Utah’s Mammoth Statehood Flag

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Large Flags—an American Tradition

While large flags may not be common in some other nations, they are part of flag-flying traditions of the United States which go back to the early days of the American republic. As British vexillologist Michael Faul has observed, “Although mega-flags seem to be a feature in the United States, they have never been popular in Britain. Even the largest British flags are quite small in comparison with flags which, in America, are almost the customary thing.”

In view of this comment, it is perhaps ironic that perhaps the earliest and most famous large U.S. flag is the garrison flag flown over Fort McHenry flown during the Battle of Baltimore in the War of 1812. Fort McHenry’s commander Major George Armistead ordered a flag large enough that “the British will have no difficulty in seeing from a distance.” The Star-Spangled Banner, measuring 30 by 42 feet, was not the only large U.S. flag of that conflict. Earlier, while stationed at Fort Niagara, Armistead requisitioned a garrison flag for that post measuring 36 by 48 feet. This American fondness for large flags was also evidenced in 1844 when Henry Clay announced his candidacy for the U.S. presidency. A flag claimed to be “the longest and largest ever floated in the breeze or ever unfolded in the world”, reportedly “reached one third the distance across the Ohio River . . .”

Big Flags and Utah’s Pioneers

Celebrating with large flags began early in Utah’s history. Even before the Mormon Pioneers arrived in the Great Basin, they talked of raising large
flags. During a meeting at Winter Quarters, Nebraska, in late February of 1847, Brigham Young mused, “What of a flag would 16 [feet] by 8 [feet] on a [mountain]—5 miles off. I think 90 [feet] by 30 [feet] better.”6 In 1849 the Mormon Pioneers started celebrating the anniversary of their arrival in the Valley of the Great Salt Lake. For the first Pioneer Day Celebration on 24 July in 1849, the women sewed a blue and white flag 65 feet long. (Figure 1) It was displayed on a pole 104 feet tall.7 A flag of that size in 1849 Salt Lake City is significant. The pioneer settlements suffered extreme isolation and fabric could by necessity only be transported across the plains from the East. As available fabric was needed for clothing and bedclothes, to use yardage for a large flag at that time seems a lavish application. Yet, that was the first of many large flags produced by pioneer women. A flag measuring 30 by 80 feet flew over the 24th of July celebration in 1850,8 and for the Fourth of July and Pioneer Day in 1851 the pioneers made a large Stars and Stripes “measuring forty-five feet by fourteen and a half [feet], with the American Eagle stretching its wings on an area of ten feet square…”9 (Figure 2) These large flags—which continued to be made and flown each year—were often dubbed “mammoth” flags, and

Figure 1. 1849 “National Flag”, 65 feet long, flown on a 104-foot pole (reconstruction).

Figure 2. Deseret National Flag of 1851, 14½ by 45 feet (reconstruction).
they became a mainstay for pioneer celebrations. Following this tradition, a truly mammoth flag was made to celebrate Utah’s entry into the Union.

**Utah’s Struggle for Statehood**

Utahns struggled for almost half a century to achieve statehood. At the same time as the United States Congress systematically reduced the area of Utah Territory through the admission of surrounding states, lawmakers repeatedly ignored Utah’s petitions. While there were several reasons behind Congress’s rejections, a central allegation repeated over the decades charged the Mormons with disloyalty to the United States. With the approach of formal admission to the Union, Utah’s citizens fashioned an enormous banner to demonstrate their loyalty. Although their gigantic flag has been briefly mentioned and pictured in a few books and articles, the intriguing story of the Utah’s Mammoth Statehood Flag has remained largely unknown.

**Approaching Statehood and Celebration**

In late 1895 Utah’s citizens prepared for the long-awaited day when Utah would become a state. The pioneers had first petitioned Congress for statehood in 1849 as the State of Deseret. The Enabling Act which provided for Utah’s admission finally passed Congress in July of 1894. The convention to adopt a state constitution took place the following year. Elections in November 1895 chose a slate of state officials. With statehood finally approaching, excitement grew. Committees formed to plan the celebration. “Politics”, reported prominent Utah Republican Spencer Clawson “will cut no figure in the general rejoicing.” (Figure 3) He and Margaret Nightingale Caine, both members of the decorating committee, can be credited with originating the idea of a big flag to celebrate the big day. Margaret Caine, herself a prominent Democrat, led Utah’s campaign for women’s suffrage. Her husband, John T. Caine, had
Figure 4. Prominent Utah Democrats John T. and Margaret Caine.
served as Utah territory’s congressional delegate. (Figure 4) In 1895 he ran unsuccessfully as the Democratic Party’s candidate for governor. Therefore, Spencer Clawson and Margaret Caine, a Republican and a Democrat, had great political influence as Utah approached statehood.

A Mammoth Flag to Celebrate Statehood

Having envisioned a large flag, Mrs. Caine approached members of the celebration committee. They warned her that such a flag would be too expensive, and she initially gave in to their fears. Meanwhile, Spencer Clawson, the main buyer for Zions Cooperative Mercantile Institution (commonly known as ZCMI) and “one of the largest wholesale dealers in Salt Lake City”, was traveling in New York City. He also wanted the celebration to display a large flag. On his urging Margaret Caine again took up the cause. She asked for donations from prominent local merchants, but found little support. Finally, she received a “donation of $250.00 from George M. Cannon of the General Committee”.

