The Raven Flag

The last issue of the VT showed “A Viking flag, which may have been the first to fly in America”. Reader Michael Faul (former long-time editor of Flagmaster) writes from York, England: “Sorry, but no. The design is found on a coin struck in York, in the 9th century. It looks like the flag shown in the VT image, but it was not a flag. It was a wind-vane. These were attached to the masts of Viking ships in such a way that they would rotate with the wind. The way they pointed showed the way the wind was blowing. The small projections were the only parts that were cloth. They were ribbons, attached to the vane. Sometimes the wind was not strong enough to move the vane, but the ribbons would still flutter in a minor breeze, again showing the wind-direction.

“There were only three raven flags which have been known to exist. One was made in Scotland for a battle in Ireland in the ninth century. The user of the flag won the battle, but the flag was never mentioned again.

“The second was again made in Scotland, again for a short battle. This time the maker of the flag lost the action and the flag was burned by the victors.

“The third was the flag of Harald Hardrada, a Viking ruler in Norway. He used it in only one event, his invasion of England in 1066 in an attempt to seize the throne. He captured York, but then faced the army of the English King Harold II Godwinson. The result was the Battle of Stamford Bridge, at which Godwinson shattered the Viking army, which eventually fled. They had come to England in a fleet of over 300 ships. They only needed 20 to go home.

“The legend of a raven flag being taken to America is just a bit of fancy from a writer who had heard of the flag and thought that, as in modern times, Vikings flew ‘national flags’.”
In our May meeting, hosted by Jessie Spillers, 14 PFA members and guests enjoyed an evening of flags and extensive conversation.

In his role as host, Jessie moderated the discussion, beginning with introductions. With Big Island volcanic eruptions in the news, he started with the flag of Hawaii.

Continuing his exploration of regal flags for Commonwealth countries, Max Liberman shared proposals for Australian state flags for the monarch, heir apparent, and governor, based on the state coats of arms, some using the sporting colors in the bordure—a “work in progress”.

Ted Kaye circulated his file of recent flag-image clippings and gave an update on NAVA. He then showed several flags obtained during travels in Uruguay and Argentina, including a number of national, provincial, and sporting flags.

Nathaniel Mainwaring shared a video game called *Fortnight*, which includes a collection of flags used to claim territory and for other purposes, in pentagonal gonfalon form, each with a significant charge on a solid background color.

Charlotte Lee, visiting from Seattle, commented on flag use there.
Fred Paltridge recounted his latest ideas for creating flags for each month using the colors listed in VT #68 and described his hopes for a personal flag, which Max may create for him.

Ken Dale brought greetings from John Schilke and described upcoming performances of the Portland Scandinavian Chorus of the five Nordic countries’ national anthems alongside large national flags.

David Koski is on the mend, and outlined his thoughts on suites of flags, such as one he is contemplating for the contents of the periodic table of the elements.

Scott Mainwaring showed an image of a Bahamian ensign hanging on the wall of China Delight restaurant in SW Portland, where he had just dined. He related plans for NAVA’s Facebook presence (he is social media editor).

Newcomer Peter Bass recounted how three years ago he set himself to memorizing all national and U.S. state flags, then demonstrated his facility quite successfully.

Continued on next page
Patrick Genna gave away several more flags that he’d found scavenging at Goodwill (after swearing off the habit), and compared the designs of Portland’s and Phoenix’s city flags.

Our next meeting will be at the home of Ted Kaye on 12 July. Ted took the Portland Flag Association flag home, the customary task of the next host.
By Michael Orelove

PFA member David Anchel recently invited me to give a flag presentation at the East Portland Rotary Club.

During his introduction, David explained the meaning and origin of vexillology as the study of flags. The word “vexillology”, coined by Whitney Smith at 17, comes from the Latin *vexillum* meaning a flag or banner carried by Roman troops.

I understand that later in life, Dr. Smith mentioned that he regretted the construction and thought a better word would be “vexillogy”.

A helicopter in the Evergreen Aviation & Space Museum (home of the *Spruce Goose*—McMinnville, Oregon) includes an Alaska-themed U.S. flag image in its livery.

NAVA 52 takes place in Québec City 12–14 October 2018. Find full information and on-line registration at [www.nava.org](http://www.nava.org) and join other PFA members who will be attending this interesting flag-filled weekend.

100 years ago: The flag of Oregon as depicted in *National Geographic*.


Members of East Portland Rotary enjoy an engaging presentation on flags by Michael Orelove (right), here showing his 50-star/50-stripe U.S. flag.

Rotary members Eric Croll and David Anchel (Elmer's Flag & Banner) hold up the 15-star/15-stripe flag as Michael Orelove describes the number of stripes on the second U.S. flag (1795-1818).
Flags in Ireland: A Field Report, Installment 3

By Ted Kaye

After ICV 27 in London in August 2017 I had the opportunity to tour Ireland. Flag use there is so prevalent that this report must occur in installments—this last one focuses on flags in Northern Ireland.

