

FIRE CATCHERS CLASSROOM

History of Flags

Flags have been used more than 4,000 years. The first type of flag, it is said, was called a vexilloid. The word is Latin and means ‘guide’. A flag is a piece of colored fabric or material that is used as a symbol, or for sending a signal. Some flags are used only for decoration.

Usually, flags are messages from a person or a group of people. People often use flags to give information such as who they are and what they stand for.

In the United States of America on June 14, 1777, the Continental Congress voted and passed an act establishing an official flag for the new nation. The resolution stated: “Resolved that the flag of the United States be thirteen stripes, alternate red and white; that the union be thirteen stars, white in a blue field, representing a new constellation.” (pbs.org, 2005). And around the summer of 1776 Betsy Ross is said to have received a visit from General George Washington regarding a design for a flag for the new nation. Washington and the Continental Congress had come up with the first basic layout. In July 1969, an American flag was ‘flown’ in space when Neil Armstrong placed it on the moon.

Individuals who design flags have an important job. They must get their message and information on the flag often without using words or pictures. The pictures and colors on a flag symbolize something important for each flag made. Flags can include symbols that are used to show ideas which would otherwise take many words. Flags are used in wars, as well as for the celebration of special events. On some occasions, flags are flown at half-mast to honor the dead and are draped over the coffins of national heroes. Today, every country in the world has a flag.



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Knights frequently carried flags into battle because it was hard to know one knight from another when they were dressed up and covered in their armor, therefore flags were used to help soldiers tell their comrades from their enemies.

There were THREE ensigns (flags) of knighthood. Going from the least to the most important were:

1. The **PENNON** also called the **SMALL STANDARD** was triangular in shape. The newly dubbed knight used the Pennon. He was called "*knight graduate*" or "*knight with pennon*."
2. The **BANNER** was square or rectangular in shape, with the height larger than its width. In modern terms it was used to 'advertise' who the knight was. These knights were called "Bannerets" and they commanded the forces assigned to them.
3. The **STANDARD** was very long, usually 3 feet in height and 12 feet in length, ending with two tails. The knight who commanded or directed the battle used the Standard.

These three 'ensigns' were carried as heraldic (coat of arms) symbols of the knight.

Towards the end of 14th century, the organization of the army changed. The knightly classifications of "bannerets" and "with pennon" disappear at the beginning of the 15th century and were replaced by 'Head of War' and 'Captain of the Company.' Yet both of these two heraldic classifications continued to be carried in each company:

A knight who commanded a company of mounted men-at-arms carried the large Standard.

The Pennon, also called the *Little Standard*, was much smaller in size and had only one tail. The Squire who commanded the company's foot soldiers carried it. When the knight fought on foot he also used the Pennon because it was easier for him to handle during the battle.

Both the Standard and the Pennon used the colors of the 'Captain of Company.' At this time the heraldic emblem or device was replaced with a more complex heraldic design (coat of arms) or the symbol of the 'party' for which the knight fought. These 'ensigns' were often designated as 'large' or 'small' standards. Sometimes the Captain would also use his own heraldic banner.



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JOAN OF ARC

"I asked my Lord's messengers what I should do. And they answered me, saying, Take up the banner of your Lord. And thereupon I had a banner made." In Her Own Words, p. 26

There is historical proof that Jeanne d'Arc had three ensigns (an ensign is a national flag displayed with special insignia or a standard of a military unit.) Two were for military use: her Battle Standard, which was large in size and her Pennon which was small. The third was a religious banner made for the priests and men of the army to assemble around for morning and evening prayers.

The treasurer of Charles VII, Hémon Raguier, paid an artist to create Joan's Battle Standard and Pennon. It is noted in his accounts: "Hauves Poulnoir (Hamish Power), banner painter of Tours, is to create for The Maid, on 'baillé' (burlap) fabric a large standard and small pennon, at the cost of 25 livre tournois." For the third, Jeanne's Chaplain, Father Pasquerel, declares at Jeanne's trial of Nullification in 1456 that Jeanne asked him "to make a banner for the priests to gather around."

All three images that Jeanne used to symbolize her mission came directly from the New Testament. According to the interpretation of Jeanne's Rouen trial testimony, her Battle Standard depicted the final coming of Christ in judgement. The author of the Journal of the Siege of Orleans states that Jeanne's pennon had the image of the Annunciation painted on it. Father Pasquerel testified that the Crucifixion scene was painted on the banner.

Before continuing, it is very important to explain the different military '*ensigns*' that were used during the Middle Ages. [The author uses '**ensign**' instead of '**flag**' because the word flag was not used in Jeanne's time as it was not invented yet.] At her trial the Rouen judges asked Jeanne



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about her *large* standard...

Question: When you were at Orleans, you had an 'ensign' (this word is normally translated in English as standard). What color was it? **Answer:** I had a standard whose field was sown with lilies. There was a figure of Christ holding the world and on each side of Him was an angel. It was made of a white fabric called "boucassin". Written above: Jhesus Maria, as it seems to me, and it was fringed in silk.

Question: Who prompted you to have painted on your standard angels with arms, feet, legs, and clothing? **Answer:** I have already answered you.

Question: Did you have them painted as they came to see you? **Answer:** No, I had them painted in the way they are painted in the churches.

Question: Did you ever see them in the manner they are painted? **Answer:** I will tell you nothing more.

Question: Why did you not have painted the brightness that comes to you with the Angels and the Voices? **Answer:** It was not commanded me.

Question: Were these names, Jhesus and Maria, written in top, below or on the side? **Answer:** On the side, as it seems to me.

Question: Who had you make the painting on the standard? **Answer:** I have told you enough that I did not do anything but by the command of God.

