

The Vexilloid Tabloid

Portland Flag Association

“Free, and Worth Every Penny!”

Issue 5 April 2005

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Responses to the American City Flag Survey

By Ted Kaye

In 2004 NAVA hosted an Internet-based survey asking its members and any visitors to rate the design qualities of the 150 flags appearing in *American City Flags*. NAVA announced the results of the survey in October 2004. Cities across the country had newspaper stories about their city flags—often on the front page. Many newspapers expressed surprise that their city had a flag.

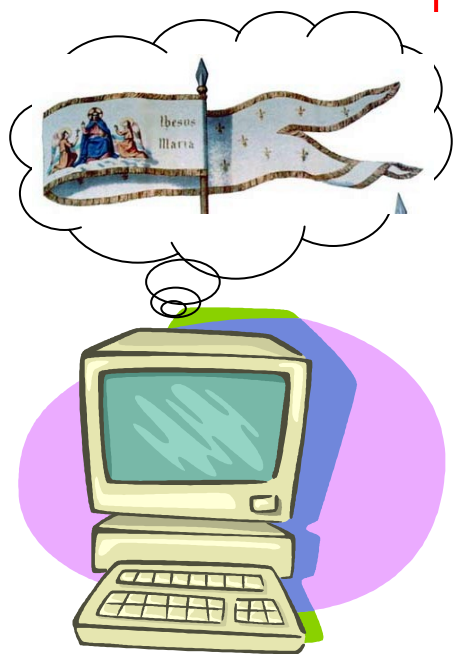
Some papers compared their cities' flags to those of rival cities, especially within the same or neighboring states. A few even derided distant competitors, such as when the New Orleans paper said that Denver's flag “looks like a bad 1970s wall hanging” and the flag of Portland, Oregon “resembles a floor tile”.

The press generally didn't pull punches when flags were ranked low. TV stations in Utah opined “When you acknowledge the Provo city flag, you might want to put your hand over your eyes instead of your heart.” Other papers wrote “Our flags are ugly” [Chesapeake and Virginia Beach] and “Raleigh has a bland old flag”.

Very occasionally a newspaper joined in the defense of its city's flag. In Salem, the *Statesman-Journal* reeked of sour grapes: “Portland flies the seventh-best flag in the country. Salem's flag ranks 51st. That's just fine. Who really cares about city flags?” It did publish my letter to the editor in response, which asserted that “... Salem would be better served by a

The newspapers often referenced or excerpted *Good Flag, Bad Flag*, listing its five principles. One common angle was making fun of the word “vexillology” or of the existence of an organization dedicated to the study of flags. Although most reporters opted for “flag experts” (the description provided in our press release), we were also called flag “aficionados”, “fanciers”, “scholars”, “enthusiasts”, and even “freaks”. A Texas magazine called vexillology “the fancy-pants term for the study of flags”. One paper called NAVA the “The North American Vexillological Society [sic], evidently not a member of the North American Pronounceable Society...”

(Continued on page 2)



“Better, forty times better, my banner than my sword.” — Joan of Arc
And her banner has been returned to her statue in Coe Circle (NE 39th & Glisan) in Laurelhurst.

If you wish to compliment the editor, or to contribute in the future, contact John Hood at 503-238-7666 or vivijohn@comcast.net. If you wish to complain, call your mother.

Responses to Survey

(Continued from page 1)

newspaper arguing for a world-class city flag, rather than implying ‘our flag may be crummy, but it doesn’t matter’.”

City officials had varied responses. When the flags fared well, they were enthusiastic. When flags fared poorly—a much more common occurrence—officials usually either defended the flag or insisted they had higher priorities. But in some cases, officials were surprisingly open to change and improvement. The spokesman for the mayor of top-ranked Washington, DC, said “Wow, that’s a nice compliment... There’s a very powerful argument that the most powerful and poignant icons are the simple ones.” Chicago Mayor Richard Daley’s press office issued a statement saying “We are proud that Chicago’s flag has been given such an honor because it represents the origins of our city as well as its great history and pride.”

Among those who staunchly defended their flag was a member of the Baton Rouge city council when it adopted a flag that devotes most of its field to the name of the city. “What do they expect for us to write on it? Bogalusa or something like that?” The spokeswoman for Charleston, S.C. said “If that’s the worst thing they can say about us, that we have an icky flag, then go ahead. We can take it, we’re tough.”

Occasionally an official’s defense was more passionate than informed.

For example, “‘It’s our flag and we like it, that would be my first thought,’ said [Mobile’s] Mayor Mike Dow [about the flag], which he subsequently could not definitively describe.” “‘I think it’s a fine flag,’ said [Pierre’s] Mayor Dennis Eisnach, who discovered the flag *after* being asked about it.”

