

*The Flags,  
Standards and Colors  
Taken by the Forces  
of the  
United States*

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# REPORT

OF

## THE COMMITTEE

APPOINTED

ON THE TWENTIETH OF DECEMBER LAST,

TO INQUIRE INTO THE

*PRESENT CONDITION AND DISTRIBUTION*

OF

THE FLAGS, STANDARDS AND COLORS,

WHICH

HAVE BEEN TAKEN BY THE FORCES

OF THE

*UNITED STATES FROM THEIR ENEMIES;*

AND

WHETHER IT WOULD BE EXPEDIENT

TO

MAKE ANY PROVISION IN RELATION TO THEM.

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FEBRUARY 4, 1814.

Read, and committed to a committee of the whole house on  
Monday next.

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WASHINGTON :

A. & G. WAY, PRINTERS.

.....  
1814.



## REPORT.

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*The committee, to whom was referred the resolution directing them “to inquire into the present condition and disposition of the flags, standards and colors which have been taken by the forces of the United States from their enemies; and whether it would be expedient to make any provision in relation to them, with leave to report by bill or otherwise,”*

### REPORT:

**THAT** the collection, preservation and exhibition of such flags, standards and colors as have been taken by the land and naval forces of the United States from their enemies, is sanctioned by the practice of European nations, and more especially by the proceedings of the congress of our revolution. It is believed there cannot be a difference of opinion on this subject: it is natural to rejoice at the victories and the glory of our country. In Europe, the trophies which have been gained in war, are preserved with uncommon care. As monuments of national power they have ever been cherished by all civilized nations. In England they are highly prized. Not content that they should constitute the ornaments of their military institutions, such standards are deemed proper subjects for the decorations of the temples which they have consecrated to the purposes of religious worship; the sacred chapels, in common with the royal palaces, are the places in which are displayed to every subject and tra-

veller, the banners which the British forces have won from their enemies! It must be recollected, that the standard of our 4th regiment of infantry, which the enemy *received* at the lamentable surrender of Detroit, was, in haste, conveyed to Europe. Immediately after its arrival in London, the public prints informed us, that it was triumphantly displayed in the *council* chamber at Whitehall. Such is the British practice.

In France the galleries of *Notre Dame* are blazoned with these splendid trophies. The chapel of the *Hotel* of the *Invalides*, is richly embellished, and exhibits, to the numerous visitors, the many standards which that gigantic power has, at different times, taken from its enemies.\* It affords no common satisfaction to the disabled tar, or the superannuated soldier, when he informs the inquisitive stranger, that he gloriously fought in the battle which may have gained some of them. For the time he forgets his former sufferings, and his present disabled condition: his consolation rests upon the power and the glory of his country, so fully demonstrated by the sight of the numerous ensigns which were taken from other nations. Other instances, in favor of the practice, could have been furnished; but your committee are persuaded, that the order of the illustrious congress of our revolution, *alone*, will justify the propositions which they intend to submit for legislative consideration. As early as the 23d of June, 1778, it was "Resolved, that the board of war be directed to collect the standards and colors taken from the enemy, by the army of the United States, since the commencement of the war." Had this order been strictly observed, and somewhat extended, the present proceedings would be unnecessary. Far from any regulations having been adopted, in pursuance of the

\* The trophies of war ornament the places of worship in Prussia, Bohemia and Austria.



recited resolution, your committee lament the peculiar negligence which ensued. The secretary of war now tells us, that of the standards and colors which were taken by the army of the United States, during the war of the revolution, only six remain in his office. He cannot give any information concerning others; even their place of deposit is unknown to the department! The navy department possesses no knowledge of any flags which were taken "anterior to the declaration of the present war." Such as have been captured, with the public armed ships of the enemy, subsequent to the 18th of June, 1812, "have been carefully preserved." Thirteen of them have been already received, as will more fully appear by the annexed statement: of these, three belonged to the heavy frigates of the enemy, viz: the *Guerrier*, *Macedonian* and *Java*. The navy department is also in possession of a royal standard of Great Britain, which was taken at York, and a union jack and flag, which were captured at fort George. The flags of five small vessels, which were captured, have not been received. Your committee regret, that the journals of congress do not exhibit statements of all the standards and colors which were taken during our revolution by the army and navy of the United States. The early attention of the legislature to this subject inclines them to believe they were very numerous. The capture of earl Cornwallis alone, furnished twenty-four of them! In all probability as many were taken with general Burgoyne.

