

Flag Day 2014

National flags are not merely symbols of a country. Their colors and designs convey past history and future goals. Flags have powerful connotations. They speak to the people and politicians. People of one country will burn the flag of another with whose politics they do not agree. To show their anger, some display their own nation's flags with the design altered or cut out completely. Dictators fly flags; dissidents rip them down. In every country of the world, the treatment of a flag displays an opinion or statement.

For all the controversy it is interesting to point out that the United States did not even have a standardized flag until 1912! Called the "Stars and Stripes," or "Old Glory," our flag is one of the most complicated in the world. No other flag needs 64 pieces of fabric to make. The current flag has 13 red and white alternating stripes (representing the original 13

states) and 50 stars (each star represents one of the states of the Union) on a blue background.

The American flag has also changed designs more than any other flag in the world. The first flag, called the Grand Union, was first flown at the headquarters of the Continent Army on January 1, 1776. Betsy Ross, a seamstress, is said to have contributed to this design. She had an upholstery business which made flags for navy ships in Pennsylvania. A legend still persists that she showed George Washington how to make a five-pointed star and suggested thirteen stars in a circle for the first flag. Her descendants claimed that she offered the design. George Washington did design the Grand Union but an often-quoted remark attributed to him be a bit of myth:

We take the stars from heaven, the red from our mother country, separate it by white in stripes, thus showing that we have separated from her...

On June 14, 1777, the Continental Congress proposed that the United States have a national flag instead of the British Union Jack. The 13 stars of the flag represented the 13 new states. There were few public ceremonies honoring the Stars and Stripes until 1877, when on, June 14, it was flown from every government building in honor of the centennial of the adoption of a national flag. Schools had American flags over their doors or outside the buildings long before this; but in 1890, North Dakota and New Jersey made a law that required their schools to fly the flag daily. The first official Flag Day was observed in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania in 1893. New York also proclaimed June 14 as Flag Day 1897. Other states were slow to follow. Some people thought that the day was too close to Memorial Day and Independence Day.

In August 1949, President Harry S. Truman proclaimed June 14 as Flag Day. Since then the President proclaims the commemoration yearly, and encourages all Americans in the country to display the Stars and Stripes outside their homes and businesses. Individual states determine how they will observe the day.

Today, here in West Barnstable, we have presented these Flags of our Country which have been inspected and condemned as unserviceable. They have reached their present state in a proper service of tribute, memory and love.

A Flag may be a flimsy bit of printed gauze, or a beautiful banner of finest silk. Its intrinsic value may be trifling or great; but its real value is beyond price, for it is a precious symbol of all that we and our neighbors have worked for and lived for, and died for-a free Nation of free people, true to the faith of the past, devoted to the ideals and practice of Justice, Freedom and Democracy.

Let these faded Flags of our Country be retired and destroyed with respectful and honorable rites and their places be taken by bright new Flags of the same size and kind.

To clean and purging flame we commit these Flags, worn-out in worthy service. As they yield their substance to the fire, may the light

from their fire spread over us and bring to our hearts renewed devotion to our community and nation.

Flag Disposal Ceremony

Disposal of flags is supposed to be done in a respectful manner. One of the most common methods is by burning and that's we will do next. I'd like to start by having _____
come forward and place the first flag in our fire.

At this time, I invite anyone who has a flag they'd like to place on the fire do come forward and do so.