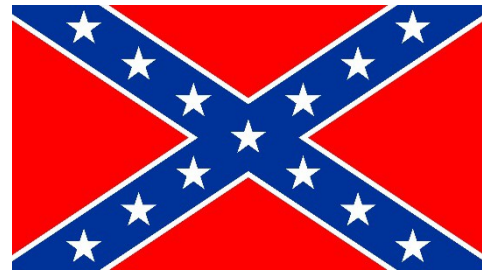


## The True Confederate Flag

Marrcel A. Smith

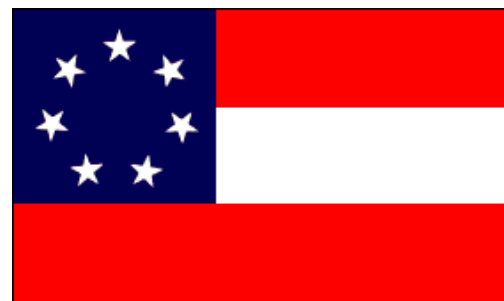
The flag referred to as the Confederate Flag and its meaning is one of the most lasting debates here in the low country. My goal is not to discuss the ideology of the flag, but to reveal its misconceptions and fascinating history throughout the Civil War.

The supposed “Confederate Flag” seen to the right isn’t the representative flag of the Confederacy at all. It is actually the “Battle Flag of Northern Virginia” and the most synonymous of the confederate flags to the



term. You can see this flag flown anywhere in the South; on t-shirts, license plates and even straddled to soaring flag poles. Although this flag's design was used as the canton in the Second and Third National flags, it was never adopted as the Confederate States of America flag. In fact, there were actually several different battle flags of various colors and designs used throughout the war by varying regions and regiments.

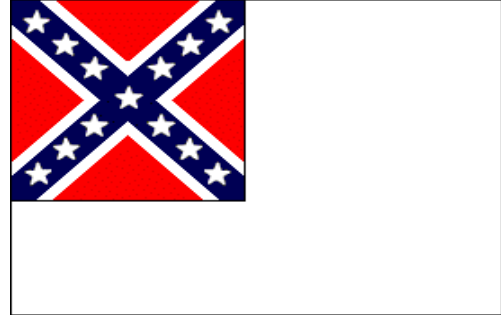
However, the Confederacy did have a national flag—well, actually three. The First National flag (right), sometimes referred to as the “Stars and Bars” was the first Confederate flag. It was adopted in 1861 and modified several times after to add more stars as



more states seceded. The flag was soon decommissioned for obvious reasons—its striking resemblance to the Northern Union flag, the earlier version of the U.S. flag. You can surely infer

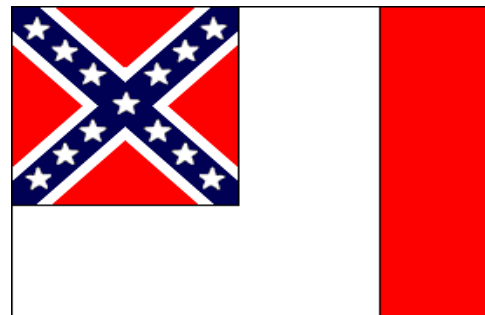
that this caused great confusion on the battle field and even ideologically. Eventually, this led to the flag's transformation in 1863.

“The Stainless Banner” was soon created by newspaper editor, William T. Thompson, as the Second National flag (right) in an effort to distinguish it from the Union flag. Thompson quoted on May 4, 1863 to Daily Morning News that, “*As a national emblem, it is*



*significant of our higher cause, the cause of a superior race, and a higher civilization contending against ignorance, infidelity, and barbarism. Another merit in the new flag is, that it bears no resemblance to the now infamous banner of the Yankee vandals.*” The major difference from the Union flag greatly pleased the opponents of the first flag. It also provided satisfaction to the admirers of the Battle Flag of Northern Virginia, as the flag serves as the canton for this flag. The only issue with this flag was its amount of white. It was feared that when the flag flew limp in no wind, it would be mistaken as a flag of truce resulting in its decommission in 1865.

A slight addition to the Second National flag, a red vertical bar, was then added bringing to life the third and last National flag of the Confederacy (right), the “Blood Stained Banner.” It was proposed and argued by Major Arthur L. Rogers for having “*as little as possible of the Yankee blue.*” Although not seen by many, this flag remained the National Confederate flag until the end of the war.



As you can see, the country is mistaken. The “Confederate Flag” that brews such heated debates, isn’t even the Confederate Flag. Actually, it is just one of many battle flags belonging to

the several Confederate regiments throughout the war. In fact, there are only three true Confederate flags, the “Stars and Bars,” the “Stainless Banner,” and the “Blood Stained Banner.”