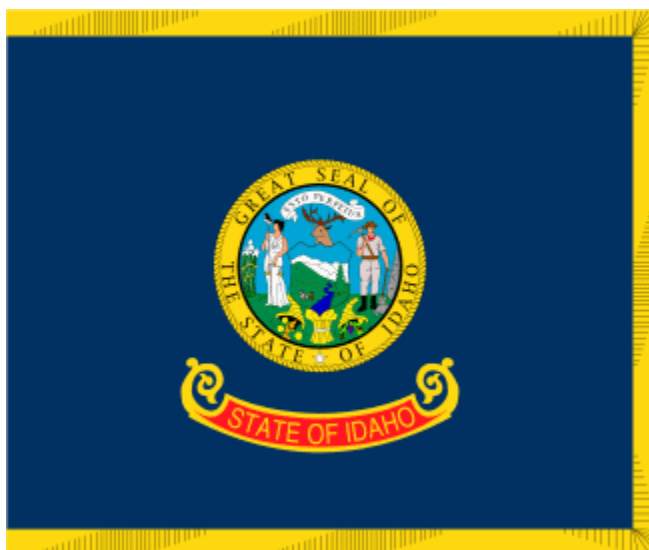


# Idaho



Idaho was admitted to the union as the 43<sup>rd</sup> state on 10 July 1890.

The Idaho State flag, like many others, had its origins as a State military banner.

After a declaration of War against Spain by the United States Congress on April 19, 1898, the Secretary of War sent telegrams off to each state "advising them of the allotment of troops under the President's call for volunteers." Idaho's contribution was defined as two battalions of infantry composed of four companies each. Governor Frank Steunenberg issued orders for the Idaho National Guard companies composing the First Regiment to report to Boise. These companies were mustered into the service of the United States as the First Idaho Volunteer Infantry in May of 1898 for deployment to the Philippines to fight in the Spanish-American War.

"Just before the regiment left for the front, it was presented with a handsome flag of military blue silk, upon which was embroidered in richly colored silks the Great Seal of the State of Idaho. This flag was presented by the women of the state and was carried by the regiment during its entire service. Col. Charles H. Irvin, of Boise, suggested the material and design for the flag, and through the courtesy of Mrs. J. B. Lyon, of Chicago, mother of Mrs. Calvin Cobb, of Boise, the flag was made in Chicago by skilled needle-workers. After the war the legislature directed to collect all flags belonging to the state of Idaho and carried by troops in the Spanish-American war and preserve them in the capitol building, and \$100 were appropriated for the purpose. The flag presented to the boys of the First Idaho is now preserved under that order and can be seen by visitors to the capitol." <sup>1</sup>

The battle flag of the First Idaho Infantry consisted of a rendition of the pictorial content of the Idaho Territorial Seal centered on a blue field. The regiment name was placed below.

The First Idaho Volunteer Infantry arrived in the Philippines on July 31 and took part in the staged assault on Manila on August 13. After active participation in battles at Santa Ana, Caloocan, Malaban, Santa Cruz, and subsequent scrimmages in 1899, the First Idaho Volunteer

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Infantry was sent home. They were greeted by Governor Steunenberg and nearly one hundred Idahoans when they arrived in San Francisco on August 29, 1899.

When the Idaho Legislature got around to thinking about a State flag, the 1907 legislation was written to specify a simple blue flag with the name of the State " in such colors and of such size and dimensions as shall be prescribed by the adjutant general of the State of Idaho." The legislation also gave the Adjutant General "supervision over the form and construction of said flag."



First Idaho Volunteer Infantry Flag

Courtesy: Idaho State Capitol Commission



First Idaho Volunteer Infantry: Company H

Courtesy: [Patrick McSherry](#)

This legislation, approved on March 12, 1907, gave the Idaho Adjutant General broad latitude over the final look of the flag. The suggestion was made to honor the First Idaho Infantry by selecting their battle flag to serve the State, replacing the regiment's name with the State name.

The Adjutant General, Brigadier General C.A. Elmer we believe, ordered the following design, adding the [Great Seal of the State of Idaho](#) to the specification approved by law:

"A silk flag, blue field, 5 feet 6 inch fly, and 4 feet 4 inches on the pike, bordered by gilt fringe 2 ½ inches in width, with State seal of Idaho 21 inches in diameter, in colors, in the center of the blue field. The words "State of Idaho," are embroidered in with block letters 2 inches in height, on a red bank 3 inches in width by 29 inches in length, the band being embroidered in gold and placed about 8 ½ inches from the lower border of fringe and parallel with the same."<sup>2</sup>

The actual flag that was produced from the order was somewhat flawed in that it provided only the pictorial information from the State seal rather than the whole seal that would have included the words "Great Seal of the State of Idaho." Additionally, the representation of the seal's picture varied from that which was in current use but, since there was wide variation between the original design for the seal and the various physical renditions that were being produced, perhaps the discrepancies were to be expected.

When the Idaho Legislature revised statutes pertaining to the Idaho National Guard in 1927, the 1907 "statute" was accidentally superseded by the 1907 "design specification" written up by the Adjutant General. The new law, approved March 15, 1927 codified the specification for the State seal as ordered by the Adjutant General in 1907 rather than the adopted statute.

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The 1927 law did ensure that the Great Seal of the State of Idaho would continue to be an element of the State flag. The problem with the pictorial representation of the seal was laid to rest once and for all when the legislature approved an enhanced version of the Great Seal of the State of Idaho in 1957.

In 1957, the thirty-fourth session of the Idaho legislature authorized the updating and improvement of the Great Seal in order to more clearly define Idaho's main industries, mining, agriculture and forestry as well as highlight the state's natural beauty. Paul B. Evans and the Caxton Printers, Ltd. were commissioned to revise the seal. This painting by Paul B. Evans officially replaced the original design by Emma Edwards Green and is designated as the "Official Copy." The official Great Seal of the State of Idaho can be seen in the office of the Secretary of State.

EMMA EDWARDS GREEN at the period when she designed the Great Seal for the State of Idaho. The only woman ever to achieve such distinction in the United States, she won in competition sponsored by the First Legislature for the State of Idaho. She was handed the honorarium by Governor Norman B. Willey on March 5, 1891.

One of the most beautiful and impressive state seals, the original painting is held in trust by the Idaho Historical Society.

"The original flag created in 1907 was displayed in the State Capitol building for many years. It began to look ragged from wear, and was placed in the Idaho Historical Archives. When a Meridian Elementary fourth grade class realized what had happened to the flag, they began a fundraising effort to restore it. \$5,000 later, the original Idaho flag was cleaned, mended, preserved and placed on permanent display in the Idaho Historical Museum in Boise." <sup>3</sup>

The flag has been restored and is currently on display at the Idaho Historical Museum.

1. *History of Idaho, The Gem of the Mountains*, James H. Hawley, Editor; Volume I; Illustrated; Chicago, The S. J. Clarke Publishing Company; 1920; Pages 566-574.

2. Idaho State Historical Society, (<http://www.idahohistory.net>), July 8, 2007.

3. *Idaho State Capitol Commission*, (<http://www.capitolcommission.idaho.gov>), August 10, 2007.

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[http://www.netstate.com/states/symb/flags/id\\_flag.htm](http://www.netstate.com/states/symb/flags/id_flag.htm)

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