



# The Vexilloid Tabloid

Portland Flag Association

“Free, and Worth Every Penny!”

Issue 102 October 2023

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## The Flag Need Not Be Everything

By Ted Kaye

In city and state flag-design efforts, we often see well-meaning but off-the-mark demands that the new flag constitute some sort of repository for the community's entire history, values, geography, and population groups.

One recent initiative sought a design that “adequately summarizes the history and geography of all peoples who have resided in or contributed to the development of this community”.

I challenge this. *The fundamental purpose of a flag is signaling at a distance.* Its design needs to be discernible (viewers can make it out) and memorable (viewers can recall what it represents). That's all. Other uses are secondary.

To ask a flag to do much more is far beyond the capability of any design. All the flag needs to do is have symbolism (objects, colors, layout) that links somehow to the place, and avoids singling out any one group or offending people.

I describe this issue as “trying too hard”, which leads to overly-complex designs with too many elements.

Yes, there should be connections between the flag's symbolism and the community it represents—that's what the “Meaningful Symbolism” principle in *Good Flag, Bad Flag* means, but its purpose is to achieve memorability, not to create an all-encompassing quilt.

Take Canada's iconic flag, for instance. The country has many more types of trees than maples, but it has chosen a maple leaf and educated the world that the symbol represents Canada. The maple leaf is discernible and memorable.

Alaska is much more than a constellation in the north sky, but using that symbol evokes the state in a unique and effective way.

So I suggest instead that such efforts simply seek a flag which “distinctively represents the community”—otherwise the stage is set for too-complex designs.



**#USE MEANINGFUL SYMBOLISM:**  
The flag's images, colors, or patterns should relate to what it symbolizes.

—Good Flag, Bad Flag

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If you wish to compliment the editor, or to contribute in the future, contact Ted Kaye at 503-223-4660 or [editor@portlandflag.org](mailto:editor@portlandflag.org). If you wish to complain, call your mother.

## September 2023 Flutterings You Need to Know

In our September meeting, hosted by Graham Houser and streamed via Zoom, 15 PFA members and friends (including three parent-child duos) enjoyed three hours of flags and video conversation. In the usual role of the host, Graham moderated the meeting, on his covered patio with the PFA flag standing behind him.

Star Pesetsky, a student at Access Academy, described the display of Pride flags there—in public areas and in the class-room—and commented on Max Liberman's recent article on the subject (see *VT#99*).

Her mother, Jennifer, a librarian and attorney, supports Star's interest in flags.



Graham Houser's home, festooned with flags to welcome PFA members.



William Gifford shows yacht flags.



Joyce Gifford describes teaching.



Star Pesetsky channels Myanmar.



Jennifer Pesetsky makes a point.

William Gifford showed images of flags on yachts during the Mangold Cup in Austria (on the Bodensee) and described his and Joyce's latest patches.

Joyce Gifford related how, when substitute teaching, she does not hang flags in her classroom, having seen contention between the supporters of the Pride and Thin Blue Line flags.



**Max Liberman exercises his right to bear flags.**

Max Liberman experimented with tessellating the Portland city flag, then shared a number of flags bearing bears of some kind.

Shane Erickson, also at Access, described controversial flag use at the Clark County Fair, then shared his enthusiasm for the 1986 flag of the Dutch province of Flevoland.

His father, Samm, supports Shane's interest in flags.



**Shane Erickson shows Flevoland's flag.**



**Alex Zimmerman shares the Métis and Winnipeg flags.**

Alex Zimmerman recently visited Winnipeg, Manitoba, and displayed his purchases: the city's flag and that of the Métis.

Scott Mainwaring has begun teaching in a Salem middle school and decorates his classroom with 2'x3' national flags representing the languages spoken by his students (including Swahili, Dari, and Chuukese).

Patrick Genna showed how he waves the Ukrainian flag on his walking stick.



**Scott Mainwaring, editor, unveils the most recent volume of *Raven*.**



**Samm Erickson admires Shane's talent.**



**Patrick Genna explains the trident.**

*Continued on next page*



Graham Houser admires the flag of Silverton, Oregon.



Jerry Houser shows his personal flag.



John Niggley shares an old flag book.

Graham Houser performed his new song about vexillology, then shared several newly-acquired flags.

Jerry Houser (Graham's father, living across the street) told the story of his high school initiative, "otter flags" and how he flies flags representing his extensive international travel as a teacher.

