

The Ring: History and Symbolism.

The Citadel ring signifies a host of accomplishments as well as the strong tie between the State and the College, and the ideals, which the college was founded. Almost every feature of the ring is symbolic of a goal or an attainment of past members of the South Carolina Corps of Cadets.

The oval crest of the ring is dominated by a reproduction of the palmetto tree, which splits the last two numerals of the class year. The palmetto tree is significant because it:

- is the state tree of South Carolina;
- represents the “Palmetto Regiment,” a military body trained by Citadel cadets and sent from South Carolina to fight in the Mexican War; and
- represents a fort on Sullivan’s Island built from palmetto logs, which successfully resisted the bombardment from many British men-of-war during the Revolutionary War.



The two oval shields at the base of the palmetto tree are miniature replicas of the state shield. The shield inscriptions are accurate and readable with a low-magnification glass. The crest is encircled by the official name of the College and year it was founded, “*The Military College of SC 1842*”.



On the right shank of the ring, the star commemorates the shelling of the Union supply steamer “The Star of the West” and memorializes all those Citadel cadets and graduates who have died in defense of their country. The United States and South Carolina colors depict the unity and coordination between South Carolina and the federal government. To serve the dual purpose of representing the artillery, one of the two original branches of military instruction given during the early years of The Citadel, and as a connecting link between the old Citadel of Marion

Square and the Greater Citadel of today are the cannon balls on the bottom of this shank. In front of the barracks at Marion Square was a pile of Civil War cannon balls. Adopted as a part of The Citadel ring, they bind the new college with the spirit and tradition of the old.

On the left shank of the ring a rifle, sword, wreath, and a 30-caliber bullet can be seen at a glance. Upon closer observation, an oak leaf is noted in the background of the muzzle of the

rifle, and by the tip of the sword is a spray of laurel. Although difficult to discern, the oak leaf is one of the most powerful motifs of the ring; it stands for the oak tree and its characteristic attributes of strength and endurance. Of equal in a world torn by perpetual military conflict is the concept of victory blessed by peace, represented by the laurel and the wreath respectively. By means of most of these symbols, some of the ideals and concepts upon which The Citadel was founded and has endured are presented artistically.

The rifle and the 30-caliber bullet symbolize the infantry, the other original department of military science at the college. Since duty and responsibility have their reward at The Citadel, that of being appointed a cadet officer in the first-class year, these ideals, too, are embodied in the ring by the sword, the symbol of the cadet officer.

An interesting tradition which has evolved in connection with the ring is the different manner in which it is worn by cadets as distinguished from alumni. Since cadets are eligible to wear rings upon becoming academic first class cadets, they wear them with the class numerals facing towards the wearer. After graduation exercises, however, the rings are turned around.

The Citadel ring was standardized in 1940 by the Ring Committee with the approval of the Classes of 1940, 1941, and 1942. Standardization brings two distinct advantages. First, it makes The Citadel ring easy to recognize, since all graduating classes wear the same type of ring, and secondly, it denotes not only a member of a certain class, but a Citadel graduate.

If you count the number of items you should come up with a certain number of symbols that your Cadet should know. Verify that number by counting the number of cadets in the sword arch at the Ring Ceremony!