



Georgia State History ~ In a Nutshell ~

Written & designed by
Cyndi Kinney & Judy Trout



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Georgia State History In a Nutshell
by Cyndi Kinney & Judy Trout
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www.KnowledgeBoxCentral.com

ISBN

Ebook: 978-1-61625-763-7

Publisher: Knowledge Box Central
<http://www.knowledgeboxcentral.com>

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What is the "In a Nutshell" series?

This is a series of concise, easy to understand information on many popular topics. You will find that many of products in this series can also be found as part of larger publications and/or curriculum on the publisher's website. At the end of each book, you will find a list of questions that may be used to help you review the material.

Georgia State History Lapbook Journal Study Guide



The Great Seal of Georgia

The last of the thirteen original British colonies was named after England's King George II in 1733. The terms of the charter granted by the king specified that the colony to be founded by James Oglethorpe be named after the king and so it was.

People who live in Georgia or who come from Georgia are called Georgians.

Aligning with some of the nicknames that have been given to Georgia, Georgians have been referred to as Buzzards, Crackers, Goober-grabbers and Sand-hillers.



Map of Georgia – Capital, Major Cities and Rivers

STATEHOOD

Georgia was one of the thirteen original colonies, providing signatories to the Declaration of Independence and the 1787 United States Constitution. Georgia ratified the Constitution on January 2, 1788, becoming the fourth state to join the union.

STATE CONSTITUTION

The Constitution of 1777

Georgia's first attempt at constitutional government was initiated in April 1776 by the Provincial Congress called by the Georgia Trustees in response to a series of mass meetings held throughout the colony. This document provided a framework for the transition from colony to state. Soon after Georgia moved toward independence by accepting the Declaration of Independence, its first constitutional convention was organized. Completed in February 1777 and executed without having been submitted to voters for ratification, this constitution remained in effect for twelve years. It vested most governmental authority in a state legislative body, incorporated the separation of powers doctrine, and included a number of basic rights, such as the free exercise of religion, freedom of the press, and trial by jury.

The Constitution of 1789

On January 2, 1788, Georgia became the fourth state to ratify the United States Constitution. In November of that year, to assure conformity with the federal document, Georgia began a revision of its state constitution in convention. The shortest of Georgia's constitutions, the Constitution of 1789 was modeled after the U.S. Constitution. It provided for a bicameral legislature, an executive branch, and a judicial branch. (The Latin roots of the word bicameral, "bi" and "cameral," mean two chambers or rooms.) The legislature, or General Assembly, was elected and had the power to select a governor. The judicial branch received little attention. Civil liberties protections normally found in a bill of rights were also included in the constitution.

Georgia has been governed under 7 constitutions between 1789 and 1983: Constitutions of 1798, 1861, 1865, 1868, 1877, 1945 and 1976. For detailed information, visit: <http://www.georgiaencyclopedia.org/nge/Article.jsp?id=h-588>

The Constitution of 1983 (Current Constitution)

In 1977, after the ratification of the 1976 Constitution, the General Assembly created the Select Committee on Constitutional Revision. Members included the governor as chair, the lieutenant governor, the speaker of the house, the attorney general, and representatives from both houses of the legislature and the judicial branch. Beginning their work in 1977, the committee members agreed to a total revision. Each article would be drafted and approved individually by the Select Committee and the General Assembly. After a series of lengthy and public meetings, agreement on a proposed new constitution was reached in late August 1981, and a document was submitted to the General Assembly in an August/September 1981 special session called to consider both reapportionment and constitutional revision. On September 25, 1981, the General Assembly approved the new constitution. Amended at the 1982 session of the legislature, the proposed constitution was submitted to the voters for ratification at the 1982 general election. Supported by leadership from all three branches of state government and bolstered by a strong effort to educate the public about its content, the Constitution of 1983 was overwhelmingly approved by voters and became effective on July 1, 1983.

The rallying cry of the Select Committee on Constitutional Revision had been "brevity, clarity, flexibility." The final product reflected this goal. The document as ratified was about half as long as the 1976 Constitution; it was better organized and wherever possible used simple modern English in place of arcane and cumbersome terminology. It gave the General Assembly greater flexibility to deal by statute with many matters that had been covered in the constitution itself. By far the most significant change between the Constitutions of 1976 and 1983 was that the latter document prohibited the inclusion of any further constitutional amendments relating to only a particular city, county, or other local political subdivision.

