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THE FLAGS AND COATS OF ARMS OF THE AMERICAN REPUBLICS

COSTA RICA.

THE history and significance of the national banner and coat of arms of Costa Rica are described as follows by His Excellency, Señor JOAQUÍN B. CALVO:^a

It is unnecessary to state that the first flag that fluttered in Costa Rica was that of Spain, and that consequently her shield was that of the mother country; but it should be stated that later on she had her own shield, conceded to Cartago August 17, 1505. This shield was divided in two parts; the first contained a lion rampant, in a red field, with a crown at the head, and three bars sangre, and the lower part a golden castle in an azure field; and for the orle, six black eagles in a field of argent, having for crest a large golden crown with the inscription "Fide et Pace."

After independence the first flag of Costa Rica was the Mexican, in virtue of her annexation to the Empire of Iturbide; but, as it appears, it was not hoisted, but placed under a load of tobacco dispatched to Nicaragua.

The first flag proper, white, with a red star in the center, was decreed May 1, 1823, and sworn to June 8 of the same year.

Afterwards came the flag of the Central American Federation, composed of three horizontal stripes—two blue and a white one between. Still later, President CARRILLO, April 21, 1840, decreed that the flag should consist of three horizontal bands, the top and bottom white, and the center azure, upon which should be pictured the arms of the State, consisting of a radiant star,

^a The Republic of Costa Rica, by JOAQUÍN B. CALVO, Minister of Costa Rica to the United States. Chicago and New York, 1890, pp. 40-42.

placed in the center of a celestial background, with the inscription at the circumference, "State of Costa Rica." Finally, upon the country assuming fullness of power, the flag which we have to-day was decreed.

It consists of five horizontal bars, the outer ones blue, the next white, and the central red and of double width.

The first shield, decreed May 13, 1823, was a star encircled with the inscription, "Costa Rica Free." The second, decreed October 27, 1824, represented a circle of mountain chains and volcanoes, denoting the position and security of the country; and in the center an arm and the left half of a breast, indicating that it gives a heart to its brethren and maintains an arm in defense of its country.

The shield of Central America represented five volcanoes and at the left the rising sun; using also for the money an oak tree, bordered with the inscription, "Libre cresca fecunda" (free she may grow fruitful).

On September 28, 1848, were decreed the present arms and colors, and since then the shield has been composed of three volcanoes, joined and placed between two seas, with a ship at each side, showing that she has ports in both oceans; at the left, the sun rising, which denotes the youth of the Republic; at the top, five stars, representing the five provinces in which she is divided. Encircling the shield, three flags; on each side pikes, rifles, and branches of laurel; and at the bottom, a cannon and a horn of plenty for the riches of the country. In the upper part extends a scarf upon which is inscribed "America Central," and below, "Republic of Costa Rica," denoting that the latter is part of the former.

The last decree referred to in Señor CALVO's book has been amended by Section II of the Decree of the Constitutional Congress of Costa Rica, dated November 27, 1906, which reads as follows:

SEC. II. The coat of arms shall represent two volcanoes and an extensive valley between two oceans with a merchant ship sailing on each of them. On the extreme left of the line that marks the horizon a rising sun shall be represented. There shall be on the upper part of the shield two myrtle palms half covered and joined by a white wide ribbon containing the following inscription in golden letters: "República de Costa Rica." The field between the peaks of the volcanoes and the myrtle palms shall contain five stars of equal size and arranged like an arch. The crest of the shield shall be a blue ribbon interlaced in the shape of a crown and bearing in silver letters the inscription "América Central."





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