



The Vexilloid Tabloid

Portland Flag Association

“Free, and Worth Every Penny!”

Issue 116 February 2026

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Flag Versions Tell All

By Ted Kaye

I love how different versions of flags, which at first glance may appear the same, telegraph the politics of those displaying them.

Take, for example, the flag of Puerto Rico. Red, white, and blue, right? However, the shade of blue indicates a political position: those using a darker blue (“Old Glory Blue”, same as on the U.S. flag), favor close(r) ties to the U.S., while those using a lighter blue favor more independence.

In current events, supporters of the Chavez/Maduro government in Venezuela favor the 8-star “Bolivarian” flag (adopted in 2006), while the opposition favors the prior 7-star-flag.

And, as seen in on pp. 7 and 10, supporters of the Islamic Republic of Iran favor the current flag, while those supporting regime change favor the imperial (pre-1979) lion-and-sun flag.

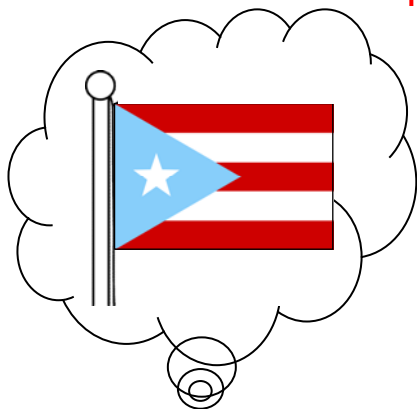
All the more reason to look closely at the flags people wave!



Two flags of Venezuela.



Two flags of Iran.



There is no “official” shade of blue.

— The Commonwealth of Puerto Rico

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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.

January 2026 Flutterings You Need to Know

In our January meeting, hosted by Joyce & William Gifford at the UU congregation in Oregon City and streamed via Zoom, 14 PFA members and friends enjoyed three+ hours of flags and video conversation.

Our gracious host William Gifford led the session with the Portland flag in the background; he began the session by describing his and Joyce’s company’s new backdrop, saying that he noted in 2025 more and more people are aware of the word “vexillology”.

Star Pesetsky zoomed in from NW Portland with a report on the project of the Lincoln High School Flag Club (three members so far) to inventory the flags displayed at the school—predominantly Pride flags and sports team flags; few U.S. flags.

Deniz İyigün, joining from Kirkland, Washington, showed his design for the flag club at his own high school (Lakeside School), and its armorial bearings (see p. 5).



Star Pesetsky describes flags at Lincoln High School.



Host William Gifford quizzes participants on arcane flags.

Alden Jencks gave an engaging presentation on flag idioms in German and described Iranian flags flown on Jan. 11 (see p. 7).

Phil Allen, joining from Berkeley, California, described the huge U.S. flags he’d observed along Interstate 5 on his way to and from Seattle for NAVA 59.



Alden Jencks rocks a custom T-shirt celebrating Denmark and Greenland.



Deniz İyigün, whom many met at NAVA 59, describes his school’s flag club.



Phil Allen explores extra-large U.S. flags along freeways.

Jackson Wakefield and his father, Curt, showed a 50-star U.S. flag with a military provenance, acquired at an estate sale and likely dating from the Vietnam War era; he also shared a custom sweatshirt given to him by his aunt, reading “Vexillologist...To put it simply, I like flags”.

Ken Dale described the use of Nordic flags by his choir, which sings in all Nordic languages.

New member John Reynolds, zooming in from Portland’s Terwilliger Plaza, described a Flag Day event there, where he helped in a presentation by Ted Kaye.



Jackson Wakefield and his father, Curt, unfurl a worn historic U.S. military flag.

Alex Zimmerman joined from Vancouver, Washington (just across the river) and reported on how his city’s new flag has been displayed, then showed flags he’d acquired on a recent trip to Sweden, including that of Skåne and a unique vimpel in the colors of the Kalmar Union.

Ralph Bartlett, joining during his lunchtime in Melbourne, gave a presentation on the flags displayed during the 125th anniversary of the Commonwealth of Australia just this month (see p. 6).



