



The Vexilloid Tabloid

Portland Flag Association

“Free, and Worth Every Penny!”

Issue 107 August 2024

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Why Politicos Abdicate on Flags

By Ted Kaye

Of the multitude of flags out there (FOTW documents over 185,000!), very few have been voted on by the people they represent. It seems that choosing a flag generally falls to the leaders of a place (elected or otherwise)—just as do adopting a budget, determining a building code, or enacting any other law or regulation.

However, we now seeing the occasional vote or referendum on flag choice. At the U.S. state level, Mississippians voted twice (in 2000 and in 2020), Georgians once (in 2003), and now Mainers will vote on their flag (in November). At the national level, Kiwis voted on the New Zealand flag in 2014–15. And a smattering of U.S. cities have put flags up to a vote. That’s all such votes of which I am aware (while there may well have been a few more, my point holds).

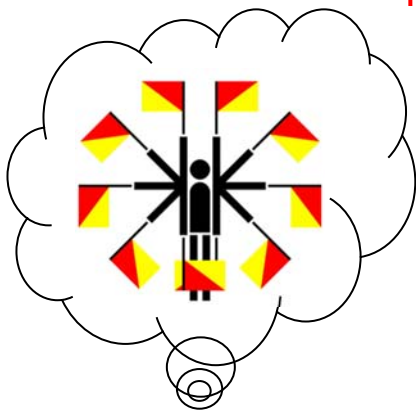
When advising cities and states on flag-change process, I suggest getting public feedback on final designs but avoiding an actual vote.

And I especially counsel against an election that pits a proposed flag against the current flag—that’s an invitation to failure, as it merges two separate decisions: 1) should the flag change, and 2) what should the new flag be?

So why do elected leaders pass flag decisions to the electorate? My theory: politicians want to deflect voter anger from themselves and blame the public for any difficult flag decision or result unpopular to some voters.

In Minnesota and Utah, opponents of change leveled the criticism “the people didn’t get a chance to vote”, as if the people didn’t have elected representatives to make hard decisions on their behalf.

This abdication of the leaders’ traditional role may reflect the increasingly high cost in political capital of changing such symbols of identity. This in turn may indicate that flags (especially at the state and perhaps even city level) are becoming more important in our public sensibilities.



*It seems like th' less
a statesman amounts to,
th' more he loves th' flag.*

—Frank McKinney “Kin” Hubbard

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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. If you wish to complain, call your mother.

July 2024 Flutterings You Need to Know

In our July meeting, hosted by Ted Kaye on the deck of his home in NW Portland and streamed via Zoom, 11 members and guests enjoyed two and a half hours of flags and video conversation.

As host, Ted moderated the meeting with the PFA flag in the background. He began the discussion by sharing several recently-acquired flag books and describing the upcoming ICV in Beijing and NAVA meeting in St. Paul, Minnesota, and ended the meeting unfurling flags from the collection of the late PFA stalwart David Ferriday, before passing them to Graham Houser for distribution to teachers.

Graham Houser showed off a shirt with an outline of the state of Oregon filled in with the flags of Spanish-speaking countries, unfurled a mystery flag, and shared the swatch samplers sent him by China Flag Makers (since he's such a good customer)—others were envious.



Ted Kaye shows David Ferriday's "Flag for All Mankind" (see VT#31).



The flag of William & Mary, the alma mater of the late David Ferriday, unfurls at the PFA for the last time.

Max Liberman gave an interesting presentation on Juneteenth flags, including a U.S. national flag version in red, yellow, green, and black, then explained the Pan-African and Garvey colors as the likely inspirations.

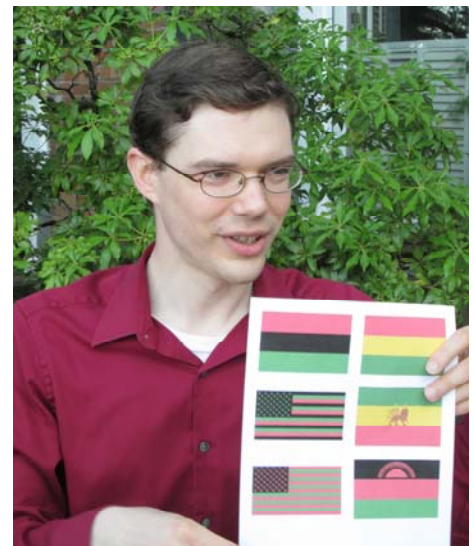
New member Cole Buffehr, tuning in from Oregon City, shared some flags related to his passion for disk golf, and expressed his enthusiasm for improving his city's flag.



