

# The Missouri State Flag



## Our flag's story

For nearly a century after achieving statehood, Missouri did not have an official flag. The idea for a flag originated in 1908, when the Daughters of the American Revolution formed a committee to look into designing a state flag. The head of the committee was Mrs. Marie Elizabeth Oliver, wife of Senator Robert Burett Oliver, and a resident of Cape Girardeau. Mrs. Oliver eventually designed the flag herself, and on March 17, 1909, a bill supporting the design was introduced to the Missouri Senate.

It turned out that Mrs. Oliver's design was not the only one being considered by the General Assembly—a second design had been introduced by Dr. N.R. Holcomb. The "Holcomb flag" was opposed by many who felt it resembled too closely the United States flag, and did not symbolize much of Missouri itself. His design did not contain the coat-of-arms, and included nothing that indicated state sovereignty.

Mrs. Oliver's design showed originality, and though simply designed, contained many messages. It took three years and several attempts before the bill for the "Oliver flag" was finally passed. On March 22, 1913, Governor Elliot Major signed the bill into law, and made the Oliver flag the official state flag of Missouri.

## Our flag's meaning

The three large stripes are symbolic of the people of the state—the blue stripe represents vigilance, permanency, and justice, the red represents valor, and the white stripe symbolizes purity. The Missouri coat-of-arms appears in the center of the flag, signifying both Missouri's independence as a state, and its place as a part of the whole United States. Having the coat-of-arms in the center of the national colors represents Missouri, as she is—the geographical center of the nation. By mingling the state coat-of-arms with the national colors of red, white, and blue, the flag signifies the harmony existing between the two. Twenty-four stars surround the coat-of-arms, representative of Missouri's position as the 24th state admitted to the Union.

## Our flag is restored

In 1961, Allen Oliver gave the State of Missouri his mother's original flag. It was on public display until the flag began to split and tear due to age, at which point it was put into a storage vault. In 1988, Missouri elementary students helped raise funds to restore the flag. Thanks to these students, the flag has been restored and is on display at the James C. Kirkpatrick State Information Center in Jefferson City.



Mrs. Marie Elizabeth Oliver, Missouri's "Betsy Ross," with the original Missouri state flag.