Ralph Bartlett, an early-morning participant from Melbourne, updated us on his research on local municipal flags, and his election as president of the Waverly (Victoria) Historical Society.

Ted Kaye circulated clippings of flags depicted in the *Wall Street Journal* and unfurled a replica 1846 Bear Flag to honor California's Admissions Day, on which we met.



Ralph Bartlett joins from Down Under.



Ted Kaye celebrates his native state.

John Niggley brought old books and opened one to show the flag of the West Indies Federation (1958–62) and the Great Seal of the United States, then unfurled the U.S. Space Force flag.

Our next meeting, on Thursday, November 9, 2023, will be hosted by Larry Snyder at his new at his new residence, the Springs at Carman Oaks, Lake Oswego. We'll deliver the PFA flag to him.

We expect again to welcome our local members as well as far-flung friends to the meeting.

## Vexiday 2023

World Vexillology Day (Vexiday) is an international celebration of flags and their study, organized by participating flag-studies organizations in many countries.

Vexiday's creator, the PFA's Scott Mainwaring, writes: "All around the world, flags speak to important human needs to express, to belong, to feel, to create, to learn. Let's take one day a year to celebrate them, all of them!"

NAVA honored Scott with its John Purcell award in 2016 "for his exemplary contribution that promotes public understanding of vexillology in North America."



The Vexiday flag, by Clay Moss.



Star Pesetsky created a display for her grandmother, using 4"x6" national, city, and organization flags.

Since the first Vexiday in 2016, PFA members have mounted a large display at Salmon Street Springs. However, the Portland Marathon's use of the space

precluded a coordinated event this year. Instead, members put up extensive personal displays of flags.

<https://vexiday.wordpress.com/>



Max Liberman flew the flags of the U.S.A., Bhutan, Australia, Kenya, Canada, Mexico, Æfira, United Kingdom, and Jamaica.



Ted Kaye flew the Vexiday flag (center), flanked by combination flags bearing U.S. state flags and national flags, with the PFA and NAVA flags on either end.

## When the Flag Changed French History

By Alden Jencks

In the summer of 1871, the French nation lay defeated, humiliated, and dismembered. Prussia had crushed French armies and stripped away the provinces of Alsace and Lorraine. Frenchman had killed Frenchman while despoiling Paris in the disastrous Commune uprising. And the provisional, self-proclaimed 3<sup>rd</sup> Republic was as unpopular as it was weak.



*La Lorraine et l'Alsace retrouvée*, a statue in Nancy depicting the provinces as women awaiting their return.

**VIVE  
LA  
COMMUNE!**

Flag of the Paris Commune (reconstructed based on Soviet art).

In this general despair, a consensus quickly emerged across France. *La Grande Nation* must reject radical 19th century political models—Napoleonic fantasies and extreme Republicanism. France must return to ancient French values—values that were to be found in two places: the Catholic faith and legitimate monarchical government.

With zeal, the French turned to building a votive church, Sacré Cœur de Montmartre. And, to the first post-war National Assembly, Frenchmen sent a stout majority of conservative monarchists.



The Basilica of Sacré Cœur de Montmartre.

These mandated representatives acted with dispatch. They offered the French crown to Henri d'Artois, Comte de Chambord, seemingly an ideal candidate. The Comte de Chambord, in his person, perfectly resolved the problem of rival Legitimist and Orléanist claims to the throne.

The count, the Legitimist claimant, was advanced in years and childless. Upon his death, the throne would pass to his nephew, Philippe d'Orléans, Count of Paris, in whom Legitimist and Orléanist streams of legitimacy united.

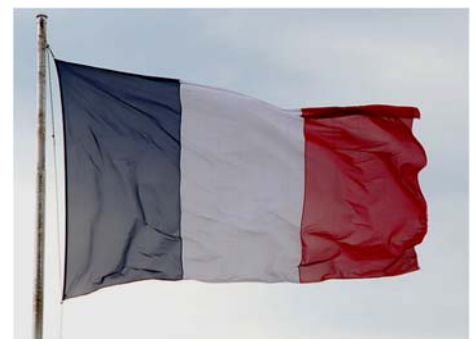


Henri d'Artois, Comte de Chambord.

At the time, everything seemed to fall into place. Yet history, as we know, records no coronation of a French king. What could have possibly derailed the restoration of the monarchy?

