
Wayne's World (of Flags)

David B. Martucci

All vexillologists should be aware of Wayne Whipple and his flag designs.



Figure 1. Wayne Whipple as a young man. Source: "Wayne Whipple," *genweb.whipple.org*.

Whipple was born in 1856 in Meadville, Pennsylvania, the son of Andrew Jackson Whipple and Hannah Jane Carr. He married Gertrude May Kimble in 1893 and died in 1942 in New York City at the age of 85.¹ Whipple was an educated man, graduating with an AB degree from Allegheny College in 1877. He was the editor of the *Kansas City Mail* (which later became the *Kansas City Star*) from 1877 to 1879, when he moved to Chicago. From 1882 to 1905 Whipple lived in Boston and was editor, then advertising manager, for the Lothrop Company, a well-known publishing firm at the time.²

Whipple was the author of numerous books of mostly historical and patriotic themes aimed at children. He wrote at least 28 published books in all and authored at least 2 more that were unpublished.

His earliest publication was a First Aid instruction pamphlet for the John Hancock Insurance Company in 1899 and his last books were published in 1934, one of which was a biography of Franklin Delano Roosevelt.³ He also wrote motion picture scenarios and many newspaper syndicate stories about Abraham Lincoln.⁴

Of interest here is the Patriotic Series, which was published as a three-volume set in 1910 by the Henry Altemus Company of Philadelphia, and included *The Story of the American Flag*, *The Story of the White House*, and *The Story of the Liberty Bell*. *The Story of the American Flag*, of course, most interests vexillologists as does *The Story of the White House* since it includes some more details on the flags which this article will discuss.⁵

The Story of the American Flag went through at least three editions which can be determined by the cover. The first edition (published in 1910) has a flag on the cover with the stars in rows while the second (about 1913) and third editions have the later Whipple Flag design on the cover. The third edition



Figure 2. Covers of *The Story of the American Flag*: (clockwise from top left) 1st Edition, 2nd Edition, and 3rd Edition. Source: David B. Martucci.

appears to have been published in the 1930s just before the Henry Altemus Company went out of business.

Whipple depicts a 46-star flag in the body of the book, with 13 stars in the center in the shape of a six-pointed star surrounded by a ring of 25 stars and 2 stars in each corner. The 13 stars, of course, represent the original states. The ring of 25 represents the number of states admitted up until the centennial of the United States (1876). The 8 stars—2 in each corner—represent the number of states admitted since the centennial to his time. Whipple refers to this design as “the history flag” as it graphically represents the history of the admission of new states into the Union. He also urged the readers to see what designs they could come up with.⁶

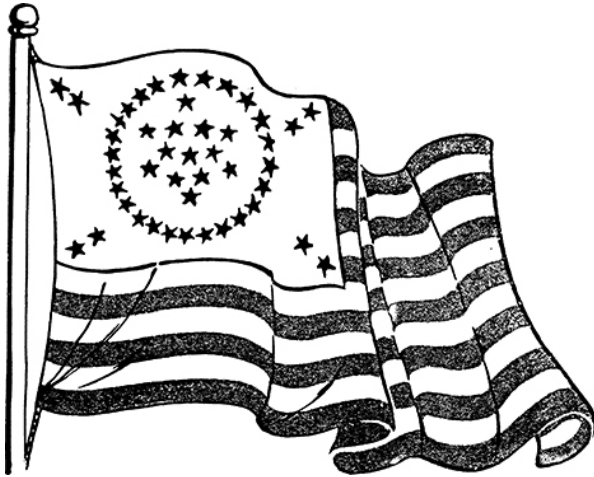


Figure 3. Whipple's flag design of 1910. Source: Wayne Whipple, The Story of the American Flag (Philadelphia: Henry Altemus Company, 1910).