Mrs. Caine overcame further concerns about the costs by organizing volunteers to make the flag. Others now embraced Mrs. Caine’s enthusiasm. “We will make an American Flag”, said Hyrum B. Clawson, Spencer Clawson’s father and the General Committee Chairman, “so the people of Utah will see for the first time the 45th star, the Utah star, placed on the blue ground of our beloved American flag.”

Making the Mammoth Flag

That $250 purchased 1,296 yards of good quality bunting. As Spencer Clawson was the buyer for ZCMI, it is likely that he bought the cloth for the flag at a wholesale price which would have been about 19 cents a yard. Today, $250 does not appear to be a significant amount, but over a century of inflation, it would be about $6,000 today. Nevertheless, that only paid for the fabric, so Mrs. Caine made arrangements for George Romney and a number of ZCMI employees to make the flag using the ZCMI factory’s “high-powered machines”. (Figure 5) ZCMI operated the largest clothing factory west of Chicago; it employed over 300 people. Spencer Clawson may well have played a part in securing the company’s cooperation.

Six women enlisted by Mrs. Caine made the flag. Margaret Glade, then twenty years old and unmarried, was the youngest, and she noted that the
other women were considerably older, but unfortunately, she did not record their identities. Her brother, David Glade, marked and cut the cloth. Margaret would marry Hyrum H. Derrick in 1901. She raised six successful children and lived to the age of 90, yet for Margaret Glade Derrick making the flag was a signal event of her life. Years later, she often spoke to church groups, schools, and civic organizations about her role the flag’s history.17 At her death, articles appeared in Salt Lake’s two daily newspapers; headlines acknowledged her as “Maker of Historic Flag.”18

A New Star for the National Flag

The pattern of stars used for the large Statehood Flag was not the arrangement that would later be officially adopted. At the time, varying patterns of stars on U. S. flags were not unusual. It was common for the Army to adopt one version of the flag and for the Navy to adopt another, with yet other versions made by civilian flag makers. When Wyoming entered the Union in 1890, the typical version of the flag showed four rows of seven stars sandwiched between two rows of eight stars.19 The New York Times reported, “Heretofore the Navy Department has not conformed strictly to any official design in the arrangement of the field [of stars]....”20 An unusual variant for the 44-star flag
Utah’s Mammoth Statehood Flag

is found in one private flag collection.\textsuperscript{21} It displays 40 stars in three concentric rings around a single star at the center. Four stars, one in each corner of the union, complete the design.

Contemporary newspaper articles also reflect this lack of uniformity in the design of the Stars and Stripes.\textsuperscript{22} Among hundreds of newspaper articles published across the nation in January of 1896, five included illustrations of the new 45-star flag. One sketch added Utah’s star to the third row. (Figure 6) Two added the 45th star to the fourth row. (Figures 7 & 8) Another drawing added the star to the fifth row. (Figure 9) The final article depicted a 45-star flag, pointing to Utah’s new star as the “Fourth Star From the Top Next [to] the Strip[e]”, among a jumble of stars. (Figure 10) There was not only a lack

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\includegraphics[width=0.4\textwidth]{figure6.png}
\caption{The 45th star added to the third row.}
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\caption{New Jersey City Chronicle of 8 January 1896, placing Utah’s star on the 4th row.}
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\begin{figure}[h]
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\includegraphics[width=0.4\textwidth]{figure8.png}
\caption{Milwaukee Journal of 4 January 1896, placing Utah’s star on the 4th row.}
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\begin{figure}[h]
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\includegraphics[width=0.4\textwidth]{figure9.png}
\caption{St. Louis Republic of 12 January 1896, placing Utah’s star on the 5th row.}
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of uniformity, there was a considerable confusion. The article accompanying one of the drawings included the following explanation:

*The arrangement of the stars and stripes of Old Glory is an official affair, and regarded as an important one, and is put in charge of a special board of army and navy officers. While it has not yet been officially and finally decided, it is probable that the new star will occupy the blank space which now exists in the fifth row from the top, nearest the flagstaff.*

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**Figure 10.** Kansas City, Missouri Times of 5 January 1896, placing Utah’s star on the fourth row.
The National Flag Rearranged

The typical 44-star flag, as noted above, had four rows of seven stars sandwiched between two rows of eight stars. In August of 1895, Secretary of War Daniel S. Lamont issued an order adding Utah’s star to the design of the 44-star flag “placed to the right of the fourth row from the top”. Nevertheless, seven months later another design for the 45-star flag received presidential approval. War Secretary Lamont had reached an agreement with Navy Secretary Hilary A. Herbert to adopt a common design for both the Army and the Navy. With Utah’s admission as the 45th state, there would be three rows of eight stars alternating with three rows of seven stars. It was expected that Utah, Oklahoma, New Mexico, and Arizona would be the last four states. The plan emerged whereby a star would be added to each of the four middle rows of seven stars as the final four states were admitted. This appears to be a logical and practical plan. Nonetheless, as is always the case with government, it took time for the common design to work its way through the War Department and Navy Department. The agreement then had to be passed to the Executive Department and go to President Cleveland for final adoption.

