

IN THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF WASHINGTON

SENATE RESOLUTION

By Senators Michael J. Gallagher and Edward F. Riley:

WHEREAS, The historical background of the State of Washington is a subject of intense interest to the members of the Legislature as well as the citizens of our great state; and

WHEREAS, Recent publications and public opinion have raised a question of doubt as to who was the designer of the original Washington State flag; and

WHEREAS, The members of the Legislature desire to know who is the designer of the Washington State flag;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, By the Senate that the Legislative Council investigate the history of the Washington State flag and determine who is the designer. The Legislative Council shall investigate and report back to the Legislature its findings on or before the fifteenth day of the thirtieth Legislative Session.

I, Ward Bowden, Secretary of the Senate,
do hereby certify this is a true and
correct copy of the resolution adopted
on April 5, 1963.

/s/ Ward Bowden
Ward Bowden
Secretary of the Senate

That the resolution above is before us indicates that there is enough uncertainty regarding the early history of the flag that the finding of one person to designate as designer would not be an easy matter. If it were somewhere clearly on record other persons who have previously studied the subject would have brought the facts to the surface to eliminate the uncertainty and controversy. What we have done, however, is to go through the public records and the pertinent, available sources of information, bring out the facts relevant to the subject, and interpret them in as sound a manner as possible. Certain areas in the study require more information to further clarify the issue and such information may later develop to expand and influence the conclusions, which at present must hinge on the information at hand. This is unfolded in chronological order, and permits some fairly definite conclusions.

AN EARLY ESSAY: "THE FLAGS OF WASHINGTON" - 1906

In 1906 the secretary to Governor Mead, Ashmun Brown, wrote a short pamphlet

about the flags associated with Washington that had recently been collected by the Governor's office.¹ Most of those flags collected were American flags which had a part in Washington history. One of the flags collected however, could possibly have had some bearing on the present state flag. This was one carried by the First Washington Volunteer Infantry in the Philippines in 1899. This flag is still located in storage in the State Historical Museum in Olympia, and an inspection of it shows that it bears no similarity in design to the present official state flag. We can conclude then, that up to that time there was no flag connected with the state bearing resemblance to the present flag.

THE D.A.R. DESIGN, 1914-1915-1916.

The first evidence of a state flag bearing similarity to the present official one relates to one designed by the Daughters of the American Revolution. According to the D.A.R. official history, corroborated by newspaper accounts of the time, and generally accepted as describing the beginning of the Washington state flag, the story of this flag during these years is outlined. Sometime in 1914 there came a call from the national society of the D.A.R. to the State Regent, Mrs. Henry McCleary, asking this state organization to send a state flag to Washington D.C. to be hung in the D.A.R. Memorial Continental Hall. Mrs. McCleary in turn appointed Mrs. S.J. Chadwick, wife of the then Justice of the Supreme Court Stephen J. Chadwick, as chairman of a three member committee to look into the subject. The committee, finding in Olympia that there was no state flag, designed one. The flag designed is described as having "a green background for the Evergreen State, upon which was the seal of the State of Washington, viz: the head of Washington." The banner could not be made in Olympia because the only die for the Washington bust was about one inch in diameter, so it was made in Washington, D.C. at a cost of \$48 in April, 1915, and presented to the Memorial Continental Hall. This banner was returned to Washington in April, 1916 to hang behind the speaker's table at the annual state assembly held in Everett that year so it could be seen by the Washington ladies.

When this history as compiled by the D.A.R. is compared with the newspaper accounts of the State Assemblies held in those years some points for interested observation do arise. The D.A.R. history states:

At the 1915 Assembly Mrs. Chadwick submitted a design for a state banner.....This design was endorsed by the Assembly and one ordered purchased²

However, according to accounts of this 1915 meeting appearing in the two leading Seattle newspapers at that time the proposal to endorse a state flag produced considerable debate, some holding that "Old Glory" was good enough for them without having another flag, that the Assembly did not vote to endorse the banner, but shelved the question to a special committee. This would have taken place only a few weeks before the state banner was made in Washington and presented to the Hall there.

The newspaper account does appear to be correct for at the 1916 Assembly Mrs. Chadwick did give a short report on the State Banner stating how it had been designed and presented to the Continental Hall in Washington. At the 1916 Assembly of the state chapters of the D.A.R. held in Everett on March 31 and April 1, the banner was on display, having been borrowed from the Continental Hall for the occasion. The Everett Daily Herald describes the flag as:

A handsome banner of rich green silk, to represent the evergreens of the state, decorated with a bust of George Washington and edged with a fringe of gold.

