

THE BEDFORD FLAG

The Bedford Flag is the oldest complete battle flag in existence in the United States. It is said that the flag began as an emblem designed in 1659 for the Massachusetts Bay Calvary Troop (Three County Troop) that served Massachusetts counties of Essex, Middlesex, and Suffolk.



The Flag was probably made in England about 1660 and brought to Massachusetts around 1660-1670. It was used as troop colors in the Indian Wars nearly a century before the Revolution.

On the morning of April 19, 1775, Cornet Nathaniel Page of the Bedford Minutemen carried it with home, thereby being the only flag at the battle at North Bridge in Concord, Massachusetts.

At the centennial celebration of 1875, the Bedford Flag was displayed, and poet Ralph Waldo Emerson read the stirring words of his "Concord Hymn":

***By the rude bridge that arched the flood,
Their flag to April's breeze unfurled
Here once the embattled farmers stood
And fired the shot heard round the world***

In 1885, Cyrus Page, Nathaniel's grandson, presented the flag to the Town of Bedford that his family had tendered for generations. Ruhamah Page is said to have cut the fringe for a military ball gown.

The original Bedford Flag is now housed in a climate-controlled room, at the Bedford Public Library thanks to the Friends of the Bedford Flag, which is now part of the Bedford Historical Society.