Cole Buffehr explains the Oregon-shaped beaver logo of a disk golf event.



Graham Houser rocks a flag T-shirt.



Max Liberman reflects on the African-color influences of a variant flag.

Alex Zimmerman zoomed in and reported on his recent trip to Victoria, B.C. and the flags he'd acquired (see p. 9), and his trip to Stockholm, where he'd observed regional flags in the throne room in the royal palace—some matching those in his collection.

Alden Jencks, back from his sojourn to Mexico, exhibited national flags that had suffered UV degradation, and described the primary role of the Virgen de Guadalupe in public iconography.

Mark Telep, attending as a guest, described how he gives flags to Alden, his host.



Alden Jencks muses on historic flags of the American Revolution.



Mark Telep examines a flag book.



Joyce Gifford aims at Oregon City.

Joyce Gifford joined briefly by Zoom and offered to work with Cole on an initiative for a new Oregon City flag.

New member Phil Jones brought a party flag he had sewn decades ago depicting a martini glass with an olive, and described the double-applique construction method.

Ken Dale related his experiences reciting the Gettysburg Address at Flag Day events and his work with funeral homes to honor veterans and dispose of worn-out U.S. flags.

Ralph Bartlett joined from Victoria, Australia, and gave an interesting talk on the flags used for the reinterment of Matthew Flinders (1774–1814), the first mariner to circumnavigate that continent, and offered ideas for a new governor-general flag.



Ken Dale talks about Flag Day.



Alex Zimmerman explains the Heart Canada Flag.



Phil Jones shows his martini flag.

Our next meeting, on Saturday, September 14, 2024, will be hosted by Graham Houser at his home near Rocky Butte. Ted retained the PFA flag for him. We expect again to welcome our local members as well as far-flung friends.



Ralph Bartlett describes flags in the reinterment of Matthew Flinders.

The Myth of a “Civilian” U.S. Flag

By Pete Loeser

Myths and misunderstandings about flags, both real and fantasy-based, abound in the vexillological world—as they do on the internet. Conspiracists, kooks, politicians, religious leaders, and scholars all vie to “prove” the existence of their own version of reality without filters or actual facts and real research. Basically, one can post almost anything on line and not only will some believe and accept it as fact, they will spread the nonsense far and wide.

The myth of the existence of a “civilian” U.S. national flag is a prime example. While there has never actually been a different civilian version of the national flag, many continue to believe this urban legend. It may have started with erroneous identifications of the U.S. Customs Flag starting in the 1870s.

The United States Customs Service, a civilian branch of the United States government, was



Customs Flag Raising, July 4, 1919.

established to keeping illegal products outside of U.S. borders and tax legal products that entered. In 2003 it became an agency within the Department of Homeland Security, renamed the United States Bureau of Customs and Border Protection. So how did false impression arise that its flag was a civilian version the United States flag?

The trick to getting an urban legend believed is to make statements that are true, but connect them to unrelated or false facts, thus making the idea seem possible. **Here’s how to do it.**

Strategy One: Show a picture of the flag, **but change the caption.** A 1919 image shows the Customs Flag being raised over the United States Appraiser’s Stores at the Port of Pittsburgh. However, if we want to create a urban legend, we simply change the caption under the flag to “The Flag of Peace—U.S. Civil Flag in 1919 at the end of World War I”. Now the casual reader will assume that the Customs Service flag was a protest flag at a peace rally. In fact, the only national flags used at the 1919 peace rallies were standard stars and stripes.

Strategy Two: Cite **fictitious information from unverifiable “experts”**. (Focus on statements **marked in red.**)

*It is believed by **some historians** that the **Civil Flag** was discontinued after the Civil War when the federal government imposed military governments in the States and disbanded civilian government. As a show of its power over the States, Civil Flags were discontinued and Old Glory became the sole emblem representing the People of the United States of America, united under military (or admiralty) rule.* (civil-liberties.com/pages/mystery_of_the_flag.htm)

First of all, ask “What historians believe this?” While just after the Civil War, temporary Union military governments were indeed installed in the former Confederate states to keep order, no action was taken to eliminate non-existent “civil” flags. The only flags banned were the Confederate flags, which were replaced by the Stars and Stripes. The “admiralty rule” comment refers to a supposed connection between maritime law (a body of civil law which governs maritime issues) and an imagined military conspiracy.



