

GOD BLESS AMERICA by Irving Berlin

God bless America
Land that I love.

Stand beside her and guide her
Through the night with a light from above.

From the mountains,
To the prairies,
To the oceans white with foam.
God bless America,
My home, sweet home.

God bless America
My home, sweet home.



The 247th Anniversary Flag Raising Committee would like to acknowledge the many individuals and businesses whose generous contributions have made this historic event possible. They include Staff of the Mayor's Office; DPW, especially Mike Bowler, Frank Santangelo, Marty Pantanella & the all-weather Building and Grounds Crew; Joe Constantine & the Communications staff; the Office of Strategic Planning & Community Development; Police Chief Charles Femino and his staff; Traffic & Parking, Ted Louis-Jacques (Veteran's Affairs), Karen, Somerville Schools Food Service; Flagraphics of Somerville (large Grand Union flag); Dunkin' Donuts in Union, and on Somerville Avenue (donuts, coffee & munchkins), Market Basket (cider, tea & cocoa); Musicians; Neighborhood Bakery (heating cider); Adda Santos, Local History Club Coordinator at SHS (capes), Docents Susan Goldin, Katie Kidwell, Ilana Krepkin, Mary Mangan, & Gerald Pierce, with Ana Lindo & Steven & Lorna Flythe (Refreshments & Museum Sales Tables); Ancient and Honorable Artillery Company (www.ahacsite.org), Rhode Island and Charlestown Militia members; His Majesty's (HM) 10th Regiment of Foot (www.redcoat.org/index.html), John Koopman (George Washington) & his horse Bear from Colchester, CT; Jeanine Farley (photographer), participating residents Linda Gritz and David Scott, and the invaluable staff at the Somerville Museum (period clothing and historic memorabilia).

The Flag Raising Planning Committee: Evelyn Battinelli, Alison Drasner, & Barbara Mangum (Somerville Museum); Colonel (MA) Lawrence A. Willwerth (Militia Coordinator, Ancient & Honorable Artillery Co.) and Brandon Wilson (SHPC - www.somervillema.gov/departments/ospcd/historic-preservation)

First Flag
The 247th
Anniversary of the Raising
of the Great Union Flag

Sunday, January 1, 2023

at 12:00 noon

On Prospect Hill, Somerville, Massachusetts
(formerly part of Charlestown)

Mayor Katajana Ballantyne

www.somervillema.gov/his/origpreservation

THIS LAND IS YOUR LAND

Words and music by Woody Guthrie

Chorus:
This land is your land, this land is my land
From California, to the New York Island
From the redwood forest, to the gulf stream waters
This land was made for you and me

As I was walking a ribbon of highway
I saw above me an endless skyway
I saw below me a golden valley
This land was made for you and me

Chorus
I've roamed and rambled and I've followed my footsteps
To the sparkling sands of her diamond deserts
And all around me a voice was sounding
This land was made for you and me

Chorus
The sun comes shining as I was strolling
The wheat fields waving and the dust clouds rolling
The fog was lifting a voice come chanting
This land was made for you and me

Chorus
As I was walkin' - I saw a sign there
And that sign said - no tress passin'
But on the other side it didn't say nothin!
Now that side was made for you and me!

Chorus
In the squares of the city - In the shadow of the steeple
Near the relief office - I see my people
And some are grumblin' and some are wonderin'
If this land's still made for you and me.