Some attacked the survey process itself. “This is nuts,” said Mayor Raul Martinez of Hialeah, “This is one of the stupidest things I have ever heard in my life—people judging flags.” Councilman Jim Lane, who helped design Fort Worth’s new flag, said that the NAVA survey “sounds to me like a Yankee conspiracy”.

But in many cases, officials were surprisingly open to change and improvement. Provo’s spokesman said of the low score earned by the city’s flag, “Quite frankly, we agree with their conclusion... We’re certainly open to suggestions.” In Akron, the mayor’s chief of staff and the city’s spokesman “acknowledged the flag is a failure. ‘We agree that the present flag sucks,’ they said in unison, using the scientific term that the vexillologists skipped in their critiques.”

In Cedar Rapids, the city hall spokesman thought that perhaps the flag ranking was “an opportunity... it might be nice to have a flag that could promote the city, [and] that businesses would want to fly.” Even its designer had tried to persuade Cedar Rapids to improve the flag he’d created as a high school student in 1960. Last-place Pocatello is currently working on a new flag. The chairman of its chamber of com-

merce, Mark Hunter, said “I don’t know what the five principles of design are, but I’m hoping the guy designing the flag does.”

But some newspapers called for improvement. The Nashville newspaper ran a facetious contest for a new city flag which produced a winner. In Kansas City, the newspaper sponsored a contest which received 250 entries, and NAVA judges selected the winner. In Mesa, the newspaper’s contest received 131 entries. Readers chose the winning design, which was adopted as Mesa’s official flag.

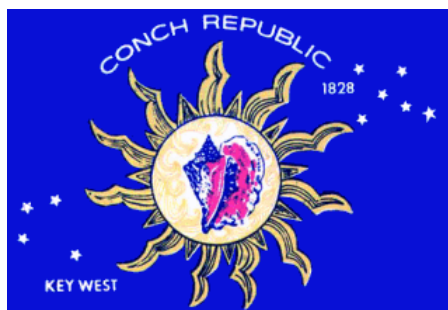
All in all, the survey gave NAVA a vast amount of exposure across the U.S. through intensive press coverage—often on the front page—in over 100 cities, and it initiated several efforts to improve city flags.



April 2005 Flutterings You Need to Know

Once more there seemed to be more to talk about than there was time allotted.

Mike Hale went to Florida and rather than a T-shirt, he brought back a flag of **The Conch Republic!** Due to a



governmental road block on the highway from Key West to the mainland in 1982 that caused a disruption to the tourist trade, the island seceded from the U.S., surrendered and asked for foreign aid! He also passed out new catalogs from his store and then led a discussion on the flags of Cascadia (see related article in this newsletter).

Ken Dale brought a 4" X 6" flag of West Linn, the city he lives in, which



is just across the river from John Schilke's home in Oregon City. We don't have an image of that flag, but it is pretty much a label on a bed sheet. John, however did bring a news article with a black and white picture of a newly adopted logo for

Clackamas County. It has great potential for a flag if the lettering is removed.

Ted Kaye showed us the German Vexillological Association's Newslet-



ter, the DGF. He also had a copy of David Hackett Fischer's book, *Liberty and Freedom* which studies these American visions of an open society. There has been enough fallout from

the "American City Flag Survey" that Ted is doing a piece for *Raven* that speaks to the responses he accumulated from various city officials and he shared that with us (see related article). Lastly, Ted played a DVD for us of the incredible flag collection of Ben Zaricor that was displayed at The Presidio in San Francisco. An attempt is being made to make it a permanent fixture.

Scott Mainwaring has made several redesign suggestions of the Oregon State flag and has promised an article next time, after we have further discussions.

Did You Know?

Legend has it that the Austrian flag was derived from the tunic of Duke Leopold V which in the battle of Ptolemais in 1191 was completely bloodied except where it remained white under his wide belt.

Another legend has the Danish flag, perhaps the oldest national flag, falling from the sky to King Valdemar, inspiring his army to

rally and defeat the pagan Estonians in 1219.

Yet another legend tells that the red hand of Ulster on the Northern Ireland flag came from the race to lay claim to the island. He who touch land first won. An O'Neil was slightly behind, so he cut off his hand and threw it ashore.