U.S. and Customs Service flags.



A fictitious U.S. “Civil Flag”
(13 stripes).

Strategy Three: Distort facts by **mixing in unsupported opinions**.

Through usage and custom, horizontal stripes had become adopted for use over military posts, and vertical stripes adopted for use over civilian establishments. The Civil Flag, intended for peacetime usage in custom house civilian settings, had vertical stripes with blue stars on a white field. By the Law of the Flag, this design denoted civil jurisdiction under the Constitution and common law as opposed to military jurisdiction under admiralty/ military law. (monocountyassembly.org/uploads/5/5/2/0/55209739/history_of_the_us_civil_flag.pdf)

One can take a fact, like that the Congress in 1777 directed that the United States flag should have 13 stripes, alternating red and white, and a union of 13 stars, white in a blue field, but without saying the stripes should be horizontal. Then add some imaginary reference to a flag with “vertical stripes adopted for use over civilian establishments with blue stars on a white field”, then throw in unsubstantiated references to the Constitution, common law, and a dark military/ admiralty reference—and the process of deception really begins.

The flag for the original U.S. Revenue Marine (eventually becoming the U.S. Coast Guard) was introduced in 1799, 22 years after the original flag resolution,



**U.S. Revenue Marine flag
(16 stripes).**

and did, in fact, have vertical stripes (16 for the current number of states).

Strategy Four: Add **false statements that sound reasonable**.

Most flag purchase orders were for the military version by the Federal government. Outpaced by military purchases, civil flag orders were almost non-existent as the cost was far more than most Americans could afford. (civil-liberties.com/pages/mystery_of_the_flag.htm)

Naturally, the demand for a non-existent flag, or a flag for a single Treasury Department branch, would be small and therefore expensive. How many Customs Service flags have you seen, and if not a boater, how many Coast Guard ensigns have you seen? Again, statements that sound reasonable build a case for the existence of a non-existing flag.

It is interesting that the catalyst of this entire myth appeared in a work of fiction. It started in Nathaniel Hawthorne’s 1850 novel *The Scarlet Letter*, which erroneously describes the U.S. Customs Flag as having 13 stripes and calls it a “civil” flag (that part is correct, as the Customs Service was not a military branch).

...here, with a view from its front windows adown this not very enlivening prospect, and thence across the harbour, stands a spacious edifice of brick. From the loftiest point of its roof, during precisely three and a half hours of each forenoon, floats or droops, in breeze or calm, the banner of the republic; but with the thirteen stripes turned vertically, instead of horizontally, and thus indicating that a civil, and not a military, post of Uncle Sam’s government is here established. (johnhenryhill.wordpress.com/2015/04/25/the-three-flags-of-the-united-states-of-america-2/)

This passage provided the perfect opening to start a new urban legend. When the 1995 movie based on Hawthorne’s novel showed the “civil” flag, it added energy to the myth. It has also been spurred by the fact that the U.S. Treasury Department flags and ensigns were not standardized until the American Civil War, and collectors of customs were responsible for acquiring flags and ensigns on their own, leading to many variants in both construction and details of insignia. Add into this mix a variety of similar-looking 18th- and 19th-century flags of the U.S. Revenue Service and U.S. Coast Guard, and the urban legend supporters and conspiracy theory enthusiasts have a rich field to choose from.

The urban legend of a civil flag continues to provide conspiracy theory enthusiasts fertile territory to plow, and a chance to make a little money on the side by selling civil flags and buttons. Supporters of Ron Paul have flown a modern version of the civil flag at Ron Paul presidential rallies from 1988 to 2012.

It is also interesting that the same conspiracy theory enthusiasts who make claims for a separate civilian version of the flag also claim that any gold fringe on a flag signify some sort of admiralty/military/law/merchant plot... but that’s another story, or rather, another myth.

A version of this essay originally appeared on Historical Flags of Our Ancestors (http://flags.mainzone.com/american_note_2.html). Thanks to Jim Ferrigan for his help in its preparation.