The State Regent, Mrs. Bowden, in her opening speech, made a series of recommendations for action by that Assembly, the third of which was:

That a committee be appointed to ask the legislature, in the form of a bill or resolution, to accept our banner as an official state banner.

There is no record that this recommendation was acted upon, and no bill or resolution of the sort is noted in the records of the next legislature, or in any other legislature until 1923. The Assembly did, however, adopt a resolution extending a vote of appreciation to the ladies who assisted in procuring the banner from Washington, D.C. for display at the meeting.

In reviewing these formative years of the D.A.R. flag it is necessary to try to determine its position relative to the design of the eventual state flag. As to whether the design was exactly as the one in use today, we cannot know for certain, but it seems evident that it was not. It had the green background of course. But all the wording of the descriptions of the flag indicate that in the center was not the full seal of the state, but just the bust of Washington "as it appears in the state seal". This could be an incorrect conclusion, but there is never a word indicating that the wording of the state seal is on that design. But even if the seal were not represented in its entirety on that flag the idea of the later to be adopted flag was there. When the Washington bust in the center is referred to it is always stated in its relation with the state seal, so the idea of the seal in the center of a green field is there.

THE NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC AND NATIONAL GUARD FLAG - 1917-1918.

The next information of the state flag on record is most puzzling and information has yet not been found to explain it. The October, 1917, issue of the National Geographic was entirely devoted to the flags of this nation and the world. One of the sections in the issue was devoted to a presentation of the flags of the states. For Washington a flag was shown with the parenthetical expression "(unofficial)" printed under it. This flag was as the official one of today except that the seal shown in the center was not correct. The incorrect seal shown was the mistaken one often made by those who read the official description of the seal without seeing the official seal, on which the wording and position of the date has always been the same. The one shown had the date "1889" within the center circle at the bottom of the Washington bust instead of at the bottom point in the outer ring. With the date in this different place the wording of the statement "the Seal of the State of Washington" is also presented in a different manner from the present official version. The version of the flag presented in that issue, even though not officially correct, is the same as has often been made since, even since the official flag adoption, and many flags of this design are still on display.

The paragraph explaining the Washington flag represented there states:

WASHINGTON State has never officially adopted a flag, but the military authorities have provided one with a green field upon which is centered the seal of the State. The vignette of General George Washington is the central

figure and beneath it are the figures "1889". Around the vignette is a yellow circle bearing the legend, "The Seal of the State of Washington." 3

Who "the military authorities" are is not indicated and information has not been found to substantiate who they might be. We have found one flag created for Washington military forces at the period around the close of the First World War, but this one does not appear to have been the source of the magazine's flag. A flag presently located in the display case at Camp Murray was used by the 3rd Washington Infantry Regiment which came into creation around the close of the War in 1918. The flag is similar to the present and other versions in that it has a golden bust of George Washington embroidered in the center with a double ring surrounding that with the words "The Seal of the State of Washington". But this otherwise duplicate of the state seal has no date "1889" located anywhere. And it has one other most notable aberration that seems to set it outside contention in the present study: its background is blue instead of green.

This flag because of its different design and the probability that it was created later than the magazine publication, was then apparently not the one the National Geographic was referring to. The use of that flag design in the magazine does indicate that the idea of the design of the flag with the seal of the state in gold centered on a green field was in some degree of acceptance by then. It would appear that this might in some way be attributed to the publicity given the creation of the D.A.R. And the publication of this design in a national magazine would further the general understanding as to the appearance of the Washington state flag even though it was not an official one.

THE GAIER DESIGNED FLAG - 1919 - 1920 - 1921.

The next round of events in the creation of the first state flag occurred in relation with another not well known event in state history: the creation of the Washington State Nautical School. The Nautical School was authorized by the 1917 session of the state legislature with funds appropriated for it at that time. It was, however, not until the fall of 1919 that a ship became available from the national government for use in the school, so the first class did not begin until January, 1920. The 1921 session of the legislature failed to renew funds for the school, so it closed.