By some the exhibitions which are contemplated, may be considered as too trivial for legislative provision. Your committee would coincide with them in this opinion, did the practice only afford a momentary gratification to the curious. Experience must have taught European governments, that national benefits were derived from the course which they have adopted, or it would long since have been discontinued. It is presumed that essential consequences pro-

ceed from the practice, more especially when a nation shall be engaged in war. Such trophies excite the spirit of a nation: the result is national character. The arrival of an enemy's flag is sufficient to rouse the population of London or Paris! On such occasions the finest national feelings are developed; and to the honor of our fellow citizens be it said, they have not been found to want this species of national sensibility when the flags of the *Guerriere*, *Macedonian* and *Java*, &c. &c. were exhibited to them. It was indifferent whether they considered themselves of the war or of the peace party, each was ambitious to rank the victor with himself! The national taste and propensity is strongly marked by the eagerness with which *all* view representations of our late unparalleled naval victories! If then the art and genius of the painter can thus excite our natures, may we not look for much more, when we have the *physical facts* placed before us, instead of fancy? These flags, the trophies won by our gallant tars, demonstrate to us and the world, that the *invincibility* of the British naval power has been very much exaggerated. In battle will the recollection of them sustain our sailors and our soldiers, and impart additional skill and valor in support of the cause of our country! The value of standards does not depend upon the gaudy colors which they exhibit, no more than upon the nature of the stuff of which they may be fabricated. They have been, at all times, regarded as the *insignia* of fame and power! Their surrender is the act of submission. The last wish of the proud bearer, is the preservation of his *eagle*: too often is the loss of it sealed with the loss of life. In Europe, where military operations are on a large scale, though the result of a battle should prove destructive to thousands of those who were engaged, the capture of a *single* standard constitutes a prominent feature in the details of the action, and adds

much to the brilliancy of the achievement. Colors taken from the enemy, were considered a present worthy the nation, to general Washington, for his signal services in the capture of earl Cornwallis! The records of the proceedings of congress, during the whole of our revolution, mention but *two* instances where this highly honorable and distinguished mark of approbation was voted! In fine, we have declared the flag shall guarantee the safety of our citizens. Can a higher value be set upon it? Can we attach more honor to it?

It may be asked, what will be the effects of a public display of the flags which have been taken from our enemies? This view is considered to be important. No one can doubt, that the government and the people of England would rather we should have taken millions of their merchandise, than that we should have it in our power to exhibit the flag of a *single* sloop of war, which was gained by equal force. If the enemy will expose to the view of the British nation and every traveller who may visit them, the one or two which they have captured from us, shall we conceal the many we have taken from them, and thus lead others to doubt our possessing any? Shall we permit the numerous trophies of our revolution to moulder into dust, by a voluntary concealment, without an effort for their preservation? If this shall have happened to the proud monuments of our independence, shall the fate of those, which are now perfect, and which have been so lately won on our own coast, on that of South America, off the Azores, on the lakes, in short, in all latitudes where our tars have come in contact with the enemy, be the same? Is not the preservation of these flags a duty which we owe to the people of the United States? Are the achievements of that gallant little navy, which a few months ago, was the object of derision with the statesmen and the people of England, but now the

cause of their fears, to be buried in oblivion? Shall we put at rest the inquiry which the glorious deeds of our sailors have excited in the parliament of Great Britain? Shall we, at our expense, approve the laboured calculations of the enemy; with her confound reason and common sense, and attribute simple truths to fallacious causes? or shall we give into a practice so generally cherished by other nations? Our successes on the ocean constitute the pride of our country; they have secured to us the respect of foreign nations. In Europe we again hold that rank which our ancestors had obtained by their many hard fought conflicts, which we had nearly forfeited. Have we not accomplished more than did Spain with her "invincible armadas;" than did Holland with her De Witts, Van Tromps, and De Ruyters; than France could achieve when she was in the zenith of her naval power; than did Great Britain with her Nelsons, Rodney's, Howes and St. Vincents? The naval annals of England furnish no instance in which every vessel belonging to a hostile fleet was captured.