I observed four overlapping themes to flag display: 1) generic displays of loyalty to the UK through the Ulster flag and Union Flag (generally in the Protestant areas), 2) flags commemorating Irish participation in the UK’s WWI effort (also in Protestant areas, a counter to the Irish who rebelled in the same era), 3) flags of current political struggle and solidarity (generally in the Catholic areas), and 4) unrelated/miscellaneous flags for tourism, promotion, and celebration. These flew in stark contrast to the sport-and-county and national flag displays so prevalent in the Irish Republic.

The centennial of WWI may be spurring some of this display. Many commemorative flags were attached to utility poles with cable ties at a uniform (ladder) height. Images of flags also featured prominently on murals.

A football bears the arms of the four historic provinces of Ireland.

The Royal British Legion, a post-WWI-era group supporting veterans and families, flies the Union Flag in Larne.

The Union Jack Souvenir Shop, dedicated to Unionist symbolism in East Belfast, welcomes Debbie (above) and Ted Kaye (below, center).
A wide assortment of flags/banners recalls the WWI involvement of the Irish a century ago, especially the 36th (Ulster) Division.

The flag of Palestine flies with the flag of Éistigí, a Republican youth organization in (London-)Derry.

Nelson Mandela and Bobby Sands appear before the vertical flags of South Africa and Ireland in a Bogside mural in Derry.

This Union Flag bears the insignia of the British Army’s Special Air Service.

The Sunburst Flag (Fianna na hÉireann) of the youth wing of the IRA flies in Derry.

The Jolly Roger flies above the Smuggler’s Inn on the Antrim Coast.

The beach in Ballygally won the Seaside Award for clean water in 2017.

TripAdvisor has claimed Belfast.

Flags welcome visitors to Brennan’s Bar in Great Victoria St., Belfast.
Seattle, like its county and state, is represented by a flag with its namesake’s face—in this case, that of the Suquamish Chief Si’ahl (anglicized as Seattle).

The flag was reportedly designed by Boeing engineer and Seattle councilman Paul Kraabel (1933–2016) and adopted by City Ordinance 28207 on 16 July 1990:

A RESOLUTION expressing the intent of the Mayor and City Council of Seattle, to celebrate the best of athletic achievement and artistic expression through the City’s sponsorship of the Goodwill Games and Goodwill Arts Festival, and declaring Seattle to be The City of Goodwill, and adopting a city flag.

The Goodwill Games were an international sports festival created by media entrepreneur Ted Turner to promote cultural exchange between the Soviet Union and the U.S. in reaction to the Olympic boycotts of the 1980s. 2,312 athletes from 34 countries competed in Seattle and other Washington cities in 1990, the first time the games were held in the U.S.

Did a Boeing engineer actually design—in any detailed way—this flag? It seems doubtful, as the complex design appears to be the work of a professional graphic designer, but perhaps Kraabel was skilled in this area. If you know the story here, please contact the PFA at info@portlandflag.org.

As on the King County flag, the face on the Seattle flag is highly stylized, taken from the city seal.

The seal itself has a long and interesting history, documented in detail by Fred Poyner IV in a 2009 article in Columbia Magazine. It resulted from extensive lobbying in the 1920s and 30s by Seattle sculptor James A. Wehn (1882–1973). In 1933 a commission was set up to update the city seal, prompted by the opening of the Seattle Art Museum in Volunteer Park and Wehn’s observation the “cornerstone of the new building would be an excellent place for a city seal”.

Wehn’s design for a city seal was similar to the one he had proposed in 1928. At its center was a profile of Chief Seattle (c. 1786–1866), image by L. B. Franklin, 1864.

The flags of the seasons form a circle for the entire year’s cycle.

Flag of Seattle, designed by Paul Kraabel, adopted 1990.

Continued on next page
of Chief Seattle, whom the artist continued to regard as central to Seattle’s founding and historical identity. Civic leader J. D. Ross had suggested to him that the figure should be “a noncontroversial subject” and that “one pioneer could not be singled out without offending others”.

From this standpoint, a profile of the Suquamish chief was an excellent choice. Beyond all that, the image of Chief Seattle was stamped in Wehn’s memory from the time when, as a young boy in 1896, he took a trip with his father and mother to visit Suquamish, “where a great number of Indians lived and where Chief Seattle is buried.”

James A. Wehn’s profile design was nearly abandoned in favor of a full-face likeness of Chief Seattle, but ultimately prevailed after intervention by Wehn and the city’s arts community. Wehn’s design was featured on an earlier, unofficial city flag patterned after the state flag, created in 1943 by councilman Frank McCaffery.

Wehn died in 1973. As Poyner notes: The artist’s death coincided with a renewed effort by the Seattle Board of Public Works to create a new city symbol and develop a “corporate identity program.” In response to this perceived need for city government to have a cohesive look throughout its various departments, the David Strong Design Group unveiled a trio of new logos in July 1974. One of these, based on Wehn’s official seal design, presented a silhouette profile of Chief Seattle, albeit rendered with highly stylized lines and curves.

