

# The Bugle



Quarterly Journal of the  
Camp Curtin Historical Society  
and Civil War Round Table, Inc.

Winter 2009  
Volume 19, Number 4

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*The Colors of the Gray*  
*The Flags of the Confederacy*

*"The field upon which we now stand will be known as classic ground, for here has been the great central point of the organization of our military forces. When my administration of public affairs will have been forgotten and the good and evil will be only known to the investigation of the antiquarian, Camp Curtin, with its memories and associations, will be immortal."*

- Governor Andrew Curtin, 1865

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### Dues are Due

Earlier this month we sent reenlistment forms to our members. We hope that all of you will renew your dues and join us for 2010 in helping to spread the word about Civil War preservation, commemoration and education. With the approach of the 150th anniversary of the Civil War, we will need your support. Things are already in the planning stages and CCHS representatives have attended state and local meetings to make arrangements for events and programs. Please return your reenlistment form and, if possible, join at a higher level. Remember, any donation above the basic recruit level of \$15.00 is tax deductible!

### Need a Program?

Teachers and organization program chairpersons who need a speaker for their classroom or group should contact Camp Curtin. We have several speakers who can present illustrated lectures on a variety of topics. Our most popular program is "The Harrisburg Area in the Civil War" but we have other topics that often include the display of artifacts and reproduction items to enliven the lecture. For information, telephone 717-732-5330 or email [CampCurtin@verizon.net](mailto:CampCurtin@verizon.net).

### Book Discounts for Members

The Civil War and More Book Store offers Camp Curtin Historical Society members a 10% discount on their entire purchase and makes a 5% donation of the pre-tax sales total to the Society's historic preservation fund. Located at 10 South Main Street in Mechanicsburg, the store offers thousands of items on the Civil War, WWI and WWII. For more information, store hours and directions, call 717-766-1899 or visit [www.civilwarandmore.com](http://www.civilwarandmore.com).

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**Cover:** *This fanciful drawing from Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper shows the Confederate attack on Cemetery Hill at the Battle of Gettysburg. It correctly shows the prominence of flags on a battlefield but unfortunately the artist depicted the wrong flags. So far as is known, no Confederate regiments used the Second National Flag as its regimental color in this battle. More than likely, the artist read about the new flag, adopted in May 1863, and included it in the illustration. It is drawings like this that has led to many misconceptions about Confederate flags. Hopefully our feature article will shed some light on the flags used by Southern troops.*

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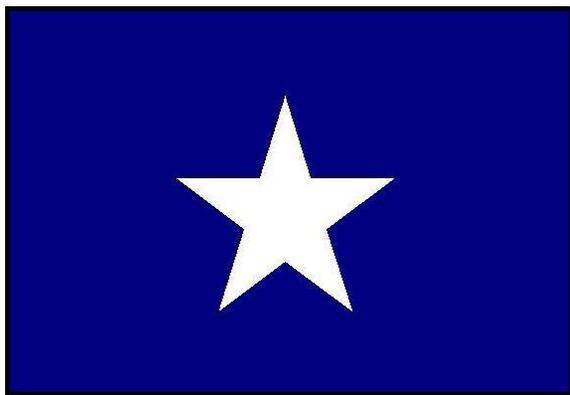
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# The Colors of the Gray *by Lawrence E. Keener-Farley*

On December 20, 1860, South Carolina seceded from the Union. Within a few weeks, six more states had rebelled and formed the Confederate States of America, wrote a constitution and established a provisional government.

When Mississippi left the Union, a blue flag with a large white star was raised over the capitol building. The flag had a history of association with popular rebellions, having been used in Mississippi against Spain and by Texas against Mexico.



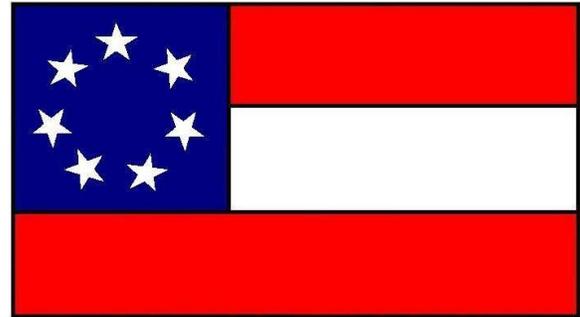
**Bonnie Blue Flag**

Upon seeing the flag, Harry Macarty composed the song “The Bonnie Blue Flag.” The flag was more common in legend and song although it did make a few appearances on the battlefield.

## **First National Flag**

The new Confederate Congress realized that it would need a flag and a committee was appointed, with William Porcher Miles as chairman. The committee solicited designs and reportedly received hundreds of suggestions for the new Southern banner. At the time, most Southerners still had an attachment to “the old flag” so many of the designs reflected the influence of the stars and stripes.