With the acquisition of a ship which would either be moored at the boat house at the University of Washington campus or would be sailing beyond local waters in the course of the school training, it was felt that the ship should fly a suitable flag. There being no state flag, however, one was designed by Mr. Grover C. Gaier, the Secretary-Treasurer of the Nautical School, and his design was accepted by the Commissioners of the School, manufactured, and hoisted on the ship. This flag is described as having the seal of the state on a green background. The seal was copied from one shown in a dictionary at that time and this version of the seal being the incorrect one, with the date in the inside circle and the wording in the outside circle consequently in a different order, the seal produced on the flag was therefore according to this incorrect version. This flag is contained in a picture accompanying a story covering the opening of the school in the January 13, 1920 issue of the Seattle Times. The picture is not too clear, but it distinctly shows the "1889" within the inner circle. This design would therefore be almost identical to the one shown in the National Geographic, and similar to the unofficial version displayed so many times since.

When the Nautical School closed in 1921 this flag went with the other materials from the school to Olympia and the flag was displayed over the desk of the then Director of Efficiency, Mr. Lucian McArdle. Mr. McArdle then became the advocate of this flag in maintaining that it should be adopted as the official state flag. This flag has since disappeared and the finding of it would certainly be of historical importance.

THE POST-INTELLIGENCER EDITORIALS - 1921.

The next event on public record in the flag controversy occurred in October of 1921 when the Seattle Post-Intelligencer ran two editorials on the subject. The first of these appeared on October 14, 1921 and was instigated by a letter the newspaper had received from the Geographical Publishing Company of Chicago. The publishing company said that it was planning to publish all of the state flags and wanted to include the state flag of Washington, but it had heard that Washington had no state flag. The P-I then took the issue up with Professor Edmond S. Meany of the University of Washington, the authority on Washington history. They quote Professor Meany as saying:

Washington has no state flag nor any state coat of arms. It has a state flower and a state seal. The Legislature has several times been asked to provide for the adoption of an official state flag and coat of arms, but has never done it.

The editorial then concludes that "the national guard units in the last war should have had a state flag under which to march, " and that the failure to establish an official state flag is inexcusable carelessness on the part of past legislatures." The matter, they said, should be an early order of business in the 1923 session of the legislature.

This editorial does bring up a few points to ponder. One is Professor Meany's statement that past legislatures had been asked to provide for a state flag. There is, however, no record of any bill or resolution in prior sessions of the legislature to do this. But the truth of the statement can hardly be doubted, and it would lend support to the D.A.R. claim that they had advertised their design and tried to get it adopted by the legislature. The editorial's comment that the Washington National Guard units in the last war should have had an appropriate state flag does indicate that any flag the military units did use to represent the state in that war, such as the one still on display at Camp Murray or the one the National Geographic quotes military authorities as considering the state flag, was not sufficiently well known to come to the attention of the P-I writers. The editorial, however, may have only been considering the fact that there was no "official" flag for such military use.

There was evidently a considerable response to that editorial for it was followed up with another one on October 28, in which the editors again said the state should "by all means put the state's official stamp upon a flag." It went on to note that there were two designs claiming that official stamp, and these are the same two claims that are in contention today: the one designed by Mr. Gaier for the Nautical School and the one designed by the D.A.R. The editorial noted that the two designs had marked points of similarity. Its presentation of the two claims was as follows:

Director of Efficiency McArdle contends that the State of

Washington should recognize the flag designed by the State Nautical School for use on its training ship cruises to foreign ports as the state's official flag. He holds that the legislative act creating the nautical school empowered that institution's organizing board to "procure all necessary equipment."

A Seattle boy, Grover C. Gaier, 4315 Twelfth Avenue Northeast, is credited with having more to do with the adoption of the design than anyone else.

The original nautical school flag, now in McArdle's possession and hanging in his office, is described as having a green field, centered with a bright yellow circle in which is the head of George Washington, tinted with purple.

The Daughters of the American Revolution claim priority in the design of a state flag made by them to hang in Memorial Continental Hall, at Washington, D.C., in 1915. The flag is similar in design this far--that the background is also green, and the center of the flag is a circle enclosing the bust of Washington painted in flesh tints.

