

Georgia



The history of the flags that have flown over or were intended to fly over the State of Georgia is a long and twisted one with many unanswered questions. Many intended designs were never implemented. Many statutory designs were altered in practice either by design or misunderstanding. The current flag, approved in 2003, is depicted above. For more information above the synopsis contained herein and a view of the other 13 flags which either flew or were proposed of flags of Georgia are depicted at the following link:

http://www.netstate.com/states/symb/flags/ga_flag.htm

Georgia was one of the [thirteen original colonies](#), providing signatories to the Declaration of Independence and the 1787 United States Constitution. Georgia ratified the Constitution on January 2, 1788, becoming the 4th state to do so. The vote was 26-0.

Until the Civil War, the flag of the United States of America flew over the State of Georgia. Two days after the election of President Lincoln, on November 8, 1860, perhaps the first of the so-called "secession flags" was raised in Savannah, Georgia. The flag depicted a coiled snake on a white background and was inscribed "Our Motto, Southern Rights, Equality of the States, Don't Tread on Me." The graphic to the left depicts this banner. It is part of a lithograph captioned "The first Flag of Independence raised in the South, by the Citizens of Savannah, Ga. November 8th 1860". For more on this flag, including the full lithograph and an early banner expressing similar sentiments, visit the [Carl Vinson Institute of Government](#) at the University of Georgia.

As the sentiment of more and more Georgians embraced the idea of seceding from the Union, unofficial "secession flags" appeared all over the state, generally depicting a single star on a solid background. While each state was represented by one star on the Stars and Stripes, the single star on the secession flags indicated that the state had withdrawn from, or intended to withdraw from, the Union.

The most well known of the single-star flags is the "Bonnie Blue Flag" immortalized in song. This flag reportedly consisted of a single white star centered on a blue field. No hard evidence has come to light that the "Bonnie Blue Flag" was ever seen in Georgia, but a single-star flag with a red star on a white field was reported in use in Augusta and in Millidgeville in January, 1861. Millidgeville served as Georgia's capital from 1807 to 1868.

In early 1955, an Atlanta attorney proposed a new flag design, one that would incorporate the Confederate Battle Flag. At the 1956 session of the General Assembly, State Senators Jefferson Lee Davis and Willis Harden introduced Senate Bill No. 98 to change the state flag design again.

Georgia

The 1956 flag design specified the same blue canton as defined in 1902, stamped with the Great Seal of the State of Georgia, similar to the flag that flew from some time in the 1920s. The Confederate Battle Flag was incorporated as the flag's field. House Bill No. 98 was signed into law by Governor Marvin Griffin on February 13, 1956, effective July 1, 1956.

For the first time in Georgia's history, the flag that flew over the capitol was as specified by law. Though minor differences did appear, this flag flew over the state of Georgia for 45 years until 2001.

By the late 1960s, some Georgia residents were expressing dismay with the 1956 design, calling the inclusion of the Confederate Battle Flag offensive and representative of a distasteful segment of Georgia history. For years the design of the flag was challenged. Numerous bills were introduced in the 1980s and the 1990s calling for a return to the pre-1956 design.

In 2000, Atlanta architect Cecil Alexander designed a new flag that was intended to recognize the Confederate Battle Flag's historical significance while minimizing its prominence as representative of the State of Georgia. House Bill No. 16 to adopt this flag was first read in the Georgia House on January 9, 2001. It was amended to include "IN GOD WE TRUST" beneath the ribbon of flags. As amended, House Bill No. 16 was adopted in the Georgia House on January 24, 2001 and rushed to the Georgia Senate where it passed on January 30, 2001. Governor Roy Barnes signed the legislation on January 31, 2001 and on that same day, a new flag was quietly raised over the state capitol.

The 2003 flag is reminiscent of the First National Flag of the Confederate States of America, the Stars and Bars. The flag consists of a square canton on three horizontal bars of equal width. The top and bottom bands are scarlet and the middle band is white. The bottom scarlet band extends the entire length of the flag. The top two bands extend from the canton to the end of the flag. Centered in the square blue canton is a gold representation of the Georgia coat of arms. Directly under the coat of arms are the words "IN GOD WE TRUST" in upper case letters. Thirteen white five-pointed stars circle the coat of arms and the wording symbolizing Georgia and the 12 other states that formed the United States of America.

The bill signed by Governor Perdue also called for a non-binding "advisory referendum" to determine whether the people of the state wished to keep the new, 2003 flag. The referendum, scheduled to be held on the date of the 2004 Presidential Primary, offered two choices to Georgians; keep the 2003 design as the Official Georgia State Flag or revert to the 2001 design. On March 2, 2004, the people of Georgia voted 3-1 to keep the 2003 Perdue flag flying over Georgia.