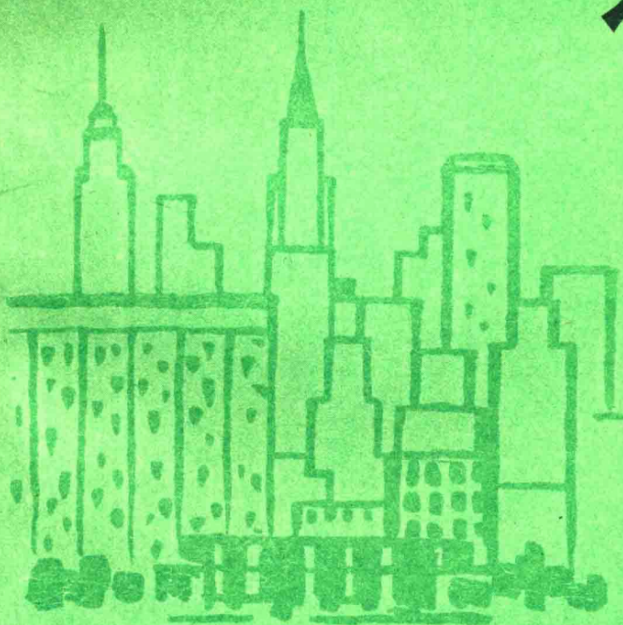


主编 郝玉田 孙明伯

# 英美概况

下册

BACKGROUND  
TO THE UNITED  
KINGDOM AND  
THE UNITED  
STATES



BACKGROUND TO THE UNITED KINGDOM  
AND THE UNITED STATES

英 美 概 况

(下册)

主编： 郝玉田 孙明伯

副主编： 宁茂权 马丽娟

编委： 曲家丹 任焕文 于 敏 沈慧军

张国海 车万虹 孙延利 张贵军

主审： Deirdre Vyse

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郝玉田 孙明伯 主编

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## Unit One

### • The United States—Its Names and Symbols

#### The Names

##### The Official Name and the Popular Names

The United States of America is a young nation in the New World. It has entered its third century with an over-two-hundred-year history ever since the independence in 1776. Apart from its official name, it is often popularly referred to as the United States, America, or the States. The initials are the USA, and the US.

The United States may be interpreted in both narrow and broad sense. In its narrow sense, it identifies the 50 states and the District of Columbia. The US Board on Geographic Names approves this usage and further defines the Continental United States or the Conterminous United States as comprising the 48 states and the District of Columbia located on the North American Continent excluding Hawaii and Alaska. In its broad sense, the United States can encompass territory beyond that of these definitions. In most instances the inhabitants of the outlying areas are taken as United States citizens or nationals, and these outlying areas, the national territories of the United States.

## Nicknames

In addition to the names given above, the United States has some nicknames.

Yankeedom and Yankeeland are, perhaps, two colloquial terms used to refer to the United States. These two words are probably derived from Yankee. Yankee, or Yank, was originally a nickname for New Englanders, which was firmly established before the American Revolution. In the American Civil War it was used derogatorily by the Southerners to mean all the Northerners or the soldiers in the Federal armies. Since the American Revolution the British have used this term for all Americans. And it was particularly widespread during the two World Wars when American soldiers, Southerners and Northerners alike, were all referred to as Yankees or Yanks.

In 1961 the United States Congress adopted a regulation saluting "Uncle Sam", Wilson of Troy, as "the progenitor of American's national symbol". Now "Uncle Sam" is a popular name symbolizing the American national character and the US government.

Samuel Wilson was an American patriot and merchant who was born in Arlington, Massachusetts, on September 13, 1766. At the age of 14, Sam himself ran away from home to enlist in the Continental Army and served under George Washington until the end of the American Revolutionary War. At 23, Sam was poverty-stricken. He then moved to Troy. And in 1790 he started his meat-packing business there. After years of hard work, he became rather successful in his business. Because of his honesty and common sense he became quite well-known. By the beginning of the War of 1812, he had already become prominent in New York state. In that year he was made inspector of provision for the US Army in New York and in New Jersey.

On October 2, 1812, a group of visitors came to his plant in Troy. Governor Daniel D. Tompkins of New York, one of the visitors, asked what the initials "EA-US" on the barrels of meat stood for. A workman replied that "EA" stood for Elbert Anderson, Jr., the contractor for whom Wilson worked; and added jokingly

that the "US" stood for "Uncle Sam" Wilson (which was actually for the "United States"). On May 12, 1813, after this incident was made known to the public by a newspaper published in New York, this became widespread to epitomize the plain American—honest, self-reliant, hard-working, and devoted to his country.