The editorial, it should be noted, does not advocate the adoption of one design over the other. The writer of the editorial indicated that he had not seen the Gaier designed flag and whether he had seen the D.A.R. version is not certain, but from what he knew he indicated the only difference seemed to be the nature of the presentation of the George Washington bust. Nothing is stated regarding the wording of the seal, or the place of the date, or even that the center design was supposed to be the entire state seal. Whether the Washington bust was presented in solid tones tinted in purple or in flesh color seems not too relevant. The legal description in the 1923 statute stated the reproduction of the seal in the center could be "embroidered, printed, painted or stamped thereon."⁴ An amendment in 1925 indicated that it should be gold or yellow. It said "when a fringe is used it shall be of gold or yellow, the color of the same shade as the seal."⁵ By regulations set up by the Secretary of State in 1955 the requirements for all state flags call for flesh pink for Washington's face, white for his hair and shirt front, and a blue state seal background. While the standards are set now, there was apparently considerable leeway in the presentation of Washington in the first flags.

THE D.A.R. RENEWS ITS CAMPAIGN - 1922.

Following the 1916 D.A.R. state assembly at the annual state assemblies, from the evidence of the newspaper accounts of the meetings as well as the D.A.R. History, no action was taken on the state flag question through the 1921 assembly. In the 1922 Assembly, however, the question was again under consideration. The account of this Tacoma meeting reported in the Tacoma Daily Ledger stated that Mrs. P. S. Masters presented a resolution for the adoption of a state flag, that Mrs. D. R. Vallentine of Seattle had worked out the details of the proposed banner. It further stated that:

The design has been approved by the Sons of the American Revolution, and it is planned to obtain the approval of as many as possible of the other civic clubs, after which the flag will be presented to the next session of the State Legislature for approval.

The description of the flag was that it would be green with the seal of the state painted in the middle.

LEGISLATIVE ESTABLISHMENT OF AN OFFICIAL FLAG - 1923, 1925.

Details regarding the passage of the bill creating an official state flag during the 1923 session of the Legislature are sparse. Little more seems to be available than just the bare outline of legislative action. The bill was sponsored by the Senate Committee on Military. The bill, S.B. 154, was read the first and second time on February 10 and ordered printed and placed on general file. It passed the Senate on February 15 without dissenting vote. It passed the House, again without a dissenting vote, on March 5 and was signed by the President of the Senate and Speaker of the House on March 7. The bill was allowed to become law without the Governor's signature. The wording of the bill was as follows:

Be it enacted by the Legislature of the State of Washington:

Section 1. That the official flag of the State of Washington shall be of dark green silk or bunting and shall bear in its center a reproduction of the Seal of the State of Washington embroidered, printed, painted or stamped thereon. The edges of the flag may, or may not, be fringed. If a fringe is used the same shall be dark green of the same shade as the flag. The dimensions of the flag may vary.

Mr. Gaier states that he was not around the 1923 session of the Legislature and that he did not necessarily follow the proceedings that year, but he stated that Mr. McArdle, the Director of Efficiency, told him that his design had been accepted as the official one.

The claims of the D.A.R. design seem to be more substantiated on the record. We have first of all their announced plans of the year before to direct a campaign for the adoption of their design and their plan to present their flag to the next legislature for approval. What might or might not have any bearing on the issue is the fact that one of the seven members of the Senate Committee on Military, Senator Oliver S. Morris, did have a wife who was a member of the D.A.R. When the bill was passed in the House a maker of the motion for passage was Mrs. H. J. Miller, a representative from Everett and a member of the D.A.R. The description of the flag in the passed bill might also support the D.A.R. version. This is the part of the description that called for a green fringe of the same color as the flag if a fringe were used. While this was changed two years later to a gold or yellow fringe, this was the original official version. Mr. Gaier has stated that his flag had a gold fringe. The D.A.R. version cannot be known for certain, but in the D.A.R. History is a picture of the flag presented by the Lady Stirling Chapter of the D.A.R. to the state chapter on April 5, 1923, only a few weeks following the close of the legislative session.⁶ Since the ladies of the Lady Stirling Chapter were also the ones who were directing the campaign at the 1922 Assembly and the ones who said they would paint the seal on the flag and present it to the next legislature, it would appear most likely that this flag presented to the state D.A.R. was the same model shown to the legislature or a copy of it. The flag as pictured in the D.A.R. History, although it is a black and white picture and room for uncertainty exists, it does appear to have a fringe of the same shade as the green field of the flag.

It must also be noted that this flag of the D.A.R. does have the wording of the seal in correct order, with the date in the correct place, while the Gaier

design is admitted to having the date and wording as given in the incorrect version of the seal.

