Essays on "Wheat" and "Old Glory."

Following are two essays on "Wheat" and "Old Glory," that won the honors at St. John's Commencement on June 15. The essay on "Wheat" was written by Rose D. Walsh, daughter of Michael E. Walsh, and is as follows:

WHEAT.

The little birds were chirping their merry approval of the sun, which was just peeping over the distant hills, and the grass covered with dew was shimmering like diamonds. It was an ideal spring morning, and the car being ready we started on what proved to be a never-to-be-forgotten tour through the Red River Valley of the North. The scenery was wonderful, on every side as far as the eye could reach fields of wheat lay, appearing like a carefully kept lawn. It was only when I saw this, that I really understand the beautiful little verse—

Here, where sweep the prairies lone,
Broad and beautiful in God's eyes,
Here in this young land, all our own,
The garner-house of the old world lies.

Wheat has been cultivated from the very earliest times—so early, in fact, that the exact date cannot be found out. But the origin of wheat is said to be older than civilization, and to antedate all known languages.

The Chinese, whose records say that it was cultivated in China two thousand seven hundred years before Christ, thought it a gift direct from Heaven, and one of the most striking ceremonies of the Chinese Court is the plowing of a field by the Emperor himself. It was the favorite grain of the old Egyptians; and it is related, that, had the wheat crop been at any time entirely destroyed the grain would have been restored to us from seeds preserved for more than three thousand years in the folds of an Egyptian mummy.

Wheat is sometimes called the "Grain of Civilization," because, historians tell us, the cultivation of grain is the most important occupation there is in making a savage nation into a civilized one. If people grow wheat they must have settled homes; and so, from wandering tribes, they become a civilized nation, for a fixed home leads to the development of government and society.

One of the most favorable conditions for the successful culture of this grain is fine, deep soil that is rich in plant food. This is found in abundance in the Red River Valley, whose soil is the deposit of alluvial matter formed in the bed of an ancient lake during thousands and thousands of years. This valley is about three hundred miles long and from thirty-five to forty miles wide, and it is almost one unbroken grain field; in fact, it is so productive that it is known as the "Bread-basket of the World" both abroad and at home. Here you find the famous "bonanza" farms, as these great western wheat ranches are called, many of them contain over 25,000 acres. This region consists of North Dakota, Minnesota and Manitoba. The Central States, fourteen in number, also produce a great quantity of wheat. Kansas the greatest wheat state, alone produced 81,000,000 bushels in 1906 and increased it to 105,938,000 bushels in 1915.

Further west along the Pacific Coast we find the famous "Big Bend Country," consisting of 7,000 square miles of very rich soil said to be like that of Sicily. Indeed so extensive are our wheat regions it seems as though our production could feed the whole world, but in reality a very small per cent of our yearly crop is exported—usually less than twenty per cent. But owing to the increased demand for grain during the first year of the war, our exports of wheat represented about 37 per cent of the crop of 1914. Farmers received an average of 79c a bushel for the 1913 crop and $1.01 for the 1914—an increase of 22c a bushel or an aggregate gain of approximately $196,000,000.

Though the soil of the Middle Atlantic States cannot be compared with the fertile soil of the West, the amount of wheat produced in these states may not be passed unheeded. For Maryland which ranks second devoted 612,000 acres to wheat in 1914 and received 13,158,000 bushels in return; in 1915 she planted 638,000 acres and received 10,786,000 bushels which is a little less than the previous year. For this excellent showing thanks may be extended to Carroll County which is faithfully year after year throwing this golden grain into Uncle Sam's granary.

