

THE NEW JERSEY STATE HOUSE FLAG COLLECTION

The New Jersey State House Flag Collection consists of 191 flags, 140 of which date from the Civil War and the Spanish-American War eras. By far the greatest portion of the collection (132 flags) consists of Civil War related flags. Just a small part (8 flags) consists of flags dating from 1865 to 1900 primarily veterans groups and Spanish American War period).

During the Civil War, New Jersey fielded a total of 37 infantry regiments, 3 cavalry regiments, 5 batteries of artillery, and a number of independent militia units. These units received their flags from three different sources: private donations, state issue, and federal issue. At the end of the war, many units turned in their flags to the state, but numerous other flags were retained by individual soldiers or were torn apart into keepsake fragments. Those flags turned in by the various units as they disbanded formed the original nucleus of the present State House Collection. In 1871 the state legislature authorized the Quartermaster General to seek out and recover regimental flags that were not yet in his possession. The flags were displayed in the capitol building until the time of a disastrous fire in 1885, which they barely survived. A few years later they were installed in a special fireproof room at the State House. The Civil War collection as it exists today was primarily complete around 1900, although a few flags were added after that date.

The typical Civil War infantry regiment was issued seven flags: a red, white and blue national flag; a blue state flag usually carrying the seal of New Jersey or the federal eagle; four smaller positional markers (2 flank markers and 2 camp colors) and a storm flag. The national and state flags were made of silk and were quite large (6 feet by 6 feet 6 inches), and required a tall staff (9 feet 10 inches long). They were primarily made by two companies in Philadelphia: Horstmann Brothers and Evans & Hassall. National flags usually cost from \$50 to \$75 and state flags from \$75 to \$125 though special presentation flags could cost up to twice as much. (The average working man's pay was about \$200 a year at this time.)

Cavalry regiments carried smaller flags, and individual cavalry companies often carried swallow-tailed, red, white and blue flags known as guidons. Artillery batteries also carried guidons, which cost from \$10 to \$12 each.

Many of the units raised in the first year of the war went through at least three sets of flags by 1865, while those raised in the last two years of the war usually went through only one or two issues. Of the approximately 160 national and state flags issued to the state's infantry regiments, only about 100 survive today. The most complete set of flags belonging to any one unit are the national flag, state flag and 2 flank markers issued to the 38th infantry in late 1864.

The collection consists of a number of elaborate presentation flags, as well as some unique militia flags and some quite interesting brigade flags from the 1st and 2nd New Jersey infantry brigades. There are also 6 captured Confederate flags in the collection. New Jersey's troops captured about 20 enemy flags. Those that could be identified were returned South in the early 1900s; another is displayed at the museum opened at Chancellorsville Battlefield National Historic Site in 1963. The ones that remain in New Jersey's possession could not be identified as to their origin.

Over the years, many of the flags have deteriorated a great deal. An effort was made to preserve them in the 1930s by sewing most of the flags to cloth backings, but this process may have done as much harm as good. In 1985 the flags were removed from the State House Annex and were entrusted to the care of the New Jersey State Museum by the State House Joint Management Commission. The Museum had conservation assessments made on the collection, and stores it in a climate controlled facility in specially-designed, individual storage trays.

In October of the year 2000, about 20 of the flags were moved to their present location in the Department of State Building at 225 West State Street. Funds for their specially designed display cases were provided by the State of New Jersey. The New Jersey Civil War Heritage Association

(NJCWWHA) paid for the display panels and battle maps that help interpret the exhibit.

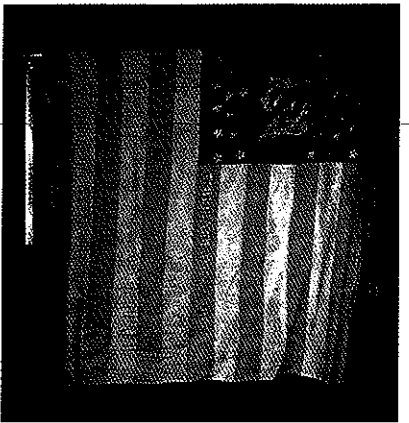
The study, display and preservation of the Civil War era flags in the State House Flag Collection is one of the primary goals of the NJCWWHA. This non-for profit group founded in 1997, is currently conducting a serious scholarly study of the individual history of each flag. The Association is also raising funds to preserve and study many other aspects of New Jersey's Civil War heritage. Anyone interested in learning more about the New Jersey State House Flag Collection, or in supporting the other projects sponsored by the NJCWWHA, should contact the organization at P.O. Box 1102, Hightstown, NJ 08520.

