



# The American Flag in History and Myth

## Peter Ansoff

The American flag was created during the Revolutionary War for a utilitarian purpose -- to identify the ships and fortifications of the new nation. Two and a quarter centuries later, the flag is flown everywhere, by government agencies and civilians alike, and is treated as a quasi-religious icon. The founding fathers would be amazed to hear about some of the mythology that surrounds the flag today. Mr. Ansoff will present a very brief history of the origins of the American flag, followed by a discussion of some of the more interesting myths and legends that have become associated with it. Some of them are just amusing, while others are downright creepy.

Hundreds of books have been written about the origins of the American flag, but most have simply repeated and embellished the work of a small group of mid-19th century historians. Though well-intentioned, these authors' research was often cursory, and their conclusions were distorted by their own assumptions and attitudes about the flag. Mr. Ansoff will discuss some of these authors during his talk, and will also provide a small show and tell of some of the rare flag books in his collection.

Mr. Ansoff is the current President of the North American Vexillological Association (NAVA) and has had a lifelong interest in flags. In addition to NAVA conferences, he has made presentations at the Star-Spangled Museum and Flag House in Baltimore, the Mariners Museum in Newport News and the American Revolution Round Table of Washington DC. In real life he is a support contractor to the US Navy's aircraft carrier program office.

Mr. Ansoff is currently working on a series of papers that re-examine the primary sources relating to early American flags and the events surrounding their creation and use. His paper on the so-called First Navy Jack flag received NAVAs Driver Award for original contributions to vexillological scholarship, and was published in the NAVA journal, the *Raven* in 2004. Two other papers, "The Flag on Prospect Hill, a New Interpretation" and "The Sign Their Banners Bore, the Pine Tree Flag in the American Revolution" have been presented at vexillological conferences and are being prepared for publication. Other forthcoming topics in the series will include Rattlesnake Flags and the creation of the Stars and Stripes.

Saturday, June 11, 2005  
2 - 4 pm

Montgomery County Library  
Bethesda Branch  
7400 Arlington Road  
Bethesda, Maryland  
(A short walk from the Bethesda  
Metro station)



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# Shadow of a Doubt

JUNE 2005

THE MONTHLY CALENDAR OF THE NATIONAL CAPITAL AREA SKEPTICS

## Annual NCAS Membership Meeting June 11

Come to the NCAS talk on June 11—afterwards, meet the candidates for the NCAS board and make your opinions heard!

NCAS is having our annual membership board meeting after the presentation on June 11. It's a great way to meet and talk with board members and the candidates for the NCAS board in the upcoming election. Who knows, you may be enthused enough to want to run yourself in the future. You can talk about any ideas you may have, see how you can get involved without being on the board, and maybe even just have some fun.

Even better, meet and talk to your fellow NCAS members. We often meet, but we don't always try to get to know one another—this is a great opportunity. One thing I can guarantee, even as a skeptic, and that is that you can always find a member of NCAS who is willing to share his opinion with you (and listen to yours). ☺

## The “Real” Alternative Medicine? *Home Remedies from a Physician's Perspective*, a Lecture by Dr. Lillian Beard at the Library of Congress on Tuesday, June 7

Dr. Lillian Beard, a pediatrician who writes a column for *Good Housekeeping* magazine, presents “Home Remedies from a Physician's Perspective” in a

program sponsored by the Science, Technology and Business Division of the Library of Congress, at 11:30 a.m., June 7, in the Mumford Room, James Madison Building, 101 Independence Avenue, S.E., Washington, D.C. Free and open to the public.

Beard, an associate clinical professor at the George Washington University School of Medicine and the medical contributor on ABC-TV's “Good Morning Washington,” compiled hundreds of family recipes for wellness from her patients and colleagues during a 30-year period of practicing medicine. The book is organized in an easy-to-follow A-to-Z guide, treating everything from acne (wash face with granulated sugar, which acts as an exfoliating agent) to sinus problems (try a warm compress of ginger tea).

According to Beard, as long as there have been grandmothers, tight budgets, and sniffles, there have been home remedies. Beyond chicken soup, the kitchen can be a gold mine for products that alleviate many common ailments. Home remedies that have survived the test of time may have a biological basis for their effectiveness. ☺

## Time to Renew!

Check your mailing label. If the renewal date has passed, please send to the NCAS address below \$30 (for 1 person) or \$40 (for 2-member households) for a 1-year renewal, or you will be dropped as a member. ☺



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