Work necessarily started on the Statehood Flag before the official adoption of the 45-star flag’s design. Making the flag took the volunteers a full week, working from eight to ten hours each day. There was considerable pressure to complete the sewing in time for the Statehood Inauguration program on 6 January 1896. They followed the design ordered by Secretary Lamont in August of 1895. The starry pattern, however, included one change. Utah’s star, the 45th star, would be larger than the others. (Figure 11) This is an understandable conceit to honor the new state, although the placement of a larger star on the flag actually followed a Utah tradition dating to 1851. On local pioneer flags, a grouping of stars with one larger star symbolized a new state rising to join the other states in the flag’s starry constellation. This also followed a practice
of flag patterns in other areas of the 19th-century American West. One collector explains, “These large stars represent the newest state to enter the Union and add great character and boldness to flags of all eras.” So, rather than six alternating rows of eight and seven stars, the union on the Statehood Flag displayed rows of eight, seven, seven, eight, seven, and eight stars. The *Ohio State Journal* reported simply, “Old Glory Smiles”.

Thus the approval of the standard design for the 45-star flag came four weeks after Utah’s admission date, and accordingly word did not reach the 45th state until after the statehood celebration had taken place. Frank J. Cannon, Utah Territory’s last congressional delegate, received the first two 45-star flags made by the War Department. He forwarded these two flags to Governor Wells and LDS Church President Wilford Woodruff in late February of 1896. “There has been a short delay” reported the *Millennial Star* that April “of making public this news, owing to the fact that it was not definitely settled that the design on the flags would be permanent.” The article concluded, “It has now been officially adopted. . . .” *Deseret News* of 19 March commented, “The uncertainty as to the arrangement of stars on the United States flag, which had to be changed by reason of the admission of Utah to the Union, has at last been

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*Figure 12. Lavish decorations on Main Street’s business blocks, flags floating from hundreds of roofs.*
settled by agreement of the secretaries of war and navy, and the approval of
the president.”
The design for the 45-star flag did not become official, however, until 4 July 1896. Utahns were too excited to wait. The pattern used for the Utah statehood celebration would not be the one eventually adopted, but it did have 45 stars.

The decorations committee members were not the only Utahns to jump the gun by displaying a 45-star flag before the Fourth of July. The Salt Lake Tribune claimed that its employee, Benjamin Midgley, raised the first 45-star flag over the newspaper’s offices. Since the Tribune was the state’s principal non-Mormon newspaper, it is evident that the celebration and rejoicing occasioned by Utah’s statehood was not just for the Mormon population. Besides, the huge Statehood Flag was not the only flag in town; as a reporter for the Boston Transcript described the downtown area, “Looking down the street I see lavish decorations on its business blocks, flags floating from hundreds of roofs, and one immense flag stretched between the topmost spires of the temple, visible for miles around.”

“The Largest Flag in the World”

The record does not say who chose the Statehood Flag’s exact dimensions. It might have been a committee decision. The decorations committee definitely wanted a large flag, and it may have determined the size to fit the space where the flag would eventually be displayed. At any rate, the flag would dwarf the mammoth flags of Utah’s early years with each of the thirteen stripes on the new flag measuring six feet wide. The stripes would be joined using double flat felled seams, giving the flag added strength. “Placing the stars on the blue ground was the hardest and most tedious work”, Mrs. Derrick would later affirm. The stars measured three feet from tip to tip, with Utah’s star larger and added to the end of the fourth row next to the stripes. Each of the 45 stars would be double appliquéd on six foot squares of blue bunting, and then the squares would be sewn together to form the union. The flag would be double-sided with appliquéd stars appearing on both sides. Different sources give slightly different dimensions, but considering the size of the parts and gauging photographs of the flag, the flag
measured 74 by 132 feet. The blue union alone measured 40 feet square. Its weight is unknown, but it took eight men to carry the folded flag. (Figure 14)

It was in fact the largest flag in the world, a boast easily made but difficult to prove. Certainly, there had been other large flags in American history, the most famous being the Star-Spangled Banner which had been sewn large in defiance of an enemy. Nonetheless, the Mammoth Utah Flag was definitely outsized, and may have been the first to claim the title of “Largest Flag in the World”. Around the turn of the 20th century and after, other flags began to claim the title, but all were smaller than Utah’s flag. One flag displayed on the building of Denver’s Daniels and Fisher Store about 1905 claimed to be the “Largest American Flag in the World”. (Figure 15) Nevertheless at 55 by 115 feet it was only about two-thirds as large as Utah’s Mammoth Statehood Flag. The appendix shows large United States flags made up until 1960. While it is possible that reference to a contemporary flag larger than the Utah Statehood Flag may yet be found, it appears that the claim for Utah’s flag is strong. Much larger flags are now common, but they did not appear until late in the 20th century.