*Answer:* The *Tricolore*—the revered red, white and blue national flag of France; the powerful and beloved symbol of the French people.

The Comte de Chambord categorically refused to receive his crown under the *Tricolore*.



The Tricolor, the national flag of France.



The flag of the House of Bourbon.

He demanded the white banner of his House of Bourbon, and he demanded that banner alone. Deputies of the national assembly, for their part, refused to dismiss their beloved Red, White, and Blue. The flag issue, then, accompanied by other reactionary demands, halted the count's candidacy in its tracks. "And all that, all that for a napkin!" Pope Pius IX would later remark.

After their initial shock, royalist supporters reassessed their situation and then moved confidently forward with an alternate plan. They would wait out the death of the Comte de Chambord. Then they would put forward the candidacy of Philippe d'Orléans. The Count of Paris had no problems with the tricolored flag and indeed his progressive world-view made him well-liked, even among Republicans.

And so, reasoned the royalists, it is only a matter of time. We must simply wait.



Royal Banner of France, "Bourbon Flag".

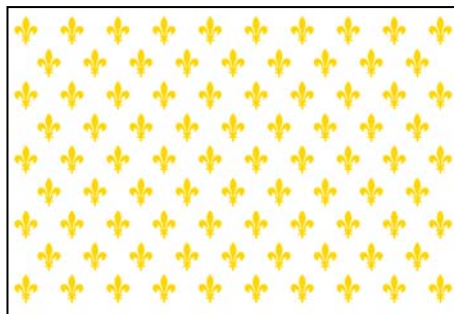
Henri d'Artois, Comte de Chambord, died in 1883. But the France that quietly noted his death had undergone a sea-change since 1871.

Most importantly, the weak, unpopular 3<sup>rd</sup> Republic of 1871 had matured over the course of 12 years and had won over the now increasingly self-confident French populace.

By 1883, most assembly representatives had become committed Republicans. These men looked disdainfully upon renewed efforts to make a Bourbon scion king. "Thanks, but no thanks, Citizen Bourbon!"

Thus, the *Tricolore*, in buying time, had saved the 3<sup>rd</sup> Republic.

*Vive le bleu! Vive le blanc! Vive le rouge! Vive la République française!*



Standard of France, early 1600s–1789, 1814–1830.



Royal Standard of France.

## NAVA 57

This month Philadelphia hosted the 57th annual meeting of the North American Vexillological Society, an event that broke records for attendance and number of presentations.

Portland Flag Association members included Graham Houser, Alex Zimmerman, and Ted Kaye, plus regular PFA meeting participants Phil Allen and Bard Cosman.



Graham Houser shows the flag of Lethbridge, Alberta, as a Vexi-Bit.



Ted Kaye delivers a presentation on the New American City Flags Survey of 2022.

## At the twilight's last gleaming?



Hank Willis Thomas, *At the twilight's last gleaming?*, 2021, Collection of Jordan D. Schnitzer,  
© Hank Willis Thomas. Courtesy of the artist and Jack Shainman Gallery, New York.

This quilt-montage combines parts of nine identifiable and currently controversial flags. Readers, can you identify them all?

Its image headlines the publicity for a current exhibition: *We Are the Revolution: From the Collections of Jordan D. Schnitzer and His Family Foundation*.

[converge45.org/we-are-the-revolution](https://converge45.org/we-are-the-revolution)

The exhibition can be seen at The Schnitzer Collection, 3033 NW Yeon Ave., Portland, Oregon. Public hours are 12–5 PM, Thurs., Fri., & Sat., August 26–December 1, 2023.

The exhibition is an anchor event for Converge 45's citywide 2023 biennial, **Social Forms: Art As Global Citizenship**.

Converge 45 is a non-profit arts organization that produces the Contemporary Arts Biennial in Portland, which “intersects regional, national, and international perspectives around art and the futures it seeks.” The organization “works in continued collaboration with community partners to build strength and resiliency within the Portland arts ecosystem.”

One large freestanding wall displays 20 of a set of 31 color screenprints by Polly Apfelbaum in the form of “emblematic flags”.

The artist, inspired by an installation she presented at the Łódź Biennale in Poland in 2004, selected specific flags to stand for revolutionary cultural and political movements throughout history.

Some are easily recognizable while others are more obscure. To create a new set of symbols, apparently “something artists regularly do to help humanity interpret the world”, the artist superimposed her own iconic pop flower shape on each flag.

