

The Cuban Flag.

Although perhaps but few Americans ever saw the emblem until recently, the Cuban flag, which now meets the eye at every turn, is really more than half a century old. Like many another thing connected with the Cuban struggle against Spain, the first Cuban flag took shape in New York City, and is still there in the possession of Narcisso A. Villaverde, of 20 West One Hundred and Thirteenth street, whose father was one of the three who devised the banner. Concerning the circumstances that led to the flag's taking its present shape, Mr. Villaverde said:

"It was in 1849, when Gen. Narcisso Lopez was arranging for his first expedition to Cuba. Gen. Lopez, my father, Cirilo Villaverde, and Miguel Tolan, were together at the latter's house, at 39 Howard street.

"Gen. Lopez was speaking of his expedition—it was a filibustering expedition—and said that all he still needed was a flag.

"At that my father suggested that he should adopt red, white and blue, as they were the colors of every free country.

"They were all Masons, and so they agreed that they would place a single star in a triangle, which in Masonry signifies strength. According to the practice of heraldry the field should have been blue, but Gen. Lopez said that it must be red instead to signify the seas of blood that they must wade through before that star could hold its place.

"Then they agreed that they would have three stripes, one for each of the three departments into which Cuba was then divided. My father was for having the outer stripes white, but Gen. Lopez said, 'No; let the outer stripes be blue. Then it can be seen farther.'

"With that Tolan, who was something of a draughtsman, dashed off a design of the flag in lead pencil, and his wife, Amelia Tolan, made the flag immediately.

"It is this flag that I still have. It passed into my father's possession from Gen. Lopez, and thence on to me.

"The flag is about two feet long and about a foot wide. The stripes seem to be made from bits of ribbon, and the blue is darker than in many Cuban flags as now made. Another peculiarity is that one of the points of the star is placed in line with the center of the middle stripe. The flag is well preserved, except that it is a trifle frayed at the edges, and I have it framed and covered with glass to preserve it from any further damage. I also have the original lead pencil sketch from which the flag was made.

"This flag, however, was not the one that Gen. Lopez took with him to Cuba on his first expedition. The flag that went with him, and was the first Cuban flag, too, was large and was made from the original model by some young ladies in New Orleans, whose names I do not recall.

"This second flag, which was carried by the first expedition that Gen. Lopez headed, is now in the possession of Juan M. Maclas, who lived until recently at One Hundred and Fifteenth street, near Lexington avenue. Maclas was Gen. Lopez' adjutant.

"It was on May 19, 1850, that this first expedition of about 600 men landed at Cardenas and captured the citadel. The flag waved over the citadel from morning until night on that day, until the Spanish were reinforced and drove Gen. Lopez off.

"I am positive of all these facts, because I have heard my father talk of them often. He knew, for he was with Lopez and was captured and only escaped from the Spanish prison one day before he was to have been executed.

"Gen. Lopez, I think, when he thought of the single star for the Cuban flag, had the idea that Cuba would eventually be admitted into the union."