

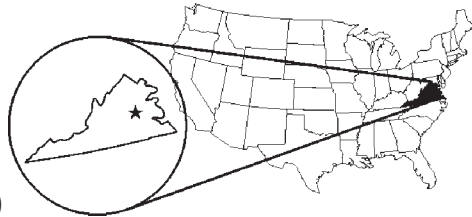
RICHMOND, VIRGINIA ★



Population Rank: U.S. # 94
Virginia # 4

Proportions: 3:5 (official)

Adopted: 24 May 1993 (official)



DESIGN: Richmond's flag has a field of dark blue on its upper two-thirds. The lower third is divided into four horizontal stripes of white, red, white, and red, in proportions of 1:3:1:3. In the center of the blue field is a three-quarter silhouette of a bareheaded boatman in white, standing with his right leg slightly raised as if it rests on a seat, and poling his boat toward the hoist. The white boat melds with the top white stripe, which has four slight bumps resembling waves and thus gives the appearance of water. In a three-quarters circle around the boatman are 9 five-pointed white stars (were the circle closed, there would be 12 stars). The boatman and stars occupy just slightly less than half the total field.

SYMBOLISM: The city describes the symbolism in “Richmond and Its Flag”:

The faceless boatman, as he poles to the honor side of the flag, symbolizes the tens of thousands of anonymous individuals, composed of a multiplicity of nationalities and races, who through the ages determined Richmond’s homogeneous character and contributed to the City’s success, growth and progress. Surrounding this symbol of our river’s power is an arc of nine stars. Each represents a present state that was once part of the Commonwealth of Virginia over which Richmond was their capital in the nation’s infancy—Virginia, West Virginia, Kentucky, Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, Michigan, Wisconsin, and Minnesota.

The city’s colors, red and blue, date to 1784 when the mayor, Robert Mitchell, added strips of red and blue ribbon when he affixed the city seal to documents. When asked why, he responded, “The blue signifies the river from which all life flows, and the red is for the infernal red clay that is always under our feet.” Richmond is situated on the James River.

HOW SELECTED: On 22 July 1991, an anonymous donor gave \$12,000 “to be used for the design of a devisal of arms, including shield, crest, supporters and badge, in connection with the creation of a new City flag”. The city council authorized establishing a flag committee to design the flag.

DESIGNER: The flag committee.

MORE ABOUT THE FLAG: Use of the city flag “except for the usual and customary official purposes, including decoration and display” is prohibited by ordinance (28 February 2000) unless specifically authorized by the city manager.



FORMER FLAG: The earlier flag of Richmond is double-sided with a dark blue field. On the front side occupying about the center third of the field is a “Norman” shield in white, featuring the central figure from

the city's seal. In the center of the field is the allegorical Justice, also called *Vindicatrix*, or “the Spirit of the South”, robed in a pink *chiton* (Greek gown) and a *himation* (drape) in white with blue shadings. Her hair is brown and she is blindfolded. In her right hand she holds a sword upright; in her left, the scales of justice. A green tobacco plant behind her symbolizes one of Richmond's early important products. Above her head, running across the center third of the shield, is the Latin motto **SIC ITUR AD ASTRA** (“Such is the way to the stars”) in black. Arched over all this, beginning and ending at the shield's vertical midpoint, in similar letters, is **RICHMOND VA, FOUNDED BY WILLIAM BYRD MDCCXXXVII**.



On the reverse side in the center is a red shield. The top half of the shield bears the Confederate Battle Flag: on a red field, a blue saltire edged in white with 13 white five-pointed stars. Below it is a white horizontal bar, with

DEO VINDICE (“Vindicated by God”), centered in two lines in blue.

This flag was designed by Carlton McCarthy, an early 20th-century mayor of Richmond, and adopted officially in 1914. Its proportions are 3:5. The designers intended its symbolism to recall Richmond's role as “the capital of the great southern Confederacy [1861-1865] and the leading city of the south”, and strongly defended the “historic connection with the Confederate cause ... [as] part of the history of the world from which we cannot be separated.”