**[Tartan Jack](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/profile/4587-tartan-jack/" \o "Go to Tartan Jack's profile)**

* Notorious Pyrate
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* Member
* 908 posts
* Location:South Carolina
* Interests:History, Scotland, Batman, Cars, and more<br />Married with 2 kids<br />

([IP: 74.226.222.171](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/modcp/ip-tools/&ip=74.226.222.171)) ·

[Posted January 29, 2007](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/topic/9812-pirate-flag-construction/&do=findComment&comment=244149) · [Report post](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/topic/9812-pirate-flag-construction/&do=reportComment&comment=244149)

Hi,

Some of you ACTUALLY seem to know what you are talking about . . .

So, how were GAoP pirate flags actually constructed?

What material was used as the main flag itself?

For the painted ones, what kind of paint was put on the fabric?

What evidence is there for appliqued/embroidered ones?

What/how did they do it?

I am a historian and amatuer vexiologist, but most of my resources cover modern or ceremonial/military stuff. I think the sea flags would be different from the silks and so forth of land units, et cetera.

Thanks for any help!

(Also-> first post here)

* [Quote](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/topic/9812-pirate-flag-construction/)
* [Edit](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/topic/9812-pirate-flag-construction/&do=edit)

[**Fox**](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/profile/1019-fox/)

* Old Twillian
* 
* 
* Moderator
* 2,565 posts
* Gender:Male
* Location:Beautiful lush Devon, England
* Interests:Nautical history of the 16-18th centuries and living history based thereon.

Shooting pirates.

([IP: 207.172.185.78](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/modcp/ip-tools/&ip=207.172.185.78)) · · 

[Posted January 29, 2007](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/topic/9812-pirate-flag-construction/&do=findComment&comment=244159) · [Report post](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/topic/9812-pirate-flag-construction/&do=reportComment&comment=244159)

Welcome aboard Wages!

The trouble with trying to ascertain that kind of detail about pirate flags is that for the most part we just dont know, and in those few instances where we *do* have details there are so different as to lead me to believe that there is no particular method more accurate than any other.

Wool bunting seems to be the common answer to "what were flags made of", but I don't know of any specific references to *pirate* flags in that material - however, if it was a common flag material then I have no reason to suppose that at least some pirate flags were not made of it.

Off the top of my head I can only think of three specific materials referred to in period descriptions of pirate flags. Davis's consort apparently flew a "dirty black tarpaulin" when no better flag was avalaible; Jean Dulaien had flags made of "Ras de St. Maur" which is a silk/wool mix; and Phillip Lyne(?) had a flag of silk which was displayed before him and his crew on their way to execution.

Methods of applying the design are even harder to fathom. Off the top of my head I can only think of one reference of use - Thomas Cocklyn's flags were described at the trial of some of his crew as having their designs painted. What kind of paint? Who knows.

* [Quote](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/topic/9812-pirate-flag-construction/)
* [Edit](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/topic/9812-pirate-flag-construction/&do=editComment&comment=244159)
* [Options](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/topic/9812-pirate-flag-construction/#elControls_244159_menu)

[**Sir Eric**](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/profile/2173-sir-eric/)

* Ship's Master
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* Member
* 146 posts
* Location:Manhattan KS

([IP: 4.244.144.167](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/modcp/ip-tools/&ip=4.244.144.167)) · · 

[Posted January 31, 2007](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/topic/9812-pirate-flag-construction/&do=findComment&comment=244553) · [Report post](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/topic/9812-pirate-flag-construction/&do=reportComment&comment=244553)

This is a complete supposition, but would it be reasonable to wonder if impromptu flags would have been made from old or damaged sail material?

More currious to me is how they applied emblems... if they were different color material sewn onto a base field or if they were pigmented in some way.

BTW Wages... my wife makes banners for renaissance merchants... I'll describe her process in the other thread, (DEFINATELY not period) but I need to ask her for some details first.

* [Quote](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/topic/9812-pirate-flag-construction/)
* [Edit](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/topic/9812-pirate-flag-construction/&do=editComment&comment=244553)
* [Options](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/topic/9812-pirate-flag-construction/#elControls_244553_menu)

[**Gentleman of Fortune**](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/profile/1651-gentleman-of-fortune/)

* Dread Pyrate
* 
* 
* Member
* 1,456 posts
* Gender:Male
* Location:Germany... Franconia (northern Bavaria)
* Interests:I \*used\* to be an environmental scientist, until I married a DoDDs teacher in 1997. Since then, I have been living in, and traveling around, Europe (First the UK, now Germany).

My hobbies are all the "usual suspects" for those interested in re-enacting and Golden Age of Piracy stuff.... but I have drifted away from the pirate scene as my location and young family don't allow for any more than "virtual" pirate participation. Besides Piracy, I am into Reverend Guitars and Vintage Corvettes.

([IP: 217.229.253.115](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/modcp/ip-tools/&ip=217.229.253.115)) · · 

[Posted February 6, 2007](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/topic/9812-pirate-flag-construction/&do=findComment&comment=245696) (edited) · [Report post](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/topic/9812-pirate-flag-construction/&do=reportComment&comment=245696)

Yes, there is even a record of such (I think Foxe posted it already). But I would think this would be impromptu only as flag material needs to be able to fly, and heavy painted canvas may not do this so well....

