A Most Interesting Jewish Experience in Abraham Lincoln’s Life

An interesting souvenir was presented to Abraham Lincoln by Abraham Kohn, President of the K A M Congregation and City clerk of Chicago. Kohn met Lincoln shortly after the Nominating Convention. They talked not only of politics, but also of the Bible. In February 1861, one month before the inauguration, Kohn, a pious and learned Jew, pondered the fate of the nation and its leader. He presented the message of Joshua to the President along with a painted replica of the American flag with the Hebrew verses from the Book of Joshua painted on the stripes.

Lincoln apparently sent a note of thanks to Kohn through the agency of J. Scrammon Young who misplaced it for almost six months. It was finally forwarded to Kohn, but unfortunately the letter was lost again for good. The President had written how deeply moved he was by Kohn’s quotation of the inspiring words of Scripture.

In the late 1862, a New York paper printed a report that some local Jewish woman had presented a flag to Mrs. Lincoln. A.S. Cohen, editor of the Jewish Record attempted to discover the details, but no one seemed to know the source of the report, so he wrote to the President. John Hay answered the query.

Executive Mansion
Washington
November 28, 1862

My Dear Sir:
The paragraph to which you refer was altogether erroneous. The “flag” referred to was a small painting of the American banner, inscribed in Hebrew characters with a passage from the 1st chapter of Joshua, from the 4th to the 9th verse.* It was presented to the President in February, 1861, before his departure from Illinois, by Abraham Kohn, City Clerk of Chicago, who had painted it. It has been in the Executive Mansion ever since the President’s inauguration.

Your Obt. Servant,
John Hay
Assist. Priv. Sec.

In the Encyclopedia Judaica, volume 15, there is a picture of this flag—courtesy of the Jewish Theological Seminary Photographic Archives.

*Mr. Hay was a bit misinformed, since the quotation on the flag is only part of verse 9 of Joshua, Chapter 1.
Hartvigsen's research pays off

BY LOUISE DYSON
APG Public Affairs Office

The North American Vexillological Association, whose membership is made up of professionals and amateurs who study flags and their usage, awarded Capt. John M. Hartvigsen with its fourth annual Driver Award.

The annual award is named after Capt. William Driver, who was the first person to dub the American flag “Old Glory.” Hartvigsen, chief of the Military Personnel Division at Aberdeen Proving Ground, earned the award which was accompanied with a check by presenting a lecture entitled, The Brandywine Flag, at the group’s annual convention last month.

In his lecture, Hartvigsen contended that the Brandywine flag was carried by the Chester County Pennsylvania Militia during the Revolutionary War.

“Although my research has not yielded direct written documentation of the Brandywine flag, it has built a plausible case of circumstantial evidence that could easily tie the flag to the battle of Brandywine,” Hartvigsen said.


Hartvigsen believes that it is incorrectly labeled as the flag of the Seventh Pennsylvania Regiment.

The flag was donated to Independence Hall in 1923 by Richard Wilson Harrison, its last private owner. In a letter, Harrison related that it was carried at the battle of Brandywine by one of his ancestors named Wilson.

Later the letter was lost. In 1931, James G. Longfellow researched to an ancestor named Wilson. He established the genealogical relationship between the Brandywine flag’s last private owner and Robert Wilson who was definitely present at Brandywine.

But despite his extensive research, Hartvigsen admits that the data he compiled and presented at the convention was not as conclusive as he would have liked.

However, his extensive research of the Brandywine flag led him to believe that the Brandywine flag is in all probability the one carried by the Chester County Pennsylvania Militia during the Revolutionary War.

Protocol expert Bee Lavery hoped that when Queen Elizabeth and Prince Philip visited Los Angeles in February, that she wouldn’t have to face a goof such as the one she had to quip her way out of when Prince Charles was in town. Prince Charles had remarked quietly during a ceremony, “The British flag is upside down.” Instead of apologizing, Lavery came back with, “We must have Irishmen working in the flag room.”


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Argentine Flag Over California?

LONG BEFORE its invasion of the Falkland Islands, Argentina captured what is now Monterey, Calif.

