

# Symbols of Freedom

by Lisa Cummins



*"Let us raise a standard to which the wise and honest can repair; the rest is in the hands of God."* – George Washington

What do you think of when considering symbols that represent America? The American flag, the Bald Eagle? What about apple pies, cowboys, the rodeo, corn fields, church buildings everywhere, statues of pioneers, the Brooklyn and Golden Gate Bridges? America's symbols have all signified sacrifice, strength, courage, adventure, conquering hardship, taming the wild, and being held responsible only to God. These symbols give the idea that every individual that set their foot upon this land is free to think for themselves and live the life they dream for them and their family. The Spirit of America lives in these symbols and they are there to remind us of who we are, where we came from, and why it is imperative we preserve our legacy of liberty. As Independence Day approaches, this is a great opportunity to share these symbols of freedom with your children so when the fireworks start bursting in the sky, they'll know and understand what it is we're celebrating.

## The Rattlesnake

The first ever popular symbol of America was the Great American Rattlesnake! It

first appeared in Benjamin Franklin's "The Pennsylvania Gazette," in May of 1754. The purposely broken up snake symbolized a colony, with the message that if the colonies did not unite, they would die in pieces. "Join, or Die," was the ultimatum during the French and Indian War. It would not be the last time that Franklin referred to the rattlesnake. Today, considered controversial and grossly mischaracterized is the Gadsden Flag! In 1775, former Sons of Liberty member, known among friends as "the Sam Adams of the South," and Colonel in the Continental Army, Christopher Gadsden, presented a copy of this flag to the Continental Congress. Benjamin Franklin had helped design the rattlesnake symbol. The flag was originally a symbolic one. It first originated in the fall of 1775, the Continental Navy had been commissioned their first mission; to aid five companies of Marines, in stopping two British ships loaded with guns and gunpowder, coming to Philadelphia. A few of the Marines on board carried with them yellow drums, painted yellow with a fierce rattlesnake, ready to strike, with 13 rattles and the words "Don't Tread on Me." Gadsden took that idea and put in a flag for the American Navy. As recorded in the South Carolina congressional journals:

"Col. Gadsden presented to the Congress an elegant standard, such as is to be used by the commander in chief of the American navy; being a yellow field, with a lively representation of a rattle-snake in the middle, in the attitude of going to strike, and these words underneath, "Don't Tread on Me!"



The Symbolism was written by Franklin:

1. The Rattlesnake is not found in other quarters of the world besides America
2. The rattlesnake also has sharp eyes, and may therefore be esteemed an emblem of vigilance
3. She never begins an attack, nor, when once engaged, ever surrenders: She is therefore an emblem of magnanimity and true courage
4. The rattle equals the number of the Colonies united in America.

Why the Rattlesnake at all? Benjamin Franklin made his thoughts more clear in his comparison of the snake to America, in a letter published in the Pennsylvania Journal, on December 27, 1775, entitled "An American Guesser:"

**I recollected that her eye excelled in brightness, that of any other animal, that she has no eye-lids. She may therefore be esteemed an emblem of vigilance. She never begins an attack, nor when once engaged, ever surrenders: She is there an emblem of magnanimity and true courage. As if anxious to prevent all pretensions of quarreling with her, the weapons with**

**which nature has furnished her, she conceals in the roof of her mouth, so that, to those who are unacquainted with her, she appears to be a most defenseless animal; and even when those weapons are shown and extended for her defense, they appear weak and contemptible; but their wounds however small, are decisive and fatal. Conscious of this, she never wounds 'till she has generously given notice, even to her enemy, and caution him against the danger of treading on her.**

You can read the full letter on the Rattlesnake of America, at <http://greatseal.com/symbols/rattlesnake.html>

## The Liberty Bell

The Liberty Bell is "a very significant symbol for the entire democratic world." – Nelson Mandela, Philadelphia Inquirer, July 4, 1993



The Liberty Bell was created in 1751 for the bell tower of the Pennsylvania State House, now known today as Independence Hall. It was shipped from the Whitechapel Foundry in London, England, but upon the first test ring, it cracked. Metalworkers John Pass and John Stow melted down the original bell and recast the bell that is displayed today. No record is found as to how or when the Liberty Bell developed the crack, however the bell was used for over 90 years. In 1846, a repairing of the bell was attempted so the bell could toll to celebrate George Washington's birthday.