Flags in the Grand Floral Parade

Every year (pandemics excepted) the Portland Rose Festival treats the city to the Grand Floral Parade.

As its PR describes it: “A colorful reflection of local, regional, and international communities, the parade draws hundreds of thousands of cheering viewers along its two-mile march on Portland’s east-side city streets.

“Each year the parade features the traditional large all-floral floats we all love, as well as the popular mini-floats that help make the Grand Floral Parade so unique! With bands, equestrian units, marching groups, drill teams, vintage vehicles, dancers, llamas, flags, and so much more, there’s something for everyone to enjoy!”

That shout-out to flags introduces this vexilliferous compilation of from the parade of June 2024.



The firefighters’ union carries four flags on its truck, now including Portland’s!



High school flag wavers.



The Royal Rosarians of Portland do not carry the Portland flag.



TSA employees again flout the U.S. Flag code, carrying the flag horizontally.



Example text with a flag book.



The Portland Peace Corps Association members carry the flags of their host countries—some served more than 50 years ago.



The TSA color guard carries U.S., Oregon, Homeland Security, & TSA.



More high school flag wavers.



Bus drivers put flags on their flag.



The Portland-Kaohsiung Sister City Association uses both city flags.



The League of Women Voters of Portland waves the suffrage and U.S. flags.

13 Stars...A New Constellation



*Happy
Independence
Day!*

from Jeff R. Bridgman American Antiques

jeffbridgman.com

Flags in Victoria, B.C.

By Alex Zimmerman

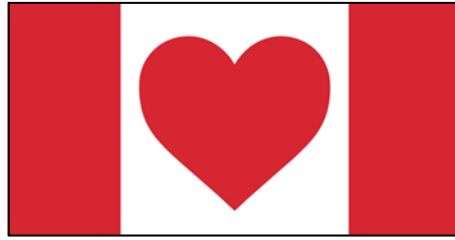
When traveling I always enjoy bringing back new knowledge and additions to my flag collection.

Like most areas influenced by British resources and control, Vancouver Island is an interesting location for any vexi-tourist. I found that while visiting Victoria, the capital of the province of British Columbia, a must-stop is the Flag Shop (part of a nationwide chain). I learned a lot and acquired some great, quality flags recently.

During the COVID-19 pandemic the local newspaper, the *Times Colonist*, printed a version of the Canadian flag, replacing the maple leaf in the center with a heart, as a tribute to front-line providers—especially those involved in healthcare and emergency services.

Readers cut out the newspaper flags and displayed them in windows all over Vancouver Island. Paul Servos of Victoria's Flag Shop, with his wife's encouragement, produced a flag for the newspaper's headquarters to show support for the community. As it gained popularity, the Heart Canada flag became a successful fundraiser for the "Rapid Relief Fund" and a symbol of community pride.

Producing the highly popular flags during a pandemic required processes like printing flags and allowing them to sit for two days before packaging, and then



The Heart Canada flag, created in Victoria in 2020.

delivering flags through a hole in the front of the store with cooking tongs to avoid any transmission of the virus. This exemplified how business and public interest in flags can promote community spirit.

At the Flag Shop in Victoria I also found a great example of the Vancouver Island flag. A defaced British blue ensign based on symbolism from around 1849, the badge bears Neptune's trident crossed as a saltire with the *caduceus* (wand) of Mercury with a beaver on an island below and a pine cone above—a nice representation of the island. The overall seal was used only briefly before the union of Vancouver Island with British Columbia in 1866. While this flag very likely did not fly at the time (vexillologist Michael Halleran seems to have created it in 1985), the symbols have lived on, even in the masthead of the *Times Colonist* from the colonial period.



The putative Victoria Colony flag, 1849–1866.

Peace Symbol: "ND"



The peace symbol was designed in 1958 by Gerald Holtom for the British Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament. Enclosed in a circle, the vertical line represents the semaphore signal for the letter D (for "disarmament"), and the downward lines on either side represent the letter N (for "nuclear").

Ted Kaye uses David Ferriday's soccer linesman's flags to demonstrate "D".