The two kinds of wheat used in the United States are winter and spring wheat. Owing to the temperate climate the former is used in the Middle Atlantic States. It is sown in the fall and harvested the next summer. The latter is used in the West and Central States, where the climate is cold and the rainfall frequent. The cultivation of wheat is quite unlike most crops; in this, that once sown it requires no attention until harvest time. Without the aid of the farmer it battles with its numerous enemies—cold, heat, humidity and insects—until it at length ripens into beautiful golden grain, and happily invites the reaper and binder to begin their merry whirring song, cutting this endless stretch of grain, separating the kernels from the golden straw, and binding it into sheaves. Less than one hundred years ago the farmers of the United States could not raise enough wheat for their own use despite the fact that more people lived on farms then, than now; but at that time they had to cut the grain with a sickle and separate the kernels from the stalk with a flail. All this accounts for the small quantity raised, but through the great minds of Robert McCormick and his son, the history of the North West was entirely changed. A harvesting machine was his first invention, and as this did the work of six men, the farmers planted more wheat. In 1870 the automatic self binder which cut and bound the wheat was invented. With the steady improvements in machinery our wheat belt grew from 15,000,000 acres in 1860 to 50,000,000 in 1900 and to 59,898,000 in 1915.

The harvest fields of the West is a picture long to be remembered by those who have visited this wonderful wheat region, so full of color and action. During this period there is not one idle moment, for the fortune of the farmer of the West is indeed in the race with the sun, wind and rain, which may be either lost or won in a few hours.

From the harvest fields the wheat is either deposited in grain elevators or sent directly to the mills where it is first weighed, then placed in separators in order to discard any weeds which may have become mixed. It is next run through heaters to obtain a uniform temperature, and then put into bins of equal temperature, ready to be ground into flour.

A hand stone was formally used to grind the grain into flour, and for four thousand years this was the only mill. The first grinding mill was the saddle stone, once used all over the world, and still even in use in some places. The mortar was the next mill to appear, and it was during this period that the Greeks are said to have made the first "milling revolution" in history, when they put man "pounders" in the place of women at the mortars. For in older times milling was a part of the household work, and women or servants did the grinding. After the mortar came the quern, a revolving mill, and later came the slave mills followed by the use of tread mills. Greeks were the first to use water as power for grinding; the Romans were the next and gradually it became common. Few of these are now in use, as electricity has taken their places. Milling is now as exact and perfect a science as can be found, and to convince one's self of this one should visit the great flour mills of Minneapolis the "World's Largest Wheat Market," and the greatest flour producing city in the world.

Now the marvelous cultivation of this grain, and all the inventions necessary to make it a success we have seemingly attributed to the skill of man, but let a moment's failure of God's power, of His watchfulness, or of His will to do good, occur, and death and annihilation would sweep through the universe. The very steadfastness of the Almighty's liberality, flowing like a mighty ocean through the vastness of the universe, makes His creatures forget to wonder at its wonderfulness, to feel true thanksgiving for its immeasurable goodness. Therefore, let us not fail to offer praise and thanks to God—the God of harvests,—who has blessed the earth and all her children with seed-time and harvest, with joy and abundance.

OLD GLORY.

Old Glory! say who,
By the ships and the crew,
And the long-blended ranks of the gray and the blue,
Who gave you, Old Glory, the name which you bear,
With such pride everywhere,
As you cast yourself free to the rapturous air,
And leap out full-length as we're wanting you to?

You frequently hear the flag spoken of as "Old Glory." The name is a very appropriate one. You may see the original "Old Glory," if you visit the Essex Institution at Salem, Massachusetts. The title, "Old Glory," was given to our flag by Captain Driver in 1831.

The history of the United States Flag is very interesting. Almost every one of the thirteen colonies had it own peculiar flag and the American Army when first formed also had its various flags.

After a time the leading men of the colonies decided that it would be a great convenience to have a national flag. So a committee, with Dr. Benjamin Franklin at its head was appointed to go to Cambridge, Mass., for the purpose of consulting General George Washington, who was in command of the American army, about the matter.

General Washington and the committee decided upon a design that they thought would exactly express the feelings of the colonists. The colonists were still struggling with Great Britain for their rights, but they had not declared themselves separated from their mother country. Yet they were united in their purposes and wished to have a new national emblem. They adopted the British union ensign of two crosses, thus indicating their allegiance to the mother country, despite her oppressive acts, and added thirteen alternate stripes of red and white to represent the original thirteen states. The new "Union Flag," as it was called, was first unfurled at the camp in Cambridge January 2, 1776.

