



## **Shreveport's Flag May Soon Wave More**

By Eric J. Brock
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It may also be seen at the welcome "gateway" at the interchange of I-20 and the Inner Loop. It is blue, white, and gold and bears a shield in the center. It has been a part of our city since 1934, though only in recent years has it been regularly flown. It is the Shreveport city flag.

Shreveport officially celebrated its centennial in 1935 (actually the centennial of the Caddo Indian Treaty of 1835; Shreveport itself was founded in 1836), but preparations for the event began some time earlier. In 1934 a contest was held to design an official flag for the city. At that time the only city in Louisiana to have its own flag was New Orleans, which had adopted its red, white, blue, and gold fleur-de-lis emblazoned banner back in 1918. Now Shreveport, the state's second city, was to be the second with its own flag.

Local journalist and state legislator Rupert Peyton suggested holding a public contest to design the new banner. A prize of \$50 (the equivalent of about \$566 in today's dollars) was offered for the best design. Designs were required to be in color, 12 by 18 inches in dimension. Relatively few entries were submitted, though most all of the designs turned out to be quite good. Today these are housed in the Larkin Edwards Room of the downtown Shreve Memorial Library.

A seven-member contest committee chaired by local department store executive Aaron R. Selber was formed. Charged with selecting a design from the several entries, the winning design they chose was by a veteran of World War I, Stewart G. Davis, a local artist who called his flag design "the best piece of work I've ever done."

The flag is divided into three sections, much like the French tricolor, except for its color scheme. At the hoist is a vertical bar of deep French blue, in the center is one of white, the outermost bar (the fly) is gold. In the center of the white central bar is a shield. This shield is divided into three diagonal sections, the upper right being French blue overlaid with 18 gold stars (Louisiana being the 18th state); the central section is a red diagonal stripe overlaid with three stylized magnolia blossoms (the state flower; the three blossoms symbolize the tri-state area known as the Ark-La-Tex, of which Shreveport is the economic center); the lower left-hand section is white, overlaid with 14 blue cones, a device borrowed from the Shreve family coat of arms. At the top is a pelican and below is a wreath of cotton leaves. Across the bottom runs a banner with the motto

"City of Shreveport 1835."

The winning design was submitted by the contest committee to the design committee, chaired by local architect Dewey A. Somdal. Approved by them, it then went to the general flag committee, chaired by Times general manager Lawrence A. Maihles, for final approval. Lastly, there was a publicity committee, charged with promotion of the new design and with turning the design into an actual flag. This committee was chaired by State Rep. Peyton. Obviously, the practice of having many committees for civic projects is nothing new.

The contest committee had 11 members, including Mayor George W. Hardy and former Mayor John McWilliams Ford. The general flag committee had a whopping 31 members, including Mayor Hardy, local architect Seymour Van Os, and local historian J. Fair Hardin. The general publicity committee consisted of seven members.

The flag was widely used during the centennial celebrations but largely fell into disuse afterward. Until 1965 it was almost forgotten.

Since that time, it has been restored to its rightful position among the city flags of the nation and among the variety of banners representing Louisiana and her rich history.

Unfortunately, examples of the flag have not been available for public purchase, though this may be about to change. The Highland Area Partnership has recently announced plans to create and sell Shreveport city flags to citizens and businesses throughout town, possibly as soon as later this summer. Wouldn't it be wonderful to see the Shreveport flag flying on homes and shops throughout the city, like the flags of New Orleans, New York, and other cities do in those places?

With flags and banners of all sorts as popular as they are these days, now is the perfect time to unfurl the Shreveport flag more often and in more locations.

\*Note: To purchase a City of Shreveport Flag, send a check for \$20.00, payable to:

**Highland Area Partnership (HAP)** 

P. O. Box 44292, Shreveport, LA 71134

or call HAP at 318-869-5706