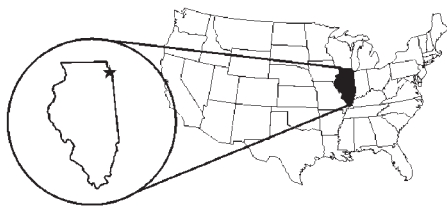


CHICAGO, ILLINOIS



Population Rank: U.S. # 3
Illinois # 1

Proportions: 2:3 or 3:5
(both official)



Adopted: 21 December 1939 (official)

DESIGN: Chicago's flag has a white field with two blue horizontal stripes, each about one-sixth of the width of the hoist, and set slightly less than one-sixth of the way from the top and bottom. Between the two blue stripes are four bright red six-pointed stars, spaced evenly across the center horizontally.

SYMBOLISM: The Chicago flag is replete with symbolism. Probably no other city attaches so much symbolism to the various parts of its flag. The three white horizontal stripes represent, from the top, the North, West, and South sides of the city. The upper blue stripe repre-

sents Lake Michigan and the North Branch of the Chicago River; the lower blue stripe, the South Branch of the Chicago River and the Great Canal. Each of the red stars symbolizes an important event in the city's history, and the points of each of the stars, in turn, represent civic virtues and history. From the hoist, the symbolism is:

First star: Fort Dearborn. The points of this star represent transportation, labor, commerce, finance, populousness, and salubrity.

Second star: The Chicago Fire of 8-10 October 1871. Its points symbolize religion, education, esthetics, justice, beneficence, and civic pride.

Third star: The World's Columbian Exposition of 1893. The points of the third star signify historical periods of the area. The dates represent the end of those periods: France, 1693; Great Britain, 1763; Virginia, 1778; Northwest Territory, 1798; Indian Territory, 1802; and Illinois Statehood, 1818.

*Fourth star: The Century of Progress Exposition of 1933. Its points represent the World's Third Largest City (in 1933); the city's Latin motto, *Urbs in Horto* ("City in a Garden"); the city's English motto, "I will"; the Great Central Market; and Wonder City (the first and last two are nicknames).*

HOW SELECTED: In 1915, Alderman James A. Kearns proposed to the city council that Chicago have a civic flag. The council agreed and established the Chicago Flag Commission, which held a contest and offered a prize for the winning design. This design was submitted on 28 March 1917 and adopted by the city council in the summer of 1917.

DESIGNER: The winner of the competition was Mr. Wallace Rice, an author and editor, who had been interested in flags since his boyhood. He worked on his design for approximately six weeks.



MORE ABOUT THE FLAG: Rice's design was the same as the current flag, except that it had only two stars, representing two major events that had occurred up to that time. While no special significance was then attributed to their points, Rice explained that the stars were given six

points to avoid confusion with the five-pointed stars on the national flag. Possibly to reinforce this distinction, the first stars had long and rather sharp points; their form persisted for several decades.



In 1933, a city ordinance placed a third star on the flag for the Chicago world's fair, the Century of Progress International Exposition. The ordinance also directed that the municipal flag be displayed on all municipal buildings whenever the national flag was displayed, but subordinate to it.

The flag was authorized to be pointed or notched when suspended vertically from windows or over a street, reflecting the fashion of the time. In the same ordinance, the council created a municipal pennant described as *a long streamer showing the three stars on white at the staff, the fly being equally divided, blue and white*, with proportions of 2:15 or 2:20, and a municipal badge, described as *on a silver ground three red stars with sharp points, six in number, between two blue bars*.

In 1939, the fourth star was added to the flag, together with the additional symbolism ascribed to the points of the stars. Although no mention was made of changes to the pennant or badge, in practice the fourth star would presumably be added to them as well.

Currently the points of the flag's stars are shortened and not as exaggerated as earlier versions. The shade of the blue color is not specified, but in practice tends to be a medium blue.

Probably because of the requirement that municipal buildings fly the city flag, Chicago's flag flies widely throughout the city on police stations, fire stations, libraries and schools, and no doubt is among the most recognized civic flags in the nation. It is certainly well known by the citizens of Chicago. When a police officer or firefighter dies, the Chicago flag drapes the casket. The flag's four-star motif has come to characterize the city, painted on its street signs, appearing on uniforms of police and firefighters, and even imprinted in concrete railings, sidewalks, and bridge abutments.