After declaring its independence in 1816, Argentina cast about for other Spanish-American colonies to join its campaign against Spanish imperialism. On November 20, 1818, two captains of Argentine ships — French privateer Hippolyte de Bouchard of the 38-gun Argentina and Englishman Peter Cornery commanding the smaller Santa Rosa — dropped anchor opposite the Spanish garrison at Monterey. There they commanded the Spanish colonial governor, Pablo Vicente de Sola, to surrender. With barely 100 men, eight small field guns and little ammunition, the governor couldn't match the Argentine forces which numbered 360. After a brief engagement, de Sola abandoned the garrison.

The foreign invaders hoisted the Argentine colors, looted the town, set it aflame and departed, never to return.

from: Fate Magazine
April 1963

VEXILLOGICAL CARTOON

from: The Salem Evening News
Salem, Massachusetts
25 January, 1983

THE FLAGSTAFF

NOTES FROM
JOHN M. PURCELL
NAVA PRESIDENT

Because of the unfortunate circumstances preventing the printing on time of the previous two NAVA News issues (soon, we hope, to be in your hands), you will likely be reading these words before our two previous columns. Consequently, in the interest of passing along to you information I know a number of you want and need as soon as possible, I am repeating the information provided in a previous column concerning the Tenth International Congress of Vexillology, the dates of which have been changed from the earlier announced dates to 25-30 September 1983. Information concerning the consequences, to be held at Oxford University, England, may be obtained from Mr. A.H. Hamilton-Hopkins, Berry House, Limplesfield Village, Surrey RH6 ODT, England.

Speaking of conferences, the Program Committee for NAVA-17, to be held in New York City 14-16 October 1983, is busy at work. Chairman Randy Beard is negotiating with hotels in New York to see which might offer us the most favorable accommodations. Dr. Whitney Smith has been working on arranging a banquet speaker for us, and Phil Allen is busy designing the NAVA-17 flag. We hope to have these and other details available to you in our next issue, in which we plan to provide more information concerning registration and participation. In any case, circle those dates on your calendar now, so you'll be sure to keep them available.

And speaking of participation, I have recently received the latest copy of Banderas (Flags), number 6, the very fine journal of La Sociedad Espanola de Vexilologia (The Spanish Vexillological Society), which marked it fifth anniversary last October. An editorial in this issue, written by Anna M. Galan, notes that it is time for members to ask themselves, "What have I done for the Society? What have I contributed?" The point is made that while the Society exists because of the interest of a few who are willing to work, it is time that all members take time to contribute their talents. As I read the editorial, I couldn't help but reflect that our own organization is in much the same position. Even though we are fortunate to have more than 200 members, only a relatively few participate in the ongoing business of the organization on a regular basis, and sometimes we have members who agree to accept a responsibility, but don't follow through. Of course we are hindered somewhat by the fact that our members are scattered over great distances from west to east coast of North America, which means that we must do most of our business by mail, except for our annual meeting.

In NAVA's seventeen years we have been very fortunate to be able to count on the talents and efforts of the volunteers who have been willing to make it the fine organization that it is, but it is the case that many of the same people have been asked again and again to contribute their time to NAVA because they care about our organization and have done a good job consistently. The fact is, though, that it isn't fair to keep depending on the same people indefinitely; they are all busy people just as you and I. Consequently, I am hopeful that more of you will want to become active as an officer or committee member to even out the work-load and to keep NAVA a viable and enriched organization. Let us know your interest in helping, either by talking to us at our annual meeting, or by writing one of the officers.

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Presidential flag turns up in a mailbox

CHICAGO — Police say the official presidential flag, missing since President Reagan's visit to Chicago on Wednesday, has been found in a paper bag, stuffed in a downtown mailbox with this handwritten note attached: "Found on barroom floor."
The 3-by-4-foot flag, valued at $4,000, vanished from the Conrad Hilton Hotel where Reagan appeared at a fund-raiser for Sen. Charles Percy, R.-Ill.
Jaye Schroeder, police spokesman, said Friday that the flag — containing the presidential seal on a blue field — was undamaged and was found by a mailman making his normal evening rounds on Thursday.
The flag and note were taken into the post office and then turned over to police, Schroeder said. The Secret Service will return it to Washington, she said.
The flag was noticed to be missing Wednesday night by Wallace Tienken, a White House communications officer. It apparently was taken from a podium in the hotel's International Ballroom, where the fundraiser was held.
FBI spokesman Anthony DeLorenzo said anyone accused of stealing the flag could be charged with theft of government property under federal law or with theft under state law.

submitted by Lynn Knights