This is from a little later period (late 18th) Century Spanish Ensign that is freakin huge...

Wool bunting, single ply



Gof

**Edited February 6, 2007 by Gentleman of Fortune**

* [Quote](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/topic/9812-pirate-flag-construction/)
* [Edit](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/topic/9812-pirate-flag-construction/&do=editComment&comment=245696)
* [Options](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/topic/9812-pirate-flag-construction/#elControls_245696_menu)

[**Tartan Jack**](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/profile/4587-tartan-jack/)

* Notorious Pyrate
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* 
* Member
* 908 posts
* Location:South Carolina
* Interests:History, Scotland, Batman, Cars, and more<br />Married with 2 kids<br />

([IP: 65.4.159.139](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/modcp/ip-tools/&ip=65.4.159.139)) · · 

[Posted February 6, 2007](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/topic/9812-pirate-flag-construction/&do=findComment&comment=245703) · [Report post](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/topic/9812-pirate-flag-construction/&do=reportComment&comment=245703)

I had been misinformed as to what "wool bunting" actually was (and never had the need/reason to look it up again).

So, a wool bunting 1-2 ply would be best, with either a modern plain weave (or a light, loose weave cotton as a poorer substitute) as a visual substitute.

They were also HUGE and I've seen listed as 20 by 30 as a "normal" large size with 3 by 5 as TINY in comparison. Also, more are squarer in shape than most would expect.

(I have spent time looking up stuff in all sorts of books, and the web.)

It also seems that stuff was painted on AND stuff was appliqued (patches sewn onto the main flag base. Sometimes, they were on one side and the main material was "cut out" underneath to make it 2 sided. Other times the patch was on both sides. The issue is weight vs. strength (you WANT light, but strong).

I have NOT been able to find out about the paint actually used on historic flags (most citings just say "painted"). It seems like modern reproductions use artist paint (usually oil, but some use acrylic-> NOT historic, but looks good and easy to use) or enamel (I question if that would be too heavy or stiff, as all shirts I've gotten brushed model paint onto makes it REAL stiff).

Anyone (like Foxe or GofF, for example) know more on both what paint types (and how different than modern paints) would be available aboard ship AND what would have been used on Landlubber bannners?

This seems to ALWAYS be the hardest info for me to find or know anyone who knows about historic paints. 

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* [Quote](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/topic/9812-pirate-flag-construction/)
* [Edit](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/topic/9812-pirate-flag-construction/&do=editComment&comment=245703)
* [Options](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/topic/9812-pirate-flag-construction/#elControls_245703_menu)

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* Ship's Master
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* 
* Member
* 146 posts
* Location:Manhattan KS

([IP: 4.244.144.1](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/modcp/ip-tools/&ip=4.244.144.1)) · · 

[Posted February 7, 2007](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/topic/9812-pirate-flag-construction/&do=findComment&comment=245936) · [Report post](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/topic/9812-pirate-flag-construction/&do=reportComment&comment=245936)

Great stuff Wages.

I wonder if you looked at dye as a pigment instead of paint if you might find some good results?

* [Quote](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/topic/9812-pirate-flag-construction/)
* [Edit](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/topic/9812-pirate-flag-construction/&do=editComment&comment=245936)
* [Options](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/topic/9812-pirate-flag-construction/#elControls_245936_menu)

[**Tartan Jack**](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/profile/4587-tartan-jack/)

* Notorious Pyrate
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* Member
* 908 posts
* Location:South Carolina
* Interests:History, Scotland, Batman, Cars, and more<br />Married with 2 kids<br />

([IP: 74.181.91.31](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/modcp/ip-tools/&ip=74.181.91.31)) · · 

[Posted May 14, 2009](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/topic/9812-pirate-flag-construction/&do=findComment&comment=356196) · [Report post](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/topic/9812-pirate-flag-construction/&do=reportComment&comment=356196)

I dug this thread up looking for other info.

I was wondering if anyone new could add to it or benefit from it.

As for my own projects, I have located some great light wool from 96 District Storehouse in Abbeville, SC. I have some material for the appliqued emblems, but they are a bit heavy.

One has the edges sewn and another HUGE one (so as to be period) sits in my wool material truck still.

* [Quote](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/topic/9812-pirate-flag-construction/)
* [Edit](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/topic/9812-pirate-flag-construction/&do=editComment&comment=356196)
* [Options](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/topic/9812-pirate-flag-construction/#elControls_356196_menu)

[**gunner Gordon**](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/profile/10651-gunner-gordon/)

* Plunderer
* 
* 
* Member
* 351 posts
* Gender:Male
* Location:Spanish held territories
* Interests:I be interested in blackpowder and blade in the realm of wooden ships and the sea, it is me livlihood as well

([IP: 71.128.202.230](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/modcp/ip-tools/&ip=71.128.202.230)) · · 

[Posted May 14, 2009](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/topic/9812-pirate-flag-construction/&do=findComment&comment=356202) · [Report post](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/topic/9812-pirate-flag-construction/&do=reportComment&comment=356202)

Living near the coast, a large number of ship's signal flags and country flags are sold in salvage stores. Yes modern, but traditionan. They are almost all made of wool bunting and pieced together to display the design. The use of signal flags and port's of call flags would probably have supplied the base to make other flags. A quick view of letter signal flags suggests the form of red and/or black based flags. two sided military flags show a widespread embrodery to the body of the flag with a matching embrodered piece sewn on from the opposite side. just a few thoughts.

