



The Vexilloid Tabloid

Portland Flag Association

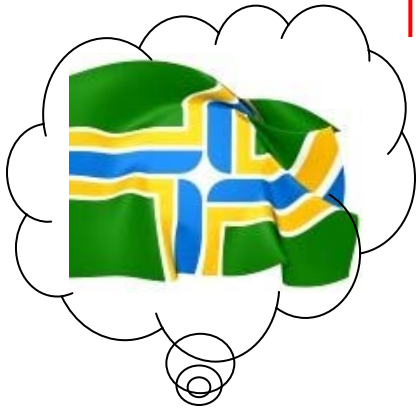
“Free, and Worth Every Penny!”

Issue 48 October 2014

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www.portlandflag.org



***Flags are a brave sight
but no true eye ever went
by one steadily.***

— Emily Dickinson

Updating the Portland Flag's Specs

By Ted Kaye

It's official! Portland has formally updated the specifications of our city flag. On September 3rd, the city council unanimously approved Ordinance #186794.

It amends the city code, Section 1.06, to accomplish two goals: 1) replace outdated Ameritone color references with Pantone numbers, and 2) correct the heights of the quadrants of the flag (so the internal measurements add to the overall 36-unit height).

The updated colors are: White, PMS 279 (Blue); PMS 349 (Green); and PMS 1235 (Yellow) (see *VT* #40). The quadrants are now 9.5 and 14.5 units high (formerly 8.5 and 13.5). These plus the stripes make 36 units.

This success reflects the hard work and dedication of Susan Hartnett and Erik Olson of the Office of Finance and Management. They asked me to check the ordinance language and to testify on its behalf. Their effort followed negotiating the licensing of the Portland flag for soccer merchandising (see *VT* #45).

The change comes just a year after this column asked about “Updating the Portland Flag's Specs?”—with that important question mark ending the title (see *VT* #41). Now the question mark has been erased!

The next steps for the council may be providing enhanced internal direction to bureaus about the flag, through 1) a style/usage guide (how, when, and where to fly the flag properly; how to portray it in various media; and creating a flag library of electronic files for users to access), and 2) encouragement to fly it broadly. Chicago actually has a law *requiring* all municipal buildings to fly its flag—the recent initiative to fly Portland's flag on all 30 fire stations is a wonderful start.

As these steps proceed, all PFA members can lend their voices in support. We will stay in touch with city staff.

Did You Know?

The *Vexilloid Tabloid* serves not only the 30+ members of the Portland Flag Association, but also reaches over 100 other interested vexillologists in 25 different countries.

If you wish to compliment the editor, or to contribute in the future, contact Ted Kaye at 503-223-4660 or kandsons@aol.com. If you wish to complain, call your mother.

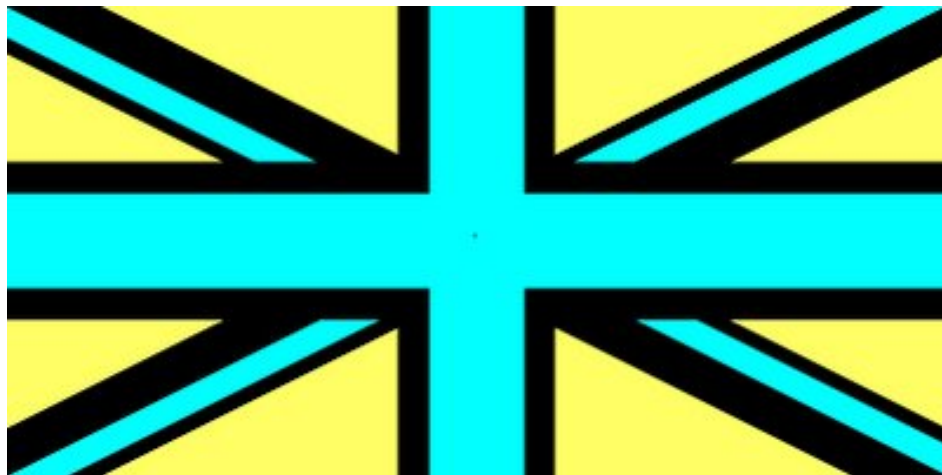
A Flag Illusion

Stare at the dot in the center of this unusually-colored flag for 60 seconds. Do not move your eyes.

Then stare at a white wall or a blank sheet of paper, or close your eyes and tilt your head up.