Obviously, the repair was not successful, and a second crack developed. That second

crack retired the bell forever, and it has not rung since.

The inscription on the Liberty Bell is taken from the King James Bible: "Proclaim Liberty Throughout All the Land unto All the Inhabitants thereof." Leviticus 25:10. The message went unnoticed during the Revolutionary War, as a rallying cry, however the inscription was adopted by abolitionists praying to end slavery. It was thanks to the Anti-Slavery Record that the bell was first referred to as The Liberty Bell, in 1835. Years later, the name was formally adopted, as Americans came to read about the bell in a fictional story "Ring, Grandfather, Ring." By George Lippard in 1847. The Liberty Bell became a symbol of pride in America. It reminded Americans that they stood together for independence, out of many, one! There is no evidence that the bell rang on that providential day of July 4, 1776, but likely, it did!

And ye shall hallow the fiftieth year, and **proclaim liberty throughout all the land unto all the inhabitants thereof:** it shall be a jubilee unto you; and ye shall return every man unto his possession, and ye shall return every man unto his family. – Leviticus 25:10

The bolded portion of the quotation is inscribed on the Liberty Bell.

### The Statue of Liberty

The idea of a statue off the shores of New York City, came from a gentleman by the name of Edouard de Laboulaye, who was a U. S. Constitution expert, an abolitionist, and a French Philosopher. Laboulaye wanted the statue to be a gift from France to honor the preservation of freedom and democracy, as well as recognition of the work done by

former President Abraham Lincoln. The French sculptor Auguste Bartholdi supported Laboulaye's vision and was selected to be the sculptor of the monument. The original name of the monument was "Liberty Enlightening the World," and it was to be an international symbol of liberty, justice, and democracy.

It was Laboulaye's hope that this gift from France would inspire the French people to pursue the same ideals in a peaceful and lawful uprising. What is completely missed on the Statue of Liberty is that at the base of her right foot, there is a broken shackle and chain. The chain link is hidden under her gown and is seen again on her left foot. The end link is also broken. The idea of freedom from oppression and slavery was only in its 100- year infancy. America still had a long way to go in promoting its primary message of liberty, justice, and equal rights towards all, but this statue signified that America was on the right path!



President, and former New York State Governor, Grover Cleveland accepted the statue from France, on a cold, rainy night on October 28th, 1886. Fireworks had been planned but due to the weather, the festivities were postponed. The lighting of the Statue had problems as well. Lady Liberty was to be the official lighthouse for New York Harbor. On November 1st, the New York skyline was lit up without any problems! The New York Times wrote "Land and sea alike were teeming with glories. The vast fleet added not a little to the scene – the distant city with its million lights and flame-tipped spires was a

sight to be remembered itself." "When the last rust of rockets from the island had scattered their showering gold and the wonted darkness settled again, the great figure grew brighter and huger and gleamed ghostly but beautiful, the new Anadyomene, Liberty rising from the sea." The poem engraved at the base of the Statue of Liberty was written by Emma Lazarus in 1883. Entitled "The New Colossus," the poem was part of a sonnet to raise money for building the base of the statue. She was convinced by a friend that her poem would inspire immigrants and welcome them to America. Most of America believes that the poem meant to say that everyone could come. That is not correct. The first part of the poem refers to the Colossus of Rhodes statue of the Greek sun god Helios. It was considered one of the seven wonders of the ancient world, before it was destroyed 280 B.C. in an earthquake. The reason for the statue was not only to honor Helios as a god of light, but to celebrate the Rhodians defending their island against an attack by Macedonia. As the Colossus of Rhodes statue was a symbol of light and strength, Lady Liberty, or 'the new Colossus,' was and is a symbol of light welcoming those that hope for liberty, tired of the oppressive tyranny they experienced in other lands.

