



Written by [Mary McHugh](#) on December 2, 2010

## Gadsden Flags and License Plates

The revival now appearing to take place throughout the U.S. of “the true Spirit of ‘76” — and not its emotional counterfeit which was seen to come and go during the Bicentennial of 1976 — has simultaneously given rise to an interest in and identification with the flags of the American Revolution (or American War of Independence). The first of these was the Bedford Flag, carried by the Minutemen of that Massachusetts town to the neighboring Battle of Concord on April 19, 1775. Some 60 years later Ralph Waldo Emerson made it famous in his poem Concord Hymn:



By the rude bridge that arched the flood,  
Their flag to April’s breeze unfurled,  
Here once the embattled farmers stood,  
And fired the shot heard round the world.

The Bedford Flag was the only one present on the American side that historic day. But it soon was joined by many others, born from the angry resistance and patriotic fervor of the colonists and their need to give expression to it. The most striking Revolutionary flag then and most popular one now is the [Gadsden Flag](#). Seen in abundance everywhere over the past 20 months with its stark yellow background and threatening rattlesnake, the Gadsden gives perfect expression to the determined backlash felt by American patriots both then and today for warning their governmental oppressors, “Don’t Tread on Me.” It has been quickly and justifiably embraced by the current liberty-loving descendants of the original Tea Party activists and all Americans determined to preserve this Republic as it was originally founded. Resistance is again quite publicly in the air.

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The [Founding Fathers.info](#) website gives the flag’s history:

Christopher Gadsden was an American patriot if ever there was one. He led Sons of Liberty in South Carolina starting in 1765, and was later made a colonel in the Continental Army. In 1775 he was in Philadelphia representing his home state in the Continental Congress. He was also one of three members of the Marine Committee who decided to outfit and man the *Alfred* and its sister ships.

Gadsden and Congress chose a Rhode Island man, Esek Hopkins, as the commander-in-chief of the Navy. The flag that Hopkins used as his personal standard on the *Alfred* is the one we would now recognize. It’s likely that John Paul Jones, as the first lieutenant on the *Alfred*, ran it up the gaff.

It’s generally accepted that Hopkins’ flag was presented to him by Christopher Gadsden, who felt it was especially important for the commodore to have a distinctive personal standard. Gadsden



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also presented a copy of this flag to his state legislature in Charleston. This is recorded in the South Carolina congressional journals:

“Col. Gadsden presented to the Congress an elegant standard, such as is to be used by the commander in chief of the American navy; being a yellow field, with a lively representation of a rattle-snake in the middle, in the attitude of going to strike, and these words underneath, “Don’t Tread on Me!”

There is now a serious movement afoot for Gadsden Flag automobile license plates to be available in several states. According to [FoxNews.com](#):

In Texas, the first state to propose and approve the plates, officials said they didn’t have politics in mind, but simply getting more people interested in displaying specialty plates, which bring the state more money than regular plates.

“The Gadsden ‘Don’t Tread on Me’ flag is a significant one to American and Texas history, and our market research, both formal and informal, shows that there’s a lot of interest in Texas in state history,” said Kim Miller Drummond, spokeswoman for Myplates.com, the company contracted by the Texas Department of Motor Vehicles to design, market and sell new specialty license plates in the state.

The plate was proposed this summer as part a flag series that also features the Texas flag and the Gonzalez [“Come and Take It”](#) flag, and will soon feature the U.S. flag, Drummond said.

A proposal was submitted to the Virginia House last October by delegate John M. O’Bannon III for Gadsden flag license plates there. The revenues from these will not be “shared” but will go entirely to the Department of Motor Vehicles. There have been more than 300 buyers committed to purchase the plates and they are expected by July. Said O’Bannon, “Some people try to politicize it, but the nice thing about this symbol is that it has a very positive and patriotic heritage and a lot of people past the Tea Party folks think favorably of this and I think would like to have it.”

Also reported by Fox was Nevada’s efforts to allow the Gadsden plates:

Nevada Assemblyman Ed Goedhart isn’t so sure that his proposal to bring the Gadsden flag plate to his home state will pass, but he said he plans to do whatever he can to make it happen.

In Nevada, “if you can sell over a certain number of plates, you’re allowed to have specialty license plates. So my bill would put the Gadsden flag as one of those specialty plates that would have to wait its turn to move up the list,” Goedhart told FoxNews.com.

His proposal requests a hearing for the bill during the legislature’s next session. He says he doesn’t know whether the legislature will oblige, but he hopes it will pass the bill by late February. Part of the proceeds from the plates would then go to a nonprofit group that distributes pocket-sized copies of the U.S. Constitution to high school students.

“I believe there are a lot of people that basically embrace the concepts of Constitution, limited government, fiscal responsibility and free markets that our country was based upon and I believe there are a lot of people that would like to show their solidarity with those founding values by having a plate,” Goedhart said.

In a recent [BigGovernment.com](#) article about the new plates, James L. Simpson observed:

National Public Radio did a segment last March, claiming that the spirit of resistance symbolized



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by the Gadsden flag is inappropriate for Tea Partiers, who should instead think of Shay's Rebellion and Timothy McVeigh as their spiritual brethren. Simply stunning.

NPR is a taxpayer funded organization. Is this not yet another justification for defunding NPR? That deliberate mischaracterization has the smell of fear all over it. How wonderful would it be to see Gadsden plates wherever you traveled? It will drive the left even further around the bend than they already are. And that is saying something!



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