

Where is the First American Flag Raised in Alaska?

In what place is the American banner that first fluttered over Alaska now resting? In what manner has the flag been preserved to the present time? And finally, what is the real story of that stirring October day at Sitka when the American warship arrived to take possession of the country, and when the Russian flag was rent in two pieces as they pulled it down from the flag pole for the last time in the western hemisphere, while the beautiful Russian Princess Muksootoff wept at the shortsightedness of her country at selling a land with so much potential greatness.

A few months ago the management of the Alaska-Yukon-Pacific Exposition started to solve these questions, especially the first one, as to the whereabouts of the flag. The result was curious, and indeed reminds us so forcibly of a famous incident of the eighteenth century, that perhaps the story may be told.

John Baxter, in his day a famous divine, died with so many pious expressions of hope and belief, that his heirs determined to issue the story. The book, "The Last Words of Richard Baxter" was issued, and was an immediate success. Money rolled in. The heirs became greedy, and hoping to duplicate the success, issued another book, "More Last Words of Richard Baxter."

It was so with the flag. No sooner had a search begun for the first American flag unfurled in the Northland, than enquirers began to be daily informed of where the "real first flag" was to be found. Everyone that had a flag thirty-five or forty years old seemed to be determined to advance his banner as the original one. Many and ingenious were the stories told, and bitterly did some of the contestants wage war for the legitimacy of the particular flag in which they were interested. True, many of these ancient American banners had most interesting histories, but histories not particularly pertaining to the point at issue.

After sifting the matter out, the Exposition management believes that the original thirty-six starred banner to float above the Russian barracks at Sitka is one of three which are in different parts of the United States for safe keeping. The history of each of these three flags is well authenticated and later the one desired will be obtained by the Exposition to be used at the opening ceremonies. It is the plan of the management that when on June 1, 1909, the gates of the Exposition swing open to the world, the banner on the topmost pinnacle of the ten million Exposition of Alaska, Yukon and the Pacific countries, will be the same one that waved farewell to the Russians two generations ago.

The writer, while in Grand Pre in the Acadian valley, some years ago was shown nine different sites where once stood the forge of Basil, the Blacksmith, where Evangeline once stood watching the upward sparks. Each site, strange to say, was on a different farm.

As then, so in the present case, each of the owners of these three flags believes them to be the original, and the following pertaining to each flag is the story as the present owner tells it.

One flag, the property of Edward Leudecke of Wrangell, has a strong claim to being the original. It now reposes in the vaults of the Dexter-Horton Bank in Seattle. The story is that the body of American troops that left San Francisco in the autumn of 1867 for Sitka to take possession of the country proceeded by the inside channel and touched first at Wrangell.

At that point there were living a few Americans engaged in pioneer work. One of these was Edward Leudecke who after forty years is still a resident of Wrangell. Leudecke, when the troops touched at that point, heard for the first time of the American purchase. Although the country was not then formally taken over by the United States, he ran to the flagpole and hoisted the American flag, and there it flew for many months. In the meantime the troops proceeded to Sitka, then the capital, and on October 18, 1867, the Russian flag was pulled down and the American flag raised before the barracks and in the presence of a detachment of both Russian and American troops.

The flag of Leudecke floated till 1867 when the news of the admission of Nebraska to the Union was announced and then the flag with thirty-six stars was pulled down and another one with thirty-seven stars, was raised in its place. Leudecke, however, clung carefully to his flag and in 1905 turned the banner over to G. E. Rodman, an attorney of Wrangell, who sent it on to its present destination for safe keeping.

Leudecke is now seventy-two years of age and is strong and hearty. He remembers perfectly the first arrival of

American troops in the North and the amazement and joy of the few Americans there on being told that Alaska had been purchased from the Russians. Of course, this flag of Leudecke's cannot be the official one as it was flown at Wrangell. Nevertheless, it would seem as if it has a strong claim to be the first American flag ever flown in the Northland.