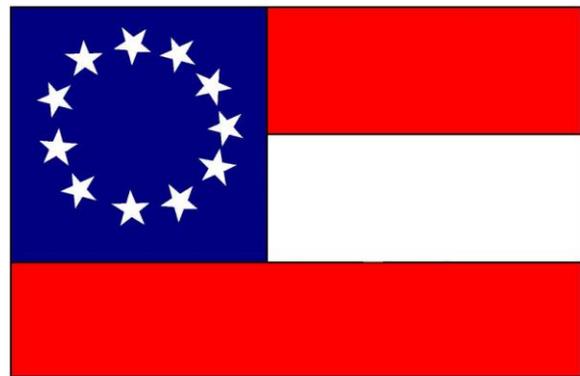
The committee ultimately settled on the “Stars and Bars” but Congress never actually enacted a law establishing the flag. Many complained that it was too close to the United States flag with its red and white bars and blue canton with white stars but it would remain the national flag until May 1863.



**First National with 7 Stars**

No official dimensions of the flag were ever established. The first flag was raised on March 4, 1861, apparently intentionally selected because it was the day of Lincoln’s inauguration. It had seven stars representing the states then in the Confederacy: South Carolina, Mississippi, Florida, Alabama, Georgia, Louisiana, and Texas.

After the firing on Fort Sumter, Virginia, North Carolina, Tennessee, and Arkansas left the Union and the total number of stars grew to eleven, which became a common number on flags prepared for the first military units in the summer of 1861.



**First National with 11 Stars**

Missouri and Kentucky joined the Confederacy in late 1861 to bring the total to thirteen stars and a few flag makers even added stars to represent the slave-holding but not seceded states of Maryland and Delaware.

Like the United States flag, there was no standard way of placing the stars in the canton. Usually they were in a circle and sometimes one star was placed in the middle of the circle. There are also known surviving examples with the stars in rows.

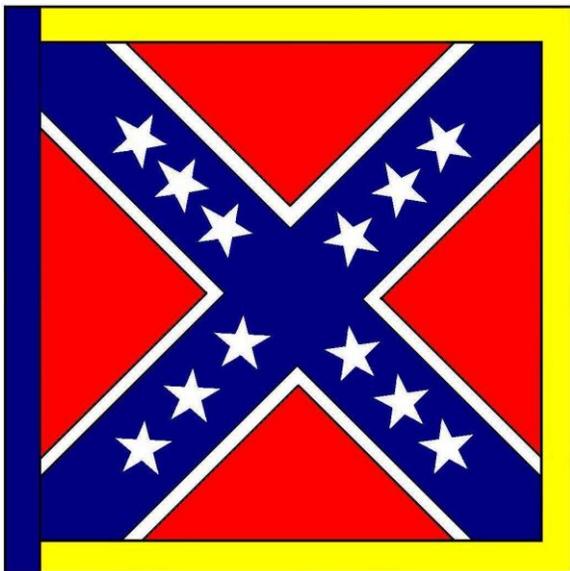
## Eastern Army Flags

At the First Battle of Manassas in July 1861, it became evident that the South would need a more distinctive flag for military use on the battlefield. Gen. P.T.G. Beauregard contacted Congressman Miles and asked that the flag be redesigned. Miles agreed with the General that the flag should be changed but doubted that the Congress would agree. Miles suggested that the army just adopt its own distinctive flag and suggested a design he had submitted for the national flag but had been rejected. It was a rectangular red flag with a white-edged blue saltier (X cross) and stars representing the states.

Gen. Beauregard liked the design as did Gen. Joseph Johnston, who suggested that it be made as a four foot square rather than rectangular. The first prototypes of the new flag were made of silk by the three Cary sisters of Richmond and presented to Generals Beauregard, Johnston and Earl Van Dorn.

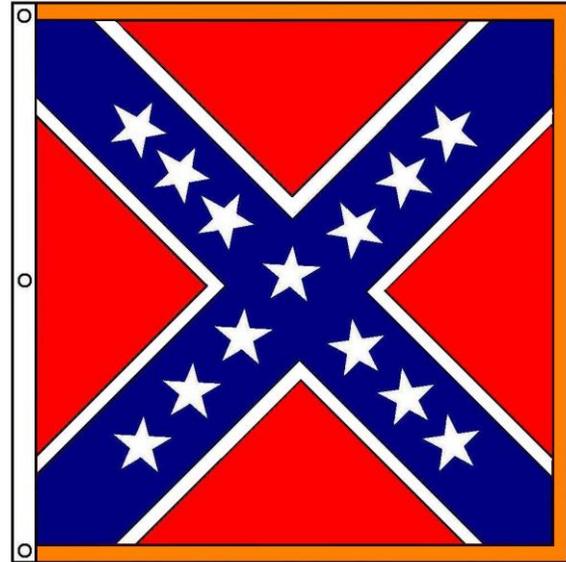
These flags set the pattern for what was then called the Army of the Potomac, later the Army of Virginia, and under Robert E. Lee, the Army of Northern Virginia (ANV).

