

Industry News

New Georgia Flag Based on Cecil Alexander Design

by John Simpson

Associate Editor



Eight years after first presenting his concept for a new Georgia state flag, Cecil Alexander, FAIA, efforts paid off on January 30 when the state legislature voted to adopt a flag based largely on his design.

"I feel like Betsy Ross must have felt," Alexander told the Atlanta Journal-Constitution after the 34-22 Senate vote.

A longstanding opponent of the former flag, which featured the Confederate "Stars and Bars" prominently, Alexander had initially approached former Governor Zell Miller with his design in 1993—the last time the Governor's office raised the controversial flag issue. However, Miller's legislative efforts failed in the face of vocal opposition.

Alexander proposed his design anew to Governor Roy Barnes last year when the issue reemerged. After getting Alexander's acquiescence to a few changes, Barnes presented the new design to the Georgia House, which approved the design last Wednesday, setting the stage for the clinching Senate vote.

The design

A comparison of the two designs reveals how closely the new flag is modeled after Alexander's original. Alexander's design (shown left), and the flag subsequently adopted Tuesday (bottom), both feature the Georgia state seal centered against a blue background, above a series of flags.



"Alexander's original design, courtesy of the architect."

"The whole thought behind it was to show the flags of the past in a historical context," Alexander told the Journal-Constitution. "We would acknowledge history and look to the future," he added.

Among the most significant changes to Alexander's design, at least symbolically, was the adopted flag's inclusion of the controversial St. Andrews Cross—emblematic of "Southern heritage" to some, but a state-sanctioned tribute to segregation and slavery to its detractors. The cross as displayed in the new flag is greatly reduced in size compared with its placement in the previous banner, in which it occupied two-thirds of the field.

Dedicated to social causes

Alexander's success in promoting changes to the flag marks the second time in as many months that he has received recognition for his many years fighting on behalf of social causes. In December, the native Atlantan was notified of his receipt of the AIA's 2001 Whitney Young Jr. Award (see articles in the February print and online editions of the AIArchitect), which will be presented to him at the AIA national convention in Denver in May.

Congratulating him on his achievement, AIA Executive Vice President and CEO Norman L. Koonce, FAIA, noted that Alexander's "healing gesture has turned into an opportunity for the media to focus on the full breadth of his outstanding 40-plus year career, particularly in the area of civil rights and racial equality." He added, "Talk about the power of one man to elevate and enrich human experience! You are a credit to the Institute and your profession." ■