



Soon after the American colonies declared their independence from England, they began looking for a flag of their own. On 14 June 1777, the design for the first flag was adopted by the Continental Congress. It had thirteen red and white stripes and thirteen stars set in a blue field. There was one stripe and one star for each of the original thirteen colonies. Over the years, an additional star was added for each new state. The first widespread celebrations to honor the nation's flag took place in 1877, the one hundredth anniversary of the flag's adoption. In 1949, Congress officially recognized 14 June as Flag Day. On that day, the flag is displayed from public buildings and private homes and often there are special Flag Day activities.

## TRIVIA

Legend has it, that Betsy Ross, a Philadelphia seamstress, made the first American flag, and that she showed George Washington how to make a five-pointed star. However, historians remain skeptical about the story which was first told by her grandson.

The American Flag Day Association was formed in New York City in 1894 to help promote Flag Day activities.

For many years, a new stripe was added to the Flag for each new state. By 1794, the Flag had fifteen stripes and fifteen stars. However, in 1818, the flag was getting too large, so it was returned to having only thirteen stripes.



# FRANCIS SCOTT KEY AND THE STAR SPANGLED BANNER

In 1814, during the conflict with England known as the War of 1812, Francis Scott Key, an American lawyer, was asked to help negotiate the release of a well-known doctor held prisoner by the British fleet just outside Baltimore. He was able to do so, but because the enemy was preparing to attack the city, the Americans were detained on a British ship until it was over. During the night of 13-14 September, Key watched the bombardment and anxiously awaited the outcome of the attack. When daylight came and he saw that the American Flag still flew over Fort McHenry, he was so moved that he wrote a poem about it, which eventually became the national anthem.

## THE STAR-SPANGLED BANNER

Oh, say, can you see, by the dawn's early light,  
What so proudly we hailed at the twilight's last  
gleaming?

Whose broad stripes and bright stars, through  
the perilous fight,

O'er the ramparts we watched, were so  
gallantly streaming?

And the rockets' red glare, the  
bombs bursting in air,

Gave proof through the night  
that our flag was still  
there.

Oh, say, does that star-  
spangled banner  
yet wave

O'er the land of  
the free and the  
home of the  
brave?

