

In obtaining the distinction of being free from the governmental control of Great Britain, the thirteen American colonies took no speedy steps to devise the ensigns representing their combined interests as a political power. The first-known use by the continental army of a standard symbolical of the confederation of the colonies was that made of the one denominated "the grand Union flag of thirteen stripes."

General Washington, in a letter to Joseph Reed, written at Cambridge, on January 4, 1776, makes mention of it, saying: "We are, at length, favoured with a sight of His Majesty's most gracious speech, breathing sentiments of tenderness and compassion for his deluded American subjects. The echo is not yet come to hand, but we know what it must be; and as Lord North said (and we ought to have believed and acted accordingly), we now know the ultimatum of British justice. The speech I send you. A volume of them was sent out by the Boston gentry, and, farcial enough, we give great joy to them, without knowing or intending it; for, on that day, the day which gave being to the new army, but before the proclamation came to hand, we hoisted the Union flag, in compliment to the United Colonies. But, behold, it was received in Boston as a token of the deep impression the speech had made upon us, and a signal of submission. So we hear, by a person out of Boston last night. By this time, I presume, they begin to think it strange that we have not made a formal surrender of our lines."

The *Pennsylvania Gazette*, issued in Philadelphia, on January 15, 1776, in like manner remarks, under "advices from camp at Cambridge, of the third and fourth instant": "That upon the king's speech arriving at Boston, a great number of them were reprinted and sent out to our lines on the 2d of January, which being also the day of forming the new army, the great Union flag was hoisted on Prospect-Hill in compliment to the United Colonies. This happening soon after the speeches were delivered at Roxbury, but before they were received at Cambridge, the Boston gentry supposed it to be a token of the deep impression the speech had made, and a signal of submission. They were much disappointed at finding several days elapse without some formal measure leading to a surrender, with which they had begun to flatter themselves."

The captain of an English transport, in a communication to the London owners of the vessel, dated at Boston, on January 17, 1776, makes a similar reference: "I can see the Rebels' camp very plain, whose colours, a little while ago, were entirely red; but, on the receipt of the king's speech (which they burnt), they have hoisted the Union flag, which is here supposed to intimate the union of the provinces." ¹

¹ American archives. Fourth series, vol. iv., pp. 570, 571, 711.