The 1983 Constitution was the first truly "new" constitution since 1877. It was the culmination of almost twenty years of discussion, debate, and compromise. A mixture of old and new, it contained provisions that first appeared in the Constitution of 1877 and incorporated other provisions that had never existed before, such as an equal protection clause, a division of the courts into seven distinct classes, a requirement for uniform court rules and record-keeping rules by class for all classes of courts, and nonpartisan election of judges. Like the nine constitutions preceding it, the Constitution of 1983 was, and is, a reflection of the state's rich political and social history.

PREAMBLE: *To perpetuate the principles of free government, insure justice to all, preserve peace, promote the interest and happiness of the citizen and of the family, and transmit to posterity the enjoyment of liberty, we the people of Georgia, relying upon the protection and guidance of Almighty God, do ordain and establish this Constitution.*

STATE GOVERNMENT

In Georgia the executive branch of government is by far the largest, with 99 percent of the state budget devoted to its activities. The governor is the state's chief executive and presides over the executive branch. In doing so, the governor wields strong budgetary powers. To be elected governor, a person must be at least thirty years old and must have been a U.S. citizen for fifteen years and a Georgia resident for six years. Governors serve a four-year term of office and may serve no more than two consecutive terms.

The Georgia Constitution names seven other executive officers elected statewide by the voters. They are the lieutenant governor, secretary of state, attorney general, commissioner of agriculture, commissioner of labor, commissioner of insurance and state school superintendent. In addition, members of the Georgia Public Service Commission are elected statewide. These officers, along with other heads of state departments, agencies, commissions, and boards, administer departments that directly address areas of importance to state government. The name of the agency generally indicates its work: the Georgia Bureau of Investigation, Forestry Commission, Department of Transportation, or Department of Community Health. There are more than twenty-five major departments in the executive branch and hundreds of smaller agencies, boards, and commissions.

The General Assembly and its staff agencies form the legislative branch of state government. The bicameral legislature consists of a House of Representatives and a senate. Members of both houses are elected for two-year terms with no limit on the number of consecutive terms that may be served. The Georgia Constitution requires legislators to be U.S. citizens, Georgia citizens for at least two years, and legal residents of their districts for at least one year. The only difference in

qualifications between the two chambers is that senators must be at least twenty-five years of age and representatives only twenty-one. The house has 180 members, who elect their presiding officer, the Speaker. The senate has fifty-six members, and the lieutenant governor serves as its presiding officer. In that capacity the lieutenant governor is styled as the president of the senate. The General Assembly meets for a forty-day period each year, beginning on the second Monday in January. Because the legislative term is a biennium (a two-year period), legislation that is introduced in the first year after an election, can be carried over to the second year. At the end of the second year, all legislation not passed dies and must be reintroduced in the next biennium.

Georgia's judicial system consists of ascending levels of courts. The most important trial court in Georgia's judicial branch is the superior court. The state is divided into circuits, with one or more superior-court judges elected in each circuit. In 1845 the Georgia Supreme Court was established as the highest court in the state. It has exclusive jurisdiction over constitutional issues, contested elections, capital felonies, titles to land, wills, and divorces. Later, in 1906, the Court of Appeals of Georgia was established to hear appeals, review decisions, and correct errors from lower trial courts in cases not reserved to the supreme court.

Local government is the oldest form of government in Georgia, and the city of Savannah is recognized as the oldest government in the state. There are three types of local governments in Georgia—counties, cities, and special districts. Georgia has four consolidated city-county governments. The constitution limits Georgia to 159 counties, although there is no limit on the number of cities and special districts.

County government is based in the county seat and generally housed in the county courthouse. Due to increases in population and service demands, many county governments are expanding operations into government annexes and satellite offices outside the county seat. As an arm of state government, county governments carry out many functions for the state, such as elections, road building and repair, health and welfare programs, record keeping, and automobile licensing. The state constitution requires that four officers be elected in each county: sheriff, clerk of the superior court, tax commissioner, and judge of the probate court. Local law establishes the county's form of government, either a board of commissioners or a sole commissioner.

Cities are governments that have been chartered or incorporated by the state legislature. Generally, cities are formed when citizens want services provided beyond those available from the county. Cities must meet certain qualifications of population, distance from other cities, and degree of development. The city charter not only creates the city but also spells out the form of government and describes boundaries. Cities are typically governed by a mayor and city council. Many cities hire a manager to direct the day-to-day administration of city affairs. Georgia has more than 500 incorporated cities. By law, counties and cities must agree on the provision and payment of local government services to eliminate service duplication.

A more limited form of local government in Georgia is the special district or authority. These are small units of government set up by a county or city for a special purpose, such as operating public schools, a transit system, an airport, or a water and sewer system, or encouraging economic development. These units are authorized to borrow money or charge users for their services. By establishing an authority a city can make a service available to citizens without raising taxes.