Chorus (2x)

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Commemoration of the 247th Anniversary of the Raising of the First Flag of the United Colonies

Sunday, January 1, 2023

11:40 AM **Procession** departs City Hall led by General George Washington on horseback followed by local dignitaries and members of the public, the Ancient and Honorable Artillery Company (AHAC), HM's 10th Regiment of Foot, ~~Kath Guck~~ and the Charlestown and Rhode Island Militia

Fife and Drum Music

Members of Rhode Island Militia

12:00 Noon **Welcome & Introduction** of Honored Guests

Ben Ewen-Campen, Ward 3 Councilor

Invocation

Matthew Mees, Chaplain, Gardner's Regiment

Opening Remarks

Mayor Katjana Ballantyne

Historical Context

J. Brandon Wilson, Coordinator for Historic Events & Education, SHPC
Paul Lane, Charlestown Militia of Gardner's Regiment
Colonel Richard Sheryka, Rhode Island Militia under General Nathaniel Greene
LTC Paul O'Shaughnessy, HM's 10th Regiment of Foot (King George's delegate)

Musical Selections - All are encouraged to join in!

"Yankee Doodle" verses circa 1775* led by

David Scott, Professor, Voice Department, Berklee School of Music

Historical Perspectives - COL Lawrence A. Willwerth, Commander of Troops

Linda Gritz, proud Somerville resident

Musical Selection: "This Land is Your Land" by Woody Guthrie*

Presentation of the Grand Union Flag to General Washington

General Washington accepts and gives remarks

Raising of the Grand Union Flag

Honors to the Grand Union Flag (bugle call "To the Colors")

Fire Salute

Pledge of Allegiance led by Honorable Mayor Ballantyne

Unfurling of Unit Flag - Charlestown Militia

Musical Selection led by David Scott - "God Bless America" by Irving Berlin*

Appreciation for Notable Participants - Brandon Wilson

1:00 Refreshments, Historic Memorabilia Table, Horse Greetings, and Mingling

(Regardless of rain, snow, sleet or high winds!)

* Words to be found in the Program

Siege of Boston

Following the battles of Lexington & Concord, the British Army retreated to Boston. Militia units and men throughout Massachusetts New England and the Colonies assembled and besieged the town. The posting of the guards and the fortification of Union Square and Roxbury convinced the British a siege was on. General William Burgoyne described Somerville's part this way: "...Invested by a rabble in arms, who, flushed with success and insolence had advanced their sentries to pistol shots of our outguards, the ships in the harbor exposed to, and expecting a cannonade or bombardment." On June 17, 1775 the greatest battle during the siege was fought at Bunker Hill. After the battle, the New England troops retreated to "Charlestown beyond the neck," now known as Somerville. They strengthened the fortifications on Winter Hill and on Prospect Hill. These fortifications, including all of Somerville land within, defined the eight miles of defensive positions from the Mystic River, through Cambridge to Roxbury, including all of Somerville land within. General Washington assigned two of his best commanders to defend these key positions -- Winter Hill under the command of Brigadier General John Sullivan, and Prospect Hill under Brigadier General Nathaniel Greene.

On June 14, 1775, the Second Continental Congress authorized the formation of a Continental Army, initially with rifle units from Pennsylvania and Maryland, and subsequently appointed General George Washington as its Commander. He was charged to transform armed civilians in the militia coming from throughout New England and beyond into soldiers and an Army. After assuming command, a 76-foot mast was erected as a flag pole on top of Prospect Hill, the highest point of the fortification. Throughout the siege in 1775, the new fortifications (Ploughed Hill in September; Cobble Hill in November; and Lechmere Point in December) played a pivotal role in directing and supporting military operations against the British, despite strong opposition and harassing fire, famine and smallpox plaguing the region. By December 1775 the soldiers of the Cobble Hill fort were successful in driving away menacing British ships in the harbor. Later that month, Winter Hill troops made a daring attempt to capture English pickets in adjacent Charlestown. Unfortunately, an accidental musket discharge during the crossing alarmed the British and the mission was abandoned.

First Flag Raised on Prospect Hill in Defiance of Great Britain

By December 1775, "The Siege of Boston" had gone on for eight long months without any clear outcome! Winter had arrived! Reconciliation with King George III had been unsuccessful! The soldiers had not been paid! They wanted to go home! Morale was low. The future was in doubt. How would it be possible for a new Continental Army to be established in January 1776 with most enlistment ended on December 31, 1775 in the middle of a siege facing 10,000 British soldiers?

