

Missouri Road Trip

Every Hero Has A Story: Marie Oliver

Chances are, you're drawn to the red, white and blue stripes, the two grizzly bears or the 24 stars. What you should see is the vision of Marie Watkins Oliver, known to many as "the Betsy Ross of Missouri," as the designer and creator of our state's flag.

Marie was born in northwest Missouri, Ray County, to be exact, in 1854. She married Robert Oliver in 1879 and moved to Jackson, in southeast Missouri, soon after. Robert worked as a lawyer and became a Missouri senator in the 1880s, while Marie cared for the couple's six children and spent time as a community volunteer.

In 1908, the Daughters of the American Revolution chapter in Cape Girardeau discovered that Missouri had a state seal bearing Missouri's official coat of arms, but didn't have an official flag. Marie was tasked with correcting that oversight.

Here's what the Missouri State Historical Society says about Oliver's work: "Devoted to her task, Oliver wrote to the secretaries of state of every state and territory in the union, seeking information about how other states had designed their flags and had them



officially adopted. Once she had gathered enough information, Oliver designed a flag that she thought would represent Missouri. She worked her design around the Missouri coat of arms."

After much political debate – and suffering the loss of Marie's design when the original paper flag was destroyed in the Capitol fire of 1911 – the Oliver flag passed both the House and Senate, and Gov. Elliott Woolfolk Major signed the bill making

it Missouri's official flag on March 22, 1913.

The Missouri Secretary of State's Office has information on the meaning of the Missouri flag's symbols. For example, the blue stripe represents vigilance, permanency and justice; the red stripe

Points of Interest

- ★ Marie Oliver's path to becoming the creator of the Missouri flag was through her local volunteer membership in the service organization Daughters of the American Revolution. When the group realized Missouri did not have an official flag, she was appointed chairperson of the committee to research and design a flag. Read more about the DAR, which is celebrating 125 years, at dar.org.
- ★ Learn more about Marie Oliver from The State Historical Society of Missouri's Historic Missourians site, shs.umsystem.edu.
- ★ Visit the Missouri Capitol, 201 W. Capitol Ave., Jefferson City; 573-751-2854.
- ★ Learn more about all the things to do and see in Jefferson City in the local newspaper, Jefferson City News Tribune, NewsTribune.com.

Sources: James C. Kirkpatrick Information Center, Hall of Famous Missourians



represents valor; and the white stripe symbolizes purity. Learn more about the flag's meaning at sos.mo.gov/Kids/History/Flag.asp.

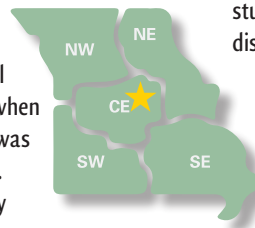
Marie Oliver died Oct. 18, 1944, in Cape Girardeau.



See the original Missouri flag at the James C. Kirkpatrick Information Center
600 W. Main St. • Jefferson City
573-751-4936

Take A Road Trip to Jefferson City!

Marie sewed a new flag after her original paper design burned in the Capitol fire of 1911. The new flag was made of silk. Following its adoption as Missouri's official flag, Marie's silk flag stayed with her family until 1961, when her son donated it to the State of Missouri. Marie's flag was on display for many years until it started to disintegrate. For the flag's 75th birthday in 1988, Missouri elementary



students raised enough money to restore the flag. Today, you can see it on display in the Kirkpatrick Center, an invaluable resource for those interested in history and genealogy research. While you are in Jefferson City, make a visit to the Missouri State Capitol. The Capitol is an architectural marvel that includes impressive artwork and sculpture, along with the Hall of Famous Missourians and the Missouri State History Museum.

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enjoy the show