At the 1923 Assembly of the State D.A.R. held in Yakima, besides the presentation of the flag mentioned above by the Lady Stirling Chapter of Seattle to the state organization, the Yakima Morning Herald reported:

Mrs. H. J. Miller of Everett, a member of the state legislature traced the history of the bill adopting the state emblem to the Daughters of the American Revolution as the state flag of Washington.

In 1925 the act establishing the official flag was amended by taking out the two sentences "The edges of the flag may, or may not, be fringed. If a fringe is used the same shall be dark green of the same shade as the flag." and inserting the sentence, "When a fringe is used it shall be of gold or yellow, the color of the same shade as the seal." This would bring it into conformity to both the Gaier flag and the first creation of the D.A.R. in 1915, which was described as having a gold fringe around the bottom, and also to the one pictured in the 1917 issue of the National Geographic. This also seems to support the theory that the flag as described in the 1923 law was based upon the model prepared by the Lady Stirling Chapter of the D.A.R.

D.A.R. PRESENTS FLAG TO STATE - 1929.

On February 21, 1929, before a joint session of the legislature Mrs. John Wallace, the then state regent of the D.A.R., presented a state flag to the state from the D.A.R.⁷ In the course of her short speech she said that "this State Flag has been intimately and vitally connected with the history of the Daughters of the American Revolution." She then related the history of the call from the national organization for a state flag and that none was to be found in this state, "so we designed a state flag, not to be outdone by the other states of the Union." Governor Roland H. Hartley received the flag in behalf of the State. This banner is still to be found in the official reception room of the Capitol.

THE FLAG IN LATER YEARS.

Over the years since the official adoption of the state flag many incorrect versions of it have appeared. Most of the mistaken versions arise from an incorrect showing of the state seal in the center. The wording of the official seal as kept in the Secretary of State's office has always been the same (although the first seal had Washington facing right, while he has been facing left since at least the early part of this century), but the legal description appearing in the state Constitution of it is not clear and flag manufacturers relying on their reading of that description are often led astray. Even the pictorial pamphlet, "The Washington State Capitol Group", put out in the early 1950's by the Washington State Advertising Commission shows an incorrect seal and also an incorrect flag. The legal description of the seal is:

The seal of the state of Washington shall be, a seal encircled with the words: "The Seal of the State of Washington," with the vignette of General George Washington as the central figure, and beneath the vignette the figures "1889".

This wording could easily be interpreted, as it so often has, that the only figures

appearing in the outer circle would be "The Seal of the State of Washington" with the date 1889" within the inner circle at the bottom of the Washington bust. But, as noted before, the actual seal located in the Secretary of State's office has always shown the "1889" at the bottom of the outer circle.

To alleviate the problems of flag manufacturers and to prevent the incorrect flags from appearing on the scene as well as to achieve complete uniformity of style the Secretary of State by virtue of an Attorney General's opinion in 1955 now requires all flag manufacturers to present copies of their state flags to his office for approval before they can be manufactured.

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From the evidence that we have been able to find on the record it is necessary to evaluate it as soundly as possible and reach a conclusion to the enquiry. The two claimants to the title of designer of the state flag are Mr. Grover C. Gaier and the D. A. R. design originated by the committee headed by Mrs. S. J. Chadwick. The flag designed by Mr. Gaier for the Nautical School is of undoubted historical value, not only because it is an early flag and because of its connection with the Nautical School, but it appears to have been the first flag to appear as a state flag over official state property. An intensive attempt should continue to be made to locate the possible remains of this flag so it can take its rightful place in the historical archives of the state. But whether it is found or not its historical value should duly be recognized. But this flag was without doubt predated in idea and design. This is evident from the picture in the National Geographic over two years prior to the creation of this flag. There has come to the surface no evidence to dispute the generally accepted historical claim for the idea of the present flag and the design of the parent of the present flag by the D. A. R. committee headed by Mrs. Chadwick. Until more evidence comes to the surface that claim seems substantiated.

FOOTNOTES:

1. Unpublished pamphlet located in the Flag File in the Washington Room of the Washington State Library.
2. History and Register, 1924, Washington State Society, Daughters of the American Revolution, page 34.
3. The National Geographic Magazine, October, 1917, page 337.
4. Chapter 174, Laws of Washington - 1923, page 573.
5. Chapter 85, Laws of Washington - 1925, page 100.
6. History and Register, op. cit., page 75.
7. House Journal of the Twenty-First Legislature of the State of Washington, 1929, pages 380-381.