Some may doubt our possessing a number of standards sufficient to warrant their public exhibition. Had we but few of them we should not deny our sanction to the principle. Your committee regret that special order had not been taken by congress immediately after the receipt of the first present of this kind; we allude to the colors which were taken by general Montgomery from the 7th British regiment, at Chamblee, on the 18th of October, 1775. The French pride themselves on their ability to exhibit the *two* which they have taken from our present enemy: for so lately as the year 1800 they had only two of the naval flags of Great Britain! Though the war and navy departments can immediately furnish but twenty or twenty-five of these flags, it is probable the place of deposit will be ascertained, so as to put within our power many of those which were gained during our

revolution. Where are those which were won during our dispute with France in 1798? The same may be asked of those which the defeats of Derne and Tripoli should furnish?

The only object which remains for consideration is, the place most proper for the exhibition. This should be public and easy of access, at the same time that it should be perfectly secure from villainous attempts. These flags should be placed so as to be seen by every citizen who might wish to observe them. It will be of advantage that they should be noticed by every foreigner who may visit the United States. Can any objection be made to the spacious national apartments which are devoted to legislative purposes? What ornaments can be more suitable? Go abroad, and you may see the walls of the British house of lords decorated with representations of some of the celebrated battles which were fought by the troops of Great Britain. At home we find the principle already established by one branch of the legislature of the United States: in the senate chamber we observe engravings of some of the battles of our revolution; and had time allowed the execution of the original design of the architect, the precedent would have had existence in the chamber of the representatives of the United States. It was contemplated that the *frize*, over the capitals of the Corinthian columns which sustain the dome, should present, in *relievo*, a regular series of the battles which secured our independence. Such decorations might gratify the artist, and afford an opportunity to display his talents; but in a national view little or no effect would be produced. It must be conceded, that much more will be communicated to the spectator by the display of the captured standards. No one can pretend that any difference exists between the representations which we have noticed and the standards which have been taken from the enemy, as will warrant the public exhibition of the one and

preclude that of the other: these subjects are most intimately connected and their tendency must be the same. The public exhibition of these trophies is a tribute due to the very superior skill and valor which achieved them; the sight of them will bring to recollection every circumstance of cause and effect; they will constitute valuable records of illustrious portions of our history; they will form a collection of the proudest monuments to commemorate the brilliant deeds of a rising nation.

## COMMITTEE ROOM,

December 22, 1813.

SIR,

The following resolution has been adopted by the house of representatives of the United States, viz. (here a copy of the original resolution was transcribed.)

The committee, to whom the above resolution has been referred, have instructed me to state, that they contemplate the collection, preservation, and public exhibition of the subjects there embraced. On the 23d of June, 1778, congress "Resolved, that the board of war be directed to collect the standards and colors taken from the enemy, by the army of the United States, since the commencement of the war." The committee request such general information as the navy department can furnish on this subject. It is particularly desired to know, whether any order and practice have been at any time adopted, under the resolution of June 23, 1778. The committee are anxious to ascertain the number of naval flags which remain of those that were taken during our revolutionary struggles, their present condition, and manner of preservation. Can the names of the captured vessels to which these flags belonged be ascertained, together with their rates, and the names of the victor us and vanquished commanders? The same information is requested concerning such flags as have been taken by the forces of the United States during their dispute with France, in 1798; concerning those which were gained from Tripoli, and such as have

been taken since the commencement of our present war with Great Britain.

With sentiments of respect,

I have the honor to be, &c.

ADAM SEYBERT, *Chairman.*

Hon. William Jones,  
Secretary of the Navy.

[*A note similar to the above was addressed to the Secretary of War.*]

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WAR DEPARTMENT,

January 13, 1814.

SIR,

Of the standards and colors taken by the army of the United States, during the war of the revolution, six remain in this office. Others, it is understood, were deposited in Philadelphia while congress sat in that city. Whether they were, or were not, brought to this place with the public offices cannot be ascertained.

I have the honor to be,

With great respect,

Your most obedient servant,

JOHN ARMSTRONG.

Hon. Mr. Seybert,  
Chairman, &c. &c.

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NAVY DEPARTMENT,

January 25, 1814.

