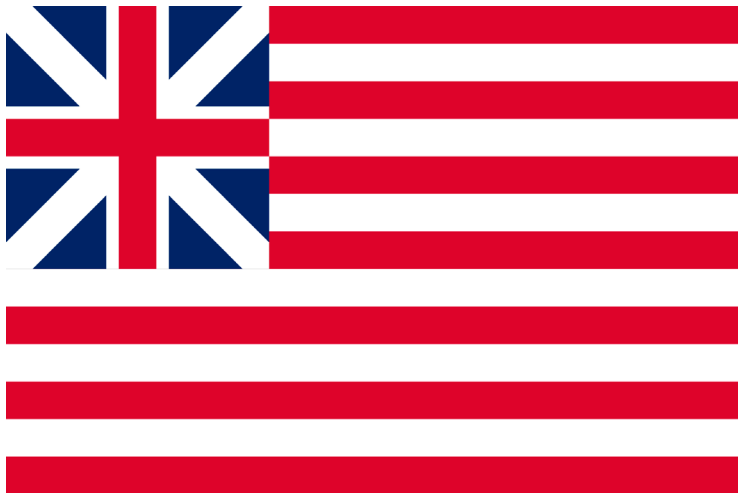




Introducing the Grand Union Flag



The Grand Union American Flag was the first flag of the colonists to have any resemblance to the present Stars and Stripes. It is sometimes referred to as the “Congress Colours”, the First Navy Ensign, and the Cambridge Flag. Its design consisted of 13 stripes, alternately red and white, representing the Thirteen Colonies, with a blue field in the upper left-hand corner bearing the red cross of St. George of England with the white cross of St. Andrew of Scotland.

History: By the end of 1775, during the first year of the American Revolutionary War, the Second Continental Congress operated as a de facto war government authorizing the creation of an Army, a Navy and even a Marine Corps. A new flag was required to represent the Congress and fledgling nation, initially the “United Colonies,” with a banner distinct from the British Red Ensign.

As the flag of the Revolution it was used on many occasions. It was first flown by the ships of the Colonial Fleet on the Delaware River. On December 3, 1775, it was raised aboard Captain Esek Hopkin’s flagship Alfred by John Paul Jones,

then a Navy lieutenant. The flag was also used by the American Continental Army forces as both a naval ensign and garrison flag throughout 1776 and early 1777. It was raised on the liberty pole at Prospect Hill, which was near George Washington’s headquarters in Cambridge, Massachusetts.

It was our unofficial national flag on July 4, 1776, Independence Day; and it remained the unofficial national flag and ensign of the Navy until June 14, 1777, when the Continental Congress authorized the Stars and Stripes (later celebrated in American culture and history as “Flag Day”). The Flag Act of 1777 by the Continental Congress authorized a new official national flag of a design similar to that of the Colours, with thirteen stars (representing the thirteen States) on a field of blue replacing the British “Union Jack” flag in the canton.

The resolution merely describes “a new constellation” for the arrangement of the white stars in the blue canton, so a number of designs were later interpreted and made with a circle of equal stars, another circle with one star in the center, and various designs of even or alternate horizontal rows of stars.

Interestingly, the Grand Union Flag also was the standard of the British East India Company. It was only by degrees that the Union Flag of Great Britain was discarded. The final breach between the Colonies and Great Britain brought about the removal of the British Union from the canton of our striped flag and the substitution of stars on a blue field