

Flags of New Spain

Spanish Royal Standard 1542

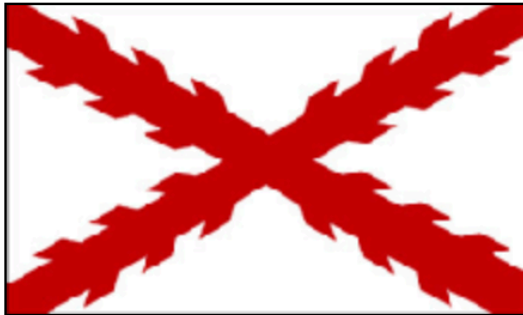


Spanish Royal Standard

The Spanish Royal Standard was the official flag of the King of Spain. While the Banner of Arms was the ceremonial ensign of the monarch, the Royal Standard or Royal Flag was the ensign design for common use by Spanish ships and military fortification.

Not truly having an official Spanish National flag, many early explorers, including Christopher Columbus, used the Spanish Royal Standard to represent the King and Queen of Spain. There are today many variations manufactured of this royal standard, one of which is shown here.

Cross of Burgundy Flag 1506-1843



Cross of Burgundy

The Cross of Burgundy Flag, introduced in the reign of Charles I of Spain (Holy Roman Emperor Charles V), was used by Spain between 1506-1701 as a naval ensign, and until 1843 as a land military flag. It was the flag carried by most of the Conquistadors in their exploration and conquest of the New World during this period of time. It represents the cross on which Saint Andrew was crucified.

Although Nueva España (New Spain) never actually had a flag of its own, this standard was used to represent army groups, army headquarters, or commanders of such groups (captain-generals, etc.) in the area after Cortez's conquest of Mexico.

The Spanish War and Merchant Ensign 1785-1931



Spanish National Ensign

For three centuries, Mexico was colonized by Spain, during which time almost all of the Mexica nahuatl-origin population living in the basin of Texcoco Lake, died off. Formal independence from Spain was recognized in 1821.

The newly created Spanish War and Merchant Flag replaced the flags used in New Spain in 1785 and was used until the end of Spanish rule in 1822. The flag was originally chosen by Charles III in 1785 for use in the colonies as a naval and coastal fortifications flag.

Flags of the Mexican War of Independence



Father Hidalgo's Flag

The Standard of Virgin of Guadalupe 1810

An obscure country padre named Miguel Gregorio Antonio Ignacio Hidalgo y Costilla y Gallaga Mondarte Villaseñor became a revolutionary leader sworn to the cause of Mexican independence when at an early Sunday Mass he made an impassioned call to arms against Spanish rule. Father Hidalgo then, so legend has it, buckled on a sword and became leader of the first unsuccessful attempt gain Mexican independence.

This banner was used by Father Hidalgo in the revolution of 1810. It was taken from a Franciscan church and was one of the many banners used by his followers. According to legend, the royalist forces adopted the Virgin of the Remedios for their banner and gave it the rank of Field Marshall, to belittle Hidalgo's standard.

Father Hidalgo and most of his rebel leaders were captured or killed by the royal forces. He was tried and executed in 1811.

The Sierra de Zongolica Flag c1812

It is said that the Siera Flag, which is currently housed in the Chapultepec National Museum of History, dates back to 1812, but no legitimate documentation to the claim exist. The traditional account of the flag is that the natives in Sierra de Zongolica (Vera Cruz), led by the Priest Juan Moctezuma y Cortéz, rose in rebellion against the Spaniards. The colors of this flag correspond with the plumage of the local freedom-loving cuautototl bird, which is very difficult to catch and would rather die than live in captivity.



The Siera Flag
(Province of Puebla Battalion Flag?)

Today, some enthusiast claim it was precursor of the first Mexican National Flag, but in all probability the flag was originally all white, with its maroon colored quiver-bow-machete emblem in the middle, since most of the flags flown by the *Insurgentes* were either of white and blue design, or had religious related emblems (see Father Hidalgo's Flag). The stripes were in all probability added to the design after Mexico achieved independence, and this particular flag may have actually been a battalion flag used later in the Province of Puebla.

in the Province of Puebla.