Utah’s large flag would hold that title of largest flag until 1923, when the J. L. Hudson department store in Detroit, Michigan, made a flag measuring
90 by 200 feet (in 1949 the store replaced that flag with one measuring 104 feet by 235 feet). (Figure 16) It is significant that Utah’s flag held the record for so long—27 years. With the publication of the Guinness Book of Records in 1955, competition for all kinds of world records increased. To celebrate the American Bicentennial in 1976, a flag identified as the “Largest Flag in the World” was raised on New York’s Verrazano Narrows Bridge. In a test the day before the Fourth of July, it tore apart in a strong gale. The flag’s makers later sought to replace it with a large flag made of stronger material that had been impregnated with silicone. Instead of the one and a half ton weight of the first flag, the replacement weighed a whopping seven tons. Fearing the flag would be a sail that could topple their structure, bridge engineers refused to allow the second flag. Too big to fly on the bridge, this record holder could only be displayed by stretching it out on the ground. In recent years, flags have grown so large that Guinness has stopped listing the candidates for largest flag in the world. Recent record-holding flags have become more photo opportunities or events than real flags.37
Figure 16. Flag displayed on Detroit’s J. L. Hudson Department Store Building, after the stars were updated in 1960.

Figure 17. Colonial Flag’s 150 by 300 foot flag in Cowboy Stadium, Dallas, Texas.
The Tradition Continues

Although it has been almost nine decades since Utah’s Mammoth Statehood Flag last held the title of “The Largest Flag in the World”, one Utah flag manufacturer still makes huge flags. The Colonial Flag Company of Sandy, Utah makes flags that measure 150 feet by 300 feet—large enough to cover the playing fields in football stadiums, and more than four times larger than the Statehood Flag made in 1896.\(^{38}\) (Figure 17) Colonial Flag has found a niche in the flag market by sewing huge flags. Most flag manufacturers in the United States and China concentrate on mass-producing smaller flags and are not interested in making the big flags.\(^{39}\) While the large flags made by Colonial Flag are not record-holders compared to other flags made nationally and around the world, in the tradition of Utah’s Mammoth Statehood Flag, they show a local commitment to honoring the U.S. flag in a big way.

How to Raise the Huge Flag

If a pole tall and strong enough could have been erected, the Mammoth Statehood Flag could have flown like any other Stars and Stripes. It was double-sided and well made. However, the flag’s size presented a problem. The flag was over 151 feet on the diagonal. To merely keep the flag’s tip from touching the ground would require a flag pole at least 152 feet tall. And to look right, an appropriate flag pole would need to be well over 200 feet tall, higher than the Salt Lake Temple, which stands 210 feet tall.

In addition to making large flags, the Mormon Pioneers had raised tall flag poles. The large 1849 flag was raised on a pole over 100 feet tall. (Figure 18) Wilford Woodruff recorded in his journal: “July 24th. A great Celebration in the City of the Great Salt Lake. A liberty pole erected 104 feet high, with a flag or ensign 60 feet long.”\(^{40}\) Since this would have been a wooden pole, it would have been cut and transported from a canyon, still in 1849 a significant effort. However, tall flag poles can present significant risks. In 1850 the Pioneers raised a flag on another “tall liberty pole”. “A gale arose”, wrote an observer “the staff broke and down came the flag, trailing in the dust”.\(^{41}\) By the 1890s tubular steel flag poles became available, taller and safer than wooden poles, but not without problems. The example of another more modern flag pole constructed years later illustrates this. Harrison S. Kerrick reported the story of one large flag pole in a 1925 book. A 218-foot tubular steel flag pole
erected in Kansas City was designed to fly a 30 by 50 foot flag. (Figure 19) The flag in Kerrick’s story was much smaller than the Utah Statehood Flag of 1896; yet, because of the stress on the halyards two strong men were unable to raise this smaller flag in a 25-mile-an-hour gale. A lesser breeze failed to billow the flag out from the pole. A smaller flag was finally hoisted on this pole, but it failed to produce the hoped-for “spectacular effect”. Kerrick pronounced the effort “impractical” and “disappointing”. Modern flag poles are better constructed, but aluminum poles usually reach no higher than 80 feet. Steel poles can go much higher. 200-foot steel poles are not uncommon, but up to 120 feet is more usual. Of course, in the Salt Lake City of 1896 no pole of sufficient height and strength existed to fly the Mammoth Statehood Flag. Even if the committee had wanted to install a tall flag pole, the cost would have been prohibitive. Certainly, that
was never the plan. Margaret Glade Derrick clearly stated, “We who worked on the flag were not told where it would be placed. We knew that it could not be placed on a pole.”

Displaying the Statehood Flag

However, the makers of the flag did not make such a large flag without having a plan to display it. Margaret Cain and Spencer Clawson knew that the inauguration ceremony would be held in the Salt Lake Tabernacle. Knowing the architecture of that building, they saw a way to make the most of the building’s most impressive attribute. The historic domed structure, built between 1864 and 1867, required no internal columns to support its arched roof. The ceiling was just the right size to accommodate the giant flag they envisioned, with no pillars in the way.