### The Statue of Responsibility

"Freedom is in danger of degenerating into mere arbitrariness unless it is lived in terms of responsibility. That is why I recommend that the Statue of Liberty on the East Coast be supplemented by the Statue of Responsibility on the West Coast." – Dr. Viktor E. Frankl,



author of *Man's Search for Meaning*

Freedom plus morality equals Liberty. That moral compass is what teaches the individual about his and her responsibility in preserving that freedom, or it could be taken. In 2005 Dr. Stephen R. Covey approached World renowned sculptor, Gary Lee Price, and asked him to create a 300+ foot Statue of Responsibility, that was inspired by Dr. Frankl. According to the official website, the monument is to balance iconic principles that are represented by the Statue of Liberty. Currently the statue is to open in the Spring of 2023, off the West Coast across from a major U.S. city. Most of the funding has come from private contributions to the \$195 million project. A representative from The Statue of Responsibility project provided Moms for America this comment: "The Statue of Responsibility is the vision of Dr. Viktor E. Frankl, holocaust survivor, and author of "Man's Search for Meaning." In his book, he states that for America to maintain her freedoms she must "bookend" her Statue of Liberty on the East Coast with a Statue of Responsibility on the West Coast.

World renowned sculptor, Gary Lee Price has been commissioned to do just that. The image that Gary created of two wrists clasped together has been approved by Viktor's widow, Dr. Eleanor Frankl. The Statue of Responsibility Team is currently in the process of locating the land for the 305ft monument and campus. The campus will also be home to several educational and motivational endeavors as well. The Viktor Frankl Institute of America will also have a home here. Join us in this history making endeavor. It's more than a Monument, it's a Movement! Just as the Statue of Liberty is an international symbol of Liberty and America, The Statue

of Responsibility will also serve as an international icon of responsibility, and a symbol of virtue. Freedom is our responsibility and we must not take it for granted.

*(Photo provided courtesy of The Statue of Responsibility Project)*

## The American Bald Eagle

After the signing of the Declaration of Independence, on July 4, 1776, Benjamin Franklin, Thomas Jefferson, and John Adams were asked to design the official seal for the United States. Out of all their endeavors together, this assignment was not successful. A series of committees tackled the design and failed, and it wasn't until the 4th attempt that the Secretary of Continental Congress, Charles Thompson, combined all the previous efforts and came up with what we use today as the official United States of America Seal. Thompson took the idea of a smaller eagle, and made it look like the grand Bald Eagle we see today. The American Bald Eagle is only found in North America. They are strong, independent, majestic, bold, and faithful. To Americans they are a symbol of strength and perseverance.



## The Great Seal

The earliest source of the motto "E Pluribus Unum" (Latin for "Out of Many One") was printed at the bottom of a monthly pamphlet entitled The Gentleman's Magazine, in London in 1731. Next to it was a graphic of a hand holding a bouquet of different wildflowers, signifying that unity and individuality could coexist. Each flower



was unique with its own properties that God had given it. But together they were strong, despite their differences. The opposite would be a mixture in a melting pot, where everyone blended together with no one standing out. The motto was very familiar to the Founders when it was presented by Charles Thomson in 1782 for the final Great Seal design. In the right talon, the Eagle is holding an olive branch. The Eagle was purposely facing the olive branch to symbolize the power of peace. In the left talon the eagle holds 13 arrows, symbolizing the power of war. The American Eagle represents liberty and freedom.

## The American Flag

*"When we honor our flag  
we honor what we stand  
for as a Nation –  
freedom, equality,  
justice, and hope."*

—Ronald Reagan



The American flag is the ultimate symbol of freedom. General George Washington, recognizing the American people needed one banner they could unite under, determined to have one commissioned. Several flag designs with 13 stripes were used in 1776 and 1777, but on June 14, 1777, Congress established an official design. The act stated, "That the Flag of the thirteen United States be thirteen stripes, alternate red and white, that the union be thirteen stars, white in a blue field, representing a new constellation." General Washington explained it this way: "We take the stars from heaven, the red from our mother country, separating it by white stripes, thus showing that we have separated from her, and the white stripes shall go down to posterity representing liberty."