On June 14, 1777, the symbol of the British union was changed to a field of blue containing thirteen stars. This flag was probably first unfurled, August 3, 1777, at Fort Stanwix (Now Rome), New York. The first battle in which it was used was probably the battle of Brandywine, September 11, 1777.

In 1795 two stars and two stripes were added for Kentucky and Vermont, but it was seen that the addition of a stripe for each state would make a very ill-proportioned banner, therefore in 1818, the number of stripes was reduced to thirteen, with the provision that a new star should be added for each new state admitted into the Union and that such addition should take effect on July 4, next, succeeding such admission.

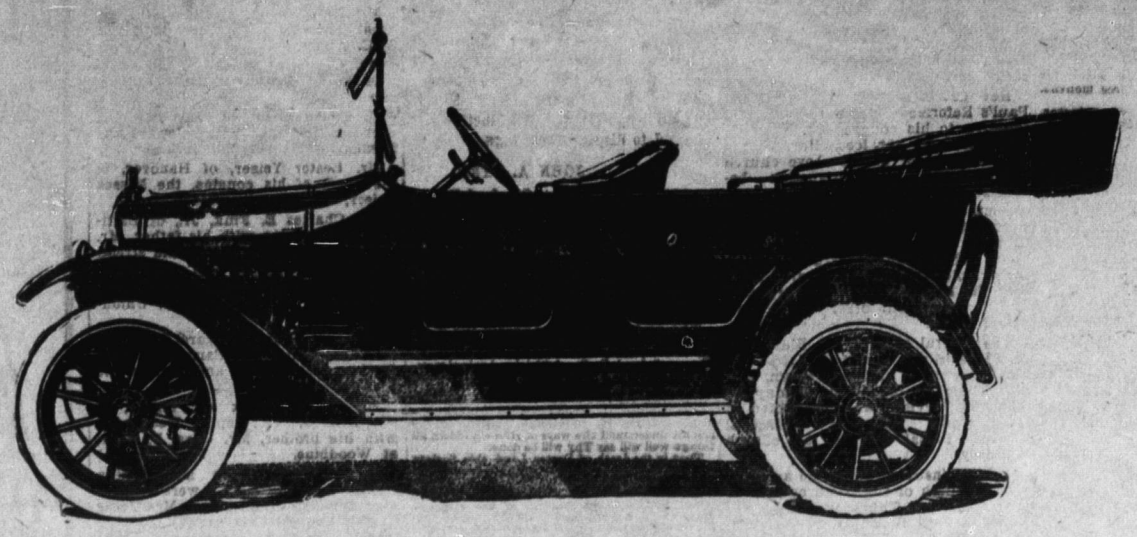
According to the tradition preserved by Mrs. Ross's descendants, General Washington, and a committee appointed by Congress suggested, that their plans be laid before Mrs. Elizabeth Ross, of Philadelphia. That night Washington told Mrs. Ross of the decision to which Congress had come. She looked over the sketch Washington had brought, and started immediately to make the flag which is now so dear to us.

Some people believe that the devices of both stars and stripes were borrowed from the coat of arms of the Washington family. But there is nothing to show that such was the case. Washington himself, said, "We take the star 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." These words seem to explain the design very clearly.

The very colors of our flag have a language. The red signifying Divine Love, is the language of valor and the emblem of war. It flashes daring and defiance and typifies the blood of our fore-fathers which was shed to win their rights and ours. The white, symbol of truth and hope, is the emblem of purity and peace. The blue signifies loyalty, sincerity and justice. And altogether—bunting, colors, stars and stripes blazing in the sky—make the flag of our country to be cherished by all our hearts, to be upheld by all our hands.

Since the flag of the United States was established on June 14, 1777, the excellent suggestion has been made, that June 14, in every year should hereafter be kept as Flag Day and that it should be commemorated by displaying the American Flag from every home in our land. Flag Day was first observed in 1893.

"Let us, then," as Henry Ward Beecher so beautifully says, "twine each thread of the glorious tissue of our country's flag about our heart-strings; and looking upon our home, and catching the spirit that breathes upon us from the battle-fields of our fathers, let us resolve, come weal or woe, we will, in life and in death, now and forever stand by the stars and stripes."



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