



## U.S. Customs and Border Protection



## Celebrating Our History, Building Our Future

This year we celebrate the 230th anniversary of the birth of the U.S. Customs Service and the important role it played in the history of our nation. Since its merger into CBP in 2003, Customs has remained a part of our heritage and a significant presence in the continuation of our mission. CBP, a component of the Department of Homeland Security, is today one of the world's largest law enforcement organizations, with more than 60,000 employees. It is charged with keeping terrorists and terrorist weapons out of the country while facilitating lawful international travel and trade. CBP takes a comprehensive approach to border management and control, combining national security, customs, immigration, and agricultural protection into a coordinated into a whole-of-government approach.

While customhouses, lighthouses, and historical artifacts are visible signs of the past, and of great popular interest, it is important to remember that the story of the U.S. Customs Service, is primarily a story of

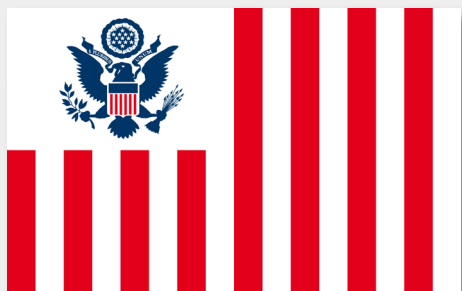
people. It is about the men and women who made our history during the past 230 years and those who are still making it today.

On July 31, 1789, the Fifth Act of the First United States Congress created a field organization of customs collection districts under the direction of appointed collectors of customs. Thirty-two days later the Department of the Treasury was established on Sept. 2, 1789, and the regulation and control of the collection districts and collectors was placed under the direct management of the Secretary of the Treasury. Thus began the history of the U.S. Customs Service, the oldest of the legacy agencies that in 2003 were united as U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP).

As the nation grew, the Customs mission became more complex. The customhouse represented the federal presence in the states, and Congress turned to the customs collectors to administer new laws and regulations. The need to protect the revenue and U.S. ships from pirates

### The Customs Ensign: First Federal Agency Flag

In 1799, Congress directed that the federal identity of the revenue cutters and customhouses be provided by flying an official ensign. Designed by Treasury Secretary Oliver Wolcott, the Customs ensign became the first official flag to represent a federal agency - and it is that same flag that today represents CBP.



"Arch Street Landing" in Philadelphia. Engraving by W. Birch, dated 1800. In the early years of the nation, the port of Philadelphia was the largest in the nation.





and British privateers led to the establishment of the U.S. Revenue Marine in 1790. Treasury Secretary Alexander Hamilton directed customs collectors at the 10 largest ports of entry to supervise the construction of revenue cutters and to supervise the captains and their crews. From 1791 to 1850, the collectors also supervised the construction of more than 300 lighthouses.

CBP's legacy agencies have a long history of working together. The Immigration Act of 1891 established the Office of the Superintendent of Immigration within the Treasury Department, and its inspectors worked alongside Customs inspectors at U.S. ports of entry. The Plant Quarantine Act of 1912 gave the U.S. Department of Agriculture the authority to regulate the importation of agricultural products and to guard against dangerous pests. The U.S. Immigration Service Border Patrol was established in 1924, and its patrol inspectors worked side by side with Customs during Prohibition. When the Confederate states seceded from the Union in 1861, major government institutions suffered divided loyalties. The Confederacy established its own customs service and controlled the ports of entry. For both North and South, customs revenue was crucial; international and coastal trade brought not only much-needed arms and supplies, but also the needed revenue accrued

through the collection of duties, fees and penalties on imported goods. At the conclusion of the Civil War, the federal ports of entry were reopened, customhouses were repaired, and the collected federal customs revenue helped restore national industry and commerce.

Female Customs inspectresses were stationed at ports of entry as early as 1866 to search women when the need arose. They were not, however, issued separate official uniforms until the 1940s. During World War II, they searched ships, checked passports, combatted smuggling, and recovered stolen property. Women were not given the title of "inspector" until 1970.

The decades after WWII brought a renewed focus on illegal arms trafficking, money laundering, and prohibited drugs. The Customs aviation programs and the Customs marine programs anticipated CBP's Office of Air and Marine. Today, the Office of Field Operations manages the nation's 328 air, land, and sea ports of entry.

Now, CBP's mission has expanded to include border security and antiterrorism.

It also helps drive the nation's economic engine by facilitating lawful international trade and travel through the enforcement of hundreds of U.S. laws and regulations ranging from agriculture to intellectual property rights.



The Customhouse, New York  
1799-1815  
Engraved for the Society of Iconophiles, 1906.