Once adopted and American independence was won, the flag came to be a symbol of divine intervention, public virtue and sacrifice. The red stripes remind us of the blood that was sacrificed on our behalf—a call to patriotism and love of country. The white stripes remind us that to be able to live under a system of limited government, we personally need to live a moral and upright life. The blue background with white stars remind us of Heaven's guiding and protective Hand and that it is to God that we look for certain inalienable rights. Author, Candace Salima, shared her passion for the American Flag and everything it stands for.

"When I see the American flag rippling in the breeze against the majesty of Rocky Mountains a thrill of patriotism runs through my soul. How I love America and all that she offers to her citizens and the world. We must protect her against all who would destroy her as an ensign to the world of freedom, liberty, and justice. May God bless America and the efforts of her citizens to restore her." Candace passed away in 2017 but her passion lives on in all the hearts she touched and lives she changed. It is that kind of love and passion we, as mothers and grandmothers, have the power to instill in the hearts of our children. As the famous saying goes, "Mothers write on the hearts of their children things the world can never erase." So let's start writing freedom on their little hearts this year!

"The American flag doesn't give her glory on a peaceful, calm day. It's when the winds pick up and become boisterous, do we see her strength. When she unfolds her hand, and shows her frayed fingers, where we see the stretch of red-blood lines of man that fought for this land. The purity of white

stripes that strips our sins, and the stars of Abraham's covenant, broad in a midnight blue sky. The rights our forefathers established. As it waves high in the currents of freedom, where the Torch of Liberty shines over the sea, does she give meaning to unity. When we strive as one nation, or when it drops half-mast, to a fallen soldier."

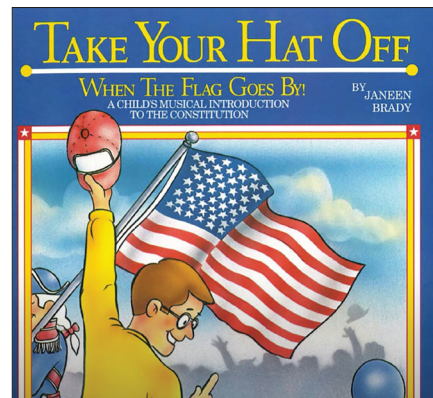
— Anthony Liccione

### Take Your Hat Off When the Flag Goes By

Want a great way to teach your children about the Constitution? This musical album is it! Includes songs such as Take Your Hat Off When the Flag Goes By, I Love America, and more. You'll be surprised how much information sticks when you learn it to music. Suggested for ages 5-12, but it's an exciting and easy way to learn for the whole family.

Listen to the audio book here:

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ybLG-FnivRfw&list=OLAK5uy\\_l\\_pRiKDmkx5PIT-tvR9XL8\\_T5euoRtYJSs](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ybLG-FnivRfw&list=OLAK5uy_l_pRiKDmkx5PIT-tvR9XL8_T5euoRtYJSs)



**John Wayne: Why I Love America!** In the 1970s John Wayne gave two incredibly patriotic presentations. One was the Pledge of Allegiance where he tells what the Stars & Stripes mean to him and the second was to America the Beautiful where he shares why he loves America. Watch these great videos to celebrate freedom this 4th of July.

Listen to the following videos, and discuss the questions:

Video 1: John Wayne The Pledge of Allegiance  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2EFwLTZ-5P2g>



Video 2: John Wayne America, Why I Love Her  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oYXgli-PNYV8>



### Discussion Questions

- ★ *What are some ideas you have on how to share the celebration of freedom with your children?*
- ★ *What is a symbol that you learned something new about?*
- ★ *Which symbol is the most meaningful to you?*
- ★ *Do you think Americans are generally educated on these symbols?*
- ★ *Why do you think symbols are important?*