Detroit's Official Symbols

Flags and seals are ways in which a city or country shares their history, their hopes and their values. The City of Detroit has chosen a flag and a seal and each uses symbols to tell the city's story.

Detroit's Official Flag

Detroit's official flag was designed by David E. Hahm in 1907. Although it was first flown on June 22, 1908, at Fisher Field, a celebration honoring the Detroit Baseball Club, the flag was not officially adopted until 1948.

The flag is divided into five sections—four quadrants with a stripe at the middle. The outer section depicts the city's official seal. The remaining sections symbolize the different areas that have contributed Detroit throughout its history.

The lower left quadrant features a white background with five stars, which is a stylized view of a city skyline. The center section represents the French occupation of Detroit in 1796 and its role as a settlement in 1800. The lower right quadrant shows a red background with three gold stars. The stars are from England's official coat of arms and this section represents the British occupation of Detroit from 1760-1763 and from 1812-1813.

The lower left quadrant consists of thirteen red and white stripes, which are borrowed from the American flag. This section represents the American occupation of Detroit from 1796 to 1812.

The upper left quadrant has a blue background with thirteen stars. Also borrowed from the American flag, this section represents the American control of the city from 1796 to the present, with the stars representing the original 13 colonies.

Detroit's Official Seal

The City of Detroit's official seal was created by artist J.O. Levis in 1837. Designed as an engraving and a reminder of the wealth and spirit of the city, it is the symbol of the city's great history. The Great Fire of 1805, which destroyed the city, is depicted on the seal. The woman on the left, holding a torch, represents the city's women on the right, and the woman on the right represents the city's men. The seal is written in Latin and represents the motto of the City of Detroit: "Honesty and Industry."