The first issue of the flags in November 1861 by the Quartermaster Department was made of silk, with an 8 inch wide cross, yellow border and blue pole sleeve. It had only twelve stars since Kentucky had not yet been officially admitted to the Confederate States.



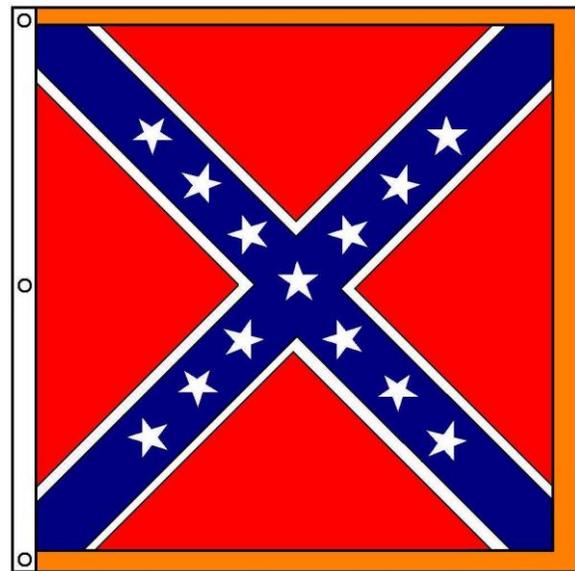
ANV Silk

As more units entered the Confederate Army and silk became harder to obtain, the army changed the fabric to cotton and then to wool bunting and added a star at the center of the cross in early 1862. It retained the 8 inch wide cross but the outer three edges were orange, using material captured from the U. S. Navy's supplies at the Norfolk Navy Yard. The pole sleeve was eliminated and replaced with a white canvas heading, with three eyelets for tying onto a pole.



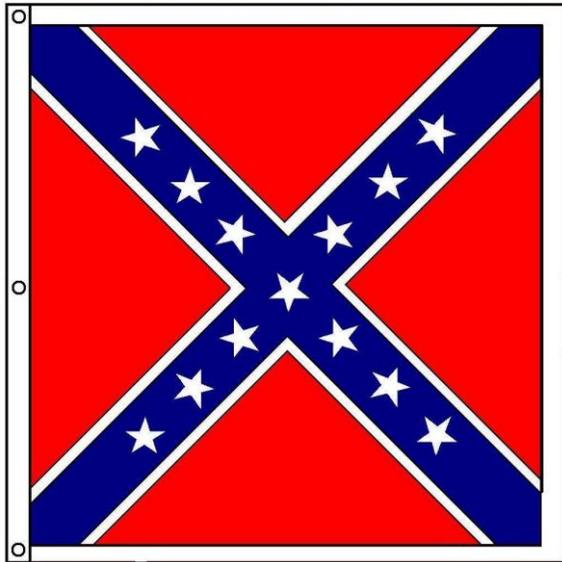
ANV 1st Bunting

By mid 1862, the width of the cross was reduced to 5 1/2 inches but otherwise retained the orange border and canvas heading.



ANV 2nd Bunting

In the fall of 1862, the design was again slightly changed by eliminating the orange border and using white. The ANV battle flag would remain at that basic design and color scheme until the end of the war.



**ANV 3rd Bunting**

Flag historian Howard Madaus examined surviving ANV flags and determined that there were five variations over the years of this white-bordered flag, with slight differences in the overall size, cross width, cross edging width, star diameter, star interval and border width (see table below).

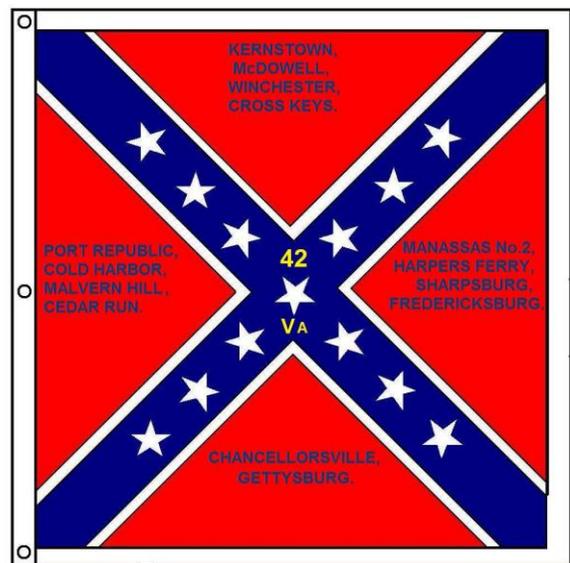
As with so many flags of the 1800s, there was no standard alignment for the stars. Unlike today, when all stars point up, Civil War era stars could point up, down, left, right or any angle.

