

Hawaiian Flags

The American flag consists of thirteen equal horizontal stripes of red (top and bottom) alternating with white, with a blue rectangle in the canton (referred to specifically as the “union”) bearing fifty small, white, five-pointed stars arranged in nine offset horizontal rows of six stars (top and bottom) alternating with rows of five stars.

The 50-stars on the flag represent the 50-states and the 13-stripes represent the thirteen British colonies that rebelled against the British monarchy and became the first states in the Union.

The first flags were used to assist military coordination on battlefields. National flags are patriotic symbols with varied wide-ranging interpretations, often including strong military associations due to their original and ongoing military uses.

Since contact, various flags have flown over Hawai‘i.

The first “official” Hawai‘i flag was adopted in 1845, however prior to that various flags flew at various times.

All of the flags were hand-made back then; so, there might have been rather large variations in appearance.

Even in the late-Monarchy period, the appearance of flags varied a lot. Likewise, there is a possibility that some observers were wrong in what they saw and reported.

Visitors to Hawai'i pre-1845 reported different types of flags flying, including varying numbers of stripes, sometimes 7 or 9, for example. Observers also reported the colors of the stripes in different orders.

It is reported that Captain Vancouver gave a British Red Ensign to the king in the 1790s, which on later visits he found flying in places of honor.

Later, the Union Flag of Great Britain flew over Hawai'i as its National Flag. The Union Flag (also known as the "King's Colors") of Great Britain was one of the flags used by the King's forces during the American Revolutionary War.

After that, the monarchy of Kamehameha I started to use a new flag, similar to the one used today by the State of Hawaii.

The flag's origin can be traced to the War of 1812. At the time, King Kamehameha had been flying the British flag. American officers suggested the king show more neutrality.

Alexander Adams is credited with helping to design the Hawaiian flag – a new flag for Hawai'i was needed to avoid confusion by American vessels (prior to that time, Hawaiian vessels flew the British Union Jack.)

Family traditions also credit George Charles Beckley as being the designer of the Hawaiian Flag - they may have designed it together (Adams later served as executor of Beckley's estate and guardian of his children.))

“The Hawaiian flag was designed for King Kamehameha I, in the year 1816. As the King desired to send a vessel to China to sell a cargo of sandal-wood, he was in company with John Young, Isaac Davis and Alexander Adams ... made this flag for the ship, which was a war vessel, called the Forrester, carrying 16 guns, and was owned by Kamehameha I.” (Ka Nupepa Kuokoa, January 1, 1862)

On March 7, 1817, the Kingdom of Hawai'i sent Adams to China to sell the sandalwood. When he sailed to China, it was the first vessel under the flag of Hawai'i.

The early Hawaiian flag looks much like the Hawai'i State flag of today, the apparent inspiration of the design being a melding of British and US flags, the most common foreign flags seen in Hawaiian waters at the time.

The original design had stripes (like the US flag) representing the eight major islands under one sovereign and the British Union Jack, representing the friendly relationship between England and Hawai'i.

Then, Kamehameha and his advisers collaborated on a new flag design, which combines elements from both the American and British flags.

This design had the Union Flag in the upper left quadrant with nine horizontal stripes alternating red, white and blue from the top. This flag was observed by Louis Choris in 1816.

For a short period of time, in 1843, Lord George Paulet, representing the British Crown, overstepped his bounds, landed sailors and marines, seized the government buildings in Honolulu and raised the British Union Jack and issued a proclamation formally annexing Hawaii to the British Crown. This event became known as the Paulet Affair.

On July 31, 1843, after five-months of occupation, the Hawaiian Kingdom was restored and Admiral Thomas ordered the Union Jack removed and replaced with the Hawaiian kingdom flag.

That day is now referred to as Ka La Ho'iho'i Ea, Sovereignty Restoration Day, and it is celebrated each year in the approximate site of the 1843 ceremonies.

At the opening of the Legislative Council, May 25, 1845, the new national banner was unfurled, differing little however from the former.

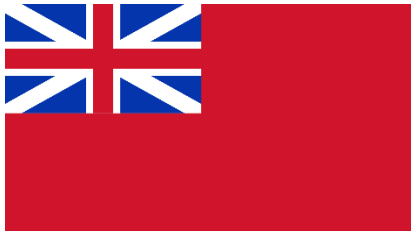
Eight stripes: first, fourth and seventh are silver represented by the color white; second, fifth and eighth are red, and the third and sixth are light purplish blue.

The stripes represent the eight major islands under one sovereign. The Union Jack represented the friendly relationship between England and Hawai'i.

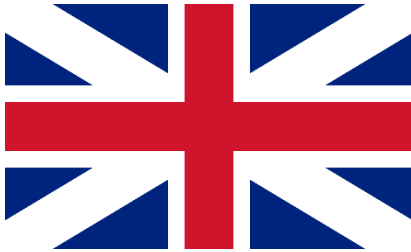
Subsequent annexation, territorial and statehood status caused the Hawaiian flag to fly with the flag of the United States.

Hawaiian Flags

1793 - 1794 British Red Ensign



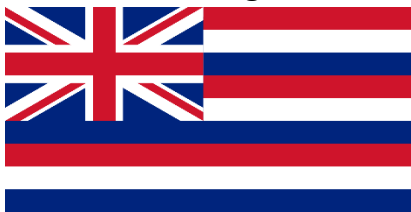
1794 - 1816 Union Flag of Great Britain



1810-1895 Hawaiian Royal Standard



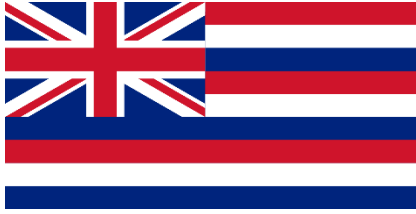
1816 – 1843 Kingdom of Hawai'i Flag



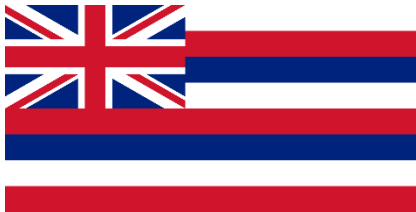
February 1843 – July 1843 – Union Jack



July 1843 – May 1845 Kingdom of Hawai'i Flag



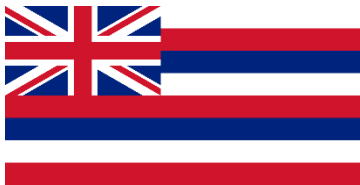
1845 (May) - Feb 1893 The current Hawaiian flag



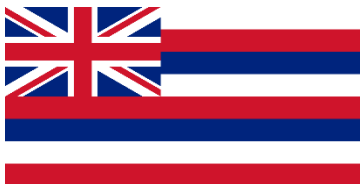
1893 (Feb) - Apr 1893 US Flag (after overthrow of the Hawaiian Kingdom)



1894-1898 Hawaiian flag re-adopted by Republic of Hawaii



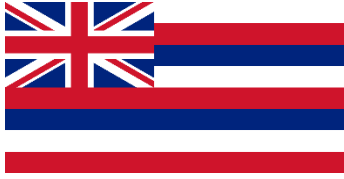
1898–1959 Hawaiian flag used by U.S. territory of Hawaii (Hawaii)



1898–1959 US flag over territory of Hawaii (US)



1959–present Hawaiian flag used by state of Hawaii (Hawaii)



1959–present US Flag flying over the state of Hawaii (US)