Georgia's constitution, like that of most states, requires that a balanced budget be introduced and passed by the General Assembly. The governor is responsible for submitting to the legislature an annual budget based on revenue estimates made by the Office of Planning and Budget. Because local governments are creatures of the state, state law controls their revenue sources. Property taxes, sales taxes, and utility revenue fees are major sources of income at the local level. Citizens of a locality may vote to impose additional local taxes to fund special projects for educational or other purposes.

U.S. CONGRESSIONAL DELEGATION

The legislative branch of the United States government makes laws for our nation and raises and distributes money to run the United States government. The most evident part of the legislative branch is the United States Congress. Congress is divided into two parts, called houses. The two parts are the Senate and the House of Representatives. Congress is referred to as a bicameral body because it is made up of two houses. The Latin roots of the word bicameral, "bi" and "cameral," mean two chambers or rooms. Members of the Senate are called Senators and members of the House of Representatives are called Representatives. Senators and representatives serving in these two bodies are sometimes referred to as congressmen, or women, and sometimes as legislators because their business is to legislate or make laws. The role of the legislative branch is defined in the United States Constitution.

Each state elects people to represent them in the United States Congress in Washington, DC. The citizens of each state elect two senators to represent them in the Senate. They also elect representatives to represent them in the House of Representatives. The number of representatives each state sends to the House of Representatives is not a specific number like the Senate, but is based on the population of the state. The people, that are elected to represent the state's citizens in the United States Congress, are referred to as the congressional delegation.

There are 100 senators in the U.S. Senate. Each is elected to a term, in the Senate, of six years. There are 435 representatives in the U.S. House of Representatives. Each is elected to a term, in the "House," of two years.

The citizens of Georgia elect two people, like every other state, to represent them in the Senate and 14 people, based on Georgia's current population in the most recent federal census, to represent them in the House of Representatives.

STATE SEAL

The state seal of Georgia was adopted by the State Constitution in 1798.

The obverse (main face) features the state coat of arms. The three pillars are symbols of the legislative, judicial and executive branches of government. The man standing with drawn sword defends the *Constitution* and its principles of *Wisdom, Justice* and *Moderation*. 1776 is of course the year the United States declared independence. The Georgia coat of arms also appears on the state flag.



Reverse Side of State Seal



The reverse of the state seal displays a scene of *Agriculture* and *Commerce* - a ship with cotton and tobacco, and a man plowing.

STATE CAPITAL (Atlanta)

One of the most recognizable features of the Atlanta skyline is Georgia's gold-domed state capitol, located several blocks southeast of the center of downtown. Although dwarfed by nearby skyscrapers, the dome glistens from the same hill that supported the first state capitol building in Atlanta.



The Georgia State Capitol, completed in 1889, is a landmark in the history of 19th-century American architecture. In style, form, and plan, it is a perfect expression and symbol of the idea of a Capitol building for the "Capital of the New South," as Atlanta was called after Reconstruction. Reminiscent of the U.S. Capitol Building, it directly expressed Atlanta's new nationalism when city leaders were rebuilding the destroyed Confederate railroad center in a new image. Atlanta became the temporary location of the State capital in 1868, and when this became permanent in 1877, the city offered the State five acres on which to erect a capitol building. It took several years of legislative appropriations and bids before construction began in 1884. At the cost of nearly one million dollars, the architectural firm of Edbrooke and Burnham of Chicago designed the Neo-Classical style building.

Current State Capitol Facts:

Began Construction: 1884

Completed Construction: July 4th, 1889

Cost of Construction: Just under 1 million dollars

Materials: Limestone (Indiana), marble (Georgia), wood (Georgia), cast-iron (Georgia), gold (Dahlonega, Georgia, added 1958)

Number of Floors: 4, top floor housing the Georgia Capitol Museum

Height: 237 feet, from the top of Miss Freedom's torch to the foundation

Architects: Franklín Burnham and Willoughby Endbrooke of Chicago

Previous Capitol: The Kimball Opera House on Marietta Street, burned down in 1894

Branches of State Government Located There: Executive and Legislative, Supreme Court of Georgia was located in the Capitol Building until 1950, now across the street

Capital History (Cities)

Atlanta is the fifth city to be designated capital of Georgia. Several other cities have also served as temporary seats of government.

