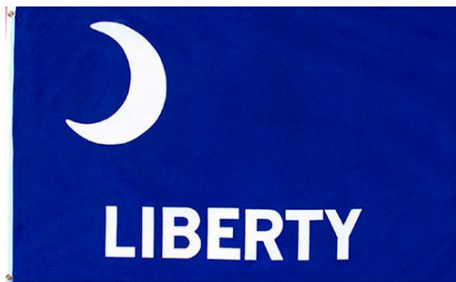




# Introducing the Fort Moultrie Flag



## The Fort Moultrie Flag

The Fort Moultrie Flag was created by Colonel William Moultrie when he was ordered to take over Fort Johnson on

James Island in Charleston Harbor, South Carolina in 1775. The South Carolina Council of Safety wanted to salute the British warships in the harbor with a flag to show them they were now in possession of the fort. Colonel Moultrie created this flag for that purpose. It was the first United States flag flown in the south.

## History of the Fort Moultrie Flag

In September of 1775, the South Carolina Council of Safety was growing more and more concerned with patrolling British warships in Charleston Harbor. The entrance of the harbor was guarded by Sullivan's Island on the north and James Island on the south. To try to get a better defensive position to guard the harbor, the Council of Safety ordered Colonel William Moultrie to take Fort Johnson, on the edge of James Island, and the small contingent of British soldiers who manned it.

Col. Moultrie sent Captain Charles Cotesworth Pinckney, Captain Bernard Elliott and Captain Francis Marion with 50 men each to take the fort. On the morning of September 15th, they rowed to the island, but were surprised to find the gates open and the fort abandoned. The British had apparently been warned an expedition was planned against the fort and they had removed all of their guns and cannon. Only 5 British soldiers remained who were then captured. Before long, the patriots had mounted their own cannons to defend the fort against British warships.

## General William Moultrie

Later that day, the British sloop-of-war Cherokee arrived off Fort Johnson.

Out of pride, the Council of Safety wanted to signal the British ship that they were now in possession of the fort. Since there

was no official United States Flag or South Carolina Flag at this point, they instructed Col. Moultrie to design a flag and hoist it above Fort Johnson.

## Design of the Fort Moultrie Flag

Moultrie designed a blue flag with a white crescent moon in the canton with the word "Liberty" on the moon. A form of this design dated back to the 1765 Stamp Act riots when South Carolinians protested the act under a blue flag with three crescents in the canton (the upper left corner). Keeping with this theme, Moultrie's South Carolina regiments wore blue uniforms with a silver crescent on their caps and the words "Liberty or Death." Moultrie chose the design to honor his soldiers and continued the tradition of using the crescent as a symbol of resistance to tyrannical rule.

This flag became known as the Fort Moultrie Flag and was the first US flag flown in the south. It also became the flag of the South Carolina Minutemen.

The patriots were ecstatic with the hoisting of the Fort Moultrie Flag, but there were some among the soldiers who were still hoping for a peaceful end to conflict with Great Britain and they were upset when the flag was raised. They believed Captain Thoroughbred on the man-of-war Tamar, would look at the flag as an insult and an act of defiance that would make him attack the fort, but he never did.

## Fort Moultrie flag at Fort Sullivan

In March 1776, Moultrie's troops began building Fort Sullivan on the southern tip of Sullivan's Island to further defend the entrance to Charleston Harbor. They built a wall of palmetto logs and sand that was far from finished when a British fleet from the north arrived on June 1.

The British Army had been confined in Boston during most of 1775 due to the colonists surrounding the town. General Henry Clinton needed to secure bases of operation where the British army would have more control, so he decided to launch an offensive against the southern colonies, thus commencing the "Southern Campaign."