State Flag [1]

State Flag of North Carolina

by Josh Howard
Research Branch, NC Office of Archives & History, 2010.
https://www.dncr.nc.gov/about-us/history/division-historical-resources/nc-highway-historical-marker-program [2]

See also: North Carolina State Symbols and Official Adoptions main page [3], Honor and Remember Flag [4]

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North Carolina state flag. Image courtesy of Wikimedia Commons. [6]

Some statutes relating to the flag are in the N.C. General Statutes,Chapter 144 [7].

> § 144-1. State flag.
>
> The flag of North Carolina shall consist of a blue union, containing in the center thereof a white star with the letter "N" in gilt on the left and the letter "C" in gilt on the right of said star, the circle containing the same to be one third the width of said union. The fly of the flag shall consist of two equally proportioned bars, the upper bar to be red, the lower bar to be white; the length of the bars horizontally shall be equal to the perpendicular length of the union, and the total length of the flag shall be one half more than its width. Above the star in the center of the union there shall be a gilt scroll in semicircular form, containing in black letters this inscription: "May 20th 1775" and below the star there shall be a similar scroll containing in black letters the inscription: "April 12th 1776". (1885, c. 291; Rev., s. 5321; C.S., s. 7535; 1991, c. 361, s. 1.)

State flag history

In Colonial North Carolina, the flag most often seen would have been that of the colony's mother country, England, and later Great Britain. Prior to the Act of Union [8] in 1707, the flag would have been that known as St. George's Cross. After 1707, the symbol became the Union flag, incorporating the Scottish St. Andrew's Cross with a blue field with St. George's Cross. Lord William Tryon [9] carried two such flags with him during the Alamance campaign of 1771 during theWar of Regulation [10].

Numerous locally made flags were likely utilized within the state's borders during the Revolution, but virtually nothing is known of them. North Carolina did not officially have a state flag until the constitutional convention of 1861. John D. Whitford [11], a Craven County [12] delegate, advocated a resolution to create a state flag consisting of a "blue field with a white V thereon, and a star, encircling which shall be the words 'Surgit astrum, May 20, 1775."

Convention delegates established a flag committee, but went with a different design than that proposed by Whitford. The committee adopted a flag that would "consist of a red field with a white star in centre, and with the inscription, above the star, in a semi-circular form, of 'May 20, 1775,' and below the star, in a semi-circular form, of 'May 20, 1861.'" There were also to be "two bars of equal width, and the length of the field shall be equal to the bar, the width of the field being equal to both bars; the first bar shall be blue, and the second shall be white, and the length of the flag shall be one-third more than its width." The new design appears to have derived from one suggested by Raleigh artist William G. Browne. The 1775 date came from the traditional date of the controversial, and since debunked, Mecklenburg Declaration of Independence [13]. The second date commemorated the day that North Carolina seceded from the Union. The flag ordinance was ratified on June 22, 1861.

The flag flew over North Carolina until 1885 when a new model banner was proposed by the state legislature. The new

design consisted of a blue union containing a white star in the center with a gilt N on the left and gilt C on the right, with scrolls above and below documenting, once again, the date of the Mecklenburg Declaration of Independence, and changed the second date to April 12, 1776 in honor of the Halifax Resolves [14].

Despite the controversy over the Mecklenburg Declaration of Independence, the flag has remained little changed since 1885. Only minor modifications to the length and the elimination of two commas have occurred.

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Edmonds, W. R. 1913. *The North Carolina state flag* [15]. Raleigh, N.C.: Edwards & Broughton Print. Co. Online at: https://digital.ncdcr.gov/Documents/Detail/north-carolina-state-flag/2308931 [15]

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Audio [16]
State Symbols [17]
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