Roundup

John Moody, of Kaiapoi, New Zealand, sends along these redesigned flags of Australian Governors (at right, by MagnumDrako25 in 2023). He writes: "As can be seen these flags have taken their cue from the designs of the Lieutenant Governors of Canada, replacing the wreath of Maple Leafs for Canada with a wreath of wattle branches for Australia."

It is interesting that a potential Administrators/State Governors flag for the Northern Territory of Australia has been featured in these designs. Perhaps Australia should consider the introduction of an Administrators flag for the Northern Territory if the State flags are going to get a refresh, replacing the St. Edward's Crown of Elizabeth II with the Tudor Crown of Charles III. It will be interesting to see what Queensland will do with their State flag when this happens.

Queensland is still in the same situation as Nova Scotia was in until May 20th this year using a defaced Union flag with the state badge in its center surrounded by a wreath of laurel leaves."



John also writes: "A Lieutenant Governor's flag was adopted by Nova Scotia, Canada, on May 20th this year. A number of photos were taken at this event, both the lowering of the lowering of the old Lieutenant Governor's standard and the raising of the new standard. A certificate was presented to those who attended this ceremony."

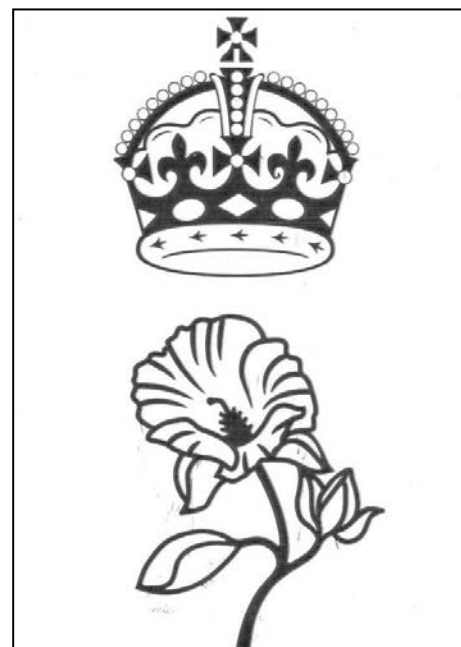


Cole Buffehr shared this commemorative disk from the 2009 Deaf National Championships in Springfield, Illinois, with disk golf baskets replacing the stars on the U.S. flag, plus then-senator Barack Obama and Abraham Lincoln signing "I L", for the host state.



This proposal for the Queensland governor's flag was designed by Ralph Kelly in 2003, the year that Queensland made maroon its official state color.

It follows the pattern of four other Australian states (with the exception of Victoria). Recently John Moody wrote to Government House asking the status. He received this reply: "Good afternoon, Mr Moody, thank you for your email. We can advise that there have been no discussions about changing the Governor's flag for Queensland. Thank you once again for writing to Government House Queensland. Yours sincerely, Louisa Beale, Executive Assistant to the Governor of Queensland and the Official Secretary."

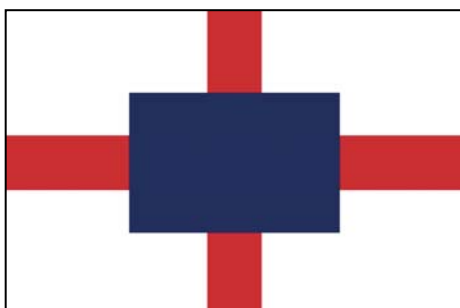
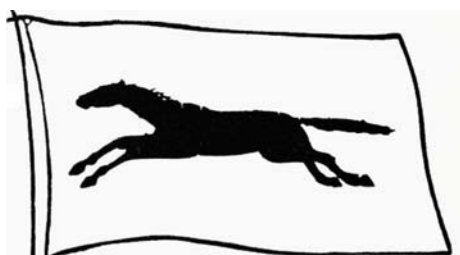


John Moody sends the updated badge for the Administrator for the Northern Territory of Australia, saying "The new badge replaces the St. Edward's Crown used by Elizabeth II with the Tudor Crown used by Charles III."

What's that Flag?

By Bruce Stewart

Identify these flags and the theme that connects them.



What Was that Flag? Answers to the last quiz

By Tony Burton

All but one of these flags are based on the pan-Arab colors inspired by the Hashemite Revolutionary flag of the Arab Revolt.

Congratulations to the solvers:
John Cartledge & Bruce Stewart.