The Insurgents War Flag and Ensign c1813-1815, 1821

When the first leader of the Mexican War of Independence, Father Hidalgo was executed, leadership fell to another priest named José María Morelos y Pavón in 1813. He fled south to Puruarán (in the current State of Michoacán), where he summoned a "Supreme Congress" (The Congress of Chilpancingo) in 1813. One of the things this revolutionary congress did, besides naming Morelos generalissimo with the powers of chief executive, was to adopt three flags and a coat of arms for the insurgents.

This is one of those adopted flags and is now called the *Bandera de los Insurgentes* or Insurgent's Flag. White and blue are colors used by tradition. In Mexico, they have been used since early colonial times in religious festivities. White-blue flags charged with either a depiction of Virgin Mary or that of the eagle and snake were flown by the very first rebels led by Hidalgo back to September 1810. Such battle flags were plain white, white bordered blue, blue with white squares patched in the middle, white bordered with blue and white squares, or checkered blue and white. All of them featured an emblem in the middle, mainly the eagle in one side and the Virgin Mary in the reverse one.

The other two flags approved by the Supreme Congress of the Insurgents in their "Puruarán Decree" were called the "Insurgent's White Flag" and the "Insurgent's Merchant Ensign." (both shown below)



Insurgents War Flag 1813



Insurgents War Flag (variant)

José María Morelos' Battle Flag c1813-1815

José María Morelos became the greatest of the insurgent military commanders and for a time had under his control most of Mexico south of Mexico City. However, a succession of military disasters beginning at Valladolid late in 1813 brought a decline in Morelos's prestige and power, and in November of 1815, he was captured and brought to Mexico City in chains.

This flag was used by Morelos' forces at Valladolid (present-day Morelia) in 1813, and was later captured by royalist troops in 1814 at Tacámbaro. The motto "OCULIS ET UNGUIBUS AEQUE VICTRIX" on Morelos' flag means "By her eyes and claws equally victorious."

In 1815, The Inquisition had Morelos stripped of his priesthood for heresy, and later a civil court sentenced him to be executed for treason.



Morelos' Battle Flag

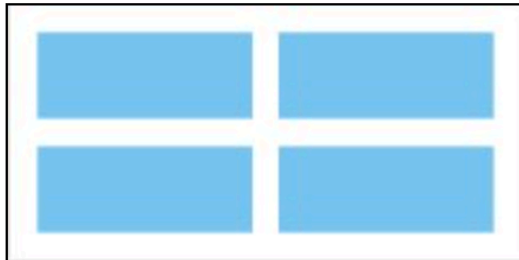


Insurgent's White Flag

Insurgent's White Flag c1813-1815

Late in 1813, the forces of Generalissimo don José María Morelos y Pavón were routed at Valladolid (later named Morelia in his honor) by the royalist forces of Agustín de Iturbide and defeated.

José Morelos in July of 1815 standardized a flag whose basic design had been in used since 1810. The fourth paragraph of the "Puruarán Decree," made by the "Supreme Congress" of Chilpancingo in 1813, describes the "White flag and Ensign" as a white flag, bordered by a six-inch wide sky-blue border, with an olive branch crossing a sword placed in the center of the flag. They were united at their intersection by a laurel crown.



Flag and Ensign of Commerce

The Insurgent's Merchant Ensign 1813-1815

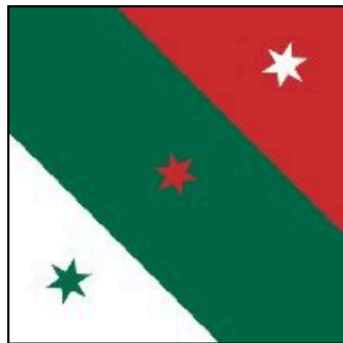
The third flag mentioned in the "Puruarán Decree" was a merchants flag for use by peaceful merchant ships (i.e. not warships) sailing for Mexico along the coasts of the Gulf between Mexico and North America.

Either this flag or the Insurgent's War Ensign was probably the flag recognized and saluted in New Orleans with a 19 cannon salute in 1815.

