

# A New Constellation: A Collection of Historic 13 Star Flags

*June 14 – July 14*

This Flag Day, **40 historic 13-star flags** will go on display at the Museum of the American Revolution in Philadelphia, marking the first time that a major exhibit of flags in this star count has ever been undertaken. Most of these have never been previously displayed anywhere, let alone together. The exhibit, “**A New Constellation: A Collection of Historic 13-Star Flags,**” will be on view from **Flag Day, Friday, June 14 through Sunday, July 14, 2019**



13-star flag, found in Gloucester, Mass., with a seemingly random star configuration, possibly arranged to crudely form the letters "U" and "S," ca 1830-1850's.

The 13-star flag became the official flag of the new nation on June 14, 1777, when the Continental Congress passed the First Flag Act, from which the name of this exhibit is derived. 13 star flags have been made in America from that time to the present. Flown for reasons both practical and patriotic, the selected count of 13 represents the 13 original colonies that declared independence from Great Britain during the Revolutionary War.

All of the flags in this exhibit are antique and most were made during the 19th century. The earliest dates to around the year 1800, while the latest dates to the turn-of-the-20th century. Because there was no official star pattern for the American national flag until 1912, the design was left to the artistic liberties of the maker. The flags in this display will feature no less than **32 different arrangements** of 13 stars.

“I am thrilled that these treasures will be seen by visitors from around the world at the Museum of the American Revolution this summer,” said **Jeff Bridgman**, the leading dealer of antique American flags and political textiles and a leading authority, who is loaning the flags to the Museum. “I truly believe that there is no substitute for the experience of standing in the presence of these remarkable pieces of America's past. As far as I know, no one has ever done an exhibit of this kind with just 13-star examples. Their impressive scale and texture are extraordinary, and it will be simply incredible to view them all together in one room.”



13 hand-sewn, single appliques stars in a broad arch above a hand-sewn federal eagle, probably made by flagmaker Sarah McFadden.

Among the highlights, said Bridgman, is one of the earliest known 13-star flags in America, which arranges the 13 stars to form a large single star

Also displayed will be a large flag (5ft. 9in. by 12ft. 4in.) ca. 1830s-1850s, found in Gloucester, Mass., which features 13 stars in a configuration possibly arranged to crudely form the letters “U” and “S.”

The exhibit also features three flags that include eagles as well as stars, one of which was made by venerable flag-maker Sarah McFadden, who is sometimes dubbed “the Betsy Ross of New York.”

The exhibit will be on view in the Museum’s first-floor Patriots Gallery from June 14 – July 14, 2019 and will be included with regular Museum admission. Tickets to the Museum can be purchased by calling 215.253.6731 or at [www.amrevmuseum.org](http://www.amrevmuseum.org). In an **adjacent activity space** in Patriots Gallery, visitors of all ages can try on Revolutionary-inspired clothing, handle replica objects, and participate in activities like designing their own flag and other crafts.

During **Flag Day Weekend, Friday, June 14 – Sunday, June 16**, guests can add a stitch to a reproduction of a Revolutionary flag and try cutting a six-pointed star like the ones on Washington’s Standard. They also can participate in a flag-themed scavenger hunt in the Museum’s galleries.

Throughout the run of the exhibit, each visitor to the Museum will receive a **miniature version of the Commander-in-Chief’s Standard**, the flag that marked George Washington’s presence on the battlefield, to take home. The Standard, which is in the Museum’s collection, is believed to be the earliest surviving 13-star American flag.

In the Museum’s core exhibition, visitors can see **two rare Revolutionary-era flags** that are on display. The Monmouth Flag descended in a Pennsylvania family and is one of the oldest surviving flags from the American Revolution, dating to 1775-6. The Forster Flag may be one of the earliest American flags to have been altered after the Declaration of Independence; it is clear that the British Union was removed from it and the white fabric has been reworked to create stripes.

### **About Jeff Bridgman**

Jeff Bridgman is the owner of Jeff R. Bridgman Antiques, Inc. He opened his business 29 years ago and has since exhibited in more than 1,400 antique shows. Bridgman also operates a full-time textile conservation business where he has preserved and framed thousands of flags and related textiles. Today, Bridgman is widely considered to be the foremost expert in the field of antique American flags and the preeminent dealer of flags and American political textiles. He has lectured on antique American flags for many years, has curated museum exhibits, and has performed appraisals for leading museums, insurance companies, and collectors. Bridgman is a member of the American Antiques Dealers Association and the Antiques Council. He serves on the board of directors of the Stars & Stripes Foundation.

### **About Museum of the American Revolution**

The Museum of the American Revolution explores the dramatic, surprising story of the American Revolution through its unmatched collection of Revolutionary-era weapons, personal items, documents, and works of art. Immersive galleries, powerful theater experiences, and digital touchscreens bring to life the diverse array of people who created a new nation against incredible odds. Visitors gain a deeper appreciation for how this nation came to be and feel inspired to consider their role in the ongoing promise of the American Revolution. Located just steps away from Independence Hall, the Museum serves as a portal to the region’s many Revolutionary sites, sparking interest, providing context, and encouraging exploration. The Museum, which opened on April 19, 2017, is a private, non-profit, and non-partisan organization. For more information, visit [www.AmRevMuseum.org](http://www.AmRevMuseum.org) or call 877.740.1776.

MUSEUM OF THE  
AMERICAN REVOLUTION

A NEW  
*Constellation*

A COLLECTION  
OF HISTORIC  
13-STAR FLAGS

JUNE 14 - JULY 14

101 S. THIRD ST., PHILADELPHIA, PA \* WWW.AMREVMUSEUM.ORG

A NEW *Constellation*

A COLLECTION OF HISTORIC 13-STAR FLAGS

Flag Day, Friday, June 14 – Sunday, July 14, 2019

*Included with regular Museum admission.*

This Flag Day, 40 rare historic flags will go on display at the Museum of the American Revolution, marking the first time that this collection has ever been displayed together. The flags feature 32 different arrangements of 13 stars, representing the 13 colonies that declared independence from Great Britain during the Revolutionary War. The 13-star flag became the official flag of the new nation on June 14, 1777, when the Continental Congress passed the first Flag Act. In an adjacent activity space, visitors of all ages can try on Revolutionary-inspired clothing, handle replica objects, and participate in activities like designing their own flag.

***The flags are on loan from Jeff Bridgman,  
Leading Dealer in Antique Flags & Political Textiles***



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