You'll see a ghostly version of the Union Flag in correct colors.

It's an example of an "afterimage". When you keep looking at the colors in the flag, your eye gets tired and the cells in your eye stop responding to the colors. When you look away from the flag, your brain says, "Hey, I'm not getting any signals that this color is blue, so it must be red."



"Stare at the center star until your patriotism increases."

(Sources: <http://www.deceptology.com/2012/07/the-american-flag-optical-illusion.html>
<http://photos1.blogger.com/x/blogger/5639/2020/1600/615733/unionjackafterimg.jpg>)

After Scotland...What?



The wider public of Australia begins their *informed* debate over the vexing flag ramifications of Scotland's possible secession from the UK.

Zev Landes, a member of the Flag Society of Australia and a subscriber to the *Vexilloid Tabloid*, offers his own humorous take on the possible unintended consequences of Scottish independence. He is an accomplished cartoonist and ardent vexillologist.

Scotland's referendum took place on September 18, and the results (55% no—45% yes) mean that the "flag question"—for the Union Flag and its progeny, remains unanswered. However, it may be expected that New Zealand, at least, will be in the forefront of potential national flag change, and perhaps Australia—site of the next ICV in 2015—at some point in the future.

What is the Most Patriotic Color?

...asked *Time Magazine* in its “Answers Issue”, Sept. 8–15, 2014.

After downloading images of 196 national flag from Flagpedia.net, *Time* added up the number of pixels of each color, simplified them, and grouped them into categories of white, black, red, blue, green, and yellow using a simple algorithm.

Time thus determined the frequency of colors by area in national flags. Although perhaps flawed in detail, overall it is a sound analysis.

Red: 31%

Blue: 21%

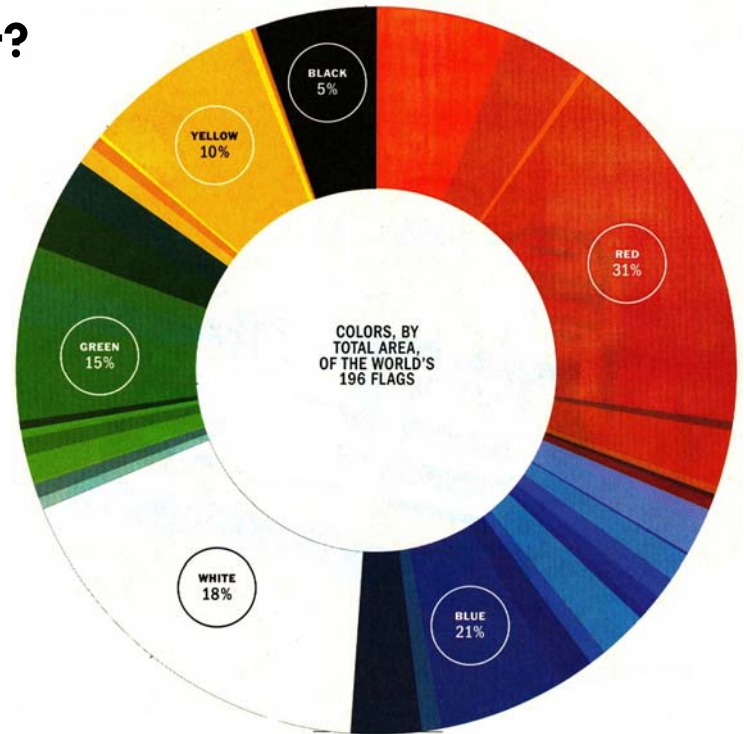
White: 18%

Green: 15%

Yellow: 10%

Black: 5%

(Source:
time.com/
answerspatriotic)



Raising the Alaska State Flag

by Michael Orelove

Each year at my home in Gresham I raise a flag in my “flower bed”. This year I am raising the Alaska state flag.

However, as an amateur astronomer I know that the state flag is not quite correct. The Alaska flag displays the Big Dipper plus the North Star. Most depictions of the Big Dipper show seven stars. However, the second “star” in its handle is actually a multiple-star system. To the keen unaided eye, or through binoculars or a telescope, two stars can be seen—the brighter, 2nd-magnitude Mizar and the fainter, 4th-magnitude Alcor nearby. Being able to discern the two as separate stars is considered a proof of good eyesight.

Alaska’s official state song, *Alaska’s Flag*, begins with a description of

Alaska’s flag: “Eight stars of gold on a field of blue...”