The ANV design was made in three sizes for infantry (48X48 inches), artillery (36X36) and cavalry

(30X30) but it is known that some artillery and cavalry units carried infantry size flags.

As the war progressed, unit designations and battle honors were added to some flags. Usually, the unit designation was in gold paint while the battles were painted in blue. Like the Union Army, the Confederates included the battles that they lost on their flags. Again, there was no absolute standard for paint colors or placement on the flag.

Flags in the Army of Northern Virginia were relatively standard, with the vast majority of regiments carrying one of the battle flags into combat. In fact, at Gettysburg, Lee specifically ordered that only the ANV battle flag should be carried. A few units only had the Stars and Bars and the 1st Texas broke out its state flag during the July 2 attack.



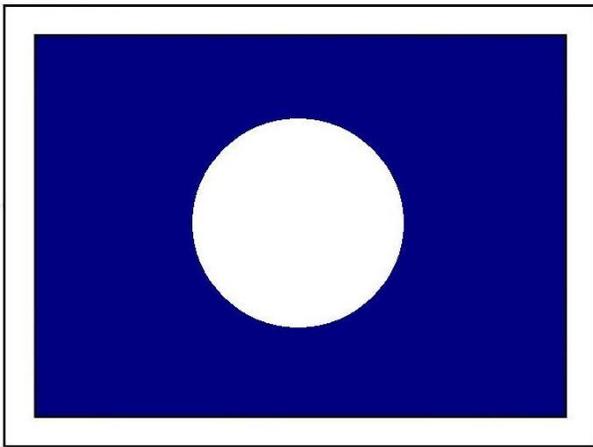
**ANV with Unit & Battle Honors**

Material Type	Issued Starting	Overall Size	Cross Width	Cross Edging	Star Diameter	Star Interval	3 Outer Edges
Silk	Fall 1861	48X48	8	3/4	4 1/2	8	2
1st Bunting	Early 1862	48X48	8	1/2	3	6	1 1/2
2nd Bunting	Mid 1862	48X48	5 1/2	1/2	3 1/2	6	1 1/2
3rd Bunting	Fall 1862	48X48	5 1/2	1/2	3 1/2	6	2
4th Bunting	Spring 1864	51X51	7	5/8	5 1/2	8	2
5th Bunting	Nov 1864	48X48	5	5/8	4 1/2	9	2
6th Bunting	Winter 1865	48X48	5	5/8	4 1/2	8	2
7th Bunting	March 1865	48X48	5	5/8	4 1/2	7	2

## Western Army Flags

Since the Confederate War Department never adopted a standard battle flag, the flags in other Confederate armies operating west of the Appalachian Mountains varied considerably. Literally, every division or corps commander designed his own flag.

In the Army of the Mississippi, General William Hardee, author of the widely used pre-war infantry tactics manual, authorized a simple blue flag with a white border and a white circle, called the “silver moon.” Often, the circle was more of an oval. Made of wool with a cotton border, the size of these flags varied. Surviving examples include 31X56, 36X39, and 47X54 inches.



Hardee Design

Units often placed their regimental designation and battle honors on these flags usually using black and white paint.



Hardee with Unit & Battle Honors

Later in the war, as part of the Army of Tennessee, when the regiments were ordered to change to an ANV-type flag, the units refused. They had fought under these colors and were very attached to them so they were allowed to keep them.

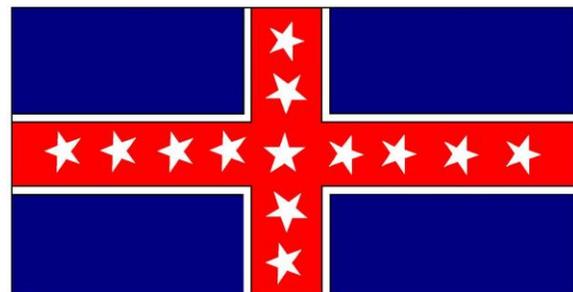
General Earl Van Dorn, commanding the Army of the West (Trans Mississippi), authorized a flag for his units in early 1862. It had a red field, with thirteen white stars and a crescent moon in the upper left corner. Most flags were bordered in yellow and had a white heading, although a few had gold fringe.