Today the display of a flag in this manner is prohibited by the United States Flag Code, which states: “The flag should never be used as a covering for a ceiling.” However, the code was first adopted in 1923 by the National Flag Conference. In 1942 Congress adopted the rules as a “Joint Resolution to codify existing rules and customs pertaining to the display and use of the flag of the United States of America”. No penalties were adopted for violation of these rules. But in 1896 no rule or custom prohibited the display of the
Figure 21. The Tabernacle’s arched roof supports eliminate the need for internal support pillars.

Figure 22. The Tabernacle’s vast unobstructed interior space.
flag to cover a ceiling, and the display of the huge Utah Statehood flag on the ceiling of the Tabernacle was certainly intended to honor the flag. Those who saw the display uniformly felt it was a beautiful sight.

Still, we can only guess why the committee that produced the Flag Code included that prohibition. The committee wanted the United States flag used as a flag and not as any type of covering. Use as a tablecloth, use to cover monuments to be unveiled, and draping over the hood of a car were all forbidden. These prohibitions are understandable, but other provisions are less clear. For example, carrying a flag parallel to the ground in a parade is not allowed, perhaps because some charities collected money tossed in a flag carried flat. But today large flags are often carried flat in parades or on the field of sporting events, and while technically against the rules of the Flag Code, it is a practice that is becoming accepted. One big example was on 9 September 2011 when each of the twelve National Football League games featured pre-game ceremonies unrolling a gigantic U.S. flag measuring 150 by 300 feet, covering the entire playing field. The cheering fans made it clear that they approved this manner of commemorating the weekend of the tenth anniversary of the terrorist attacks of 11 September 2001. Colonial Flag Company made those flags.49

The only exception to using the flag as a covering is for draping the caskets of those who have served in the military, police forces, and fire departments. Certainly an important use of the flag, this practice honors those who have served.

One problem does exist with displaying a flag flat in that it becomes difficult to determine the “flag’s own right”. When a flag is stretched out in this way, the flag’s left and right are determined by the position of the observer. This problem also exists when the flag is draped on a casket. There, it has been solved by placing the union over the heart of the deceased, which has the effect of displaying the front of the flag. This is significant, especially when a heraldic banner, such as the British Royal Standard, is used. It would be improper to show the reverse of the flag. When a flag is displayed covering the ceiling, everything depends on where the observer is standing and which direction the observer is facing. Is the flag right side up or upside down? Where is the flag’s left? Where is its right? Perhaps that was an uncomfortable situation for members of the flag committee. Nonetheless, it didn’t bother the citizens of Utah in January of 1896. Wherever they stood or sat when observing the mammoth flag in the Tabernacle, the flag looked beautiful.
Hanging the Huge Flag in the Tabernacle

When the finished flag was delivered to the Salt Lake Tabernacle for installation, a crew headed by John Starley, Temple Square's head gardener, spread the flag out over the benches. Three young women—Alice Calder, Mary McAdams, and Bernice McAdams—sewed rings on the back of the flag to coincide with vent holes built into the ceiling. Ropes attached to the rings were run through the ceiling holes and the flag was hoisted high above the seating. The flag covered the entire ceiling from the massive organ pipes on the west to the balcony on the east. (Figure 23) Workers constructed a special electric light fixture with an opening the shape and size of Utah's star. Placed directly behind the Utah's star, the light was readied for Utah's Statehood inaugural ceremony, which would be held in the Tabernacle. On 4 January 1896, President Cleveland signed the proclamation admitting Utah. On 6 January the inaugural ceremony took place with the Tabernacle and its flag standing in readiness. When the building filled with an excited and proud audience ready to experience the proceedings, the magnificent flag made a wonderful impression on those attending. Then at the right moment, with a flip of a switch Utah's 45th star shone brightly in the banner's blue union. Utah and its people had achieved statehood.

Figure 23. The Mammoth Statehood Flag on 6 January 1896, suspended from the Tabernacle ceiling.
One of the attendees, Frederick Kesler, wrote his impressions of the statehood ceremony:

*I attended the great inauguration ceremonies at the [Salt Lake Tabernacle] at 12 noon in which the Great Building was packed, every available space being occupied. It was that 14,000 persons were within the walls of the building. The building was very elaborately and tastefully decorated for the occasion which was of no ordinary moment. The Largest American Flag ever made, its exact size being 150 feet long and 75 feet wide, was stretched out at full length on the ceiling overhead. The additional star of the newborn state of Utah was very conspicuous, a small electric [light] being ingenuously fixed so the bright light shone on the new star.*\(^{51}\)

Margaret Glade Derrick, one of the flag’s makers, described the scene:

*There was nine feet of space between the dome of the Tabernacle and the flag. When the air circulated through the space, it caused the flag to ripple across the ceiling. WHAT A BEAUTIFUL SIGHT!*\(^{52}\)

*As I watched the flag as it rippled across the ceiling tears filled my eyes and a lump came in my throat. I felt this flag was saying, “Proudly I wave over you, home of the brave and land of the free.”*\(^{52}\)

**A New Place to Display the Flag**

In the summer of 1897 another celebration approached, the 50th anniversary of the Mormon Pioneers’ arrival in Great Salt Lake City, and the large flag served in that celebration. Spencer Clawson, who had been so involved in creating the Statehood Flag, became the president of 1897’s Pioneer Jubilee. He would have likely been eager to see the large flag displayed again. This time the huge flag was hung on the south wall of the Salt Lake Temple,\(^ {53}\) and even then it was a bit too big for the space available. With a little draping it still stretched from the towers on the east to those on the west again a breathtaking sight.\(^ {54}\) (Figure 24).