John Reynolds describes a Flag Day event at Terwilliger Plaza.



Ken Dale enjoys Nordic flags.



Ralph Bartlett presents on Australia’s 125th anniversary of achieving commonwealth status.



Alex Zimmerman shares the flag of Skåne, the southernmost county in Sweden.

Continued on next page



**Ted Kaye unfurls a fully-applied English standard, acquired in England in 2001
(all of his flags come from the places they represent).**

Ted Kaye distributed the state flag redesign handout supplied by Alan Hardy at NAVA 59, and in honor of the birthday of the Princess of Wales, showed the Welsh flag and the English standard.



Joyce Gifford uses Alan Hardy's U.S. state flag-proposal chart to demonstrate the size of smALLFlags' micropatches.

Max Liberman led a discussion of personal flag design, exploring how the purposes and uses of such flags might lead to differing design considerations.

Joyce Gifford described how a TikTok video demonstrating smALLFlags' micro patches and showing its business card led to an explosion of orders (40 the first day, and increasing afterwards), doubling the prior year's revenue.

Our next meeting will be hosted by Jessie Spillers (see p. 12). Ted will deliver the PFA flag to him. We expect again to welcome our local members as well as far-flung friends.



Max Liberman (with his customary flag tie) makes a salient point.

Lakeside School Flag Club

By Deniz İyigün

Lakeside School is an independent middle and high school in Seattle, Washington. In the fall of 2024, upon joining its upper school, I founded Flag Club to promote vexillology and heraldry in the student body.

Last year, I provided regular updates on flag redesigns in the news, including Washington, Illinois, and the local city of Kirkland. This year, we announced the winner of our flag design contest; our plans for the future involve designing a flag for the school, holding flag trivia competitions, and devising heraldic emblems for member students. At the beginning of this school year, I created a flag and coat of arms for the organization itself.

The field of our club's flag is bisected per pale between gold and maroon, the colors which have represented Lakeside since 1921. The division is found on our school coat of arms, where the dexter (viewer's left) half represents the former St. Nicholas girls' school, and the sinister (viewer's right) half represents the Lakeside boys' school with which it merged in 1971. The chevron is the famous "V" of vexillology and an allusion to the flag of NAVA. (At the January 2026 PFA meeting, it was also pointed out that its right angle forms a diagonal "L" for Lakeside!) Above the chevron is an escutcheon, or shield,



Flag: Lakeside School Flag Club.

symbolizing our club's heraldic activities. It is stylized with the pointed top used in the school logo and many emblazonments of the coat of arms, giving it relevance to Lakeside. The chevron and escutcheon are both counterchanged, an effect somewhat particular to flags and heraldry, showing a close connection to those disciplines.

The flag is also a heraldic banner of our club's arms, which are blazoned *Per pale Or and Gules, a chevron reversed throughout, in the honor point an escutcheon, all counterchanged.* Our crest, the part of our armorial achievement that appears above the shield, is blazoned *A lion passant Or langued and armed Gules holding in the dexter forepaw a flagstaff bendwise sinister Gules its finial Or flying therefrom to the sinister a banner of the Arms*—that is, a gold walking



Lakeside School logo.



Arms: Lakeside School Flag Club.

lion holding with the right forepaw a diagonal flagstaff from which flies the club's flag. The lion is Lakeside's long-time mascot and a fixture of the school's coat of arms. The motto, on a scroll below the shield, reads *Pro scientia vexillorum*, a Latin phrase meaning "for the science of flags", which summarizes our mission in the same language as that of the Lakeside School motto.

This full armorial achievement is also used on our club seal, which I intend to use to lend us an air of legitimacy and haughtiness.



Seal: Lakeside School Flag Club.

Commonwealth of Australia at 125

By Ralph G. C. Bartlett

On 1 January 2026, the Commonwealth of Australia turned 125 years old. Six British colonies in Australia had federated to become six States of the Commonwealth of Australia, a self-governing Dominion within the then British Empire, on 1 January 1901.