John Ben “Bennie” Benson, Jr., a 13-year-old Aleut boy, created the design for the state flag contest.

His submission won unanimously and was adopted on May 2, 1927.

I’ve added a double star to my own Alaska flag to make my version “astronomically correct”.



The Alaska flag in Michael Orelove’s “flower bed”. The blue flowers are lobelia, (“Crystal Palace”); the second star is correctly depicted as a multiple-star system.

September 2014 Flutterings You Need to Know

In our September meeting, hosted by Larry Snyder, 16 PFA members enjoyed a lively evening of flags and other wide-ranging topics. As the host, Larry moderated the event, welcoming new faces and showing many flags from his boating experience.

Michael Orelove updated us on his “write and get flags” education project, showing the latest national, government agency, and yacht club flags he’s received (8 so far). Larry donated several used burgees to Michael’s burgeoning collection.

Scott Mainwaring introduced his “Flags and Art” Facebook page (he welcomes contributions) and discussed the recent white-flags-on-the-Brooklyn-Bridge incident and other similar white flags, including those of Portuguese artist João Felino (see p. 6). He also gave answers to the *VT* quiz (see p. 7).



“Zulu” says Carl Larson, showing one of many maritime flags he’s acquired.



By deconstructing an actual flag, Michael Orelove (L) demonstrates that Washington’s obverse is actually the mirror image of its reverse.

Dave Anchel recently enjoyed cycling the “Tour de Lab” (a multi-pub bicycle tour), and noted significantly more Portland city flags flying around town. He shared a book on Civil War flags from his home state of Pennsylvania, and announced a generous special discount for PFA members at Elmer’s Flag & Banner—20% off all stock merchandise plus other benefits (not for resale, please!). We’re very grateful.

Carl Larson described a store in Clayton, NY (near Ontario) which sells used maritime flags salvaged from shipbreakers, and showed off some of his best purchases.

Ted Kaye reported on the flag-specification updates to the Portland City Code (see p. 1), shared *Time*’s national color analysis (see p. 3), and related his recent interviews on Slate.com’s “The Gist”.

John Niggley hearkened back to Missouri and a special civil war flag, as well as the “barn flags” of Bates County, Mo. He also waved a specially-licensed World Cup banner.

In honor of the date, 9/11, Ken Dale read his letter to *Dear Abby* about respect for the flag, published after seeing tattered flags in the months after our country’s 2001 patriotic flag-flying surge.



Lindsey Matson delves into the world of alternative flags.

David Koski brought up the proposed “Six Californias” initiative, now hoped for the 2016 ballot, and wondered what the flags of those “new states” might look like.

David Ferriday shared his usual miscellany of flag items, and showed photos of a recent visit to the Nike campus, with around 45 national flags flying.

Keryn Anchel baked cupcakes in the colors of the PFA and the Portland flag. She began a discussion of the potential impact of Scottish independence on the Union Flag, and on other flags that bear it, such as New Zealand or Hawaii.

Max Liberman followed up with more discussion of the Union Flag without Scotland, and shared several proposals for a revised version.

Patrick Genna showed off his latest Goodwill purchases, coincidentally including a Union Flag which supported the extensive conversation about Scotland, and its referendum to be held a week later (see p. 2).

Lindsey Matson, a social worker when not at working at Elmer’s, had set some of her teenaged girl clients—all on parole or probation and representing many ethnicities—to describe in writing their feelings about flags, which she then read. The results proved very intriguing, with strong emotions expressed—pro and con.

Our next meeting will be at the home of Michael Orelove, on November 13th. A suggestion, since our numbers have grown: a voluntary limit of 10 minutes per person. Let’s aim for that!



Cupcakes in the PFA / Portland flag colors, courtesy of Keryn Anchel.



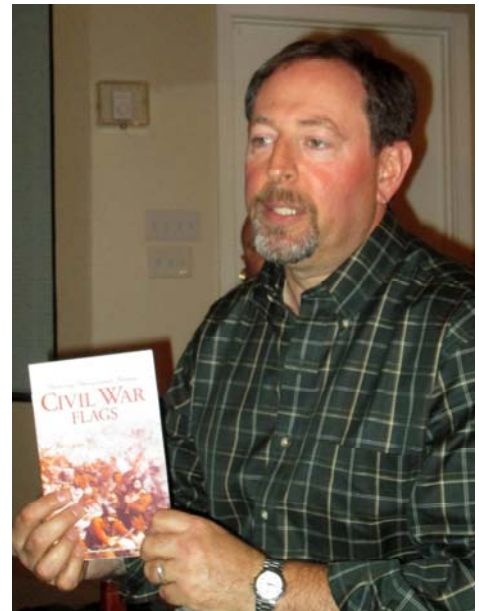
David Ferriday (L) and historic flags.