When the regiments joined the Army of the Mississippi, they carried these flags with them.



Van Dorn Design

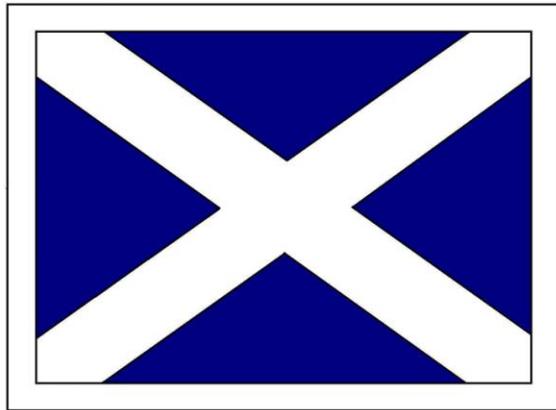
Again, there is considerable variation among surviving flags as to size, placement of the stars, unit designation and battle honors. A typical size was about 4X5 feet. In designing his flag, General Leonidas Polk seems to have been influenced by his pre-war position as a bishop in the Episcopal Church. The main feature of the flag was the red cross of Saint George, patron saint of England. The cross was edged in white, the field was blue, and thirteen white stars were placed on the cross.



Polk Design

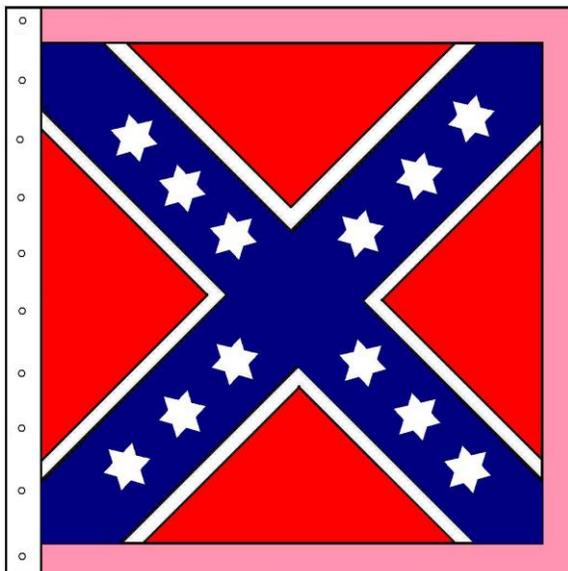
Sizes of surviving Polk flags vary from 28X51 to 44X60 to 53X72 inches. Unit designations and battle honors are sometimes painted in white on the blue field. A few variations of Polk's design, a blue field with a white cross, were also used by some units.

In Eastern Tennessee, General John P. McCown had blue flags, with a white cross and white border, issued to his division. This flag resembled the Scottish flag, the cross of St. Andrew.



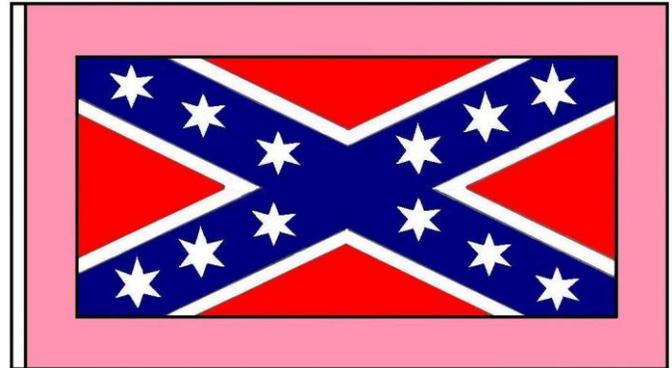
**McCown Design**

When General Braxton Bragg's Corps was added to the Army of the Mississippi, General Beauregard ordered the New Orleans Depot to make an ANV variation that had twelve stars with six points and a pink border on three sides. They were made of cotton rather than wool bunting. Most surviving examples are slightly less than the four foot square of the ANV design. This was the first time that the ANV style flag was issued to western troops.



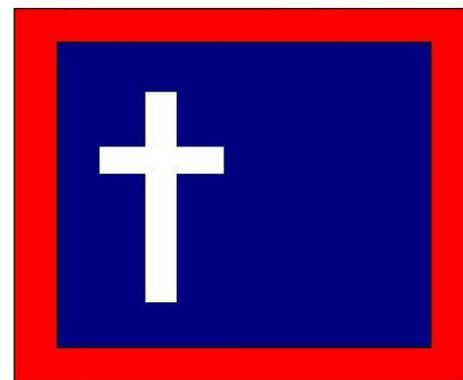
**Bragg 1st Design**

The second issue of the flag was rectangular and had a wider pink border on all four sides. Sizes varied from 32X61 to 41X73 inches. Oddly, both Bragg design flags have only 12 stars, even though they were made after the admission of Missouri and Kentucky to the Confederacy in late 1861.