The Commonwealth was proclaimed in Sydney at the Federation Pavilion, a temporary structure erected in Centennial Park. However, the federal capital was Melbourne, with the first parliament formally opening in May 1901 at what's now the Royal Exhibition Building (built in 1880), on the north-eastern edge of Melbourne's central business district.



1899 Australian Federation League badge. (Museums Victoria, Item No. 335699-small)



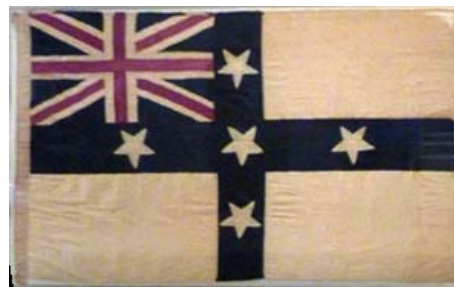
The British Royal Standard flies above the Federation Pavilion in Sydney as Commonwealth is proclaimed in 1901.



British royal standard, printed on wool bunting.



1901 Commonwealth Proclamation program, with Australian ensigns and the badges of the colonies.



1890s Federation Movement flag, which served as the unofficial Australian flag from January to September 1901.



1901 Commonwealth Proclamation invitation, with the Australian Federation Movement flag.



Federation Movement variant flag with 6 stars for the 6 colonies/states.



Royal Exhibition Building, Melbourne.

Iran Protests in Portland

By Alden Jencks

Dozens of Iranian flags appeared suddenly on Sunday, January 11, along S.W. Broadway in downtown Portland, on the west side of Pioneer Courthouse Square. And—wonders to be spoken—all were versions of the old Iranian national flag (some even fringed).

The red, white, and green banners were flags from the days of the Shah, whose reign ended abruptly a generation ago (1979) with the establishment of the Islamic Republic. The iconic lion-and-sun on these flags was accompanied by large, poster-photographs of Shah Mohammad Reza, his Queen, and the young crown prince. The now-65-year-old crown prince smiled down from other, recent photos held up by defiant demonstrators.

“Where did all of these imperial flags come from?”, I asked. One man replied, “I have been holding my flag for 46 years, awaiting this day.” And a lady volunteered proudly, “I sewed mine up last night for this occasion!”

Flags, in an instant, can communicate the profoundest of emotions and beliefs. Portlanders of Iranian descent demonstrated this with their flags. Their message went out, loud and clear, to fellow Portlanders. And, more importantly, their message went out to their embattled families and friends halfway around the world in Tehran.



Flags and posters displayed in Downtown Portland on January 11 in support of regime change in Iran.

Under My Skin – A Fusion of Vexillology and Tattoo Art

By Mike Funke

It's 9:10 PM in downtown Boise, Idaho, the day after Thanksgiving, and I'm lying face down on the artist's table of the first open tattoo studio I could find. As I lie there, the city of Boise flag is being etched into the fourth of seven rectangular outlines on the back of my left calf; a permanent memento to my first venture living in the "big city", where I started my career and met my wife.

I got my very first tattoo as a 20-year-old college student. It was a depiction of Leonardo da Vinci's "Vitruvian Man" on my left deltoid on my upper arm. Over the years, I've continued to get a few, here and there, usually to venerate a special point in my life or passed friend. The combination of the skillfully drawn images and the connection to my own past make for a beautiful, joyful reminder of my own life's journey.



Matt Johnson at Moscow (Idaho) Tattoo Co. inscribes two flags.

My vexillological "habit" started 20 years later, but with even greater vigor. The hidden meanings of the banners have always piqued my curiosity, while their beauty and symbolism marveled my eyes. Currently, my flag collection includes over 300 (and growing). I enjoy collecting and displaying flags from different regions, causes, schools and groups on the 30-foot Douglas Fir flag pole in front of my house.

In late 2024 while traveling and feeling a bit homesick, I had the idea of getting a tattoo of Portland's city flag—to remind me of my home of the past 15 years. That flag is a work of art in its own right, and the tattoo would be a beautiful, permanent homage to my past and present, fusing my loves of tattoo and vexillology.