The blue union found its place on the east portion of the wall. To later observers, the flag appeared to be hung backwards. Although the gigantic flag had been made to announce Utah’s loyalty, some have even suggested that this display indicated Mormon defiance of the federal government. Nevertheless,
the rule dictating placement of the starry union to the west portion of the wall—on the flag’s own right—did not exist in 1896.\textsuperscript{55}

There is no record explaining why the flag was hung in this manner.\textsuperscript{56} The flag did have two sides; the double-appliquéd stars were visible on the front and back of the flag. Pictures of the flag suspended from the ceiling of the Tabernacle show the front of the flag. Pictures showing the flag hung on the wall of the Salt Lake Temple show the back of the flag. If the flag had had only one side, the side seen in Tabernacle photos, then it would have been necessary to hang the flag on the temple wall with the stars to the west. So the stars were hung to the east by choice.

This manner of display makes sense when the whole view is considered. The stars of the blue union were placed next to the east spires of the Temple, which are the tallest and most important features of the building. It is almost as if the east central tower was intended to serve symbolically as the flag pole upon which the mammoth flag was raised. Interestingly, a modern example of flag display—unforeseen in 1923—places the flag in a way that appears to contradict the U.S. Flag Code: a U.S. flag patch worn by American troops on the right
sleeve of the U.S. Army combat uniform “is worn so the star field faces forward…, and gives the effect of the flag flying in the breeze as the wearer moves forward.” The U.S. Flag Code always specifies that the “star union” is always in the upper left hand quarter. On the right sleeve this would give the appearance of the flag being hoisted by the fly end with the stripes forward and the union “flying in the breeze as the wearer moves forward”. (Figure 25) The military, thus, follows regulations and not the U.S. Flag Code, which was created as a guide for civilians. The Boy Scouts of America follow the specifics of the flag code and wear flag patches always showing the union in the upper left and corner. (Figure 26) Nonetheless, the practice of showing the flag flying to the rear “as the wearer moves forward” is also the practice in other nations, as shown in a recently published guide for flag display in Britain. This modern situational display is in the spirit of the display of the Utah’s 1896 flag on the wall of the Salt Lake Temple with the stars placed to the flag appears to be flying from the building’s tallest towers.

A circular issued by the U.S. War Department’s adjutant general in 1917 gives perhaps a better insight into ideas concerning proper flag display that may have been prevalent in 1896. While it suggests that the flag should not be used for “purposes of decoration”, it does provide that when a flag is displayed against a wall, it “should always be hung flat whether on the inside or the outside of buildings, with the union to the north or east, so that there will be a general uniformity in the position of the union of each flag displayed”. The Mammoth Statehood Flag was hung on the south wall of the Salt Lake Temple, so that the stars were displayed to the east.

Current sensibilities regarding the division of church and state may find offense in the display of the flag on the wall of a religious building. How-
ever, the display of the huge U.S. flag on the side of the Salt Lake Temple was intended to honor the flag and the nation, and it exhibited pride and not rebellion. The 1896 statehood flag continued to be displayed on the south wall of the Salt Lake Temple on appropriate holidays until about 1903, as a sign of Utah’s pride in its national flag.

**The Worn Flag is Destroyed**

The size of the flag had a negative consequence. Although made with strong seams and out of good quality material, the flag could not support its own weight. As it hung on the side of the Temple, the weight of the flag tore rips in the fabric. Photographs show it with long tears along its stripes. Damp storage in the basement of the Tabernacle and in a greenhouse also caused the cloth to mildew, and when it could not be cleaned or repaired, the flag could no longer be displayed. Finally, Utah’s Mammoth Statehood Flag was destroyed respectfully by burning it on a corner of the Temple grounds. While we may be disappointed that the flag was not saved, its size and condition would make its preservation a daunting challenge for any museum. It is unfortunate that no swatch of fabric or souvenir fragment was retained. A star or even Utah’s larger star would have been an impressive artifact. Although such patches were cut from the Star Spangled Banner and other 19th-century flags, no portion of Utah’s mammoth flag appears to have been saved.