Germany: Empire 1875–1919;
co-flag 1933–35.



Sudan.



Palestinians.



United Arab Emirates.



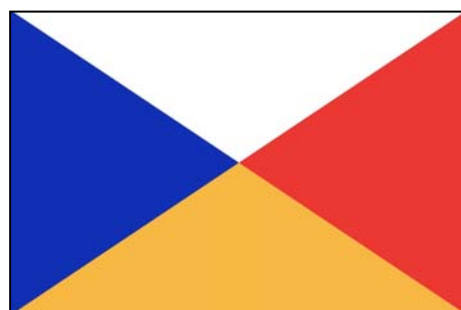
Yemen.



Kuwait.



Arab Revolt (1916).



Portland Flag Miscellany



Portland City Flag 3x5FT 3-Pack
150D Printed Polyester

By G128,
Sold by Walmart, \$35.99 (\$12 each!).
The quality is unlikely to match flags
sold by Elmer's Flag & Banner.

<https://www.walmart.com/ip/Portland-City-Flag-3x5FT-3-Pack-150D-Printed-Polyester-By-G128/283875025>



PORTLAND THORNS FC
3X5 PRIDE FLAG—the center of the
central rose is the hypocycloid from
the Portland flag.

(Official Portland Thorns FC product)

Sold by WINCRAFT, \$31.20.

<https://ptfcauthentic.com/products/portland-thorns-fc-3x5-pride-flag-2>

<https://ptfcauthentic.com/collections/vendors?q=WINCRAFT%2C%20INC>



Flag of Portland - Oregon
Paperweight.

By Mappa_Mondu,
Sold by Zazzle, \$24.72.

<https://www.zazzle.com/flag-of-portland-oregon-paperweight-256772560716922086>

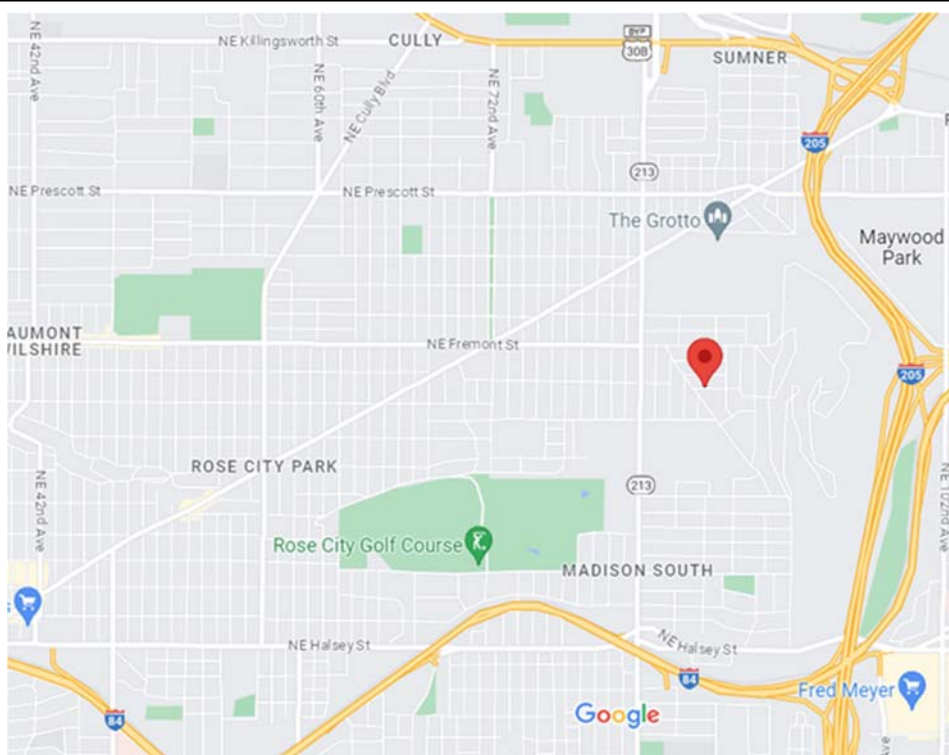
September Meeting

The next meeting of the Portland Flag Association will be at 1 PM, Saturday, 14 September 2024, at the home of Graham Houser: 8617 NE Dyer Street, Portland. See map at right.

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.