By the fall of 1775, no flag existed to represent **all** of the Colonies as a young American nation. General Washington requested Congress, through Benjamin Franklin, to create a new national flag – to symbolize all the colonies, colonial unity, and a clear identity of the ships of the fledgling Continental Navy, located in New England. The first national flag, the "Great Union" Flag, authorized by Congress in November, was sent to General Washington in December 1775.

On Monday, January 1, 1776, Lord William Howe, the British Commander, directed copies of King George III's Speech to Parliament, to be distributed through the American Lines, declaring the Colonies in revolt and to challenge American resolve. In response, General Washington directed the new flag to be immediately flown at the most visible point, on Prospect Hill. Washington's correspondence states "we had hoisted the Union Flag in compliment to the United Colonies...on the day which gave being to the New Army." This flag was clearly visible to all, especially the British garrison in Boston. Its display reminded the British we are very much here to stay. The Colonists, once angry British citizens, had been transformed into independent Americans!

By January 1776, all the doubt and pessimism of a month before had changed. In spite of many obstacles, the Continental Army was successfully created. Many soldiers had re-enlisted and decided to stay the course. The "Great Union" Flag, also known as "Continental Colors," waved proudly atop Prospect Hill. Later in the month, cannons previously captured from Fort Ticonderoga, NY and dragged 150 miles on sleds to Boston by Colonel Henry Knox, were emplaced in the American fortifications. This artillery plus the new resolve forced the evacuation of the British army from Boston in March 1776 -- the first American military victory of the Revolution! This victory, combined with the publication of Thomas Paine's "Common Sense," made independence from England a realistic possibility.

The "Great Union," now called the "Grand Union" flag, displayed thirteen stripes of alternating red and white, symbolizing the thirteen colonies. The Union Flag of Great Britain was placed at the upper left, as our independence had yet to be declared. A tablet was erected in 1896 at the corner of Munroe Street and Prospect Hill Drive, to commemorate this flag-raising event.

With us today, 247 years later, are representatives of military organizations and members that served during the "Siege of Boston" and witnessed the first flag raising on January 1, 1776: Massachusetts and Rhode Island colonial militia; The Ancient and Honorable Artillery Company of Massachusetts; and Her Majesty's 10th Regiment of Foot.



Prospect Hill-- and its Early History

From "A History of the Hill" by William Preble Jones

Few spots throughout the length and breadth of this country have as many incidents in their history as Prospect Hill.

In its connection with the American Revolution chiefly lies the fame of Prospect Hill. Close to its foot the British marched on their way to Concord and Lexington on the night of April 18, 1775, and again they skirted its base late in the afternoon of the following day, when they received the hottest fire during their disastrous retreat. A month later Col. Paterson's regiment occupied an unfortified breastwork at the foot of the Hill. On the evening of June 16, 1775, Col. Prescott marched from Cambridge, with one thousand men, along the foot of the hill to fortify Bunker Hill, and during the memorable struggle of the seventeenth the hill was occupied by the American reserves. Retreating from Bunker Hill, the Americans took a defiant stand on Prospect Hill, and immediately began to fortify it, under the orders of Gen. Israel Putnam, who superintended the work in person. From then till the British were driven out of Boston, March 17, 1776, it was the strongest and most important fortification in the American lines and a constant menace to the enemy. Nearly four thousand American troops, under the immediate command of General Nathaniel Greene, were encamped here during the Siege of Boston. At a later period two thousand three hundred British Troops from General Burgoyne's surrendered army were quartered in the barracks on the hill for about a year.

On Prospect Hill
January 1, 1776

by Sam Walter Foss

Yankee Doodle

Traditional, circa 1775



Full many men must meet and mix
To form a nation. On this height,
On that first day of 'seventy-six,
A nation rose in sight.
And on this height stood men the peers
Of God's strong souls of all the years.