**The Heritage of Utah’s Mammoth Statehood Flag**

Today only written descriptions and a few photographs remain of Utah’s Mammoth Statehood Flag. Still the flag and its story remind us of the excitement felt by Utahns as they illuminated the nation’s 45th star, Utah’s star. They sang Utah’s original and then newly composed state song: “Bright in our banner’s blue / Among her sisters true / She proudly comes to view / Utah we love thee!”
### Selected Large Flags Compared to the Utah Statehood Flag

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<th>Flag Name</th>
<th>Hoist</th>
<th>Fly</th>
<th>Star</th>
<th>Stripe</th>
<th>Weight</th>
<th>Yards Cloth</th>
<th>Yards Thread</th>
<th>Cost</th>
<th>Year Made</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>U.S. Army Post Flag</td>
<td>10'</td>
<td>19'</td>
<td>60”</td>
<td>90”</td>
<td>7”</td>
<td>xxx</td>
<td>xxx</td>
<td>xxx</td>
<td>xxx</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>U.S. Army Garrison Flag</td>
<td>20'</td>
<td>38”</td>
<td>120”</td>
<td>180”</td>
<td>14”</td>
<td>xxx</td>
<td>xxx</td>
<td>xxx</td>
<td>xxx</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Star Spangled Banner Flag</td>
<td>30'</td>
<td>42”</td>
<td>(16’)</td>
<td>(18’)</td>
<td>2’</td>
<td>2’</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>400</td>
<td>1813</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Postmasters’ Flag</td>
<td>37’</td>
<td>70’4”</td>
<td>(19’11”)</td>
<td>(28’)</td>
<td>(2’3”)</td>
<td>(2’10”)</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>1920</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manchester, NH Flag</td>
<td>50’</td>
<td>95’</td>
<td>28’</td>
<td>38’</td>
<td>3’</td>
<td>(4’)</td>
<td>200</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>1914</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Daniels &amp; Fisher Store Flag</td>
<td>55’</td>
<td>115’</td>
<td>28’</td>
<td>35’</td>
<td>2’</td>
<td>4’2”</td>
<td>450</td>
<td>1,450</td>
<td>$800 ca. 1905</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>George Washington Bridge</td>
<td>60’</td>
<td>90’</td>
<td>32’8”</td>
<td>36’</td>
<td>3’</td>
<td>5’</td>
<td>500</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>1960</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mulford Flag</td>
<td>65’</td>
<td>100’</td>
<td>34’</td>
<td>40’</td>
<td>2’8”</td>
<td>5’</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>1900</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Utah Statehood Flag</td>
<td>74’</td>
<td>132’</td>
<td>40’</td>
<td>40’</td>
<td>3’</td>
<td>6’</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>1,296</td>
<td>$250 1896</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>J. L. Hudson Flag #1</td>
<td>90’</td>
<td>200’</td>
<td>(48’)</td>
<td>(70’)</td>
<td>(5’6”)</td>
<td>(7’)</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>1923</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>J. L. Hudson Flag #2</td>
<td>104’</td>
<td>235’</td>
<td>(56’)</td>
<td>(80’)</td>
<td>6’</td>
<td>8’</td>
<td>1,500</td>
<td>2,038</td>
<td>5,500 1949</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stadium Size Flags</td>
<td>150’</td>
<td>300’</td>
<td>80’</td>
<td>100’</td>
<td>7 ½’</td>
<td>12’</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>5,000</td>
<td>$33,000 2004 &amp; after</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes:
1. Figures in parentheses are estimates based on overall measurements.
2. Dashes are used when data are not known.
3. The symbol “xxx” is used when data items for standard sizes are not significant.
4. The measurements for the Utah Statehood Flag are based on many sources and photographs.

* The 45th star on the Utah Statehood Flag, representing Utah, was larger than the other stars.
End Notes

1. Michael Faul email to John M. Hartvigsen, 28 February 2012.


5. The Mormon Church is officially known as “The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints”, or “LDS” for short.

6. Minutes of meeting held Friday, 26 February 1847 at Winter Quarters, Brigham Young Papers, LDS Church Archives. The flag discussed was the “Ensign of the Nations”, however, the size of contemplated flags appears to have been followed in the manufacture of other flags in the Salt Lake Valley.

7. Marilyn Higbee, ed., “‘A Weary Traveler’: The 1848–1850 Diary of Zina D. Huntington Young”, *Journal of Mormon History*, Vol. 19, No. 2 (Fall 1993), pp. 113 ff, and also “24th of July, at Great Salt Lake City”, *Frontier Guardian*, 19 September 1849, p. 4. Huntington gives the length as 60 feet while the *Frontier Guardian* and other sources give 65 feet, a large flag at either measurement. Its design was not a traditional Stars and Stripes, but considered a flag of Deseret. The Provisional State of Deseret was proposed for statehood in 1849. Utah Territory was created instead by Congress in 1850.


11. In October of 1983, New York City’s St. Moritz Hotel hosted NAVA’s 17th annual meeting. The annual banquet took place in the hotel’s storied Sky Gardens overlooking Central Park South. There, I was privileged to deliver an after-dinner speech and slide presentation which considered large flags, many claiming the title “The Largest Flag in the World”. One interesting claimant was the flag made and displayed in Salt Lake City in 1896 when Utah achieved statehood. Time constraints prevented my sharing any details then; this article finally tells the full story of this fascinating flag.

13. Clarissa Y. Spencer, quoted in “Utah and Her Neighbor States Receive Statehood”, Heart Throbs of the West, compiled by Kate B. Carter (Salt Lake City: Daughters of the Utah Pioneers, 1940), p. 92.