Some Flag Related Websites

North American Vexillological Association <http://www.nava.org>

Flag Institute (United Kingdom) <http://www.flaginstitute.org>

Flags of the World <http://www.fotw.net>

Elmer's Flag & Banner <http://www.elmersflag.com>

Darwin's Flagman (Australia) <http://www.nationalflags.com.au>

Flag Society of Australia <http://www.flagsaustralia.com.au>

July Meeting

The next meeting of the Portland Flag Association will be at 7 p.m., Thursday, July 14, 2005, at Ted Kaye's house, 2235 NW Aspen Ave., telephone (503)223-4660. See the map below.

We look forward to seeing those of you that have been otherwise committed, and hear some new war stories, see some different flags, and hear some provocative discussion.

In addition, bring an idea for a new Oregon flag. Thanks to Scott Mainwaring, we have several more to discuss.

It's not too early to be making plans for NAVA 39 in Nashville, TN, October 7-9. See the NAVA website for details.

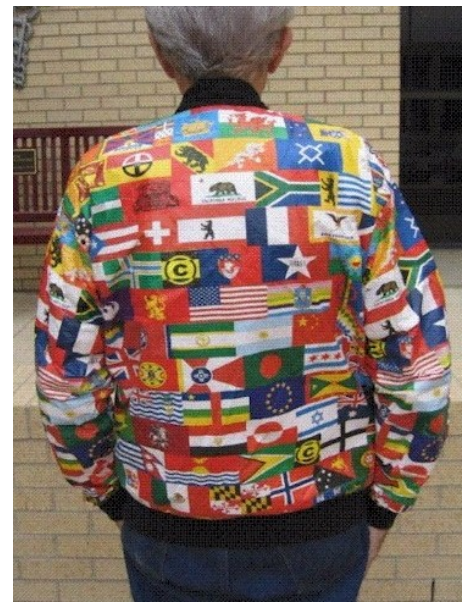
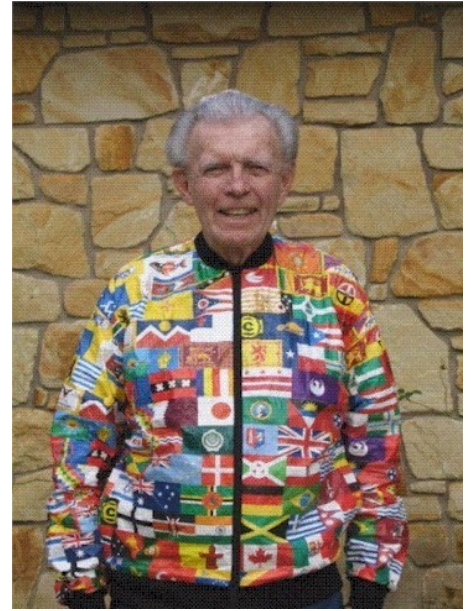


Flag Society of Australia Turns 21!

We feel remiss in not helping the Flag Society of Australia to celebrate the 21st anniversary of their founding on August 20, 1983. From the pictures in *Flagmaster*, a good time was had by those gathering for the celebration and commemorative dinner. Several members, including our separated brother, Ron Strachen, plus Dr. Whitney Smith and Nozomi Kariyasu (Japan Vexillological Association) attended. The Eureka Stockade Museum (see the last Tabloid) was also visited by some of the attendees. It's good that the folks "down under" have retained such a vibrant organization and continue to publish an excellent magazine, *Crux Australis*.

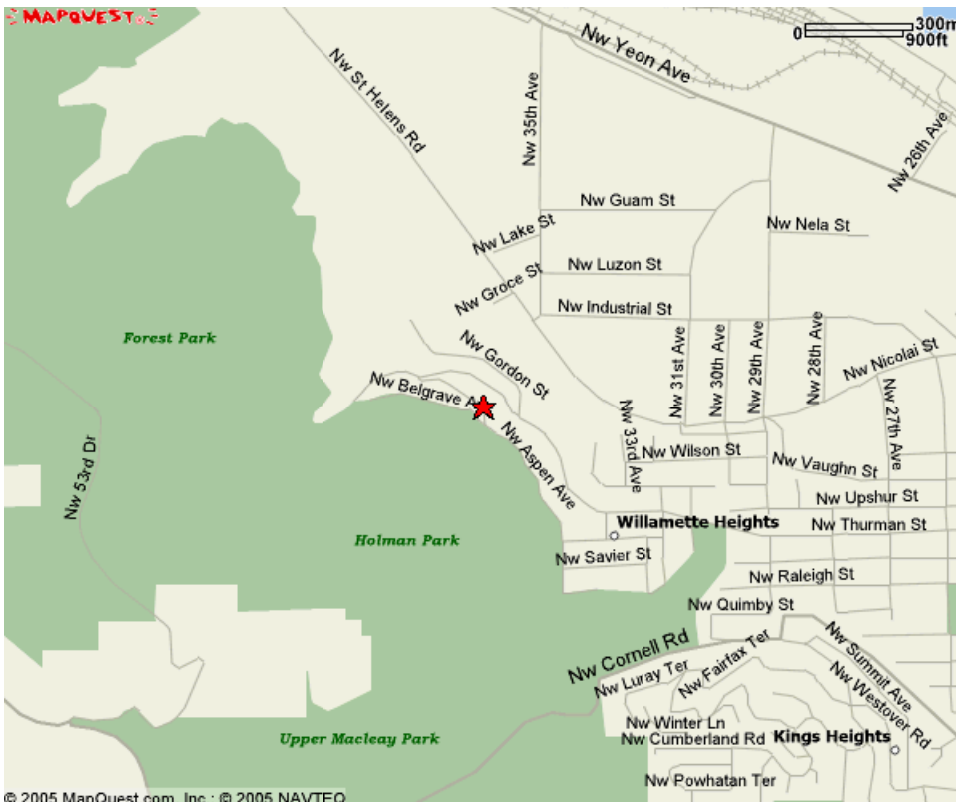
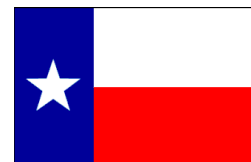