Question: Who carried your standard? **Answer:** It was I who carried the aforementioned sign when I charged the enemy. I did so to avoid killing any one. I have never killed a man.



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Question: What significance was there in the two angels and God's holding the world. **Answer:** Saint Catherine and Saint Marguerite said to me that I should take and carry the Standard boldly on the part of the King of Heaven.

Question: Did the two angels that were painted on your standard represent Saint Michael and Saint Gabriel? **Answer:** They were there only for the honor of Our Lord, Who was painted on the standard. I only had these two Angels represented to honor Our Lord, Who was there represented holding the world.

Question: Were the two Angels represented on your standard those who guard the world? Why were there not more of them, seeing that you had been commanded by God to take this standard?

Answer: The standard was commanded by Our Lord, by the Voices of Saint Catherine and Saint Margaret, which said to me: 'Take the standard in the name of the King of Heaven'; and because they had said to me 'Take the standard in the name of the King of Heaven,' I had this figure of God and of two Angels done. I did all by their command.

Question: Did you have them painted as they had appeared to you? **Answer:** I had them painted after the manner they are painted in the churches.

Question: Did you ask them if, by virtue of this standard, you would gain battles wherever you might find yourself, and always be victorious? **Answer:** They told me to take it boldly, and that God would help me.

Question: Which gave most help, you to your standard, or your standard to you? **Answer:** "The victory either to my standard or myself. It was all from Our Lord.

Question: The hope of being victorious was it founded in your standard or in yourself? **Answer:** It was founded in Our Lord and nowhere else.



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Question: If any one but you had borne this standard, would he have been as fortunate as you in bearing it? **Answer:** I know nothing about it. I wait on Our Lord."

Question: If one of the people of your party had sent you his standard to carry, would you have had as much confidence in it as in that which had been sent to you by God? Even the standard of your King, if it had been sent to you, would you have had as much confidence in it as in your own? **Answer:** I bore most willingly that which had been ordained for me by Our Lord; and, meanwhile, in all I waited upon Our Lord.

The standard was intended to be carried on horse-back, and was used as a rallying point for the troops. The pole was extremely long, the length of a war lance, or approximately 18 feet (5.50 m) in length.

The fabric was 11.5 feet long (3.56 m) and approximately 2.6 feet (80 cm) width at the point where it was attached to the pole. This formed a triangular shape.

Depending on the importance of the owner, such as the King, the length of the tail could extend sometimes more than an **additional** 19.2 feet (6 m). Thus creating a standard that was 28.8 feet long!

Even on horseback, the man who held the Large Standard needed a great amount of strength and skill to be able to hold the deployed ensign. The rider who carried the standard was equipped with a special saddle called in French, "selle de bannière" or the "banner saddle." Often the larger standards were simply planted at the highest part of the ground where it was used as a rallying point.



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We know from various testimonies that Jeanne often held her own standard while in combat. At her trial she stated the reason why, "to avoid killing anybody," adding that she "liked forty times more her standard than her sword".

Joan's battle standard was made from a material called Buckram, similar to an artist's canvas with a silken fringe. It measured 3 feet high by 12 feet long.

"The field of it was sown with lilies, and therein was our Lord holding the world, with two angels, one on either hand. It was white, and on it there were written the names Jhesus Maria, and it was fringed with silk." In Her Own Words, p. 26

The purpose of the standard was to indicate a clear location to which her army could rally when dispersed in the confusion of battle. On several occasions when her troops were losing ground, Saint Joan of Arc is reported to have ridden into the midst of battle, using her standard to mark her position on the field, and rally her men on to victory.

During her Trial of Condemnation on Saturday, March 10, 1431, she was asked what God holding the world with two angels signified. She answered that Saint Catherine and Saint Margaret told her to take the banner, and bear it boldly, and to have painted thereon the King of Heaven.

"I loved my banner forty times better than my sword. And when I went against my enemy, I carried my banner myself, lest I kill any. I have never killed a man." In Her Own Words, p. 26

Joan had her battle standard present at the coronation of King Charles at Reims Cathedral. When questioned at her trial about its presence at such an event she said *"It had borne the burden, it had earned the honor."*



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Biblical History

Used in accordance to the Word, flags become the primary sign for lifting up a “standard” of God. The Bible refers to the word flag as “**standard**” or “**banner.**” The Hebrew word **degel** is translated as, a flag or banner or standard. Degel comes from the Hebrew root word **dagal**, meaning to flaunt, i.e. raise a flag; to be conspicuous, setting up with banners. **Standard** is defined as a banner used as an emblem, marker or rallying point; an ensign; military or personal flag. In the Old Testament, God commands Moses to instruct the children of Israel to camp by their own “standard” to signify their tribe. (Num.2:2) There were 12 different flags or banners for the 12 tribes. (Num.1:52, 2:2-3, 10, 18, 25; 10:14, 18, 22, 25) Banner is defined as a flag or cloth standard. It is used figuratively to define one of God’s names, Jehovah Nissi, the Lord is my banner! God’s salvation and truth is declared by the raising of the banners, Ps. 20:5, Ps. 60:4. He is a banner of love and protection described in Song. 2:4 and reigns with great power, Song. 6:4, 10. He is a standard and He is calling us to lift up a standard, declare and proclaim it to the entire world. (Isa. 5:26. 11:12, 13:2; Jer. 50:2). Flag Ministry is communicating with God through various flag movements, colors and spoken names of God. Flag Worship is the union of flags, music, and the Word of God that allows one to enter the awesome presence of God. This worship art form brings a memorable experience of worshipping our Lord under His anointing.

Additional Scripture References

Exodus 4:1-2, 17, 14:13-16, 17:12-15

Numbers 1:51-52, 2:1-25, 10:14-36

Song of Solomon 2:4, 6:4-10

Isaiah 59:16-21



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