Text by Dr. David G. Martin

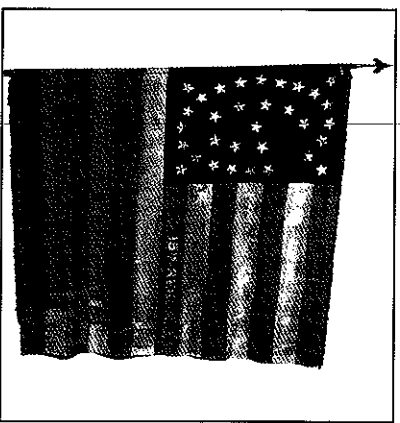
This Brochure was paid for with funds provided by the New Jersey Civil War Sesquicentennial Committee.



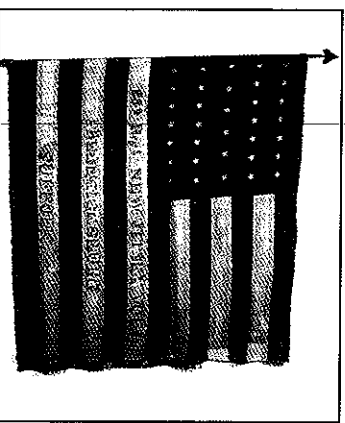
For more information on the New Jersey Civil War Sesquicentennial Committee see their website at www.njcivilwar.org or contact: Dr. David Martin, PO Box 1102, Hightstown, NJ 08520.



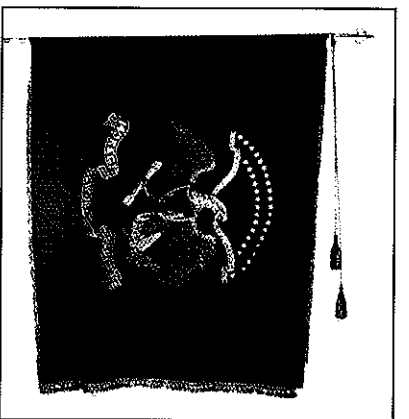
No. 42. National Color, 7th Infantry, 1861



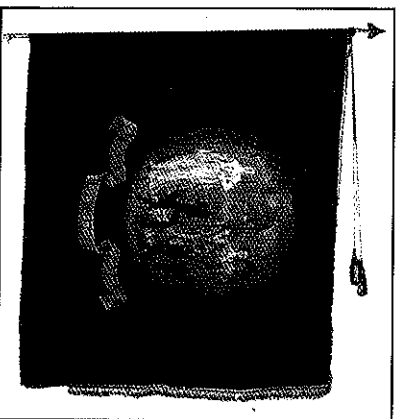
No. 71. National Color, 15th Infantry, ca. 1863



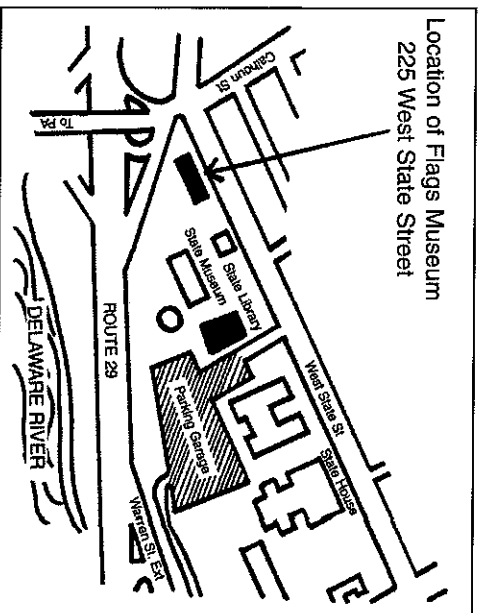
No. 81. National Color with battle honors, 25th Infantry, 1863



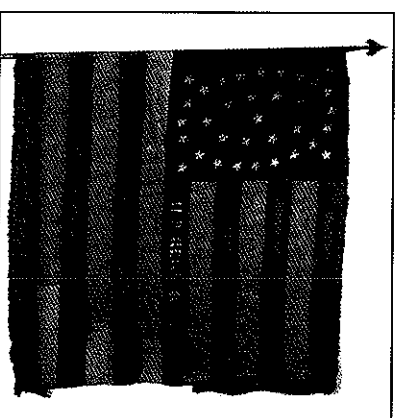
No. 68. Regimental Color with Federal eagle, 14th Infantry, ca. 1862



No. 27. Regimental Color with New Jersey seal, 4th Infantry, 1862



Location of Flags Museum
225 West State Street



No. 56. National Color with battle honors, 11th Infantry 1864

THE CIVIL WAR FLAG COLLECTION OF NEW JERSEY

NOW ON DISPLAY AT THE
DEPARTMENT OF STATE BUILDING
225 WEST STATE STREET
TRENTON, NJ 08608