

THE FLAG AND PATRIOTISM

An Oration

by
Lieut., Col. R. B. Putnam



Wetmore Declamation Bureau

**Box 2695
Sioux City, IA 51106**

**www.wetmoredeclamation.com
Email: speeches@wetmoredeclamation.com**

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. . . In the year 1492, Columbus, with three pitifully small ships, set sail due west across the broad and trackless seas in search of "the east." And what a voyage it was--what fortitude and courage were required to win success. Probably no adventure in all the history of mankind was ever undertaken against such tremendous odds by men so poorly equipped for what they had to face. Certainly no single event was ever fraught with so much meaning to the whole of the wide, wide world as this, the first voyage of Columbus.

. . . Following that voyage and a long period of discovery and exploration, there came a still longer period of appropriation and colonization. . . Men came, some seeking wealth, some because they had been oppressed. Others came seeking freedom in religion; the right to worship God according to the dictates of their own consciences. The desire for liberty of speech and thought drove men and women to break the ties that bound them to their homes and face the terrors and hardships of the wilderness. Within their hearts there burned the love of liberty, of righteousness, and of peace, which was to weld them into a mighty nation.

. . . After the signing of the Declaration of Independence came the adoption of a flag for the thirteen United States.

. . . Now, where did the design of this flag come from? . . . It is peculiarly significant that in the records of the continental Congress there is no reference to the design of the flag or from whence it came. It is even more significant that no single word as to the origin of the design can be found in any of the writings or memoirs of the historians and public men of that day. It seems we are forced to the conclusion that there was some good reason why the origin of that design should be so shrouded in mystery--and there is.

When the Great Weaver of our destinies looked down upon this world and saw the thirteen Colonies struggling against such powerful odds, there can be no doubt that His great heart of hearts was filled with pity and compassion. Then when He considered the cause of the struggle--saw that it was for the sake of human liberty and knowing the purity of the motives which lay back of it. He, in His omnipotence, realized the great need for unity of thought and purpose on their part. He then and there determined that they should have an emblem which would typify all those things so absolutely necessary to the success of their cause.

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