Texas Harry

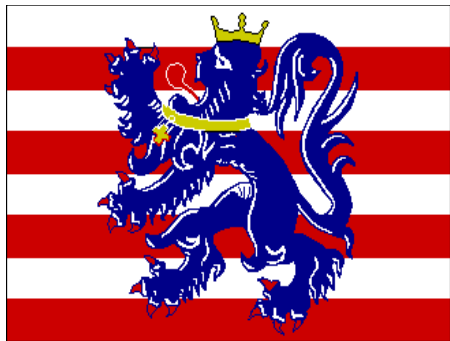


Since Harry Oswald moved to Texas, he certainly has become the very model of a modern vexillologist (apologies to G & S).

Here he is resplendent in his vexment, obviously a veximavin and probably a closet vexoholic! Notice that the Texas flag is over his heart and the Portland flag right next to it.



What was that flag? Answers to January's quiz



Bruges, Belgium

This is probably the Brabant Lion from the 12th century that the son of the Duke of Brabant changed from gold to blue. It could also be a design brought back from the crusades called The Saracen Lion.



Qaanaaq, Greenland

This is the northern most community in the world, established in 1953 to move natives away from the Thule Airbase. There are also narwhals on the coats-of-arms of Nunavut and Northwest Territories.



Tamil Eelam

This is a part of Sri Lanka that has been attempting independence since 1972. The tiger has always had significant meaning to the people.



St. John Ambulance

Founded in Jerusalem in the 12th century to aid pilgrims during the crusades. The lion and unicorn are also supporters on the Royal Coat of Arms of the United Kingdom.



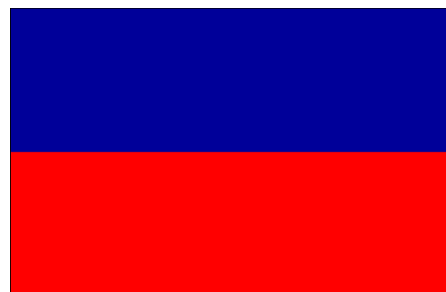
Berlin, Germany

Probably came from Albert the Bear, the 12th century Margrave of Brandenburg, which is near where Berlin came to be a century later.



What's That Flag?

They say to keep it simple, but very few flags are simpler than these — what are they?



Cascadian Flags

By Mike Hale

It's not a nation or a language group, but it spans two countries, seven states and two provinces. It is not defined in any atlas or gazetteer, but can easily be identified on a large scale topographical map. This anomaly has come to be known as Cascadia and is the area roughly included in the Cascade Mountain Range of North America, the watershed of the Columbia and Fraser Rivers. An area that shares a similar economic base: lumber, tourism and fishing.



Cascadia Region

Many flags have been proposed for this imaginary boundary, but for me, most are so abstract as to have no clue to help identify the flag with Cascadia. The place itself is abstract and tentative, therefore the flag needs to be more concrete. Stars and waves are clever devices in the **Flag of the Kingdom of Cascadia**, designed by Karen and Andrew Rogers. This horizontal bicolor has a circle of stars that divide Cascadia

into seven commonwealths. It is reminiscent of the European Union flag. No relevancy or meaningful symbolism exists to connect it with the region or its landscapes or existing flags. There are also variants for the Naval, Governor's Ensign, and a separate Royal Ensign for the King.