## • The Symbols of the Nation

### The Stars and Stripes

The national flag of the United States is the Stars and Stripes or the Star-Spangled Banner. The Continental Congress in 1777 prescribed that the flag be "13 stripes alternate red and white, that the Union be 13 stars white in a blue field...". The stars had been arranged in many ways, both during the Revolution and later as additional states joined the original 13.

Now the national flag of the United States has 50 five-pointed white stars in the dark blue rectangular canton. The stars represent the 50 states collectively, rather than individually; thus, no star "belongs" to any one state. The 13 horizontal stripes, seven red and six white, represent the original 13 states. The red color of the flag stands for earth, hardiness, and courage; blue for heaven, vigilance and justice; and white for liberty, purity and innocence.

### The Great Seal

The Great Seal of the United States is one of the chief symbols of the nation. It is a device affixed to specified official documents to authenticate the president's signature. The seal in use is essentially the one that was adopted by the Continental Congress on June 20, 1782. The design on the face side consists of the national coat of arms surrounded by two concentric rings. The arms have an American bald eagle with a shield of thirteen stripes and one larger stripe on the top. In its beak

the eagle holds a ribbon with the motto in Latin, "E Pluribus Unum", meaning "One Out Of Many". In one claw he takes an olive branch and in the other a bunch of thirteen arrows. Above the eagle's head is the crest, consisting of thirteen stars against a blue sky, surrounded by rays of light and an encircling cloud.

The design for the reverse of the seal consists of a pyramid with 13 layers. Above the pyramid appears an eye surrounded by rays of light. Below are the mottoes "Annuit Coeptis" and "Novus Ordo Seclorum", which mean, respectively, "He Has Favored (Our) Undertakings. " and "A New Earthly Order."

The artistic and symbolic elements of the seal faces were drawn from many sources. The eagle has been a symbol of sovereignty in many societies. The Americans take the bald eagle as their national bird because it is native to North America, and it can fly across the entire continent, soaring at great heights, living in lofty places, and swooping down on its prey with unexpected speed. It best represents America's freedom, power, and majesty. The olive branch and arrows stand for the power to make peace and war. The constellation above the eagle's head suggests the new nation taking its place as a sovereign republic. The red in the shield is said to stand for valor and hardiness, the blue for vigilance, justice, and perseverance; and the white for purity and innocence. The thirteen stripes represent the original thirteen colonies, and the larger stripe the nation. The pyramid symbolizes strength and endurance, and the eye of God above it alludes to hoped-for divine favor. The date 1776, in Roman numerals at the pyramid's base, is that of independence and the beginning of the "new order".

The Great Seal is kept in the US Department of State.

### The Star-Spangled Banner

The national anthem of the United States is the Star-Spangled Banner.

During the War of 1812, on the night of September 12, 1814, English warships bombarded Fort McHenry, which guarded the city of Baltimore. The bombardment lasted for a whole night, but the American soldiers held their ground, and the national flag kept waving over the fort. A young American lawyer of the name Fran-

cis Scott Key who was detained on an English ship, watched the whole scene and greatly inspired. With great emotion, he wrote the Star-Spangled Banner. Later in 1931, it was officially declared the national anthem of America. The words of it read like this:

Oh, say can you see by the dawn's early light  
What so proudly hailed at the twilight's last gleaming?  
Whose broad stripes and bright stars thru the perilous fight,  
O'er the ramparts we watched were so gallantly streaming?  
And the rocket's red glare, the bombs bursting in air,  
Gave proof through the night that our flag was still there,  
Oh, say does the star-spangled banner yet wave,  
O'er the land of the free and the home of the brave?

## • The United States—The Land

### The Aggregate Area and Location

#### Area

The United States of America is the world's fourth largest country by area, exceeded only by Russia, Canada and China. The aggregate area under its sovereignty is 9,666,861 sq km (1994), of which 9,159,073 sq km are land and 507,788 sq km are inland, coastal, and Great Lakes bodies of water.

The Conterminous United States is the mainland of the country. It is situated in the middle latitude of North America, stretching about 4,517 km from West Quoddy Head, Main, the easternmost point in the United States, to the Pacific Ocean, and extending some 2,572 km from the northern border to the southern tip of Texas.

Alaska occupies 1,593,438 sq km. It became the 49th state in 1959 lying between about 71 degrees and 56 degrees north latitude. Hawaii is 16,729 sq km consisting of eight major and a number of minor islands in the central Pacific Ocean. It was admitted in 1959 as the 50th state which is 2,000 nautical miles southwest of California.

Outlying areas of the United States include the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico, the unincorporated territories such as the Virgin Islands of the United States, American Samoa, and Guam, the trust territory of the Pacific Islands, the Canal Zone, and several small islands in the Pacific and Caribbean.