The Flag of the Three Guarantees 1821-1824



Mexican Flag of 1821



modern variant



With 8 pointed Stars
Fictitious "Solis" variant



With 5 pointed Stars

When the Mexican War of Independence broke out in 1810, Agustín de Iturbide rejected an offer to lead insurgent troops, choosing to fight on the royalist side. In 1820, when the Spanish king accepted the Cadiz Constitution and its republican ideals, it caused the Mexican landed class, which included Iturbide, to "switched sides" and fight for Mexico's independence from Spain. They saw it as a way to preserve their status and the colonial system.

Iturbide build a coalition of partners that for almost ten years had been fighting one another. Iturbide's promise of the "three guarantees;" independence, supremacy of the Catholic faith and equality of the Creole and Spanish-born classes, allowed him to build the coalition that in 1821 decisively ending the War of Independence. When the new Mexican government was unable to find a suitable royal to take the throne, Iturbide himself was crowned emperor in 1822

According to legend, when the *Plan de Iguala* was proclaimed in 1821, the first national flag was made by the tailor Jose Magdaleno Ocampo at the request of Agustín de Iturbide with the following specifications: three diagonal stripes, red with a white star, green with a red star and white with a green star. The middle stripe carried an imperial golden crown and the words *Religión, Independencia y Unión*. White stood for religion, green for independence and red for Mexican unity. It was called the "flag of the three guarantees."

There are many modern variants of this flag. Some versions of this flag will sometimes reverse the direction and order of the stripes, but green is always in the middle. There also are different size and shaped flags available, and the color of the stars are sometimes mistakenly shown as all gold. Even the size and type of star used varies between 5-pointed, 6-pointed or 8-pointed stars. The original flags were, of course, hand made and no two were exactly alike, but all legitimate variants discovered always have a crown in the middle and the stars in proper color on the proper stripes. The most authentic version of this flag shown here is the "Mexican Flag of 1821."

If you wish to cause an argument among Mexican flag experts, call the *La Bandera de los Tres Garantías*, the first *de facto* national flag of Mexico, which some consider it to be. The flag was, however, never an official national one, but represented the *Ejército Imperial de las Tres Garantías* (Imperial Army of the Three Guarantees). The Three Guarantees flag was in use between 1821 and 1824 until Agustín de Iturbide was deposed as Emperor of Mexico and the liberal Constitution of 1824 was implemented.



First Mexican Empire Flag
(Official)



Military Flag 1821

of a nopal raised out from a stone in the middle of the lake. While similar to the national flag that is used today, the eagle in these arms is not holding a serpent in his talons and a crown has been affixed to the head of the eagle to signify the Empire. This basic design was destined to remain the same until the present day, with only nine "official" changes to the design of the coat-of-arms centered on the white stripe. ([For more information about the coat-of-arms on this flag - click here](#))



Proposed Flag 1821

During this time, the colored stripes were used in several different orders and directions, until the Junta Provisional Gubernativa decided that the stripes should be vertically green, white and red. Of course, there also existed several unofficial variants of this flag with different coat of arms depictions, specially the eagle. A naval flag had the tricolor pattern, but only contained the eagle with the crown above its head. The army used a similar, square flag, but the eagle was larger than on the national flag.

The Second Mexican National Flag 1823-1863, 1867-1968

Used from 1823-1864 during the establishment of the Mexican Republic. The second national flag was adopted around the same time as the establishment of the first federal republic in 1823. The only difference the new flag had was in the appearance of the central emblem. The crown was removed from the eagle's head and a serpent was placed in the eagle's right talon. Another addition to the flag is a branch of oak and laurel branches, a tradition which is carried over to the current flag.

This flag was discontinued briefly in 1864 upon the dissolution of the federal republic. It was readopted from 1867 to 1881 during the reestablishment of the Mexican Republic.



First Mexican Republic Flag
1823 Reestablished 1867

Interestingly, according to the renown Mexican flag scholar Juan Manuel Gabino

Montezuma (Moctezuma) Imperial Family Flag 1849

Two Spanish families claim to be descendants of the Aztec Emperor Montezuma today. In 1531, Aztec Prince Tehuicalhualzin, baptized Pedro, renounced his claim to the empire in exchange for economic compensation and the Spanish title of the "Count of Montezuma." This title was officially recognized on 1627, when his great grandson Pedro Tesifón de Moctezuma received the title. In 1865, the 13th Count of Montezuma was upgraded to the rank of "Duke of Montezuma." This family title is still recognized by the Spanish authorities.