Although I was ready to take action, I decided it would be more meaningful to have the tattoo done in Portland, paying respect to the abundance of talented artists in the city. As I awaited my trip home it occurred to me: "Why only Portland? Why shouldn't I add a memory from EVERY city I've lived in and if so, shouldn't I also get those tattoos in the ACTUAL cities themselves?" And with that, the idea was born—seven cities, six artists, four states, two countries—a vexillological chronology of my 45+-year life so far.

When taking on an endeavor such as this, one needs some guidelines.

What counts as "lived in"? Do I count the time I spent a month abroad for a university summer program?—no, probably not. Do I have to get a tattoo of the actual city flag or can I use a different representation? What if it doesn't have a flag or if the flag is ugly or boring? What if the city is so small that it doesn't have a licensed tattoo parlor, or a flag (e.g. Deary, Idaho—pop. 501)? The struggle was real, but after some reflection, the vision materialized and I had a plan.

The first tattoo in the series was from the most recent city I've lived: Vancouver, B.C., where I've spent nearly half of my nights over the past five years—yeah, that counts. There I had British Columbia's busy and beautiful provincial flag etched onto my calf, as well as six empty rectangles, the blueprint for the rest of the series.



Jessie at Ink Slaves Tattoo in Boise, Idaho.

Next, I returned home to Portland to get my second. Some places were easy to get back to, such as Moscow, Idaho, where many family members still live.



Sam the Cowboy at Gold Sparrow Tattoo in Portland, Oregon.



The flag of Spokane, Washington, moves from smartphone to tattoo.



The flags on Mike Funke's calf:

Left column: Spokane, University of Idaho (representing Moscow), [Blank] (awaiting Chicago), British Columbia;

Right column: Idaho (representing Deary), Boise, Portland.

Others were farther out of my normal path, such as Spokane, Washington. For that, I used the guise of a theme park vacation to lure my family to get near my birth city, so I could run in and add its newly designed flag. When my brother invited us to Thanksgiving dinner, just a mere 3-hour drive from Boise, flying there was not an option. We had to drive so I could circle back and get the sixth flag (a traditional design that's current after the residents revolted en masse and rejected a newly proposed, more modern design).



Mike with Gabbie at Living Skin Tattoo in Spokane, Washington.

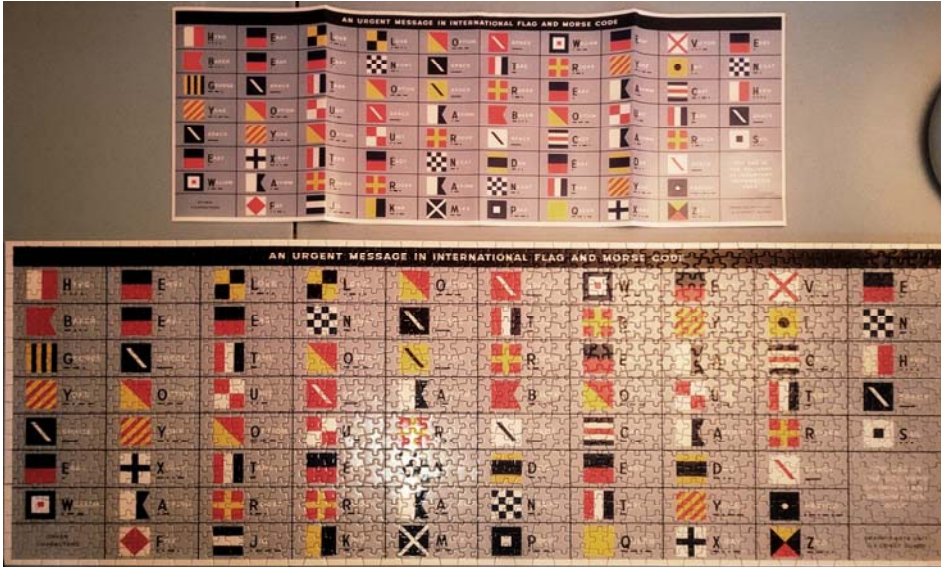
Without exception, each artist has been excited to literally put his or her mark on the creation and I've been privileged to discover so many talented, interesting people and places. Their beautiful craftsmanship is not only a sentimental reminder of places I've lived, but a living work of art that I'm proud to carry around with (on) me for the rest of my life.