* [Quote](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/topic/9812-pirate-flag-construction/)
* [Edit](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/topic/9812-pirate-flag-construction/&do=editComment&comment=356202)
* [Options](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/topic/9812-pirate-flag-construction/#elControls_356202_menu)

[**Gentleman of Fortune**](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/profile/1651-gentleman-of-fortune/)

* Dread Pyrate
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* Member
* 1,456 posts
* Gender:Male
* Location:Germany... Franconia (northern Bavaria)
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([IP: 79.240.191.123](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/modcp/ip-tools/&ip=79.240.191.123)) · · 

[Posted May 17, 2009](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/topic/9812-pirate-flag-construction/&do=findComment&comment=356741) · [Report post](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/topic/9812-pirate-flag-construction/&do=reportComment&comment=356741)

I'll echo Gordon

I believe that a ship of the period would have any number of signal flags or country flags on board already. So when a "pirate" flag was needed, it "could" be fashioned out of available flag material on board. Foxe has posted pirate flag data before, and they all were not black with skull and x bones... some were yellow, green, red etc. These colors would be available on an ocean going ship.

For my own "personal" flag, I am cannibalizing wool flags. Hope to post it when its ready.

GoF

* [Quote](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/topic/9812-pirate-flag-construction/)
* [Edit](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/topic/9812-pirate-flag-construction/&do=editComment&comment=356741)
* [Options](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/topic/9812-pirate-flag-construction/#elControls_356741_menu)

[**Kian McBrian**](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/profile/10559-kian-mcbrian/)

* Ship's Master
* 
* 
* Member
* 197 posts
* Location:New York

([IP: 69.206.131.239](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/modcp/ip-tools/&ip=69.206.131.239)) · · 

[Posted May 17, 2009](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/topic/9812-pirate-flag-construction/&do=findComment&comment=356743) · [Report post](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/topic/9812-pirate-flag-construction/&do=reportComment&comment=356743)

Please do post pics. I would love to see how its done. Our crew is finalizing the design now and I want to make it if possible. So any advice would be very much appreciated!!

* [Quote](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/topic/9812-pirate-flag-construction/)
* [Edit](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/topic/9812-pirate-flag-construction/&do=editComment&comment=356743)
* [Options](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/topic/9812-pirate-flag-construction/#elControls_356743_menu)

[**BILLY BONES**](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/profile/966-billy-bones/)

* Plunderer
* 
* 
* Member
* 307 posts
* Location:Silverton,Oregon
* Interests:I'm a propmaster in the film industry (historical films only). Oil paint, make flags,period maps, scrimshaw, and documents, etc. Master armorer for POTC II & III in the Bahamas, flag maker for POTC III.

([IP: 71.111.120.108](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/modcp/ip-tools/&ip=71.111.120.108)) · · 

[Posted May 17, 2009](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/topic/9812-pirate-flag-construction/&do=findComment&comment=356750) · [Report post](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/topic/9812-pirate-flag-construction/&do=reportComment&comment=356750)

I read that you were concerned about weight as far as how a flag will fly. When I was constructing flags for POTC III, I was surprised to see that no matter what the material (within reason) the flags flew just fine in a stiff sea breeze. Most painted flags from this period were painted with an oil base pigment, and were much more durable. When painting, again depending on the type of cloth, the oil from the paint may spread into the surrounding fabric, but this was a hazard even pirates faced. The pigment itself did not. The paint took about 3 days to dry (to the touch).

I had some arguments on pirates over the ratio of the flags on the staff and on the fly. The production designer wanted to keep the flags on a 3x5 ratio (only a lot bigger!). I felt this was absurd. Although "official" naval jacks were generally around this ratio, infantry flags were generally square. Let's get real. Unless a pirate had an ensign made for him by a private contractor, as some appear to have done, you made it out of whatever material was available and with whatever quantity. Some flags were small, some were large. Some were close to square (we're talking European pirates here). It's true that some flags were appliqued on one side, and the field cut out on the other side to reveal the design. This, in my opinion, had nothing to do with weight, but difficulty. If you've ever tried to match designs on both sides of a flag and sew them too, you'll see what a difficult proposition this was. Now do it with a 25' flag. Nowadays, we can use products that will adhere your design to the field before you sew. If you're a student of flags, you'll also find that in the early days of the US flag, many had sewn stars on one side, and the stars cut out on the other. Sewing stars is HARD!

  [Quote](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/topic/9812-pirate-flag-construction/)

 [Edit](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/topic/9812-pirate-flag-construction/&do=editComment&comment=356750)

 [Options](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/topic/9812-pirate-flag-construction/#elControls_356750_menu)