In 1912 Whipple began a newspaper publicity campaign for his new design which changed the outer number of stars from 8 to 10 reflecting the 2 new states added in that year and made them into the shape of a circle rather than 2 stars in each corner which he said would give enough room for additional stars in the future as new states were admitted. The flag actually appeared in two slightly different formats, one with a more square canton and having the lower five stars in the central star shape pointing down while all of the others pointed up.⁷ The second variant had a rectangular canton and all of the central star shape's stars pointed up.⁸

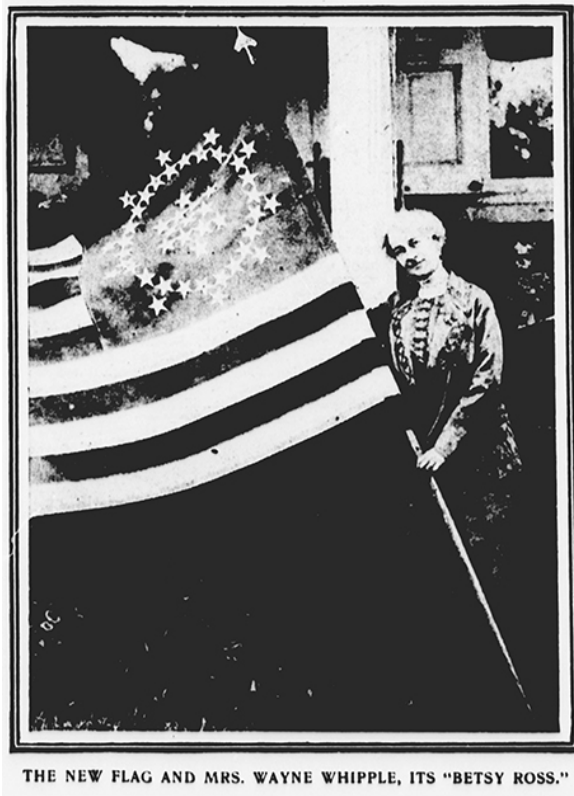


Figure 4. Mrs. Gertrude May Kimble Whipple holding up the Whipple Flag in 1912 as part of the newspaper publicity campaign. Source: The New York Sun, 1 December 1912, 11.

Apparently this design was touted in numerous newspaper articles, as well as in the second edition of his book *The Story of the White House*, in which he says that

It was the country's growth that made necessary the change in its Flag, because not another star could be admitted to its union until a change had been made in their arrangement.

The admission of Arizona and New Mexico, therefore, proved that the blue "field of honor" of the Flag was full. It was proposed to keep "Old Glory" forever as it then stood, a solid phalanx of military rows as the battle flag with which the nation had won, through wars and struggles, the foremost place among the Great Powers of the world.

This star arrangement had previously won the favor of the President and the authorities in Washington as the best in every way as illustrating

the history of the country and providing plenty of room for the adding of stars for all the states that can be added during the ages to come. It was pronounced the best design of more than 500 submitted during the previous hundred years. In recognition of President Taft's interest in this flag and because of his efforts to promote peace in the United States and throughout the world, Wayne Whipple called upon him on the 3rd of March—his last day in the White House—and presented him with a large silk flag with this approved arrangement of the stars.

With the approval of the authorities "the new flag," as it soon came to be called, was unfurled before great gatherings and patriotic organizations from the Atlantic to the Pacific coast and from Maine to the Gulf of Mexico winning approval of the sovereign people North, South, East and West as the future flag of the United States.⁹

Later, portions of this statement were misinterpreted as meaning President Taft held a contest for a new U.S. flag and that there were 500 entries out of which Whipple's design won.¹⁰

Whipple described his design in several ways, but by 1913 he was suggesting it as an alternative to the standard design of six rows of eight stars. He said, "This was first accepted as a substitute for 'Old Glory' but I said to the authorities 'Why not keep the old flag as it is, unchanged forever, as the flag of battle? Its Field of glory is full—not a star can be added. They are in military rows. Why not have it for the battle flag with which we have won our unique place as a leading world power? This met with favor. The flag of the fathers can now come gradually into the hearts of the people and become a banner of peace.'¹¹

