

THE NORTH STAR FLAG

a proposal for a new Minnesota State Flag:
simple, colorful, & symbolic ...

- **The "North Star"** recalls the state motto, adopted by the pioneers
- **Waves** illustrate the Indian name "minnesota" ("sky-tinted water")
- **Blue** is for our lakes and rivers
- **White** is for our winter
- **Green** is for our farmland & forests
- **Gold** honors our natural wealth



HERITAGE & HERALDRY:

The flag symbolically illustrates the state name ("minnesota," or "sky-tinted water") and motto ("The North Star") – a technique called "canting heraldry." Since the name comes from Indian natives, and the motto from pioneer settlers, both legacies are duly honored – but with symbolism open to all people and generations. The flag's evocative northern colors are often seen in Minnesota flags, banners, and logos. It was designed in 1989 by two flag specialists, and is dedicated to the Public Domain.

Like other effective state flags, the North Star Flag is ...

- highly visible when flying at a distance
- simple to remember, sketch, or apply to common items
- clean of clutter from words, complex seals, etc.
- an iconic design with instinctive symbolism
- highly distinctive among state & national flags
- respectful of both Indian & pioneer legacies
- praised by experts who have designed modern national flags
- timeless: rooted in our heritage but open to our future
- symbolic: uses longtime principles of heraldry & flag graphics
- proven: the only alternative state flag in actual use for years



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THE 1957 STATE FLAG:

(TEN PROBLEMS WITH ITS DESIGN)

- You **can't see** its details: viewed from afar, everything is invisible.
- Few can **remember** its details: they're too complex to be recalled or sketched.
- It looks just like **25 other state flags**: they're all blue with insignia.
- Everything is **backwards** on the flag's reverse: pictures, dates, & slogans ("atosenniM").
- Its design is **not versatile**: the flag can't be reproduced well on miniature items or in the largest flag sizes; and it appears crooked when hung vertically.
- It uses **tiny pictures and dates**: our history should instead be portrayed by bold colors and emblems, like other state and national flags (e.g. the U.S., Alaska, Colorado, Maryland, Texas, Arizona, etc.).
- It **repeats** itself: the north-star appears twice (the motto and topmost star); statehood twice ("1858" and 19 stars); and is even stamped "Minnesota" (aren't all those symbols enough?!).
- Its symbols have been **controversial**: from 1849-1983, the seal portrayed the Indian giving way westward to the white settler, creating ill-will in an era of civil rights.
- Its cinematic imagery is **time-bound** to the 19th century: its tradition is fading, not growing.
- A seal is meant for **documents**, not flags: the seal's crowded details can only be seen up-close, because it was designed like a portrait.



The **1957 flag** bears the state seal (revised in 1983), wreathed by the state flower and motto, a North-Star, a "Great Star" pattern of 19 stars (for Minnesota as the 19th state after the original 13), and the dates 1893, 1858 (statehood), and 1819 (Fort Snelling founded).

The **1893 flag** was similar, but with a white field, and the design more spread out. It could be restored as a special "Ceremonial Standard" for occasions of high ceremony, if a new State Flag became official. The State Seal would not be lost, either: it would still be used on state documents, badges, and medallions.

HOW IT CAME TO BE:

Portraits make poor flags, because they can't be seen from afar. Unfortunately, the Minnesota flag resembles a portrait for two historical reasons.

First, the seal on the flag was created from a small watercolor painting. Second, the flag itself was designed to be viewed like a portrait, up-close. It was created for the state pavilion at the 1893 Chicago World's Fair, where a flag was needed as a state promotional tool.

Although the design was not suited for general display, the legislature made it the "official state flag." The double-sided flag, however, was bulky and expensive, and frayed easily when flown in the wind. It was rarely used.

In 1957 the legislature tried to simplify its design. Nevertheless, it remains a "flying portrait" which is invisible from afar, poorly known by the general public, and rarely used.

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