

Varnum Continentals, Inc
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East Greenwich, RI 02818
www.varnumcontinentals.org

Re: Bristol historical flags annual update by Varnum Armory Museum

12.15.2022

To Steven Contente and Town Council of Bristol,

This report covers the 8 flags that were put in the hands of the Varnum Armory Museum and Conservation Lab per a signed long-term loan agreement from 2020.

Flag status overview:

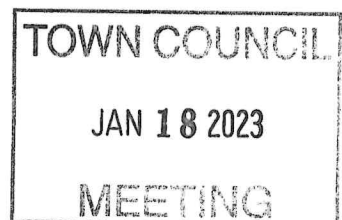
1. Nathaniel Byfield flag – fully conserved, mounted, and on display
2. “Babbitt Post 15” Civil War veteran flag – conserved, mounted and on display
3. “Babbitt Post 15” Civil War veteran flag – conserved, mounted, in storage
4. US Naval ensign from WW1 period – cleaned, no conservation needed, in storage
5. 33-star Civil War period flag – awaiting conservation, in storage, conservation funding has been secured
- 6-8. Late 19th century US flags – In very poor condition, market value makes it not worth conserving them, all in storage

The “Nathaniel Byfield” flag remains safely on display in our Colonial America exhibit room that is climate controlled and secure. The flag dominates the room and is one of our most talked about objects. The National Museum of the US Army still intends to display the flag for the 250th anniversary of the US Army at their grand museum at Ft Belvoir starting in 2025. The flag will be put in a new custom-made display case that will remain with the flag when it is returned to RI. We have not yet gotten to the loan agreement contract phase yet...I will review that with you, Steven, when the time comes, of course. I will also coordinate with Steve on the signage for the flag at the US Army museum to ensure the Town of Bristol gets proper credit for the display. The flag will likely need to go to the US Army’s conservation lab for transfer to the new case in 2024.

For those who missed the PBS documentary about the flag and its conservation, you can stream it here:

<https://watch.ripbs.org/video/a-stitch-in-time-k9d8xf/>

Internal



The 2 two small "Babbitt Post" GAR Civil War veteran flags are both complete from a conservation standpoint. One is framed and on display in our 19th Century room and the other is in storage. Still happy to put one of these in Bristol somewhere...townhall or the historical society seems most appropriate.

The other flags remain in storage. We still intend to conserve and display the 33 star flag that is in fragments. I have secured a promise for grant funding to pay for that conservation when Maria is able to get to it. She still has a few projects before this one.

There was a question about moving the Byfield flag to Bristol for the 4th of July next year. This was asked when I had originally presented to the Town Council in person...the flag is very fragile of course and the size/weight of the glass top is pretty extreme (a few hundred pounds) ...I would be VERY nervous about moving it without experienced professional help. Would you be able to manage that? When the Army does the transfer for the loan, they will hire a specialized art transportation company (read: expensive), likely out of DC or NYC, to do the move...they will have a lot of experience doing this. I can find out from the US Army what options exist and what the rough cost would be to move it.

Also, what would the plan be for where to display it? We'd need to make sure it's secure, climate, and light controlled.

Please let me know if you have any questions or concerns.

Best regards,

Patrick Donovan, President & Executive Director
401-829-1260