

## The Latin Mottoes of the Battle Flags of South Carolina

The removal of the Confederate flag from South Carolina's state Capitol building in Columbia at 10:09 am on 10 July 2015 was a widely observed and emotional event. It caused black southerners to think once again of the era of slavery and white southerners to remember both their loss of life (almost one fourth of the South's male population died during the Civil War) and their modus vivendi as well as the interdiction enforced for over a decade after the war forbidding them from making any form of commemoration- no flags, no monuments, no statues. However when the opportunity came these symbols proliferated in towns and cities all over the south. By the late 1940s, however, the Confederate flag became associated with Dixiecrat states' rights resistance to the desegregation policy of the Federal government, and so it was, a symbol of defiance, when hoisted over Columbia during the "Confederate War Centennial" on 11 April 1961.

Interestingly enough the flag that was removed from Columbia's Capitol was not one of the three national flags approved by the government of the Confederate States of America (i.e. "The Stars and Bars," "The Stainless Banner," and "The Blood Stained Banner" ) nor was it even particularly South Carolinian in origin. It was in fact the battle flag of the Northern Army of Virginia. Furthermore it was only one of many, for a wide variety of flags and banners were designed during the Civil War by individual southerners for use by their states or by their various military units. Classical education being the educational standard exemplified by Southerners such as Basil Gildersleeve, Jefferson Davis and even the assassin John Wilkes Booth, ( "sic semper tyrannis"), it is no surprise that Latin played its own part on the battlefield.

My paper will present a small, but timely, vexillological study of the Latin mottoes found on the Confederate battle flags of the state of South Carolina and include a look at their source, their designers, their years of use and their present location in museums. (I have used Glenn Dedmond, *Flags of Civil War South Carolina*, (Gretna, LA, 2000) as a reference source, but Dedmond offers no analysis of the Latin mottoes. Thus the study of their meaning and use is my own.) A number of South Carolina's military units, such as the Martin Guards, the Chesterfield Artillery, and the Richmond Rifles, used all, a portion of, or a variation of South Carolina's venerable two-part state motto adopted in 1776: "animis opibusque parati" (*Aeneid*, 2.799) and "dum spiro spero spes." But others did not, and the designers of these flags turned for direct inspiration to authors such as Cicero, Ovid, Livy, Suetonius, and Lactantius, or to Latin versions of the Gospels and to phrases taken from Latin Christian liturgy. Some even invented their own mottoes.

Using photocopies, I shall present my findings concerning the Latin mottoes used by the military during this unique period of American history. I have focused on South Carolina alone as a full study of the battle flags flown by the all of the Confederate States of America would require much more than 20 minutes to present.