SIR,

In reply to the inquiries contained in your letter of the 22d ultimo, I have to remark, that the re-



solution of congress, of the 23d of June, 1778, directing the collection of standards and colors taken from the enemy, appearing to relate to those only which were taken by the *army* of the United States, it is not supposed that "any order and practice have been, at any time, adopted," in pursuance of that resolution, concerning naval trophies of a similar kind. The records and documents of this department afford no light respecting such flags as are inquired for by the committee, anterior to the declaration of the present war, nor are there any such flags or standards in any depository of the department that were taken prior to this time. Those which have been captured from the enemy by the public armed vessels of the United States, and received at this department, since the 18th of June, 1812, have been carefully preserved, and are now suspended in the office of the secretary of the navy, subject to such disposition as congress may provide for their better security and exhibition. The enclosed paper embraces all the particulars, in relation to them, within the power of the department to present to the committee.

I have the honor to be, sir,

Very respectfully,

Your obedient servant,

W. JONES.

The hon. Adam Seybert,  
Chairman of the Committee, &c. &c.





## EXHIBIT.

SHEWING the number of naval flags taken from Great Britain since the commencement of the present war, together with the names of the captured vessels, &c. to which they were attached, their rates, the rates of the capturing vessels, the date of capture, and the names of the vanquished and victorious commanders.

<i>Names of the Vessels captured.</i>	<i>Commanders Names.</i>	<i>No. of Guns.</i>	<i>By what Vessels Captured.</i>	<i>Commanders Names.</i>	<i>No. of Guns.</i>	<i>Date of Capture.</i>
Sloop Alert, . . . . .	T. L. Langhorne, . . . . .	20	Essex, . . . . . (frigate)	D. Porter, . . . . .	32	August 13, 1812.
Frigate Guerriere, . . . . .	J. R. Dacress, . . . . .	49	Constitution, . . . . .	Isaac Hull, . . . . .	44	August 19, 1812.
Sloop Frolic, . . . . .	Thomas Winyates, . . . . .	22	Wasp, . . . . . (sloop)	Jacob Jones, . . . . .	16	October 15, 1812.
Frigate Macedonian, . . . . .	John Carlen, . . . . .	22	United States, (frigate)	Stephen Decatur, . . . . .	44	October 23, 1812.
— Java, . . . . .	H. Lambert, . . . . .	49	Constitution, . . . . .	William Bainbridge, . . . . .	44	December 29, 1812.
Sloop Peacock, . . . . .	W. Peake, . . . . .	22	Hornet, . . . . . (sloop)	James Lawrence, . . . . .	18	February 24, 1813.
— Boxer, . . . . .	Sammuel Blyth, . . . . .	18	Enterprise, . . . . . (brig)	William Burrows, . . . . .	14	September 3, 1813.
Ship Detroit, . . . . .	. . . . .	22	Lawrence, . . . . .	. . . . .	20	} September 10, 1813.
— Queen Charlotte, . . . . .	. . . . .	18	Niagara, . . . . .	. . . . .	20	
Schooner Lady Prevost, . . . . .	. . . . .	14	Caledonia, . . . . .	. . . . .	3	
Brig Hunter, . . . . .	Commodore Barclay, . . . . .	10	Ariel, . . . . . (schooner)	. . . . .	4	
Sloop Little Belt, . . . . .	. . . . .	3	Scorpion, . . . . .	O. H. Perry, . . . . .	2	
Schooner Chippeway, . . . . .	. . . . .	3	Somers, . . . . .	. . . . .	2	
			Tripp, . . . . . (sloop)	. . . . .	4	
			Tigress, . . . . .	. . . . .	1	
			Porcupine, . . . . .	. . . . .	1	

N. B. In addition to the flags which belonged to the captured vessels above named, there are, in this department, a royal standard of Great Britain, taken at York, on the 27th of April, 1813; a royal marine taken from the Parliament-house at the same time and place; and a union jack and flag, taken at fort George on the 27th of May, 1813. These were transmitted to the department by commodore Chancy.

It is believed that this statement includes, all the flags of the public armed vessels of the enemy that have been taken by the public armed vessels of the United States, since the commencement of the present war, excepting those of five small vessels, captured by commodore Clouney, on lake Ontario, and those of the brigs Detroit and Caledonia, taken by lieutenant Elliott, on lake Erie, which have not been received.



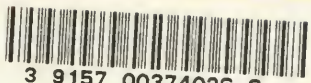








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