

# FURTHER REVIEW

# SEEING STARS

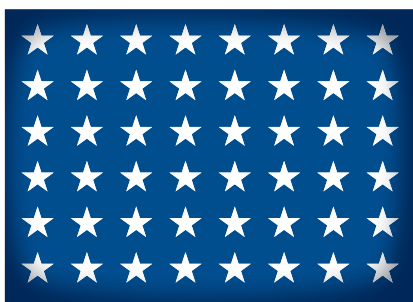
By Charles Apple  
THE SPOKESMAN-REVIEW

Starting in 1818, whenever our country added a new state, it also added a star to the blue field on the U.S. flag. The new design becomes official on the July 4 after the admission of a new state.

The catch: Until the adoption of the 48-star flag in 1912, there was no set format on how those stars were to be arranged.

- 1777  
13 stars
- 1795  
15 stars
- 1818  
20 stars
- 1819  
21 stars
- 1820  
23 stars
- 1822  
24 stars
- 1836  
25 stars
- 1837  
26 stars
- 1845  
27 stars
- 1846  
28 stars
- 1847  
29 stars
- 1848  
30 stars
- 1851  
31 stars
- 1856  
32 stars
- 1859  
33 stars
- 1861  
34 stars
- 1863  
35 stars
- 1865  
36 stars
- 1867  
37 stars
- 1890  
43 stars
- 1891  
44 stars
- 1896  
45 stars
- 1908  
46 stars
- 1912  
48 stars

## 48 STARS



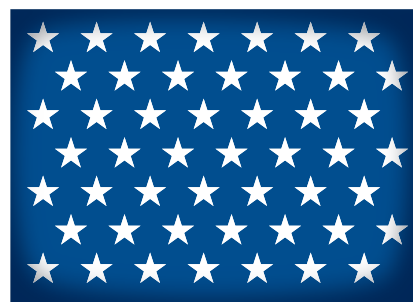
We all have our movie pet peeves. Mine is when I'm watching a World War II movie and I spot a 50-star flag flying over a platoon or a battleship.

The 48-star flag is easy to spot because of the straight up-and-down rows of stars — as opposed to the diagonal rows of stars on the 50-star flag.

An executive order by President William Howard Taft in 1912 was the first time the government had dictated to flagmakers precisely how the stars should be arranged in the blue field. Before then, flagmakers had a bit of latitude in how they arranged the stars.

This design stood for 47 years.

## 49 STARS



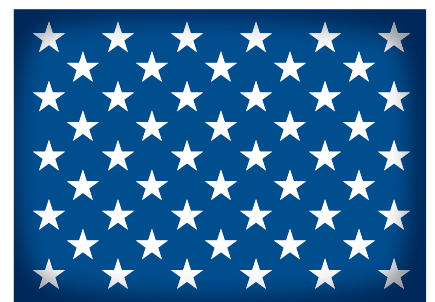
Alaska officially became a state on Jan. 3, 1959, but the blue field of the U.S. flag didn't gain its 49th star until July 4 of that year.

President Dwight D. Eisenhower appointed staffers to propose designs for the stars. The one adopted had been drawn up by the acting secretary of the Army.

The 49-star flag has diagonal rows of stars, much like today's 50-star flag. But note the right edge of the block of stars. Three stars jut out toward the stripes unlike our current flag.

This flag served for only one year. They're considered rare, however, you can find them in collectibles stores or on eBay.

## 50 STARS



Hawaii officially became a state on Aug. 21, 1959. The U.S. flag didn't reflect that addition until July 4, 1960.

However, Eisenhower knew from the start of his administration that the flag would soon need 49th and 50th stars. In addition to suggestions from his military staff, thousands of designs and sketches poured in from American citizens. Many of those submissions are still on file at the Eisenhower Presidential Library in Abilene, Kansas.

The 50-star design has stood for 61 years and counting.

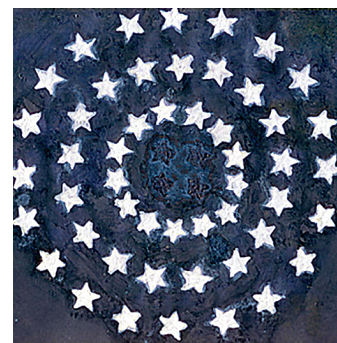
## PLAYING THE FIELD



Lots of wildly different suggestions poured in. This one proposed the 50 stars form a large star.



This one filled the blank space in the center with a U.S. eagle.



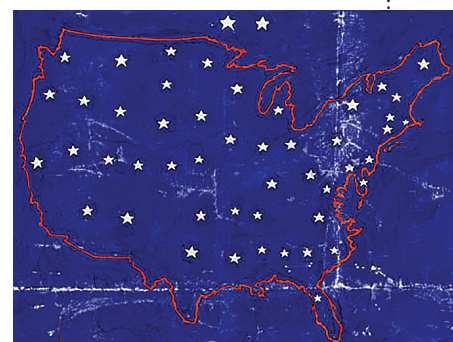
This one put stars for the original 13 colonies in a circle, with all the other stars surrounding it.



This one — using a large circle and a large star — was endorsed by the Veterans of Foreign Wars.



This one included the phrase that was added to the Pledge of Allegiance in 1954.



This impossibly complex one tried to incorporate a map of the United States.

Teachers across the country challenged their students to come up with a format for the stars. One such student was 16-year-old Robert G. Heft of Lancaster, Ohio.

Heft's teacher, Stanley Pratt, complained that Robert's work was "unoriginal" and was based too strongly on the existing 48-star flag.

He gave Robert a B-minus on the assignment.

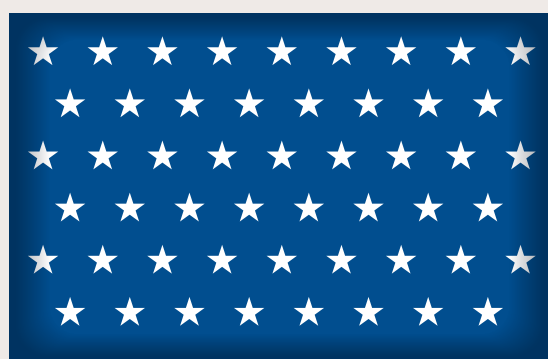
But Robert passed his design along to his congressman, and his design was eventually selected by Eisenhower.

Pratt changed Robert's grade to an A.

## WHAT'S NEXT?

At some point, the United States might need to update its flag. But would the banner need to be spangled with 51 or 52 stars?

Puerto Rico has voted four times to become a state, most recently in 2024. The District of Columbia voted to become a state in 1982 and again in 2016. The House of Representatives voted to make D.C. our 51st state in 2020 and again in 2021 but the Senate has refused to consider the matter.



Proposals for a 51- or a 52-star flag have been floated by a number of people or agencies. But nothing has been approved yet.