1777-78 Savannah

1779-80 Augusta*

1780-81 Heard's Fort*, miscellaneous sites in Wilkes County

1781-82 Augusta

1782 Ebenezer*, Savannah

1783 Augusta

1784 Savannah, Augusta

1785 Savannah

1786-96 Augusta

1796-1806 Louisville

1807-1864 Milledgeville

1864-65 Macon*

1865-68 Milledgeville

1868-present Atlanta

* Denotes temporary meeting sites of state government

STATE MOTTO

"Wisdom Justice Moderation"

The state motto of Georgia is *Wisdom Justice Moderation* and appears on the state seal and Georgia's state quarter.

STATE CREED (Approved March 4, 1939)

"Accepting, as I do, the principles upon which Georgia was founded, not for self but others; -- its Democratic form of Government, based on 'Wisdom, Justice and Moderation'; --its natural resources; -- its Educational, Social and Religious advantages, making it a most desirable place to live -- I will strive to be a pure upright Citizen, rejecting the evils -- loving and emulating the good.

I further believe it is my duty to defend it against all enemies, to honor and obey its laws, to apply the Golden Rule in all my dealings with my fellow Citizens.

I feel a sense of pride in the history and heroic deeds accomplished by my forebears, and shall endeavor to so live that my State will be proud of me for doing my bit to make my State a better Commonwealth for future generations."

STATE FLAG

In 2003, Georgia designated a new state flag which is based on the national flag of the Confederacy. It has three bars of equal width - two outer red bars and a center white. There is a square blue canton the width of two bars in the upper left corner.



Flag History

Georgia State Flag Before 1879 (Unofficial)

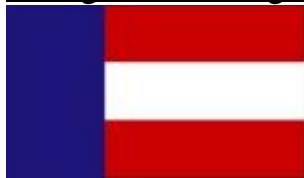


History does not record who made the first Georgia state flag, when it was made, what it looked like, or who authorized its creation. Probably, the banner originated in one of the numerous militia units that existed in antebellum Georgia.

In 1861, a new provision was added to Georgia's code requiring the governor to supply regimental flags to Georgia militia units assigned to fight outside the state. These flags were to depict the "arms of the State" and the name of the regiment, but the code gave no indication as to the color to be used on the arms or the flag's background. In heraldry, "arms" refers to a coat of arms, which is the prominent design--usually shown on a shield--located at the center of an armorial bearing or seal. Arms usually appear on seals, but they are not synonymous with seals.

Based on the best available evidence, the above flag is a reconstruction of the pre-1879 Georgia state flag as it would have appeared using the coat of arms from the 1799 state seal.

Georgia State Flag, c. 1879-1902



In 1879, state senator Herman H. Perry introduced legislation giving Georgia its first official state flag. Colonel Perry was a Confederate veteran, a fact that probably influenced his proposal to take the Stars and Bars, remove the stars, extend the blue canton to the bottom of the flag and narrow its width slightly. The legislation provided no height vs. length dimensions, but it did stipulate the width of the blue band was to be one-third the length of the entire flag. Also, the red of the flag was specified to be scarlet.

Why had Georgia finally adopted an official state flag? On the previous day, the 1879 General Assembly had passed a law rectifying state law regulating volunteer troops. Included in the revision was a provision that: "Every battalion of volunteers shall carry the flag of the State, when one is adopted by Act of the General Assembly, as its battalion colors."

Governor Colquitt approved Georgia's first official state flag on October 17, 1879.

Georgia State Flag, c. 1902-1906



In 1902, as part of another major reorganization of state military laws, the General Assembly changed Georgia's state flag again. New language was added stipulating: "On the blue field shall be stamped, painted or embroidered the coat of arms of the State; and every regiment and unassigned battalion shall, when on parade, carry this flag." The above flag is a reconstruction of Georgia's flag with the addition of the state coat of arms.

If flag makers had followed the letter of the law, Georgia's state flag from 1902 to 1956 would have appeared as pictured above.

Georgia State Flag, c. 1906-1920



Between 1902 and 1906, some unknown person or flag manufacturer added a gold-outlined white shield to the coat of arms, placed the date "1799" below the arms and added a red ribbon with "Georgia" below the shield.

Although the General Assembly hadn't authorized any changes to the state flag, apparently no one contested the new version. In fact, a Georgia history book for children published in 1906 includes a full-page color rendering of this design, indicating this to be the state flag of Georgia.

Georgia State Flag, 1920-1956



By the late 1910s or early 1920s, a new, unofficial version of Georgia's state flag- one incorporating the entire state seal- began appearing. There is no record of who ordered the change or when it took place.

The new flag may have resulted from a 1914 law changing the date on Georgia's state seal from 1799 (the date the seal was adopted) to 1776 (the year of independence). Because some flag makers had been including "1799" beneath the coat of arms, it became necessary to change the date on new flags. At that point, possibly the Secretary of State or a flag manufacturer may have decided that the entire state seal created a more uniform flag.