Montezuma Imperial Flag
1849

According to another story, in 1466, Xipaguazin (baptized Maria), sister of Tohualicahualzin, married a Catalan lord named Joan de Grau, baró de Tolriu, and when her brother advocated, inherited the Montezuma imperial title. Since that time the line of Grau-Moctezuma (Joan I, Antoni I, Nicolau I, Joan II, Joan III, Jaume I, Jaume II, Magí I, Magí II, Guillem I, Guillem II, Guillem III and his descents) have claimed their "imperial" connection. However, this family's claim to the Aztec crown has not been recognized by either the Spanish or Mexican governments. In 1968, according to one source, the United States Department of Justice granted to Guillem the condition of exiled sovereign and an embassy was briefly opened in Bel Air, Texas (unverified) and another in Paris, France. (unverified) To further cloud this issue, one member of the Grau-Moctezuma family is now claiming to be Grant Master of a group of Spanish Templars and selling titles in the order to anyone willing to pay.

The Grau-Moctezuma Imperial flag was green until 1849, when Magí II adopted a new flag with the Mexican colors bearing the shield of the Grau-Moctezuma. ([click here to see documentation](#)) They claim the native title of "Vei-Tlaotani of Anahuac" meaning "Lord of the lords of Anahuac." The home of these interesting "imperial descendants" of Montezuma is in Catalonia, Spain.

The San Blas Active Coastguard Battalion Flag 1823

The San Blas Battalion was a Mexican infantry unit founded in 1823 in San Blas, hence its name. Its most famous action was in the Mexican-American War. The battalion participated in the Battle of Chapultepec, where commanded by Lt. Colonel Felipe Santiago Xicoténcatl, it aided in the defense of the Military Academy in the Chapultepec Castle. Of the 300 men comprising the battalion, only a few survived the tragic battle against the American forces. ([To see more Mexican-American War Era Flags used in Texas and California - Click here](#))



San Blas Battalion Flag
Battle of Chapultepec

It is said that Colonel Xicoténcatl, severely wounded, wrapped himself with the *Bandera del Batallón de San Blas* and died beside his men. This flag is displayed in the Museo

Republic of the Rio Grande 1840

In 1840 a group of insurgents known as the *Federalistes* (Federalists) declared an independent nation in the Mexican States of Coahuila, Nuevo Leon and Tamulipas. Calling themselves the *República de Río Grande* they declared Laredo their capitol. They named Jesús de Cárdenas their president and Antonio Canales the Commander-in-Chief of their army. The Mexican Government responded by sending Federal troops under Mexican General Mariano Arista to put down the rebellion.

The two forces met in March of 1840 at the Battle of Morales, where Canales's forces where soundly defeated. General Canales and his remaining troops sought refuge and assistance in Texas, but failed to get any official support. A small force of about 100 Texans volunteers did briefly cross the border, but were driven back into Texas by Mexican forces. In November the Mexican government offered General Canales a position as Brigadier General in the Mexican army if he would abandon the cause; he did and the rebellion collapsed. The whole revolution lasted from January 17 to November 6, 1840.



Rio Grande Republic Flag

The Third Mexican National Flag 1864-1867

Used from 1864-1867 during the Second Mexican Empire of Maximilian I, the third official national flag used the green, white and red tricolor pattern with the white stripe being charged with the national arms. However, the ratio of the flag was changed from 4:7 to 1:2 and four eagles, which had crowns above their heads, were placed at each corner of the flag. The design, which was ordered by the Emperor Maximilian, gave the arms a look similar to the French Imperial arms, but he decided to add a bit of "Mexican flavor" to the flag.

The flag was abandoned in 1867 when Maximilian was overthrown by Benito Juarez and executed by the Mexican people. The second national flag was adopted once again as the national flag, but it was not officially declared as such. ([For more information about the coat-of-arms on this flag - click here](#))

Imperial War Ensign and Civil flag 1864-1867

A simplified version of the imperial national flag was also in use by the military, and reportably by non-military civilian governmental organizations.



