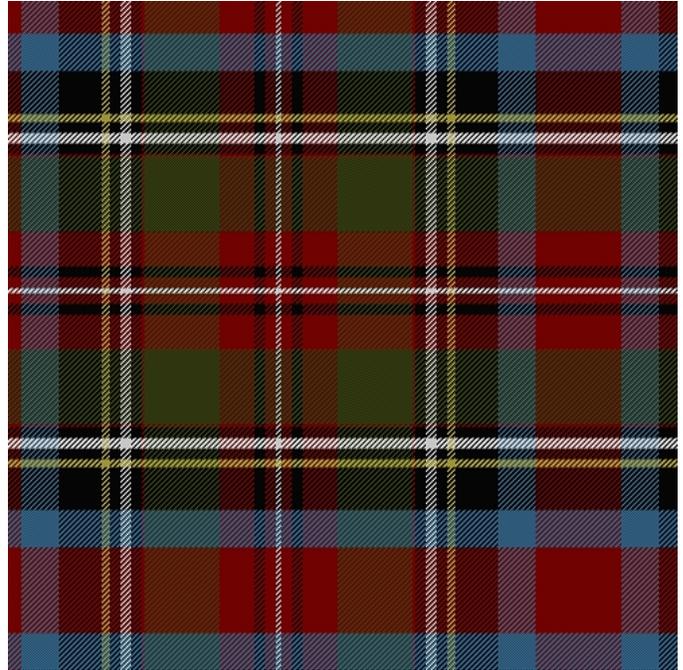


The Tartan of the Carolinas

Pepsi Cola bills itself as "The Taste of the Carolinas." But everyone knows this is just an advertising slogan. There is no law proclaiming Pepsi to be the official cola of the Carolinas, and residents of the states are free to prefer Coke, or RC, or Dr. Pepper. But is there an official tartan of the Carolinas? Yes there is!

Both North and South Carolina (along with many other US states) have adopted tartans as state symbols. In this case, NC and SC have adopted the same tartan, called the Carolina tartan. It was designed in 1981 by tartan specialist and historian Peter MacDonald, of Crieff, Scotland. It is based upon a version of the "auld Royale" tartan found in an old pre-1800 fragment. It is believed to be the same tartan used in ribbons on the coat of King Charles II for his coronation in 1661. King Charles II created the Carolinas with a 1663 grant.

This tartan was first presented to and approved by the St. Andrews Societies of NC and the St. Andrews Society of Charleston. It was adopted by the Cross Creek Pipes and Drums of Fayetteville, NC in the early 1980s. It is also worn by the NC State University Pipes and Drums. In 1991 North Carolina passed legislation adopting the Carolina tartan as the official tartan of the state. And in 2002, South Carolina passed legislation accomplishing the same.



When a state passes such legislation, it is adopting the tartan as a state symbol – just like the official state bird or flower. One may even suggest that an icon as symbolic as tartan has a status more akin to the state flag. It is something one can display to show pride in the state. Official recognition of a tartan by a state government is the equivalent of a Scottish chief sanctioning a tartan for his clan. Recently, however, confusion has come about by the introduction of two new tartans named after North and South Carolina.

In 2003, David McGill, owner of a small private design and retail company called International Tartans, designed a tartan for North Carolina at the request of someone named "Charles" from Flatbranch, NC, (no last name is given on the company's web site)¹ who was supposedly "dissatisfied with the fact" that the Carolina tartan had been officially adopted by the state. Shortly thereafter, a woman from Sumter, SC, named Mary Katherine Hurt also commissioned McGill to design a new tartan for South Carolina. Again, the stated reason was due to "dissatisfaction" with the "patronizingly named Carolina tartan."² McGill makes the astonishing and completely baseless claim that when states pass legislation adopting a tartan, they "are not making that tartan official or exercising any authority."³ He attempts to discredit the official Carolina tartan by calling it "mysteriously named" and "even more mysteriously provenanced" (with no explanation as to the basis for those accusations). These new tartans are billed as the tartans for "all true North [and South] Carolinians." He even claims to be able to proclaim the wearers of these tartans "Armigers"⁴ (someone granted personal heraldic Arms) which is fraudulent, as only the Lord Lyon has such authority in Scotland.

No wonder people are confused! But the truth is simple. Individuals who did not like the tartan adopted by their states chose to have new tartans designed, and this company is now doing all it can to promote them. However, the fact is that the tartan sanctioned by the governments of North and South Carolina remains the original Carolina tartan. Those wishing to wear the actual tartan of these states should honor this. If anyone wishes to wear one of these new tartans, they are free to do so. But they should be aware of the facts, and any attempts to discredit the established Carolina tartan, or to suggest that these new tartans are more legitimate in any way, does an injustice to the people who worked diligently have the Carolina tartan adopted through the official legal processes of their respective states.

The North and South Carolina tartans are copyrighted designs belonging to David McGill, an Edinburgh architect by trade. These tartans are only available from his company. The Carolina tartan, being an official state symbol of NC and SC, is available for all to use, and has been produced by various commercial mills and individual weavers, in various color schemes, in both Scotland and North America. For more information see:

www.carolinatartan.com

¹ <http://www.internationaltartans.co.uk/state/north-carolina>

² <http://www.internationaltartans.co.uk/state/south-carolina>

³ <http://www.internationaltartans.co.uk/health-warning>

⁴ <http://www.internationaltartans.com/>