Now just one empty rectangle remains, reserved for the flag of Chicago. When will I go, which shop will I use? I have no plans yet. While the collector in me craves the completion of the menagerie, the adventurer in me doesn't want to see the journey come to an end!



Mike with his tattoo artist in Vancouver, B.C.

Roundup



Flag Puzzle assembled by Jon Niggley. Who wants it next? (contact John)



Flags observed flying in solidarity with other nations dealing with current U.S. foreign policy, at S.E. 30th & Market.



The Library of Congress's flag on display there in September. (photo by Barry McMillion)



The social media platform X (formerly Twitter) replaced the Iran flag emoji with Lion-and-Sun symbol in January as pro-regime-change protests erupted.



"Laser Loon / Don't Tread on Us" flag, created by Andrew Prekker (designer of the 2024 Minnesota state flag), and sold by him at redbubble.com/people/minnesotafag/shop.



Mystery flag. Any ideas?



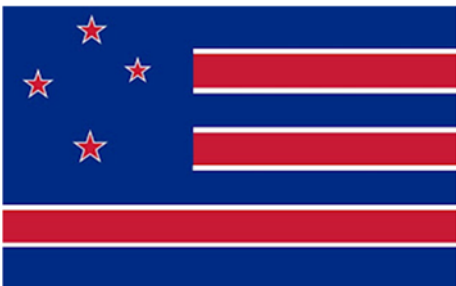
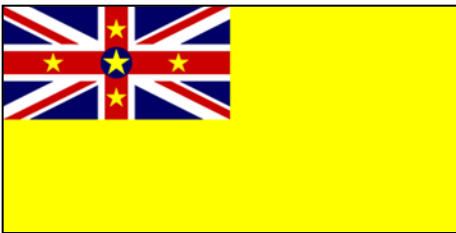
Ralph Bartlett seeks help identifying a flag flown outside Australia's Parliament House in Canberra, ca. 1966.

Next to the American flag is a U.S.-style (perhaps government agency) flag. The emblem in the center of the badge appears to be a white building on a green background, encircled in a ribbon of text of blue on white.

What's that Flag?

By John Cartledge

Identify these flags (using Google image search is cheating!), and determine the theme that connects them (they fall into two categories).



What Was that Flag? Answers to the last quiz

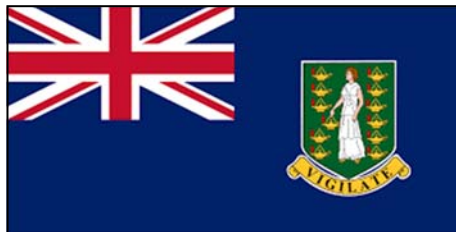
By John Cartledge

These flags bear emblems (in heraldry, "charges") which remain upright when the flag is hung vertically from the hoist. So separately made flags are needed for Olympic medals ceremonies.

Congratulations to the solvers:
Bruce R. Stewart and Larry Wentworth.



Dominican Republic.



British Virgin Islands.



North Korea.



Albania.



Bhutan.



