

United States 33 Star Storm Ensign, 1st Flag Captured in Civil War

Date: January, 1861

Media: Banner, cotton canvas and paint; Flag, wool bunting, machine stitched, cotton hand sewn, double appliqué stars with linen canvas heading.

Comment: This iconic ghost of an American flag is the earliest documented flag captured during the American Civil War. The flag was captured by Florida secessionists at Pensacola, on January 12, 1861, a full three months before the firing on Fort Sumter, thus making it the first United States flag captured in that Great Conflict.

The flag was later retaken by United States Navy Lt. Edward E. Brennand from the storeship USS Supply, who while ashore under a flag of truce, seized the flag back from the secessionists, who were desecrating the flag by trailing it in the dust.

Lt. Brennand returned to his home in Pittsburgh and left the flag in the care of his sister, Mrs. John Erwin, and her grandniece, Mrs. John Prichard. Lt. Brennand did not survive the war, but his relations used the flag in November 1864 to celebrate the reelection of President Abraham Lincoln by attaching it to a commemorative banner and displaying it across Penn Avenue in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. The flag and banner have not been separated since that time. A careful look at the flag reveals several of the stars are joined only by the slenderest of threads, symbolically much like the Union in the Civil War.

Provenance: Acquired at auction in 2007 by the Zaricor Flag Collection (ZFC2510) from the Soldiers & Sailors National Military Museum & Memorial, Pittsburgh, PA, via James D. Julia Auctions, Fairfield, ME. www.FlagCollection.com