

The Navy Hymn

*Eternal Father, strong to save
Whose arm has bound the restless wave.
Who Bidd'st the mighty ocean deep
Its own appointed limits keep
O Hear us when we cry to thee
For those in peril on the sea!*

*O Father, King of earth and sea,
We dedicate this ship to thee.
In faith we send her on her way;
In faith to thee we humbly pray:
O hear from heaven our sailor's cry
and watch and guard her from on high!*

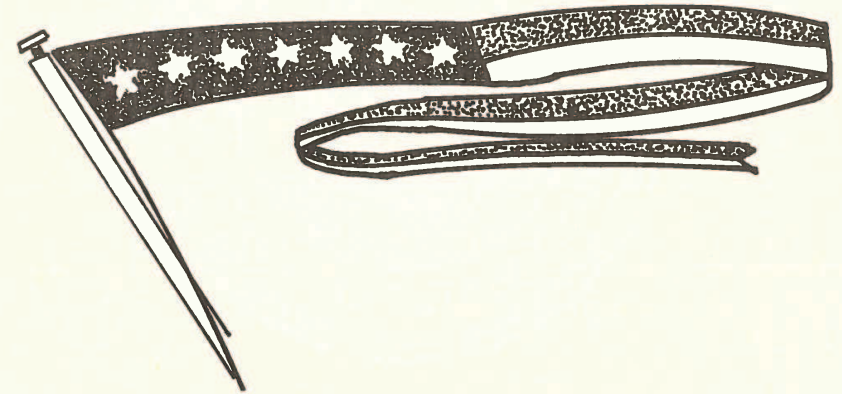
*And when at length her course is run,
Her work for home and country done.
Of all the souls that in her sailed,
Let not one life in thee have failed.
But hear from heaven our sailor's cry
And grant eternal life on high!*

“Don't Tread On Me” History

Since 1977, the “Don't Tread On Me” flag has flown from the jackstaff of the oldest ship in active naval service.

The “Don't Tread On Me” flag has its origins from the South Carolina Low Country. The flag was the emblem of Colonel Christopher Gadsden, a delegate from South Carolina and one of the original members of the Marine Committee of the Continental Congress. In February 1776, Colonel Gadsden returned to Charleston from Philadelphia and presented the South Carolina Provincial Congress with “an elegant standard such as is to be used by the Commander-in-Chief of the American Navy; being a yellow field with a lively representation of a Rattlesnake in the middle, in the attitude of going to strike, and these words ‘Don't Tread on Me.’”

It is believed by most naval historians that this emblem bore a serpent diagonally across a field of 13 alternate red and white strips. It has become known as the Navy's first jack.



Commissioning Pennant History

The commissioning pennant dates from the 17th century when the Dutch Admiral Van Tromp defeated an English fleet in 1652 and lashed a broomstick from the aftertruck of his flagship to signify he had “swept” the English from the seas. A year later, after the fortunes of war had reversed, the English admiral hoisted a horsewhip to indicate he had subdued his adversary. Thus, the narrow “coachwhip” pennant has become the international symbol of a ship of war.