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Flag Day 2012: Celebrate America's Colors

JUNE 14TH 2012 BY UNKNOWN

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*By Annabeth Miller,
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Thursday is Flag Day throughout America - a day that commemorates the adoption of the original 13 Stars and Stripes, which occurred June 14 in 1777.

The young men in Dexter's Boys Scout Troop 200 were out early to place American flags in the Historic Downtown district, as well as on Business Highway 60 in town.

Although President Wilson officially proclaimed it as "Flag Day" in summer of 1949, it is not what is known as an official federal holiday.

According to the Defense Department, ten Navy ships, including USS Fort McHenry, are commemorating Flag Day today at the site of the historic War of 1812 battle 200 years ago that inspired the National Anthem.

Sailors, Marines and Coast Guardsmen will take part in Flag Day events at Fort McHenry in Baltimore, Maryland, the star-shaped fortress that endured what's become one of the most remembered engagements of the war.

On the night of Sept. 13, 1814, British ships in Baltimore harbor bombarded the outgunned U.S. resistance at the fort for 25 solid hours. Francis Scott Key, a civilian lawyer who was sent to Baltimore to negotiate an American hostage's release, found himself in a front-row seat to the battle aboard a British ship.

As dawn broke the following morning, Key stood on the ship's deck, amazed to see the U.S. flag still flapping in the breezes over the battered fort. He was so moved that he penned the poem that became the lyrics of the National Anthem.

The Navy ships in Baltimore are part of a flotilla making its way up the Eastern Seaboard to mark the bicentennial of the war that historians say marked the dawn of U.S. naval power.

Eighteen tall ships, including the U.S. Coast Guard Cutter Eagle, and navy vessels from Brazil, Canada, Colombia, Denmark, Ecuador, Germany, Indonesia, Japan, Mexico and Norway are accompanying the Navy gray hulls in the "Star Spangled Sailabration."

The flotilla spent 12 days in Norfolk before arriving today in Baltimore for a week of activities including a tall ship parade, an air show by the Navy's Blue Angels flight demonstration squadron, fireworks and a parachute jump into Camden Yards.

Flag Etiquette

Federal law stipulates much of flag etiquette, which is often called the Flag Code. Some of the general guidelines to properly display the American flag are listed below

- The flag should be lighted at all times, either by sunlight or by an appropriate light source.
- The flag should be flown in fair weather, unless the flag is designed for inclement weather use.
- The flag should never be dipped to any person or thing. It is flown upside down only as a distress signal.
- The flag should not be used for any decoration in general. Bunting of blue, white and red stripes is available for these purposes. The blue stripe of the bunting should be on the top.
- The flag should never be used for any advertising purpose. It should not be embroidered, printed or otherwise impressed on such articles as cushions, handkerchiefs, napkins, boxes, or anything intended to be discarded after temporary use. Advertising signs should not be attached to the staff or halyard.
- The flag should not be used as part of a costume or athletic uniform, except that a flag patch may be used on the uniform of military personnel, fireman, policeman and members of patriotic organizations.
- The flag should never have any mark, insignia, letter, word, number, figure, or drawing of any kind placed on it, or attached to it.
- The flag should never be used for receiving, holding, carrying, or delivering anything.
- When the flag is lowered, no part of it should touch the ground or any other object; it should be received by waiting hands and arms. To store the flag it should be folded neatly and ceremoniously.
- The flag should be cleaned and mended when necessary.
- When a flag is so worn it is no longer fit to serve as a symbol of our country, it should be destroyed by burning in a dignified manner.

Photo above: The American Flag flags in the early morning sunlight along Stoddard Street in Historic Downtown Dexter. (ShowMe Times photo by Annabeth Miller)

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