The prints/flags are displayed hanging downward, and it's unclear to some observers how the artist improves on the flags themselves (see next page).





Polly Apfelbaum (b. 1955), *Flags of Revolt and Defiance* (selections), 2006:  
 FRELIMO, Socialists, FNLA, Polish Peasant Insurrection, Rainbow Flag,  
 Federal Republic of Padania, Sons of Liberty, SWAPO, Tigre Liberation Front, Sandinistas,  
 Anarchists, Anarcho-syndicalists, Jolly Roger, Eritrean People's Front, Black Panthers,  
 Romanian Uprising, NOW, Kurdistan Worker's Party, Viet Cong, Western Somali Liberation Front.

## Roundup

Reader Chris Cobey asks: “Can you name the county flag which includes an image of a person being shot?”

The answer: Union County, New Jersey, which has an SOB flag. The seal depicts the scene of the first woman killed in the Revolutionary War in New Jersey.

The story:

Hannah Caldwell was shot in front of her home while protecting her family. She is said to haunt the grounds where she lived, now known as the Caldwell Parsonage in Union Township (located about 8 miles southwest of Newark.



Seal of Union County, New Jersey.



Heather Cox Richardson sent this image out in her e-blast on Sept. 23, saying “My friend Peter Ralston took this image recently, and it feels perfect for this moment in a bunch of different ways. You will note that the building—and by extension, the flag painted on it—is under repair.”



Jay Shoemaker came upon this untitled, un-ascribed Ukrainian flag-themed work in August. He found it “subtle, powerful, and intriguing”.

When the war broke out, Hannah’s husband, Rev. Caldwell, joined the Patriot Army and moved his wife and nine children to the parsonage for safety.

When he heard that the enemy was approaching, Rev. Caldwell wanted his wife and children to accompany him to safety in Springfield, but she felt that she would not be harmed. However, a British soldier shot her with his musket as she tried to protect her young son.

John Ward Dunsmore’s painting *Battle of Springfield, New Jersey* depicts the event; a copy hangs in the Springfield Municipal Court. The death of Hannah Caldwell became a symbol of the fight for independence.

Union Township Historical Society President Barbara La Mort says “...a strong woman like Hannah Caldwell, who stood her ground, even knowing that the enemy was coming, is a perfect representative of what Union stands for.”

[nj1015.com/why-the-official-seal-of-union-county-nj-depicts-a-womans-murder](https://nj1015.com/why-the-official-seal-of-union-county-nj-depicts-a-womans-murder)

## What's that Flag?

By Nikita L. Dudko

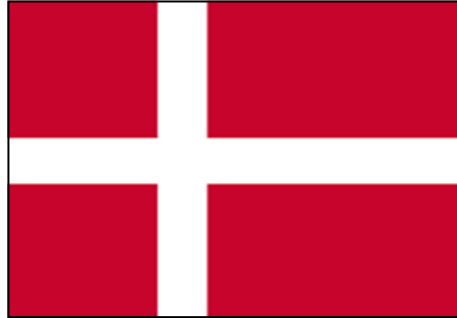
Identify these flags and the theme that connects them.



## What Was that Flag? Answers to the last quiz

By Pete Loeser

These are among the oldest national flags, in order of first documented use.



Denmark (*Dannebrog*, ca. 1219).



Austria (1230).



Latvia (ca. 1279).



Scotland (ca. 1286).



Royal Standard of Norway (1280).



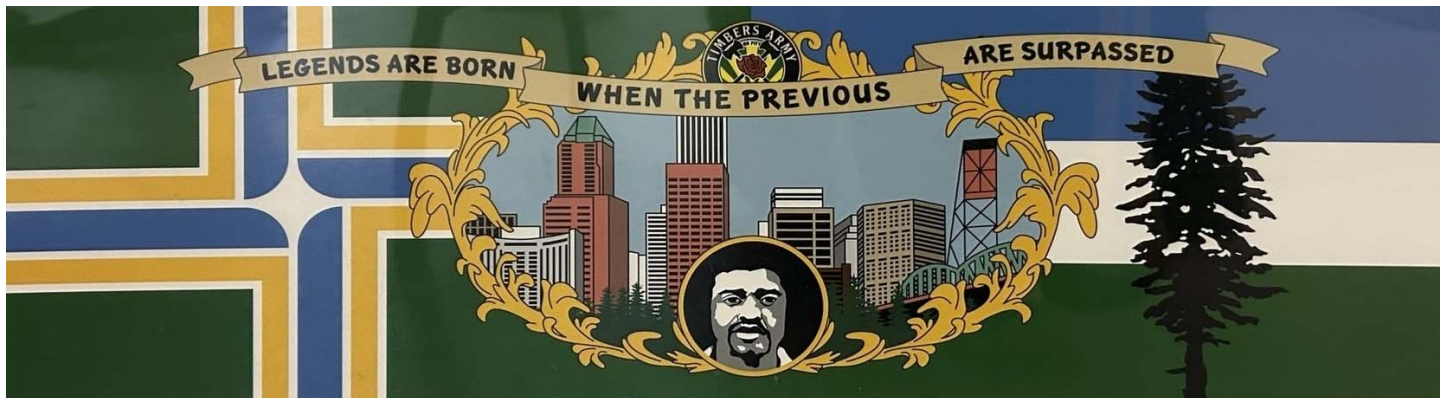
Albania (*Flamuri Kombëtar*, 1430).