The likeness of Seattle on the seal appears on the current flag. However, the current city flag itself appears…nowhere. Athen Nguyen lays out the need for a new city flag in his Medium essay “Seattle needs a new flag and 12s prove it: How the ‘12th Man’ flag fills the void of a quality Seattle flag”:

When Seattle City Council doesn’t fly the flag of the city that it serves, that means something. There is a reason that we almost never see the Seattle flag but see the 12th Man flag everywhere. As it stands, the Seattle flag is aesthetically unappealing and needs a redesign that represents a more modern Seattle.

For one, the current flag is overcomplicated. Although distinctive, the undulating lines are an eyesore that would be impossible for your average Seattlite to replicate. This breaks one of the most important principles in design by ignoring the power of simplicity. […]

Another problem with the flag is that it was designed for the Goodwill Games, rather than for city alone. It is for this reason that we see the “City of Goodwill” on top of Chief Seattle. Although the Goodwill Games were undoubtedly one significant event in the history of Seattle, this is not true today—especially considering that the Goodwill Games ended in 2001 after losing millions of dollars and political relevancy following the fall of the U.S.S.R.

This points to another design problem by imposing on another key principle of flag design: no lettering or seals. When a flag has to resort to the use of letters rather than using meaningful symbolism, it is already failing as a flag.

I couldn’t have said it better myself. (Tragically, Athen Nguyen died at the hands of a drunk driver in January, at age 22.)

Seattle designer Riley Raker recently blogged his opinion of the flag, with a proposal of his own (below).

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New Flag—Reno, Nevada

Reno, the “biggest little city in Nevada”, has a new flag after flying a little-known and unofficial banner for nearly 60 years.

For the city’s 150th birthday, the city’s Arts & Culture Commission led an effort to create an official municipal flag.

Tucker Stosic, a 23-year-old Reno native and graphic designer, submitted the winning design. The field of blue is for Nevada; the base of the circle represents silver mining; the light blue stripe is for the Truckee River; above those are the Sierra Nevada; the gold background represents the desert; and the silver star recalls the Reno arch, a local landmark.

The Reno Arts & Culture Commission held workshops on flag culture and design and received over 200 submissions, which it narrowed to 13 for an online public voting process. Then the 13-member Reno Flag Committee selected and presented three finalists to the Reno City Council—Stosic’s design, ranked second by the Commission but the favorite in the public vote, was chosen by the City Council and officially adopted by Resolution 8527.

Jim Ferrigan acted as a consultant and participant in the process and provided Good Flag, Bad Flag to workshop participants and all arts commission and city council members. To its five principles, he added a sixth: “the coolness factor”.


Milwaukee newscaster Tom Durian jokingly accused Reno of stealing his city’s flag, calling Reno Councilman David Bobzien on air and asking him to pay for the design; Bobzien offered a sausage and a beer as payment.

The Reno flag’s designer, Tucker Stosic, responded “There are without a doubt similarities between the two flags….obviously the big circle in the center. But, when it comes down to it, flag design is about being simplistic. There’s limited ways you can design a flag and make it work well. It’s kind of inevitable that two designs would look the same.”

The new Reno flag debuted 9 May 2018 at Greater Nevada Field at Reno’s Biggest Little Birthday event, the culmination of the city’s year-long sesquicentennial celebration festivities.
**What’s that Flag?**

By Mike Thomas

Can you name these flags, shown in grayscale, and identify their common theme? Answers in the next issue…

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

By John Cartledge

These are (or at the relevant time were) the flags of the countries of origin of the United Nations’ nine secretaries general to date. Kudos to solvers Viviane Thomas and Tony Burton.

- Peru (Javier Pérez de Cuéllar 1982–91)
- Norway (Trygve Lie 1946–52)
- Egypt (Boutros Boutros-Ghali 1992–96)
- Sweden (Dag Hammarskjöld 1953–61)
- Ghana (Kofi Annan 1997–2006)
- Burma (U Thant 1961–71)
- South Korea (Ban Ki-moon 2007–16)
- Austria (Kurt Waldheim 1972–81)
- Portugal (António Guterres 2017–)
Portland's police chief Danielle Outlaw addresses the City Club of Portland in May, standing in front of the flags of the state and the city. However, no police vehicles or facilities display the city’s flag (yet).

Portland Flag Miscellany

The flag of the American Indian Movement flies above Portland’s Pioneer Courthouse Square (Weather Machine to its left) in a September 2017 event—the 12th annual “Dancing in the Square Powwow”, sponsored by the Northwest Portland Area Indian Health Board. AIM is an American Indian advocacy group in the U.S., founded in 1968; its objective is to create “real economic independence for the Indians”.

July Meeting

The next meeting of the Portland Flag Association will be at 7 PM, Thursday, 12 July 2018, at the home of Ted Kaye: 2235 NW Aspen Ave., Portland, OR 97210.

See the map at right.

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

If you can’t get to the meeting, perhaps you can give the editor something to share with readers.

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 www.portlandflag.org.