



Six Flags over Vincennes

George Rogers Clark's Flag



To understand the origin of the colorful red-and-green flag, now known as the flag of George Rogers Clark, it is necessary to look at the ledger of Vincennes inhabitant Francis Bosseron. On November 12, 1778, Bosseron listed in French the following items:

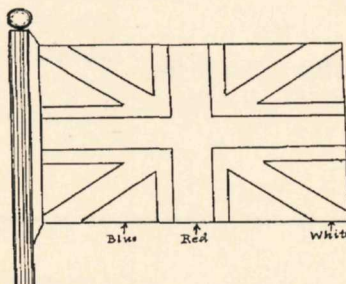
1. *Paid to St Marie for 5 ells [an ell of material measured 45 inches] of red serge for the flag (pavilion) at 9; 45 Livres [livres]*
2. *Paid to Mr. Dajene for 3 3/4 ells of green serge at 10; 37 Livres [livres]*

3. *Paid to Madam Goderre [Godare] for making the flag; 25 Livres [livres].*

This flag was authorized by George Rogers Clark and was used by Captain Leonard Helm. In all probability, it was the flag that Lieutenant Governor Henry Hamilton mentioned in his journal on December 17, 1778. Hamilton says: "On my approach to St. Vincennes (I) was not a little surprized to see at a landing place about a small mile above the fort, our boats with a small guard, and the Gunboat with the flag, hawled on shore- The American flag at the same time being displayed on the Fort I now presumed that some reinforcements had come to the Garrison . . ."

Of all the flags and banners used by Clark and his men, the 13-striped-red-and-green flag is the only one that historical records describe.

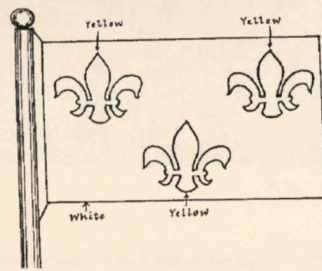
The King's Colors



When Queen Elizabeth of England died during 1603, her cousin, King James of Scotland, became King of England. Since James was sovereign of England and Scotland, it was decided to combine both kingdoms' flags. As a result, the British red cross of St. George and the Scottish blue cross of St. Andrew were

united. On April 12, 1606, the new flag was adopted. During 1626, the term Union became the standard terminology when referring to the King's Colors. As per old tradition, the Union was flown primarily at sea. Many times, however, it was difficult to see the Union on a ship's tall mast. Gradually the King's ships began flying a smaller Union at their bows. This smaller flag was called a Union Jack because it was flown off the jack staff at the bow of the ship. In time the term Union Jack was used universally when referring to the flag of Great Britain. This flag was the standard of the British Army during the American Revolution and consequently it flew over Fort Sackville during the winter of 1778-1779.

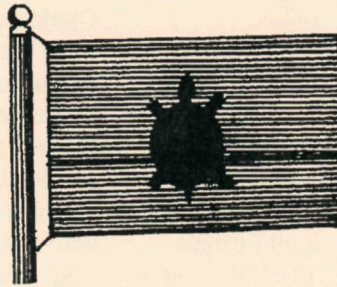
French Colonial Colors



The beautiful white French Bourbon flag with the three golden fleurs-de-lis (iris or lily) was the official flag of the French Navy and of the colonial government of New France. This flag

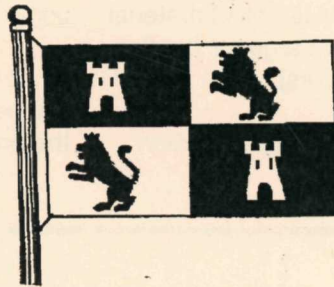
would have been flown officially at Post Vincennes until the end of the French colonial era during 1763. The explorers, Champlain, Marquette, Jolliet and LaSalle, all traveled under the authority of this flag. Later during the American Revolution, this same flag would have been a welcome sight to the Continental soldiers as they greeted their French naval allies.

Indian Banner



Local legend relates that the Piankashaw Indians in the Wabash County used a flag similar to the turtle flag depicted here. Usually, Indian warriors did not use flags. On occasion, however, a specific tribe might become allied with European settlers and adopt a flag as a symbol of the alliance. For the Indians of this area, the turtle totem was a very significant spiritual symbol.

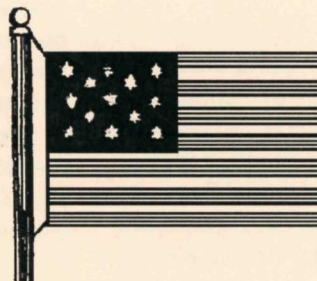
Royal Spanish Standard



Historical records indicate that the Spanish flag never officially flew over Vincennes. But the

Spanish influence from the West often was felt in this area. There was a Spanish garrison in St. Louis when George Rogers Clark captured Fort Sackville. Spanish traders frequently arrived with trade goods to sell to the local French. Francis Vigo was a business partner of Señor Don Fernando de Leyba, Spanish Lieutenant Governor at St. Louis. A Spanish expedition, led by Captain Eugene Poure, was mounted to capture Fort St. Joseph (in present-day Michigan) on February 12, 1781. Thus, the Spanish flag did fly briefly over the Old Northwest.

First Stars and Stripes



On June 14, 1777, the Continental Congress resolved that the flag of the United States be thirteen stripes, alternating red-and-white, and that the union be thirteen stars, white on a blue field, representing a new constellation in the heavens. When George Rogers Clark and his

men captured Fort Sackville and February 25, 1779, Clark renamed the fort after Patrick Henry and his men raised the American colors. Unfortunately, no account exists which specifically describes what this "American Flag" looked like. The first official American flag to fly over Vincennes probably was displayed during 1788 when Major John Francis Hamtramck and his men were stationed at Fort Knox I. Hamtramck had waited a year after his arrival on the Wabash to receive a flag from General Josiah Harmer which suitably would impress the local Indians and townspeople.