Flag of the Kingdom of Cascadia

The Flag of the Republic of Cascadia, by Rick Wyatt, uses wavy stripes and a bicolor canton of green and red with a sunburst similar to the British Columbia flag. There are Northwest symbolisms here for Puget Sound, Pacific Ocean, green forests, red volcanism, western sunsets and, finally, the fir cone. The flag seems to have a canton superimposed on the waves and is bothersome in its placement. The elements are just not cohesive. For manufacturing, the use of four spot colors is expensive to reproduce. The website is satirical and more silly than serious. This flag is the most commercial with T-shirts and other merchandise for sale.



Flag of the Republic of Cascadis

Nick Pharris' Design, the **"Eight Star" Cascadian Flag**, has more relevancy using colors and elements from the flags of Alaska, British Columbia, California, Idaho, Oregon, and Washington. The eight stars represent eight major cities in the region, including Fairbanks to Medford. The waves resemble the old Estonian SSR Flag. The flag uses four colors, again expensive to reproduce. The devices work well together. It is a memorable flag and fits the region. This may be a close second to Dirk Schonberger's flag, which I favor.



"Eight Star" Cascadian Flag

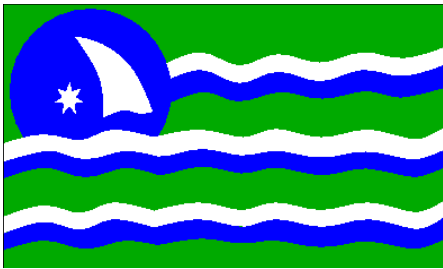
The Cascadian Flag of the Cascadian Institute, designed by Dirk Schonberger, is influenced by the map of Cascadia (see above), drawn by David McCloskey of the Cascadian Institute. "Mappy" flags (as coined by Mason Kaye) are usually silhouettes of states, or islands complete with shorelines or border details. This map simply makes a broad gesture stroke. The stylized map is also a believable nautical shape, an orca's fin or a boat's sail. The Cascadian Institute recognizes and defines the region economically; therefore, inclusion of the map is paramount on their flag. The waves

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Cascadian Flags

(Continued from page 6)

highlight the Pacific Ocean, Puget Sound, straights, bays and inland waters. The whole design is simple, cohesive, convincing, and could be drawn by memory by a child. At only two meaningful colors, it's less expensive to produce. Of all the flags, this scores the highest on the Kaye Standard (as put forth in *Good Flag, Bad Flag*).



Cascadian Institute Flag

Other flag proposals exist, including the **Cascadian National Party** with two stars limited to Oregon and Washington States. John Phillip's design, with waves of green and white on a blue field is a clean design but again, it has only limited relevancy. It includes only two states and is not representative of the entire region, but limited to a political entity.



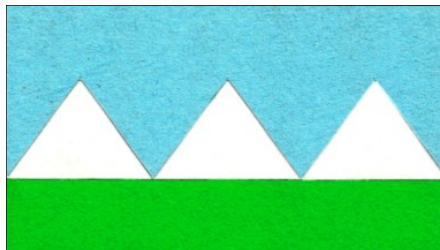
Cascadian National Party

If Cascadia were to need an actual flag, the Cascadian Institute Flag best sums up the region. It is distinctive

and relevant to the region. Even if we never get such a republic, one can legitimately ask, why does the train end at the border? Why not a cooperative region with excise taxes favorable to the region? Regardless, Cascadia is a state of mind; a way of life here in the Pacific Northwest.

Michael Hale, has a Graphic Arts Degree from Portland State University, designs and consults on flag design and production, and owns Elmer's Flag and Banner, in Portland, OR.

Editor's note: Ted Kaye proposed a flag for Cascadia in about 1990 that is eminently simple. The Cascade Mountains; three peaks, probably for Oregon, Washington, and British Columbia; green for the forests; blue for the water/sky.



Ted Kaye's Proposed Flag

Separated Brethren

It seems that we have acquired several vexillologists to our mailing list. It is good to get responses from total strangers (friends we haven't met yet). It certainly expands my horizons to hear from people in Darwin, Australia; York, England; or Okemos, Michigan! Any or all of you are welcome to contribute a tidbit to this newsletter. I'll use what I can and save the rest for discussion at one of our meetings. And by all means, if any of you plan on visiting this wonderful upper left coast, allow me to introduce you around. Mike Hale has the largest flag store in America, Ted Kaye is the editor of *Raven*, Doug Lynch designed the Portland City Flag (seventh best in the nation), and I have what has been referred to as "The Flag House," because I always fly three flags from the second story windows, chosen according to my 'Occasions to Fly Flags' data base. Feel free to contact any of us if you are in the area.



This is the editor's way of filling space!