Switzerland (1470).



## Portland Flag Miscellany



A display at the Timbers Army store before the MLS Portland Timbers' match against the Minnesota Loons on May 20.

The flag of Portland merges into the flag of Cascadia. PFA members designed both flags:

Doug Lynch created Portland's flag in 1969, updating it in 2002. Alexander Baretich created the Cascadia flag in 1994–95.

Long before Portland had a widely used city flag, pennants such as this represented us. A number are findable on-line. Who wants to compile them for the VT?



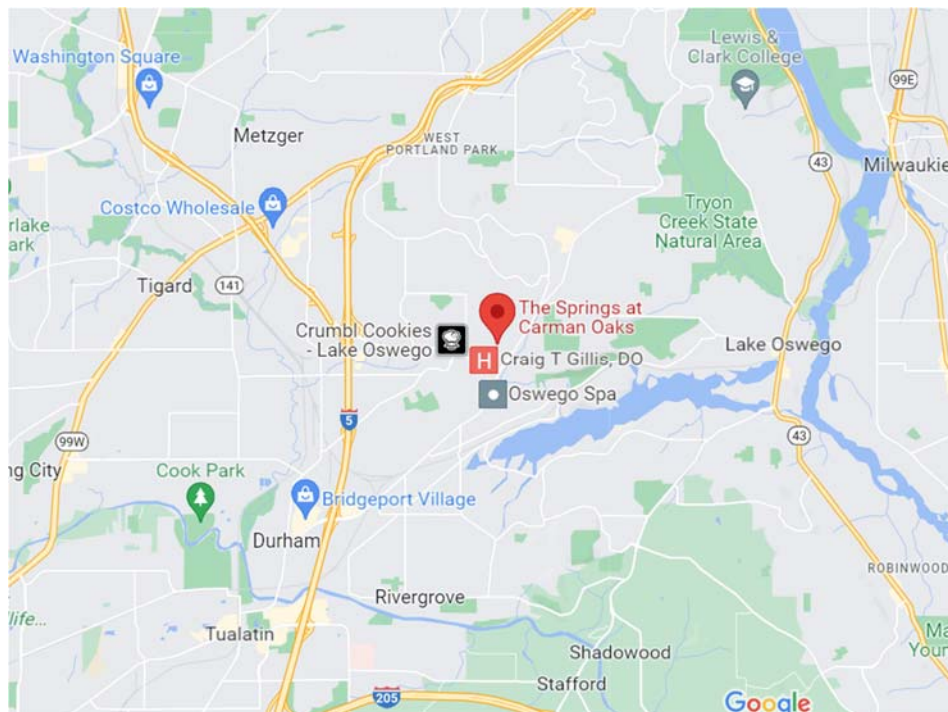
## November Meeting

The next meeting of the Portland Flag Association will be at 7 PM, Thursday, November 9, 2023, hosted by Larry Snyder at the Springs at Carman Oaks, 3800 Carman Dr., Lake Oswego.

Those who cannot attend in person should watch for a Zoom invitation.

We look forward to seeing those of you who have missed recent meetings and engaging in provocative flag-related discussion.

Newcomers and friends from around the world are welcome!



The *Vexilloid Tabloid*, founded in 1999 by the late John Hood, is published bi-monthly by and for the Portland Flag Association—Portland, Oregon, U.S.A. Find back issues at [portlandflag.org](http://portlandflag.org).