

36 Star United States Grand Luminary Mourning Flag

Date: 1865

Media: Hand sewn silk with painted stars.

Comment: Although its popularity had waned during the Civil War, the grand luminary arrangement of the stars to form one great star still held some degree of favor at the end of the American Civil War. The symbolism of the grand luminary or great star was a graphic representation of our national motto, *E Pluribus Unum* or Out of Many, One, which had been popularized by the War of 1812 privateer Captain Samuel Reid.

In this small silk flag, the stars are formed into a large star centered on a star that is slightly larger than the stars composing the points of the great star. All were hand applied to the light blue silk canton with white paint.

A black silk crepe border was added to this flag during the period of official mourning for the death of President Abraham Lincoln, who was assassinated on the evening of April 14, 1865 and who died the next morning. Flags were draped in black crepe, which in Victorian parlance also meant bordering all or some of the edges of a flag.

After this flag was used as a mourning flag after the assassination of Abraham Lincoln, the band of crepe, which surrounds the flag, was never removed, and the flag was used to mourn other assassinated President, John F. Kennedy.

Provenance: Acquired at auction by the Zaricor Flag Collection (ZFC0617) in 2002 from the Boleslaw and Marie Louise D'Otrange Mastai Estate via Sotheby's Auctions, New York, New York. www.FlagCollection.com