The first state publication to show Georgia's flag with a seal was the Georgia Official Register for 1927, which contained the artist's color rendering shown above. In reality, until the mid-1950s (when a new seal was drawn), various versions of the Georgia seal were used on state flags.

Georgia State Flag, c. Adopted in 1956



At the Constitutional Convention in 1787, it was agreed that each state, while loyal to the United States flag, should also have its own flag. After the Georgia Seal was adopted in 1799, the first state flag was designed with the Seal centered on a field of blue.

In 1879 the General Assembly of Georgia passed an act changing the flag to a vertical band of blue next to the staff occupying one third of the flag; the remainder was divided into three horizontal bands with the upper and lower in red and the middle in white. In 1905 the state Seal was added to the vertical blue band. Having two fields, one of deep blue and the other dark red, the Georgia flag showcases the Battle Flag of the Confederacy and the state seal.

On the state seal is the year 1776, the date of the Declaration of Independence. The three pillars stand for the three branches of government Legislative, Executive and the Courts. The arch above the pillars stands for the constitution. A ribbon expresses the ideals of the constitution "wisdom", "justice" and "moderation". The original state flag was designed by John Sammons Bell, an Atlanta attorney, and was adopted as the official flag of Georgia in 1956.

Georgia State Flag, c. 2001-2003



On January 31, 2001 Governor Roy Barnes signed into law a bill to change the design of the state flag. For more than 15 years, opponents of the flag rallied and introduced legislation aimed at removing the confederate emblem featured prominently on the 1956 state flag.

Because of the controversy, many Georgia cities and private businesses throughout the state refused to fly the official Georgia flag, opting instead to display the pre-1956 version.

In early 2000, Atlanta architect Cecil Alexander brought forth a "compromise" flag design consisting of the state seal, fittingly depicted in "Dahlonaga Gold," surrounded by 13 white stars. Below is a gold ribbon containing small images of the three state flags that have flown over Georgia, as well as the current and past versions of the United States flag. Above the small rows of flags is the phrase "Georgia's History."

On January 24, 2001, the Georgia House approved H.B. 16, adopting Alexander's flag design as the new state flag with an amendment to add "In God We Trust" beneath the ribbon of flags. H.B. 16 was then transmitted to the Senate, where it was passed without amendment on January 30, 2001.

STATE NICKNAMES

The Peach State

So called for the importance of peaches in the Georgia agricultural economy.

Empire State of the South

This nickname represented a determination in the Georgia citizenry to be leaders in industrial and economic development in the southern tier of states.

Yankee-land of the South

Similar to the above nickname, "Yankee-land of the South" speaks to industrial and economic development in the south. This nickname may be used in a derogatory sense.

The Goober State

Like "The Peach State," this nickname calls attention to the value of peanuts in the state. "Goobers" are peanuts.

The Cracker State

Along with Florida, Georgia has been called "The Cracker State" in earlier times. This Georgia nickname was a derogatory term that referred to immigrants, called "Crackers," from the mountains of Virginia and North Carolina. Crackers were considered less than ideal citizens.

The Buzzard State

Buzzards are scavengers and Georgia, considering them a necessary part of the ecology, at one time passed a strict law for their protection within the state.

STATE BIRD



Georgia's governor, Eugene Talmadge, first proclaimed the Brown Thrasher (*Toxostoma rufum*) as the state bird in 1935.

Thirty-five years later, at the urging of the Garden Clubs of Georgia, the Georgia General Assembly passed Joint Resolution No. 128, that designated the brown thrasher the official Georgia State Bird and the Bobwhite Quail the official Georgia State Game Bird. The resolution was approved on March 20, 1970.

The brown thrasher is a large bird (almost a foot in length) with a long, curved bill and a very long tail. It has two prominent white wing bars, a rich brown color on its top side, and a creamy white breast heavily streaked with brown.

Below, you will find 15 general questions to help review what you have learned. Use the following page(s) for documenting your answers. Older students may choose to write a State Report as well.

Review Questions:

1. List the states and/or bodies of water that border this state.
2. What was the date of statehood?
3. What is the state capital?
4. What is the state motto?
5. Name at least one state nickname.
6. Describe the state flag.
7. What is the state bird?
8. What is the state flower?
9. List at least 5 other state symbols.
10. Describe this state's government.
11. Name the major imports and exports for this state.
12. Describe the weather and climate in this state.
13. List at least 5 famous people from this state.
14. Describe at least 5 significant events in this state's history.
15. What other interesting information have you learned about this state?

Answers to Review Questions:

