

In the *Annual Register*, for the year 1776, published in London in 1788, the Union flag is described as having thirteen stripes: "The arrival of a copy of the king's speech, with an account of the fate of the petition from the continental congress, is said to have excited the greatest degree of rage and indignation amongst them; as a proof of which, the former was publicly burnt in the camp; and they are said upon this occasion to have changed their colours from a plain red ground, which they had hitherto used, to a flag with thirteen stripes, as a symbol of the number and union of the colonies."¹

As no mention is made of the color of the thirteen stripes constituting this particular flag, it has been assumed that they were alternately red and white.

The first legislative action, ordaining the symbols of the flag of the United States of America, was taken by the American congress on Saturday, June 14, 1777, when it

"Resolved, That the flag of the thirteen United States be thirteen stripes, alternate red and white: that the union be thirteen stars, white on a blue field, representing a new constellation."²

This genesis of the national standard may have been preceded by discussions by members of the congress concerning the propriety of the use and the signification of the banner's emblematic colors, stars and stripes, but there are no minutes known as extant of such debates nor any traditions to render the supposition authoritative.

It has been confidently asserted that the style of the United States flag as established by congress was derived from a star-spangled banner, made in Philadelphia, by Mrs. John Ross from a rough drawing furnished her by a committee of congress, in June, 1776. The claimant of this particular knowledge, William J. Canby, of Philadelphia, read in 1870, before the Historical Society of Pennsylvania, a paper, in which he alleges that his maternal grandmother, Mrs. John Ross, was "the first maker and practical designer of the stars and stripes." "Three of Mrs. Ross's daughters," who "were living when Mr. Canby wrote his paper," are said made the same allegation, "founding their belief not upon what they themselves saw—for the incident occurred many years before their birth—but upon what their mother had told them concerning it."

In a letter to Rear Admiral George Henry Preble, of the United States Navy, written by Mr. Canby soon after the reading of his paper before the Historical Society of Pennsylvania, he says: "It is not tradition, it is report from the lips of the principal participator in the transaction, directly told not to one or two, but a dozen or more living witnesses, of whom I myself am

¹ The *Annual Register*, for the year 1776. London, 1788, p. 147.

² Journals of the American congress. 1823, vol. ii., p. 165.