

# The History of the Hawaiian Flag



*Hawaii State flag*



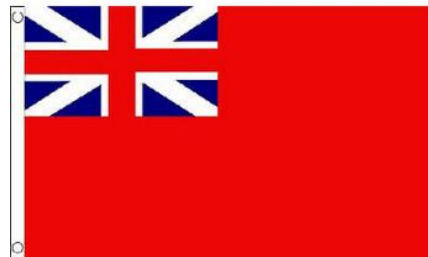
The only flag in the US with features borrowed from the United Kingdom is the **Hawaii State Flag**. Also, it is the only US state flag to include a foreign country's national flag.

The flag was adopted on December 29, 1845. It has been in use through the **Hawaiian** regimes of the kingdoms, protectorate, and after independence.

The flag has 8 stripes that run horizontally with alternating colours of white, red, and blue from top to bottom. The 8 stripes stand for **Hawaii's**

8 main islands. The canton in the top left corner is borrowed from the British flag.

In 1793, [Captain George Vancouver](#), having previously visited the islands with Captain James Cook, returned in command of [HMS Discovery](#). During the visit, [Vancouver](#) met with [King Kamehameha I](#) and presented him with a [Red Ensign](#) used by the Royal Navy at the time.



Ireland was not a formal part of the United Kingdom before 1801, so, at that time, the British flag did not contain the Saint Patrick's Cross of Ireland. This version of the [Red Ensign](#), as well as the current version which added the cross in 1801, was the unofficial flag of the [Kingdom of Hawaii](#) until 1816.



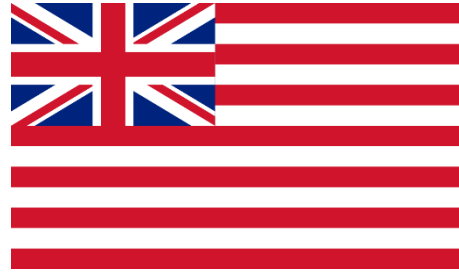
1937 3c USA stamp showing statue of [King Kamehameha I](#) standing in [Honolulu, Hawaii](#). The statue honours the King who first united the [Hawaiian Islands](#).

An adviser to [Kamehameha](#) warned that the Union Flag could draw [Hawaii](#) into international conflict, as his kingdom could be seen as an ally of the United Kingdom, and he subsequently lowered the Union Flag over his home at [Kamakahonu](#). While disputed as to its historical accuracy, one account stated that in order to placate US interests during the War of 1812\*See Note at end, a US flag was raised over [Kamehameha's](#) home, only to be removed when UK officers in the court of [Kamehameha](#) vehemently objected to it. This would explain why the resulting flag of [Hawaii](#) was a deliberate hybrid of the two nations' flags.

In 1816, [Kamehameha](#) commissioned his own flag to avoid this conflict, which has evolved into the current flag. It was probably designed by one of the commanders of the Royal Hawaiian Navy, former officers of the

British Royal Navy, who advised Kamehameha, and based on a form of the British naval flag. There is debate as to the actual designer: some credit Alexander Adams, others George Charles Beckley.

It was very similar to the flag of the British East India Company in use around this time, which had only red and white stripes.



In 1959 Hawaii became the 50<sup>th</sup> USA State.

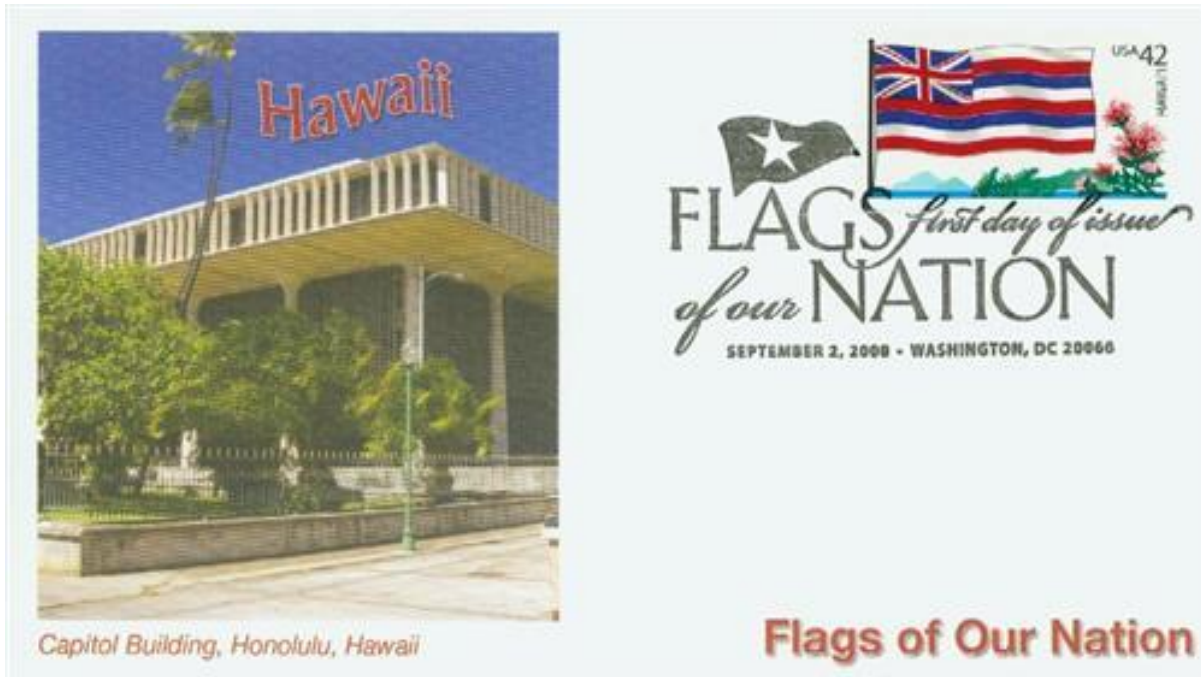
This air mail stamp of 1959 shows the 8 major islands of Hawaii with a Hawaiian warrior.



Greetings sticker canvassing a 50th Star be added to the USA flag.



1960 First Day Cover showing the 50-star flag



2008 1st Day Cover from USA 42c "Flags of our Nation" set & showing a Hibiscus, the Hawaiian State Flower

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Note: **War of 1812** - a conflict between the US and the UK (1812–14), prompted by restrictions on US trade resulting from the British blockade of French and allied ports during the Napoleonic Wars, and by British and Canadian support for North American Indians trying to resist westward expansion. It was ended by a treaty which restored all conquered territories to their owners before outbreak of war.