Second Mexican Empire Flag
(Official)



Imperial War Ensign

Montezuma (Montezuma) Imperial Family Flag 1840

The Evolution of the Mexican National Flag 1881-1968

The present version of the Mexican National Flag is an adaptation of these designs, where the eagle was changed from a front-facing to a side-facing position. Because of the lack of clarity on the legislation regarding different national symbols, such as the national coat of arms, there were many interpretations, and all was left to artistic interpretation. Several governments tried to unify the criteria about the arms' design through decrees, laws and rules, but in the process failed to abrogate the original decree of 1823, just adding to it. Despite government efforts to unify the design: eagle, nopal, stone and lagoon, were all drawn, painted, embroidered after the artists' imagination. Those "official" attempts all eventually reached a certain kind of uniformity, and the one of 1934 finally achieved the goal of being the only version universally known throughout the country and abroad.

The first flag shown on the left was the first national "variant" flag used after the Republic Restoration between 1881-1898. ([For more information about the coat-of-arms on this flag - click here](#)) The second national "variant" flag also shown on the left was used during the last part of Porfirio Díaz's government and Revolution between 1899-1916. ([For more information about the coat-of-arms on this flag - click here](#))



Mexican Flag of 1881-1898
(Official variant)



Variant used between
1881-1917



Mexican Flag of 1899-1916
(Official variant)



Mexican Flag of 1917-1934
(Official variant)



Mexican National Flag 1934-1964
(Official variant)

The third "variant" national flag (shown directly above) was used from 1917-1934, and originally approved by presidential decree in 1916 by Venustiano Carranza. ([For more information about the coat-of-arms on this flag - click here](#)) The last "variant" national flag (also shown above) was used from 1934-1968, with the new Coat of Arms designed by Jorge Enciso. Eventually, it became the most universally accepted and known of the "official variant" flags. ([For more information about the coat-of-arms on this flag - click here](#))

here)

The Cristero Rebellion Flag 1926-1929

The Cristero War (*La Cristiada*) was a short 4 year violent counter-revolution between 1926 and 1929 against the anti-clericalism of the then ruling Mexican government. The rebellion began when Mexican President Plutarco Calles tried to enforce the anti-clerical statutes of the Mexican Constitution of 1917 in order to lessen the influence of the Roman Catholic Church over the secular government.

Centered in western Mexico, the revolution became one of the larger rebellions in Mexican history. It was tied into the peasants' overwhelming frustration for land and for social justice. The Calles' administration felt threatened by the Church and in 1919 began a 10-year persecution of Catholics, resulting in the death of thousands. After a period of peaceful resistance by Mexican Catholics, armed resistance began in 1927.

The rebels called themselves *Cristeros*, invoking the name of Jesus Christ the King (*Cristo Rey*) and with the assistance of women who smuggling guns and ammunition into them eventual attracted the attention the United States Ambassador to Mexico and the financial relief and assistance by the Knights of Columbus. The rebellion was eventually ended by American diplomatic help. Later several priests who were tortured and murdered in public were later canonized by Pope John Paul II.



Cristero Flag



Cristero Flag (Variant)

The Fourth Mexican National Flag 1968

The Flag of the United Mexican States or Mexico has been a vertical tricolor of green, white, and red with the national coat of arms charged in the center of the white stripe since 1821. While the meaning of the colors has changed over time, these three colors were adopted by Mexico following independence from Spain during the country's War of Independence. The current version of the flag was adopted in 1968.

The current version uses the design approved by presidential decree in 1916 by Venustiano Carranza, where the eagle was changed from a front-facing to a side-facing position. Flag Historian Juan Manuel Gabino Villascán points out a very important detail about this flag, the presidential decree by means the coat of arms and flag were adopted abrogated all previous decrees, laws and rules, finally including that of 1823, thus making this version actually only the Fourth Official Mexican National Flag. The current coat-of-arms was designed by Architect Francisco Eppens Helguera. ([For more information about the coat-of-arms on this flag - click here](#))



Present Day National Flag
The Fourth National Flag
(Official)