Whipple made numerous presentations of copies of his design to members of Congress and other influential people. Some of these were made by his wife while others were produced at his own expense by one or more of the major flag manufacturers of the day. It is not known which flag company made these although as we shall see, the Dettra Flag Company did ultimately patent, manufacture, and sell a nearly identical star pattern on a pennant. Whipple also presented his design to many major newspapers by travelling to their offices. One account says he "exploited" the design "in newspapers, magazines, and motion pictures."¹²

Whipple's promotion of his design made the design well-known and many proponents were found in this country. For example, the Out West Tent and Awning Company of Colorado Springs, Colorado, published an undated advertising card that featured this design with text that reads, in part,

"This new design of the American Flag has been recommended by Presidents Roosevelt, Taft and Wilson and is approved by many G. A. R. posts and other patriotic societies. Its adoption as the official flag of the United States will be asked of Congress."¹³



Figure 5. *The Out West Tent and Awning Company's advertising card.* Source: courtesy of Nicholas Artimovich.

In December 1912, it was reported that the women passengers of the mail liner *Peru* travelling from Panama made a copy of this flag after seeing it in a magazine and that they donated it to the ship, whose captain promised to fly it.¹⁴

Whipple also stated that the design was not his but rather it was "the flag of the fathers" brought up to modern design. By this he meant that the two basic design motifs utilized in the design had a long tradition that preceded his work.

The first motif of course is the "Great Star" pattern in the center, a six-pointed arrangement of 13 stars of 1-4-3-4-1. This design originated in 1782 in the crest of the United States Arms and Great Seal. The original drawing shows this pattern made of six-pointed stars. It was redrawn officially several times as new seals were made, notably in 1841, 1877, and 1885. We know it was used as a pattern for 13-star flags in the nineteenth century. As an example, it is shown flying at the battery in New York in 1851 in a print that adorned the cover of Grace Cooper's landmark book *13-Star Flags: Keys to Identification*.¹⁵ A similar flag made with six-pointed stars about 1876 was auctioned off at Sotheby's in New York City in 2002 for just under US\$6,000.

The other design motif is the circle of stars made popular by the introduction of the so-called "Betsy Ross" flag in 1876. According to the legend this was originally George Washington's own design, modified by Mrs. Ross by making

the six-pointed stars five-pointed. No evidence exists to prove this legend, but Whipple, as well as many others even to this day, firmly believed in it and used it as a design basis for his flags: “‘It is not a new flag,’ said Mr. Whipple, ‘but the flag of the fathers grown up with the country. The six-pointed star in the center is the design of the original thirteen states from the seal of the United States. The circle was designed by Washington, who set the first 13 states in a circle in the first flag made by Betsy Ross. This circle, however, includes twenty-five stars for states admitted during the first century of the country’s history.’”¹⁶

Little known, however, is that Whipple did not act alone or in a vacuum. For many years, perhaps since the end of the Civil War, some Americans had advocated for a “standardized design” for the flag. Although the Army and the Navy had their own patterns, sometimes basically the same and sometimes very different, there was no set pattern for the flag as used by ordinary Americans until President Taft issued his Executive Order in 1912. Until then there was no pattern to be had.

It should be noted that in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries Americans were in the habit of sending in flag designs to the War Department, Congress, or White House without there ever having been an official “contest” asking for designs. The War Department admitted to having received some 150 designs in 1912.¹⁷ None of these spontaneous submissions was ever selected as an official design, although some “entries” did match the official pattern that was ultimately selected. As an example, Robert Heft claims credit for the design of the 50-star flag because he submitted a design essentially matching the design chosen. But the official designer is listed as the Army Institute of Heraldry.¹⁸ In fact, by the time Heft submitted his design, the final design probably had already been chosen.