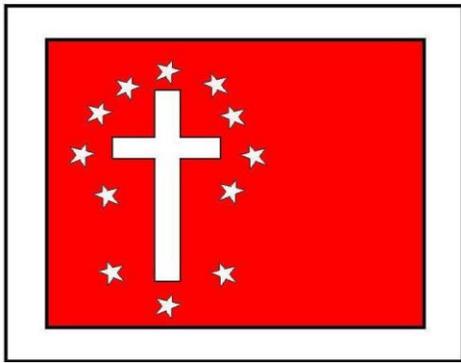
**Bragg 2nd Design**

Several regiments in the Confederate Trans Mississippi Department, commanded by Gen. Sterling Price, carried flags with the Christian or Roman Cross on a blue field. It was most popular among Missouri units and is often referred to as the Missouri Battle Flag. Several of these flags were surrendered at Vicksburg in 1863 and even appear in newspaper drawings of the time. These cotton flags were relatively small ranging from 32 to 36 inches on the staff by 47 to 51 inches on the fly.



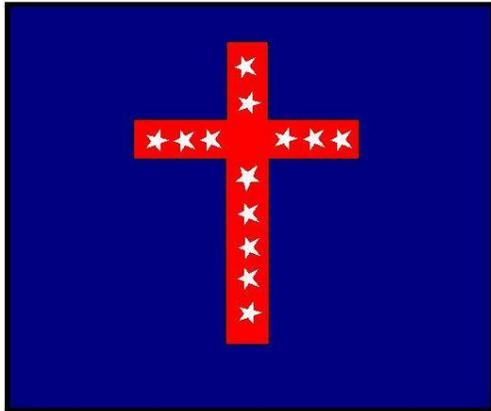
**Trans Mississippi Christian Cross Design**

In the winter of 1865, the ladies of Mobile, Alabama seem to have been inspired by the Trans Mississippi flag in designing a flag for Major General Dabney Maury. The flag was made of silk and about 21 X 30 inches. Maury used the flag to designate his headquarters during the siege of Mobile.



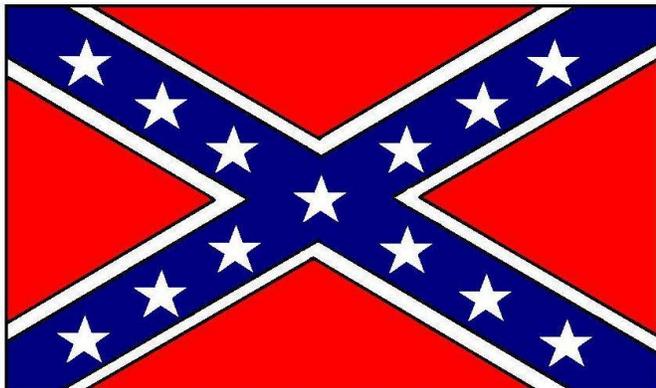
**Maury Design**

Some Kentucky regiments also carried a variation of the Christian Cross. The flag of the 3rd Kentucky Infantry was blue flag with a red cross, festooned with white stars. The flag of the 5th Kentucky Cavalry was similar but the stars surrounded the cross much like the Maury design.



**Kentucky Design**

When General Joseph Johnston took command of the Army of Tennessee, he ordered new flags from the Atlanta Quartermaster Depot. They were rectangular versions of the ANV flag but without a border. Most were about 36X52 inches and made of cotton, affixed to the pole by cloth ties sewn onto the heading.



**Johnston Design**

Like their Eastern comrades, some western units place their regimental designation and battle honors on the flags in a manner similar to the ANV flag shown above. Others put their unit on the red field and their battles on the white edging of the cross. The surviving examples of this type of rectangular flag dispels the myth that all Confederate battle flags were square.



**Johnston with Unit & Battle Honors**

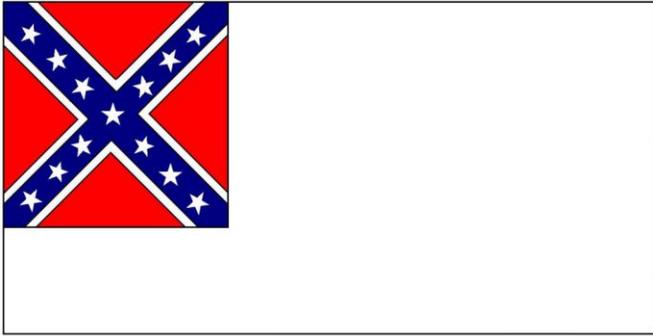
Despite his efforts to standardize the flags in the Army of the Tennessee, Johnston's troops fought under at least five different flags until the end of the war – Johnston's, Hardee's, Bragg's two versions, and the Second National.