Time-tempered men from farm and shop,
The disciplined recruits of toil,
The fruitage and the chiefest crop
Of Freedom's sturdy soil.
A strong deed, in an hour of need,
Finds strong men equal to the deed.

"Who is this chieftain from the South
Strong in his youth yet sternly sage?"—
"Fame placed her trumpet to her mouth
And blew his name to every age,
And still that blast blows on and on
That peels the name of Washington."

"What is that tall, white shaft of pine?"
"That shaft, when many years have gone
Shall be a nation's lifted sign
For centuries to look back upon;
To loom through perils, victories, fears,
A beacon for a thousand years."

"But see! there floats an unknown flag,
A flag unseen, unknown before;
Let England's might tear down the rag
That dares to flaunt upon this shore—
Aye, snatch the insolent shred away—
'Tis but the banner of a day!"

"Ah, no; by many breezes fanned,
That flag shall float o'er field and town,
And strong, ah, strong must be the hand
That tears that lifted banner down.
Old thrones shall reel, old realms shall die,
But still that flag shall wave on high."

"But who are these plain plowmen here,
These wielders of the axe and spade,
In awkward regimental gear
Drawn up in loose parade?"
"Why, these are empire builders, man,
The greatest since the world began."

"Who are these cohorts from the wood?"
"They are the vanguard files of fate,
Proud men of red, imperial blood,
High, regal souls, and great,
The children of a haughty name,
The sires of states and sons of fame."

"And here to-day breaks on this height
The sun-burst of a nation's morn,
That unknown banner greets the light
That sees an empire born,
And these wide ranks that round us stand
Are fathers of a mighty land."

They flung their banner to the wind,
They flung it in the face of foes, -
And thus they published to mankind
That human nature grows,
And that a youngling state had grown
Too big for insults from a throne.

That flag now floats from many a height,
And waves its word from crag to crag,
Beyond the day, across the night, -
The sunrise and the sunset flag;
That flag is flown by every breeze,
Across the world and all its seas.

And as it waves from slope to slope
From sea to sea, or far or near,
Ah, may it never shame the hope
Of those strong men who placed it here,
But be, on sea or shore unfurled,
The banner of the hope of the world.

Chorus:

**Yankee doodle keep it up,
Yankee doodle dandy,
Mind the music and the step
And with the girls be handy**

Father and I went down to camp,
Along with Captain Gooding,
And there we see the men and boys
As thick as hasty pudding.

Chorus

And there we see a thousand men,
As rich as 'Squire David,
And what they wasted every day,
I wish it had been saved.

Chorus

And there we see a swamping gun,
Large as a log of maple,
Upon a ducid little cart,
A load for father's cattle.

Chorus

And every time they shoot it off,
It takes a horn of powder,
And makes a noise like father's gun,
Only a nation louder.

Chorus

And there was captain Washington,
And gentlefolks about him,
They say he's grown so tarnal proud,
He will not ride without them.

Chorus (twice)

Excerpts from a broadside in the
Rosenbach Collection in Philadelphia,
illustrated in Vera Brodsky Lawrence,
Music for Patriots, Politicians, and
Presidents: harmonies and Discords of
the First Hundred Years (New York:
Macmillan Publishing Company,
1975), p. 61.





Plate 3b. Illustration of the Grand Union flag featuring the British Union Jack and thirteen red and white stripes symbolizing the union of the American colonies. Considered the “first flag of America,” the Grand Union was first displayed on the Continental Navy’s flagship, Alfred, on 3 December 1775 and was in use until late 1777. Courtesy of Duane Streufert for USFlagDepot.com



HRM King George III



General William Howe,
Commander HM Forces, Boston

Excerpts from His Majesty’s King George III Most Glorious Speech to both Houses of Parliament On Friday, 27 October 1775