### Boundaries

Canada and Mexico are the two immediate neighbours of the United States. Canada is contiguous to the United States in the north. The common boundary shared by the Conterminous United States and Canada starts in the east in Grand Manan Channel off West Quoddy Head in Maine and finally passes through Haro Strait and the Strait of Juan de Fuca to the Pacific Ocean lasting for a total of 6,420 km. And the boundary between Alaska and Canada runs for 2,480 km. The line begins at Cape Muzon on the southern part of Dall Island, and it follows, at Mt. St. Elias, the 141st meridian northward to the Arctic Ocean. The boundary between these two countries is open and undefended.

The other land neighbour Mexico and the Conterminous United States share a 3,115-km common boundary beginning in the east in the Gulf of Mexico and extending at last to the Pacific Ocean.

### The Coastline

The United States is bounded by three oceans—the Atlantic Ocean, the Pacific Ocean and the Arctic Ocean—and the Gulf of Mexico. It has a 19,924-km coastline with 3,330 km along the Atlantic Ocean; 2,624 km along the Gulf of Mexico; 12,265 km along the Pacific Ocean; and 1,706 km along the Arctic Ocean. It is one of the countries with the longest coastline in the world.

## The Face of the Land

The United States is so large in size, and in such a great variety of relief features that it is almost impossible to give one generalization describing the face of the whole land. A better way out is to take the physiographic parts separately. Here brief descriptions of relief features will be given on the main land—the 48 contiguous states—and the two noncontiguous states, Alaska and Hawaii.

### The Mainland

The Conterminous United States is usually divided into three parts: two belts of highlands and a hammock-like interior lowland in between. These three parts can be subdivided into smaller physiographic regions. From east to west, the Coastal Plain lies along the coast of the Atlantic and that of the Gulf Mexico; next to the Coastal Plain are the Appalachian Highlands, which is one the three ribs traversing the main land; to the west of this upland belt lies the Interior Lowland; farther west is the second mainland-traversing rib, the Rocky Mountains; walled up by the Rockies in the east and the Pacific Mountain Area in the west, which consists of the third rib of the three, the Intermountain Plateaus lie in between.

### The Coastal Plain

The low plain between the Atlantic and the Appalachian Highlands is the Atlantic Coastal Plain. It stretches from Cape Cod and Long Island to Florida. And between the Gulf of Mexico and the Central Lowland, another plain stretching southward into Mexico, merging with the Atlantic Coastal Plain in the east, is the Gulf Coastal Plain. These two coastal plains together make up the Atlantic and Gulf Coastal Plain. This Coastal Plain is low, and its coastline is exceedingly irregular. Along the coastline, there are many estuaries, and some of them are navigable for miles inland. The Atlantic Coastal Plain is also known as the tide-water

region. It is bounded on the west by the "Fall Line". The northern part of this "Fall Line" is so densely inhabited that it has become the Megalopolis which includes Columbia, Washington, Richmond, Baltimore and some other urban cities.

### The Appalachian Highlands

To the west of the Atlantic Coastal Plain lie the Appalachian Highlands beginning from north Maine and ending in northern Alabama and Georgia. As a rib traversing the mainland, the Appalachian Highlands cover a distance of 1,200 miles running from northeast to southwest, the average altitude of the highlands is 800 meters above sea level, and the average width is about 300 miles.

The Appalachian Highlands are subdivided into five parts. In the north, New England together with the adjacent parts of New York State forms the Northeast which consists of hills and mountains and intervening lowlands. In this region, the White Mountains lie in northern New Hampshire and western Maine. Mt. Washington is its highest peak that reaches 1,916 meters. The Connecticut Valley, the best farming area in New England, lies in the region of the Berkshires and Green Mountains running from western Massachusetts to Canada. West of the Berkshires and Green Mountains is the Hudson River-Lake Champlain Lowland beginning from New York City in the south and terminating at Montreal in the north. The Mohawk Valley was once the principle route from the eastern colonies to the Great Lakes. Nowadays, it is followed by the New York State Barge Canal which is New York's chief transportation corridor. The other region in the northeast is the region of Adirondack Mountains bounded by the Mohawk Valley in the north and the Champlain Lowland in the west.

Farther south the Appalachian Highlands are surmounted by a number of paralleled mountain ranges. From east to west these mountain ranges are the Piedmont, the Blue Ridge Mts, the Ridge and Valley, and the Appalachian Plateau.

The Piedmont is a rather old ridge extending from the vicinity of New York City southeastward into Alabama. It has a rolling surface of relatively low elevations. Next to the Piedmont lie the Blue Ridge Mts, extending from southern