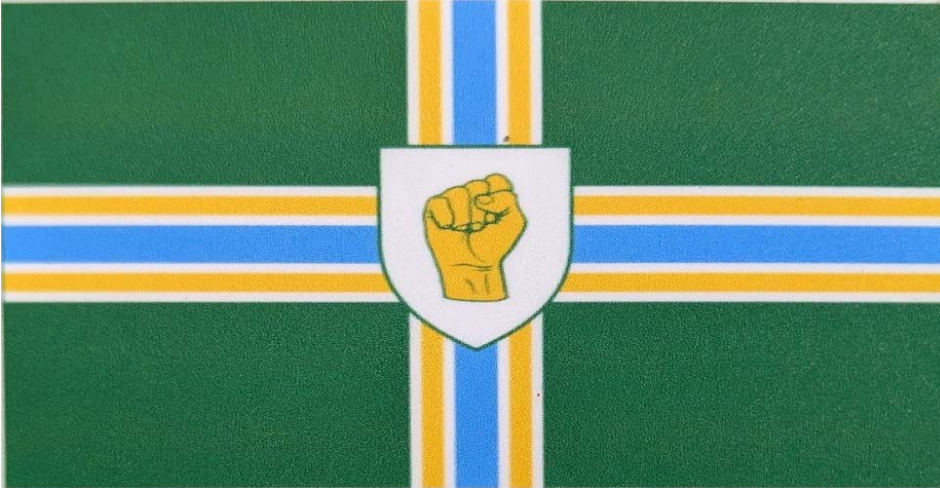
Slovakia.



Liechtenstein.



Portland Flag Miscellany



The source of this image has evaded editorial sleuthing, but a notation associates it with Holman's Bar and Grill ("since 1933") at 15 S.E. 28th Ave.

It is notable as a variant on the Portland city flag, using the stripes in blue and yellow (with white fimbriations) but centered, with a white shield edged in green over their intersection, bearing a clenched fist in yellow.



Flags at Escape From New York Pizza on N.W. 23rd Avenue: New York, "World Flag", Portland.

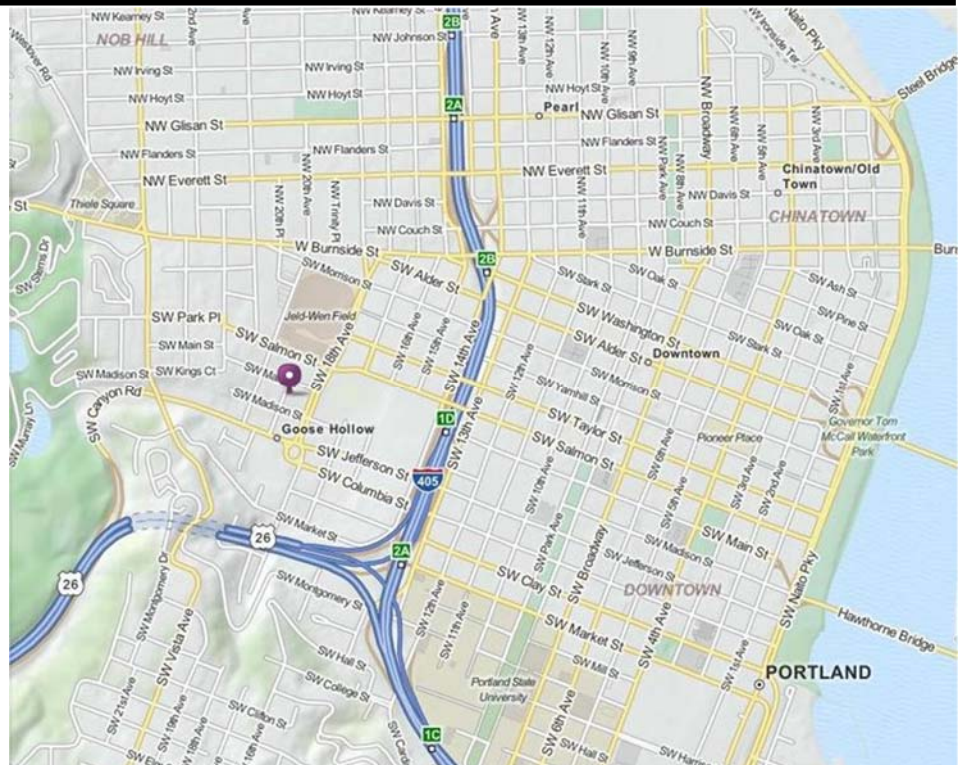
March Meeting

The next meeting of the Portland Flag Association will be at 7 PM, Thursday, March 12, in the community room at the residence of Jessie Spillers (Legends), 1132 S.W. 19th Ave., Portland.

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.