## Later National Flags

As early as the Spring of 1862, there were rumblings in the Confederate Congress to change the design of the national flag. The "Stars and Bars" similarity to the "Stars and Stripes" was losing its charm as more politicians and citizens wanted a distinctive Southern flag. Congress could not agree on a design and the idea was tabled for another year.

By the Spring of 1863, the issue again came before Congress. After a hurried debate before its summer recess, they passed a resolution establishing a new national flag for the Confederate States. It was to have a white field with the ANV battle flag as the canton (the upper left portion near the pole).

Oddly, the new law specified the proportions of the flag as being 1:2, that is, a flag three feet on the pole would be six feet on the fly. Hanging limp, it could easily be mistaken for a flag of truce or surrender. Nevertheless, President Jefferson Davis signed the bill on May 1, 1863, and the Confederacy had a new national flag.



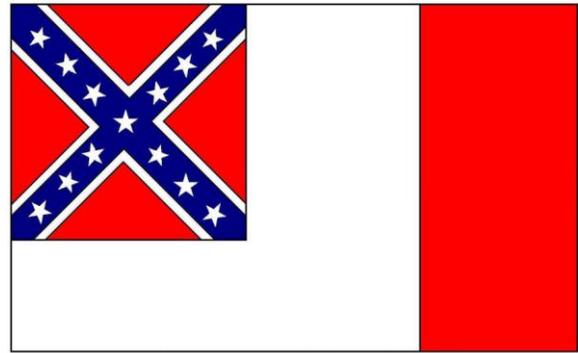
**Second National Flag**

One of the first flags made was unfortunately used to drape the casket of General Thomas “Stonewall” Jackson and it was sometimes referred to as Jackson’s flag. More commonly, it was called the “Stainless Banner.”

As the Army of Northern Virginia marched into Pennsylvania in June 1863, it had a few of the new flags, mostly used as headquarters flags by general officers. The Confederates did not adopt the two flag system – national and regimental – of the United States Army.

A few of the Second National Flags were used as unit flags by the Army of Tennessee later in the war as replacements for captured or worn out flags. Most were not in the 1:2 ratio as specified by law but rather 2:3. Common sizes include 4X6 and 4½X7 feet. Some surviving examples do not have the white edging on the blue cross.

On March 4, 1865, the Confederate Congress revised the flag law by adding a red bar on the fly end of the white field. Since Richmond was evacuated a month later and most Confederate armies had surrendered by June, very few of these flags were actually made and used.



**Third National Flag**

## **Fate of the Flags**

As flags were captured or surrendered, they were supposed to be sent to the War Department in Washington. Some, however, were retained by individuals or sent back to Northern states as trophies of war.

In 1887, President Grover Cleveland wanted to return the flags to the South but was vehemently opposed by the Grand Army of the Republic. As a man who had paid a replacement to take his place in the war, the GAR always viewed Cleveland as a pro-Southern villain.

Ultimately, the flags were returned in 1905 during President William Taft’s administration with little adverse comment. Those that could be identified were sent to their respective states and all of the others were given to what is now the Museum of the Confederacy in Richmond.

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This article is one of a continuing series designed to explain some of the basics of the Civil War. A PowerPoint presentation on Union and Confederate Flags is available for schools and organizations. Questions may be directed to [campcurtin@verizon.net](mailto:campcurtin@verizon.net).

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## **Camp Curtin Descendant Brigade**

Membership in the Camp Curtin Descendant Brigade is open to men, women and children (12 years of age or older) who are direct or collateral descendants of a soldier who passed through Camp Curtin from April 18, 1861 to November 11, 1865. Descendants of civilians who worked or volunteered at Camp Curtin are also eligible. The Ladies Union Relief Association of Harrisburg is one of the civilian organizations that worked at Camp Curtin.

The application fee is \$25.00. Accepted members will receive a membership medal, membership certificate, and a one year membership in the Society. We plan to present the first medals and certificates at our November 8 meeting. Subsequent dues will be \$15.00 per year. For more information and an application form, visit our website at [www.CampCurtin.org](http://www.CampCurtin.org).

## Special Thanks

The article on Confederate flags could not have been written but for the original research by the late Howard Madaus. I had the honor and pleasure of working with "Howie" for several years. He was truly the most knowledgeable vexillologist in the nation.