In 1889, Mrs. Charles Carleton Coffin, wife of the war correspondent and lecturer, sent to the War Department a new design for the 42 stars in the flag: “It has 13 of the stars made into a six-cornered star for the centre, to symbolize the original thirteen states. The rest of the stars are to be arranged about this in straight rows. The device is much admired by the army officers who have seen it.”¹⁹

Many other designs were proposed. Addie G. Weaver, who, it is recorded, “headed several committees” charged with “fixing the arrangement of the stars,”²⁰ published a book in 1898, *The Story of Our Flag*,²¹ in which she proposed a design nearly identical to Whipple’s. It was composed of the 13-star six-pointed Great Star in the center, same as on Whipple’s flag, with a ring of 23 stars around it and another ring of either 9 or 10 stars around that (the

text describes 9 stars making a total of 45 [the correct number for 1898] but the illustration shows 10 stars making a total of 46, which would not become official until 1908). She credits the design to John F. Earhart, a printer/publisher who, several years earlier, promoted a radical design with the canton changed into a nine-pointed blue star in the center of the stripes with the 45-star pattern of stars set into it. This design, he said, "would symbolize the birth of imperialism."²² Weaver's symbolism was the same as Whipple's except that the ring of 23 stars added to the 13 in the center makes a total of 36, the number of states in 1865 at the close of the Civil War.²³

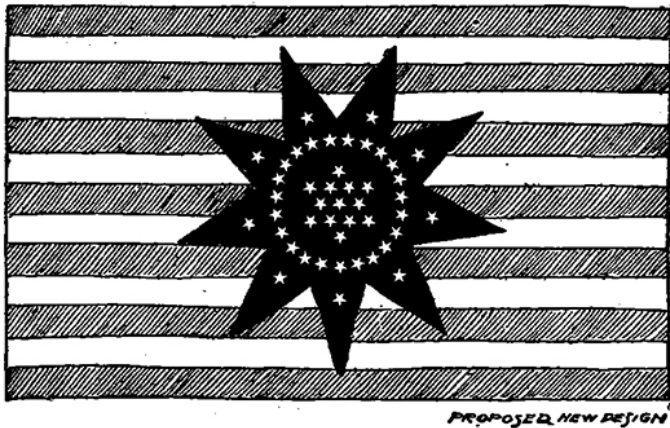


Figure 6. The flag design proposed by John F. Earhart of Cincinnati, Ohio, in 1898. Source: *The Globe-Republican* (Dodge City, Kansas), 15 December 1898.

In a newspaper exchange with Whipple, Edward C. Frisbie of Hartford, Connecticut, criticized Whipple's design but stated the problem with it was merely the number of stars in the ring around the 13-star Great Star in the center. He propose it should consist of 22 stars, which when added to the 13 in the center made 35, the number of states 1861–1864, during most of the Civil War.²⁴ Other proposals were to simply keep the 13 stars in the Great Seal Pattern and surround that with a ring made up of the rest of them. This design was proposed anonymously to the *New York Sun* in 1898²⁵ and was used in the second inaugural parade of William McKinley in 1901.²⁶ Many other designs were proposed in these years, usually having some combination of a Great Star (either with five, six, or eight points) and circles of stars. Some had outlandish patterns composed of swirls, arcs, and other geometric patterns. A number of these designs were actually proposed in Congress and some of them were championed by members of Congress.²⁷



Figure 7. President William McKinley's second Inaugural Parade on 4 March 1901. Source: Library of Congress, Reproduction Number LC-DIG-cwpbh-03416.

After Whipple's promotions started—they lasted until at least 1922²⁸—some others came forward to propose designs clearly based on his. Addie G. Weaver surfaced again with her proposal that the ring should contain 23 stars rather than Whipple's 25. On 13 December 1916, a patent application was submitted by Charles L. Campbell, assignor to John C. Dettra, Inc. of Oaks, Pennsylvania, for a pennant design that included a 48-star pattern very similar to Whipple's, the only difference being an oval rather than circular rings of stars around the six-pointed Great Star of 13 stars in the center. It was granted on 6 March 1917, as patent number D50413. There are a number of these pennants still existing, with Dettra's patent number printed on them. No evidence has been found that Dettra made any Whipple flags other than this pattern; there is no evidence to indicate Dettra had Whipple's permission to make this design.

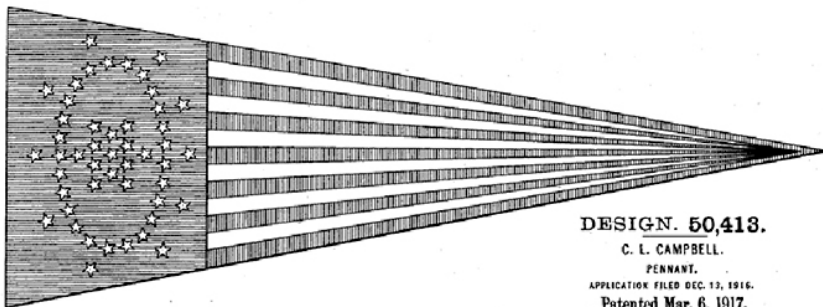


Figure 8. The John C. Dettra, Inc., pennant design of 1916. Source: C. L. Campbell, Pennant, US Patent D50413 S, filed 13 December 1916, and published 6 March 1917.

In summary, Wayne Whipple took a design that had been around in essence, the “flag of the fathers” as he called it, and in practice by others such as Weaver, Earhart, and Frisbie and promoted it. The United States nearly had this design as its official national flag pattern.



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End Notes

1. Whipple Website, “Wayne Whipple,” accessed 19 January 2016, <http://genweb.whipple.org/d0856/I24529.html>.
2. “Wayne Whipple,” New York, N.Y., Death Index, 1862–1948, accessed 19 January 2016, www.ancestry.com.
3. “Index,” accessed 19 January 2016, www.waynewhipple.com/index.html.
4. “Wayne Whipple,” New York, N.Y., Death Index, 1862–1948, accessed 19 January 2016, www.ancestry.com.
5. “Patriotic Series—Henry Altemus Company,” accessed 19 January 2016, www.waynewhipple.com/wwseries/series4.html.
6. Wayne Whipple, *The Story of the American Flag*, 2nd edition (Philadelphia: Henry Altemus Company, 1910), 58–60.
7. See, for example, *The Hawaiian Gazette* (Honolulu), 17 June 1913, p. 7.
8. See, for example, *The Sun* (New York City), 1 December 1912, p. 11.
9. Wayne Whipple, *The Story of the White House*, 2nd edition (Philadelphia: Henry Altemus Company, 1910), 131.
10. “The Whipple Flag,” accessed 19 January 2016, www.waynewhipple.com/flag.html.
11. *The Hartford Courant*, 14 November 1913, p. 5.
12. *The Evening Tribune* (Providence, Rhode Island), 11 June 1922, p. 7.
13. Advertising card, Out West Tent and Awning Company, Colorado Springs, Colorado, undated, in the private collection of Nicholas Artimovich, Columbia, Maryland.
14. *The San Francisco Call*, 11 December 1912, p. 2.

15. Grace Cooper, *13-Star Flags: Keys to Identification* (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1973), cover.
16. *The Hartford Courant*, 14 November 1913, p. 5.
17. *The Washington Times* (Washington, D.C.), 8 December 1912, p. 11.
18. *The New York Times*, 22 August 1959.
19. *The Philadelphia Record*, 4 July 1889, p. 1.
20. *The Hartford Courant*, 15 November 1913, p. 7.
21. Addie Guthrie Weaver, *The Story of Our Flag* (Chicago: n.p., 1898).
22. *The Globe—Republican* (Dodge City, Kansas), 15 December 1898, p. 3.
23. Weaver, *The Story of Our Flag*, 33.
24. *The Hartford Courant*, 15 November 1913, p. 7.
25. *The Daily Shield* (Mansfield, Ohio), 8 August 1898, p. 5.
26. Library of Congress, Reproduction Number LC-DIG-cwpbh-03416 (Washington, D.C.: Prints and Photographs Division).
27. All subjects of a future presentation!
28. *The Evening Tribune* (Providence, Rhode Island), 11 June 1922, p. 7.