“My Lords, and Gentlemen,
Those who have successfully labored to inflame my people in America by gross misrepresentations, and to infuse into their minds a system of opinions, repugnant to the true constitution of the colonies, and to their subordinate relation to Great-Britain, now openly avow their revolt, hostility and rebellion. They have raised troops, and are collecting a naval force, and they have seized the public revenue.
Many of these unhappy people may still retain their loyalty, yet the torrent of violence has been strong enough to compel their acquiescence, till a sufficient force shall appear to support them.
The authors and promoters of this desperate conspiracy have meant only to amuse by vague expressions of attachment to the Parent State, and protestations of loyalty to me, whilst preparing for a general revolt. On our part, the resolutions of Parliament breathed a spirit of moderation and forbearance. I have acted with the same temper; anxious to prevent the effusion of the blood of my subjects; and the calamities which are inseparable from a state of war; still hoping that my people in America would discern the traitorous views of their leaders. To be a subject of Great Britain, with all its consequences, is to be the freest member of any civil society in the known world.
The rebellious war now levied is become more general, and is manifestly carried on for the purpose of establishing an independent empire. I need not dwell upon the fatal effects of such a plan. The object is too important, the spirit of the British nation too high, the resources with which God hath blessed her too numerous, to give up so many colonies which she has planted with great industry, nursed with great tenderness, encouraged with many commercial advantages, and protected and defended at much expense of blood and treasure.
When the unhappy and deluded multitude shall become sensible of their error, I shall be ready to receive the misled with tenderness and mercy! To remove as soon as possible the calamities which they suffer, I shall give authority to grant general or particular pardons and indemnities, and to receive the submission of any Province or Colony which shall be disposed to return to its allegiance, as if such Province or Colony had never revolted.”

George R.

General Howe directed that copies of the “Kings Speech” be distributed to the Rebel lines on Monday, January 1st 1776. General George Washington directed the “Great Union” flag be raised at the most visible point, Prospect Hill.



Lauri (1842)



After 1801, the flag contains the Union Flag of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland in the canton. (1810)



Rees (1820)



The flag had a Union Flag in the canton after the creation of the Kingdom of Great Britain in 1707.



Lens (1700)



Prior to the Acts of Union which created the Kingdom of Great Britain, the flag contained the St. George’s Cross in the canton representing the Kingdom of England



Downman (1685)



National Geographic (1917)



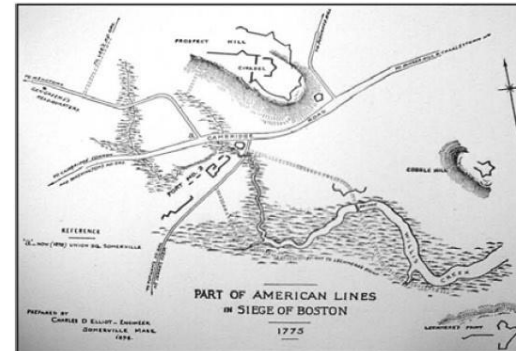
*Washington's First Victory
1775-1776
Prospect Hill and the "Siege of Boston"*



General George Washington,
Continental Army Commander



Brigadier General Nathaniel Greene,
Prospect Hill Commander



Prospect Hill 1775-1776

Prospect Hill, Today

In 1898, Charles D. Elliot, formerly city engineer, traced the outline of the fortification at Prospect Hill and vicinity. On the map above, one can easily understand the system of fortifications. Cobble Hill is Asylum Hill; Lechmere Point is East Cambridge; Willis Creek is Miller's River, now filled; Fort Number Three was located near the former Union Square Station on the Fitchburg Railroad. Cambridge Road is the present Washington Street. Also note the road to Menotomy (Arlington), Bow Street and Somerville Avenue; the road to Lee's headquarters, Newton and Prospect Streets, and the road to Ploughed (Nunnery) Hill, Shawmut and Cross Streets. Strong Redoubts encircled the steep brows of Prospect Hill, while the citadel occupied a commanding place at the summit. For more information see "A History of the Hill" by William Preble Jones, April 11, 1896.