In terms of Confederate flags, I think he had personally looked at every original known to exist and whenever a new one turned up he was usually the person consulted to verify its authenticity. I was lucky enough to photograph several flags for his research. Howie's numerous articles and books have been an invaluable source of information to me and countless other historians and to generations yet to come. -- LKF

*The Camp Curtin Historical Society and Civil War Round Table, Inc., is a non-profit corporation chartered by the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. Contributions are tax deductible under IRC Section 501c(3). The Society is properly registered with the Pennsylvania Department of State as a charitable organization. A copy of the registration and financial information may be obtained by telephoning toll free within Pennsylvania 1-800-732-0999. Registration does not imply endorsement.*

## Website Updated

The Camp Curtin Historical Society website has been updated thanks to the efforts of Tom Hilbish, our webmaster. The site has been simplified and is easier to navigate.

Pages tell about the history of Camp Curtin and the Society's various activities. There are downloadable forms to join CCHS and our new descendant brigade.

Perhaps most importantly, our most recent issues of *The Bugle* are in PDF form and in color! Also, the main articles from past issues are being revised, color photos added and posted as PDF files to a new "Articles of Interest" page.

Some of the articles of interest include: Dedication of Couch and Jenkins Monuments by CCHS, Pennsylvania Monuments at Antietam, Brig. Gen. Joseph Knipe, Union Army Corps Insignia and Flags, Civil War Field Artillery, Harrisburg's Grand Review for Black Troops, Maj. Gen. John W. Geary, Harrisburg Area Subsidiary Camps, John Frederick Hartranft: General and Governor, Pennsylvania's Civil War Capitol Building, Governor Curtin and the Soldier's Orphan Schools, and the Grand Army of the Republic.

These two pages create an archive of valuable information about local history and basic information about the Civil War. We especially hope that students and teachers will use this resource.

The revisions and additions will continue over the next few months so check back frequently to see what is new: [www.CampCurtin.org](http://www.CampCurtin.org).

## Dancers Donate

The Civil War Dance Foundation and its performing troupe, the Victorian Dance Ensemble, recently awarded \$4,000 in preservation and education grants to five organizations. The organization was featured in the Spring 2009 issue of *The Bugle* and many of the dancers are members of CCHS.

One thousand dollars each was donated to the Civil War Preservation Trust and the Save Historic Arlington House. Five hundred dollars each was given to the Gettysburg Foundation, Center for Civil War Photography, Joseph Junkin Homestead & Historical Marker Project, and Moores Library's Christiana Slavery Resistance Archive.

Each year, the dancers select organizations and causes to help support preservation and education. With this year's donations, the total has now reached over \$27,000 since the group began awarding grants in 2001. One of the group's early donations was to the CCHS Jenkins Monument Project.

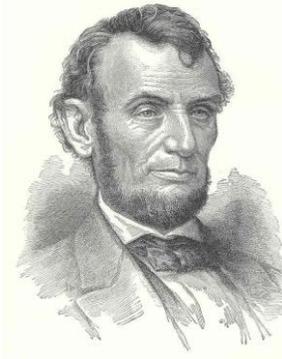
During 2009, the Ensemble danced for some very special events, including the Presidential Inaugural Ball at the Smithsonian Institution, the Philadelphia Lincoln Bicentennial Celebration on Independence Mall, and the premiere of "For the People," an oratorio commissioned by the Lincoln Bicentennial Commission for the Dedication Day commemoration of Lincoln's Gettysburg Address.

For more information, visit the Civil War Dance Foundation website at [www.CivilWarDance.org](http://www.CivilWarDance.org).

*The Camp Curtin Historical Society*  
*presents*

**James E. Schmick**  
*speaking on*

**Lincoln Comes to Harrisburg**



Our February speaker will be James Schmick, founding president of CCHS. Jim will be speaking on Lincoln's visit to Harrisburg on February 22, 1861, on the way to his first inauguration. Learn about his visit to Harrisburg and his secret departure to avoid an assassination plot. After he was assassinated in 1865, Lincoln's body was returned to his hometown of Springfield, Illinois, by the same route he used to reach Washington in 1861. Hear about this second sad visit to the capital city. Jim's presentation will also include a slide show of his collection of 1909 Lincoln Centennial postcards.

***2:00PM, Sunday, February 28, 2010***

***at the Camp Curtin Memorial-Mitchell United Methodist Church***  
***2221 North Sixth Street, Harrisburg, Pennsylvania***

**This program is free and open to the public so bring a friend.**  
**Refreshments and social hour will follow the presentation.**  
**The program will be preceded by the Camp Curtin Historical Society's annual meeting, including presentation of reports and elections.**

**For directions or information, telephone 717-732-5115**  
**(Email [genjenkins@aol.com](mailto:genjenkins@aol.com))**