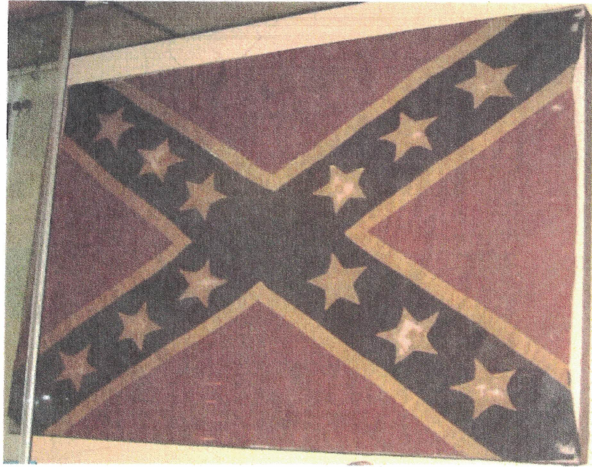


# The Forrest Battleflag



Original Forrest Cavalry battleflag, Tenn State Museum

As with most Confederate units, Forrest's cavalry regiments fought under a variety of battleflags during the war, including the First National "Stars & Bars" and the St. Andrews Cross battle flags. The principal flag that they carried, from 1861 well into 1864, was the First National. Then, beginning in 1862, the newly-issued 13-star St. Andrews Cross battleflag also came to be used by some units. The flag that Forrest would make famous, the 12 star saltier battle flag, came from the Mobile Depot in July, 1864. Additionally throughout this time, a few home-made Second Nationals were in the mix but overwhelmingly it was First Nationals that were used by Forrest's Cavalry, as it was for the majority of Confederate cavalry in the west. That is, until 1864.....

As an example, Forrest's Seventh Tennessee Cavalry initially likewise carried a First National. Their Second National battle flag was presented in late March, 1864 according to the Mobile Register & Advertiser of March 23rd. In July, 1864 they received their 12 star Mobile Depot battle flag when Forrest requested a new issue of flags for his Cavalry Corps. This flag was apparently mistakenly made from a 12-star pattern 1861 ANV flag that was sent to the depot for safekeeping. But Forrest, never wanting to waste anything, and recognizing the strategic value of a unique emblem, accepted the 12-star battleflags and issued them to his regiments. These were first carried in action in the famous "Memphis Raid" of August 1864.

Forrest took pride in his men carrying the 12-star battleflag and used this distinctive style flag to great advantage against the enemy. It became widely known in Union garrisons and encampments in the occupied Southland that Forrest's men carried the battleflag with no center star. His legendary exploits and victories quickly transferred to that flag and its presence on the battlefield meant that Forrest was at hand – and that further resistance by the Federal troops meant certain defeat. The 12-star battleflag became a very useful psychological tool in Forrest's arsenal of tactics and proudly carried by his men of Forrest's Cavalry. It was the flag of victory.

- By Lee Millar, historian, and Life Member Sons of Confederate Veterans