



# US Marine Corp Flag Information

Very little information is available regarding the flags carried by early American Marines, although indications are that the Grand Union flag was carried ashore by the battalion led by Captain Samuel Nicholas on New Providence Island, 3 March 1776. It is quite possible that the Rattlesnake flag was also carried on this expedition.

The standard carried by the Marines during the 1830s and 1840s consisted of a white field with gold fringe, and bore an elaborate design of an anchor and eagle in the center. Prior to the Mexican War, this flag bore the legend "To the Shores of Tripoli" across the top. Shortly after the war, the legend was revised to read: "From Tripoli to the Halls of the Montezumas."

During the Mexican and Civil Wars, Marines in the field apparently carried a flag similar to the national flag, comprised of red and white stripes and a union. The union, however, contained an eagle perched on a shield of the United States and a half-wreath beneath the shield, with 29 stars encircling the entire design. Beginning in 1876, Marines carried the national colors (the Stars and Stripes) with "U.S. Marine Corps" embroidered in yellow on the middle red stripe.

At the time of the Vera Cruz landing in 1914, a more distinctive standard was carried by Marines. The design consisted of a blue field with a laurel wreath encircling the Marine Corps emblem in the center. A scarlet ribbon above the emblem carried the words "U.S. Marine Corps," while another scarlet ribbon below the emblem carried the motto "Semper Fidelis" (*Always Faithful*).

Orders were issued on 2 April 1921 which directed all national colors be manufactured without the yellow fringe and without the words "U.S. Marine Corps" embroidered on the red stripe. This was followed by an order dated 14 March 1922, retiring from use all national colors still in use with yellow fringe or wording on the flag. Following World War I, the Army practice of attaching silver bands carrying inscriptions enumerating specific decorations and battles was adopted. This practice was discontinued on 23 January 1961.

Marine Corps Order No. 4 of 18 April 1925 designated gold and scarlet as the official colors of the U.S. Marine Corps. These colors, however, were not reflected in the official Marine Corps standard until 18 January 1939, when a new design incorporating the new colors was approved. The design was essentially that of today's Marine Corps standard.

For a brief time following World War I, the inscribing of battle honors directly on the colors of a unit was in practice, but realization that a multiplicity of honors and the limited space on the colors made the system impractical, and the procedure was discontinued. On 29 July

**1936, a Marine Corps Board recommended that the Army system of attaching streamers to the staff of the organizational colors be adopted. Such a system was finally authorized by Marine Corps Order No. 157, dated 3 November 1939, and is currently in practice.**

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UNITED STATES MARINE CORPS  
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