

Illinois



Illinois was admitted to the United States as its 21st state on 03 December 1818.

Mrs. Ella Park Lawrence, of Galesburg, was elected Illinois State Regent of the Society of the Daughters of the American Revolution (D.A.R.) in 1911. As State Regent, she was required to attend the National Congress at the D.A.R. headquarters in Washington, D.C. each year. While attending a meeting in Memorial Continental Hall, she noticed that among the State flags hanging in the hall, there was none representing Illinois. Mrs. Lawrence determined to remedy this situation.

She found that Illinois had no official State flag and, in 1912, she began a vigorous campaign to adopt a design for an official State banner for the State of Illinois. Mrs. Lawrence visited D.A.R. chapters across the State and lobbied State officials and members of the Illinois General Assembly in her efforts to promote interest in an official State flag. She sent a letter to every D.A.R. chapter in Illinois, offering a \$25.00 prize to the organization that submitted the best design for an official State flag.

Four judges, led by Secretary of State Lewis G. Stevenson, evaluated thirty-five designs in 1913 and 1914. They eventually selected the entry submitted by Miss Lucy Derwent of the Rockford Chapter. Miss Derwent's design featured the pictorial content of the 1868 [Great Seal of the State of Illinois](#) on a white field.

State Senator Raymond D. Meeker introduced the flag bill in the Illinois Senate. The design was approved by both houses of the General Assembly and became official on July 16, 1915 when Governor Edward Fitzsimmons Dunne allowed the bill to become law without his signature. The law stipulated that the design be reproduced in black or in color on the white background.

Mrs. Lawrence requested five hand-made flags. Three by five feet in size, they were made of silk taffeta and bound with a yellow fringe. The design was painted on each flag using oil-based paints. One flag was given to the National Headquarters of the D.A.R. and another given to the State organization. The remaining three were distributed to Secretary of State Stevenson, Governor Dunne, and the Illinois State Historical Society. One of these original flags currently hangs in the Henry Knox Room at the Knox County Courthouse.

While serving in Vietnam, Chief Petty Officer Bruce McDaniel of Waverly became concerned over a perceived deficiency of design of his Illinois State Flag. One of many State flags that hung in his mess hall, its identity was consistently questioned. McDaniel requested that the design of the flag be amended to include the State's name.

A bill to amend the original act of 1915 was sponsored by State Representative Jack Walker of Lansing. It was approved by the General Assembly and signed by Governor Ogilvie on September 17, 1969. This bill authorized a new flag to carry the State's name.

Governor Ogilvie appointed a committee consisting of the State Historian, the Director of the Illinois Information Service, and the State Records Archivist to develop specifications for the new flag to ensure uniformity in production and color by flag makers. Mrs. Sanford Hutchison of Greenfield was brought in to

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assist. Mrs. Hutchison had previously done extensive research on the design for the State seal and she submitted a design for this new flag that was accepted by the committee, the Secretary of State and the Governor on July 1, 1970.

The flag includes the emblem of the Illinois State Shield on a white field. The name of the State represented by the flag, Illinois, is printed below the emblem in blue upper case letters.

The Bald Eagle, representing the United States, holds a red streamer in its beak. The [State motto](#), "State sovereignty, national union" means that Illinois governs itself under the government of the United States. In the Bald Eagle's talons is a shield with thirteen bars and thirteen stars representing the original thirteen colonies. The date Illinois was admitted to the Union and the date of the State seal are printed on the boulder. The ground around the boulder symbolizes the rich soil of this prairie State.

Mrs. Ella Park Lawrence died on March 17, 1924 and is interred at Hope Cemetery in Galesburg.

One of the design proposals that was not chosen during the flag contest was submitted by newspaperman, poet, and author Wallace Rice. He envisioned a design consisting of horizontal white-blue-white stripes with twenty blue stars and one large white star, representing Illinois's position as the 21st state to join the Union. Mr. Rice was not deterred however and his later proposals for Illinois' [Centennial flag](#) and the [original version](#) (two stars) of [Chicago's municipal flag](#) met with success. In both of these flags, Rice's horizontal blue and white stripe theme is repeated.