



Introducing the Culpeper Minuteman Flag

The Culpeper Minutemen was a militia group formed in 1775 in the district around Culpeper, Virginia. Like

minutemen in other British colonies, the men drilled in military tactics and trained to respond to emergencies “at a minute’s notice”.



The Culpeper Minutemen were organized on 17 July 1775 in the district created by the Third Virginia Convention and was formed as part of Colonel Patrick Henry’s First Virginia Regiment of 1775. Recruitment began in September 1775 with four companies of 50 men from Fauquier and Culpeper counties each and two companies of 50 men from Orange county.

The Culpeper minutemen fought for the patriot side in the first year of the American Revolution, and are remembered for their company flag: a white banner depicting a rattlesnake, featuring the phrases “*Liberty or Death*” and “*Don’t Tread on Me*”. At the time, Culpeper was considered frontier territory. In October 1775, the minutemen were sent to Hampton in response to British ships attempting to land. The riflemen were able to effectively shoot the men manning the ships cannons, and the fleet eventually sailed away. The Culpeper militia next participated in the Battle of Great Bridge in December 1775. The battle was a complete American victory. There were accounts of the battle that suggested the British were unnerved by the reputation of

the frontiersmen. The Culpeper Minutemen disbanded in January 1776 under orders from the Committee of Safety. Many of the minutemen continued to serve. Some joined the continental line, and others fought under Daniel Morgan. John Marshall, the fourth Chief Justice of the United States Supreme Court, was a member of the original Culpeper Minutemen.

History of The Culpeper Flag: The Culpeper Don’t Tread on Me Flag was first used as the banner of the Culpeper Minutemen. The Culpeper Flag incorporated the coiled rattlesnake which occurs on several Revolutionary War flags. The rattlesnake’s eye, supposedly brighter than any other creature’s and with no eyelids, is the symbol of vigilance. It is said that the snake never begins an attack, but once aroused it never surrenders. The snake was also portrayed with 13 rattles, symbolic of the 13 American colonies.

Subsequently, there was a Naval rendition of the Culpeper Minutemen Flag. This was one of the first flags to show 13 stripes, one for each American colony, along with the rattlesnake. As previously mentioned, the rattle snake had become a traditional symbol of the American Colonies and the Colonial Navy apparently adopted the sea going version of this and the Culpeper name stuck with it.