17. Interview with Ali Derrick, Margaret Glade Derrick’s daughter-in-law, on 10 November 2010.


31. The 1817 law providing for updating the United States flag reads: “That on the admission of every new State into the Union, one star be added to the union of the flag; and that such addition shall take effect on the fourth of July next succeeding such admission.” Statutes at Large, 15th Congress, 1st Session, Chapter
XXXIV—An Act to establish the flag of the United States approved April 4, 1818, page 415.


33. *Drum’s Manual*, a register published in 1896, listed state office-holders. Tables included columns which identified relevant facts about each official. For example, one column indicated political party with an “R” for Republican or a “D” for Democrat. One column may be surprising to the modern eye in that it identified each individual by either an “M” or a “G” standing for Mormon or Gentile. Gentile, of course, was the term used in the past to identify a person who was not a member of the Mormon Church. This book shows that the newly formed state included both Mormons and non-Mormons alike. In fact, Utah’s population had grown diverse during the decades since the arrival of the Mormon pioneers. See Thomas Alexander, “Integration into the National Economy”, *Utah’s History* (Provo: Brigham Young University Press, 1978) pp. 429–442.

34. “Utah’s First Inaugural”, *The Transcript*, Boston, Massachusetts, 14 January 1896.

35. Derrick, p. 2.

36. Walter Lord, *ibid*.


41. Langworthy, *ibid*.


43. Derrick, *ibid*.

44. The Tabernacle, the largest meeting hall in the state in 1896 (holding up to ten thousand people), was the logical choice for the statehood ceremonies. It was used then as it is now for all types of religious and community events.


46. Title 4, U.S. Code, § 8 Respect for Flag, paragraph (f).

47. Kerrick, p. 45.


51. Frederick Kesler, Diaries Volume II, Diary II, 6 January 1896, Special Collection, University of Utah, Marriott Library, 1. The entry has been edited to conform to modern spelling and punctuation.

52. Derrick, ibid.

53. The Salt Lake Temple, completed in 1893, is not used for public meetings or worship services, but for religious ceremonies and ordinances such as baptisms and marriages for church members. In Temple Square next to the Tabernacle, it has six spires, three on the east and three on the west.

54. Poll, ibid.

55. Kerrick, p. 45.

56. Margaret Derrick Lester, Margaret Glade Derrick’s daughter, suggested that because the rings were sewn on the back of the flag, it had to be displayed on the Temple with the stars to the west. Since the back or reverse of the flag is the side viewed in photographs showing the flag on the Temple, this does not appear to be correct. See postscript shown with Margaret Glade Derrick, “The Making of the Statehood Flag”, in Beehive History, No. 21 (Salt Lake City: Utah State Historical Society, 1995), p. 9.


59. Graham Bartram, Flying Flags in the United Kingdom (Flag Institute, 2010), p. 7.


61. Gwen Starley Matheson, ibid.

Illustration Sources

Figure 1. 1849 “National Flag” / John M. Hartvigsen, reconstructed illustration based on a description by Charles Benjamin Darwin

Figure 2. Deseret National Flag 1851 / John M. Hartvigsen, reconstructed illustration

Figure 3. George M. Cannon / Pioneer leaders book, Utah State Historical Society

Figure 4. John T. & Margaret Caine / Utah State Historical Society

Figure 5. ZCMI Clothing Company / Utah State Historical Society

Figure 6. 45-Star Flag / Unknown newspaper clipping, 6 Jan. 1896

Figure 7. 45-Star Flag / New Jersey City Chronicle clipping, 8 Jan. 1896

Figure 8. 45-Star Flag / Milwaukee Journal clipping, 4 Jan. 1896

Figure 9. 45-Star Flag / St. Louis Republic clipping, 12 Jan. 1896

Figure 10. 45-Star Flag / Kansas City, Missouri Times clipping, 5 Jan. 1896

Figure 11. Statehood Flag union / John M. Hartvigsen

Figure 12. Salt Lake celebration with flags / Utah State Historical Society

Figure 13. Double flat felled seam / Online illustration, site unknown

Figure 14. Statehood flag with measurements / John M. Hartvigsen

Figure 15. Daniel & Fisher Store Flag / Hartvigsen Collection, contemporary color print

Figure 16. J. L. Hudson #2 / Hartvigsen Collection, J. L. Hudson Department Store photo

Figure 17. Stadium flag / Dallas News

Figure 18. Bowery & liberty pole / Howard Stansbury, Exploration of the Valley of the Great Salt Lake, 1852

Figure 19. Tall 20th century flagpole / Harrison S. Kerrick, The Flag of the United States: Your Flag and Mine, 1925

Figure 20. Tabernacle exterior / Utah State Historical Society, C. R. Savage photo

Figure 21. Tabernacle buttress drawing / Office of Archaeology and Historic Preservation, State of Utah

Figure 22. Tabernacle interior without flag / Utah State Historical Society, C. R. Savage photo

Figure 23. Tabernacle interior with flag / Utah State Historical Society, C. R. Savage photo

Figure 24. South wall, Salt Lake Temple & flag / Special Collections, Marriott Library, University of Utah

Figure 25. U.S. Army patch / John M. Hartvigsen photo

Figure 26. Boy Scout patch / John M. Hartvigsen photo