Another flag is told about by Major A. N. Brown, private secretary to Gov. Albert E. Mead, of the State of Washington. Mr. Brown in this connection writes as follows the story of this flag:

"In making some researches among the government documents and reports on the acquisition of Alaska; I have found that when Secretary Seward dispatched General Rousseau as United States Commissioner to Sitka to receive the Territory of Alaska from the Russian Government, he had given to the general a flag with instructions to use it in formally taking possession. The report shows that it was used, that it was taken back to Washington by General Rousseau and that it was there returned to the Secretary. It would be interesting to have that flag exhibited at the Exposition. I would suggest that you interest some of the State delegation in that matter to the end that the Department of State hunt the old flag up and send it out."

The whereabouts of the third flag is known to Dwight A. Hurlburt. Mr. Hurlburt in writing explains further that he was a member of the squad of the 2d U. S. Artillery, which went to Alaska in 1867 to take possession. He was the member of the squad to adjust the staff at the raising of the flag on October 19, 1867, at Sitka. Mr. Hurlburt took the pains to follow the course of this flag after it had served its usefulness, and this he claims is the original flag after which the Exposition is in search. The flag is not, as he says, in the possession of the government at the present time. Mr. Hurlburt is now in Kansas City, but spent many years in Alaska. He was there when Secretary Seward visited Sitka; and took down the speech of Mr. Seward in shorthand and thus preserved it to posterity. It was afterwards published in the Alaska Times of that time.

These are the three flags which seem to be most near to the ideal which the Exposition is seeking. Doubtless there are others and the management of the Exposition would be grateful to receive information from anyone knowing anything further about this matter, or in fact about anything vital to the early history and settlement of Alaska.

Notice of Settlement of Estate

In the United States Commissioner's Court for Precinct of Juneau, District of Alaska. In Probate.

In the Matter of the Estate of Charles Wortman, Deceased.

The undersigned, as administratrix of the above entitled estate, having filed in the above entitled Court her final report and account of administration thereof.

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN that the above Court did, by an order duly entered in said matter on June 1st, 1907, designate a time for the hearing of said final report and accounting and the settlement of said estate, to-wit: Saturday, the 10th day of August, 1907, at 10 o'clock in the forenoon of said day at the office of the said Probate Court in the U. S. Court House, Juneau, Alaska; and all persons interested in said estate are required to appear on said date at said place to present their objections, if any, to the granting of the prayer of the administratrix in that behalf.

Dated at Douglas, Alaska, this June 5th, 1907
LENA WORTMANN,
Administratrix of the Estate of
Charles Wortman Deceased.
First Pub., June 5th, 1907.
Last Pub., Aug. 7th, 1907.

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Douglas Island Time.

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For Douglas and Treadwell:	
8:00 a. m.	5:00 p. m.
9:30 a. m.	6:30 p. m.
11:00 a. m.	7:00 p. m.
1:00 p. m.	9:00 p. m.

LEAVE DOUGLAS

For Treadwell:		For Juneau:	
8:15 a. m.	8:30 a. m.	8:30 a. m.	8:30 a. m.
9:45 a. m.	10:00 a. m.	10:00 a. m.	10:00 a. m.
11:15 a. m.	11:30 a. m.	11:30 a. m.	11:30 a. m.
1:15 p. m.	1:30 p. m.	1:30 p. m.	1:30 p. m.
3:15 p. m.	3:30 p. m.	3:30 p. m.	3:30 p. m.
4:45 p. m.	5:00 p. m.	5:00 p. m.	5:00 p. m.
7:15 p. m.	7:30 p. m.	7:30 p. m.	7:30 p. m.
9:15 p. m.	9:30 p. m.	9:30 p. m.	9:30 p. m.

LEAVE TREADWELL

For Douglas and Juneau:	
8:25 a. m.	5:25 p. m.
10:00 a. m.	6:30 p. m.
12:00 a. m.	7:35 p. m.
1:40 p. m.	9:25 p. m.

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