Larry Snyder designed the flag for U.S. Power Squadron District 32.



John Niggley recalls the recent 2014 FIFA World Cup with a licensed flag.



A Pennsylvania native, Dave Anchel describes the flags of the Civil War held in its capitol’s collection.



In the evening’s most popular topic, Patrick Genna explains the history of the Union Flag and explores the vexillographic implications of Scottish independence.

White Flags

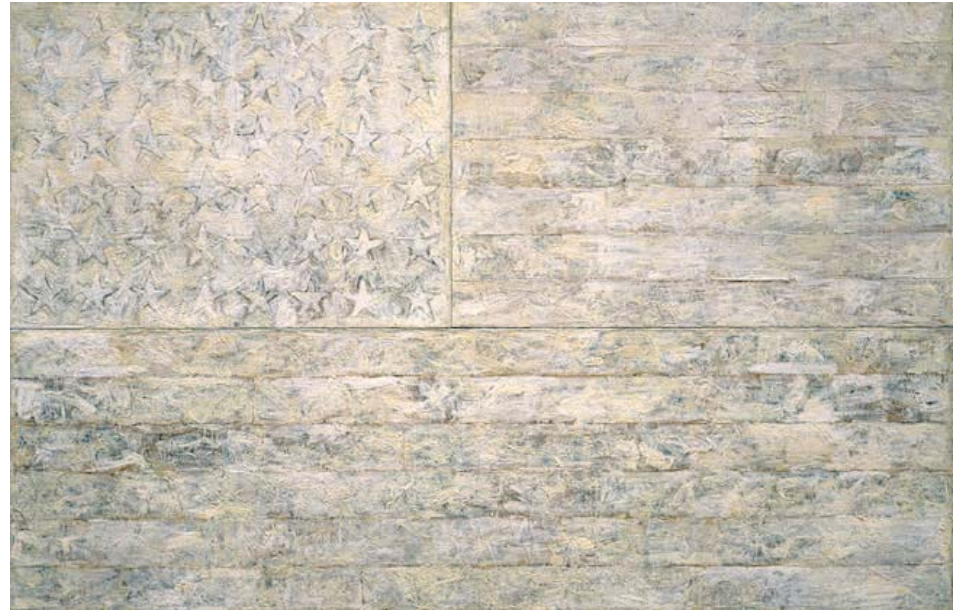
By Scott Mainwaring

Color is so elemental in flag design that *colors* is a synonym for *flag*. Recently, however, all-white flags have been in the news due to two Berlin artists, Matthias Wermke and Mischa Leinkauf. In the wee hours of July 22 they evaded police surveillance to replace each 10-by-19-foot U.S. flag atop both towers of the Brooklyn Bridge with all-white versions of their own making. New Yorkers awoke to this strange spectacle, and quickly began joking about surrender.

Wermke and Leinkauf are not the only artists to produce all-white American flags. I've come across at least three precedents. Earliest is Jasper Johns' monumental 1955 painting *White Flag*, now in the permanent collection at New York's Metropolitan Museum of Art. Another is the flag James Cross painted white, photographed, and submitted to a 1986 design exercise by Kit Hinrichs. Third, like Wermke and Leinkauf and at roughly the same time, Portuguese artist João Felino fabricated and displayed an



The Wermke-Leinkauf flags over the Brooklyn Bridge, 2014.



Jasper Johns, *White Flag*, 1955.

all-white U.S. flag as one of many “de-colored” national flags in his “Flags of the World” project.

These artworks are all, in their own ways, meditations on the ideas of liberty and possibility. They use white not as the color of surrender, but as the absence of color—so startling in the case of the U.S. flag that it forces a double-take. They make us ask anew, “what does this mean?”

Jasper Johns' painting is a major milestone in the history of modern art, a force to be reckoned with by any subsequent artist working on this theme. It's large (10 by 6 feet), richly layered (made of wax, pigment, and newspaper clippings), and deeply ambiguous. As critic Andrew Graham-Dixon points out,¹ it was originally understood as “art for art's sake” having little to say about the flag and its meaning,

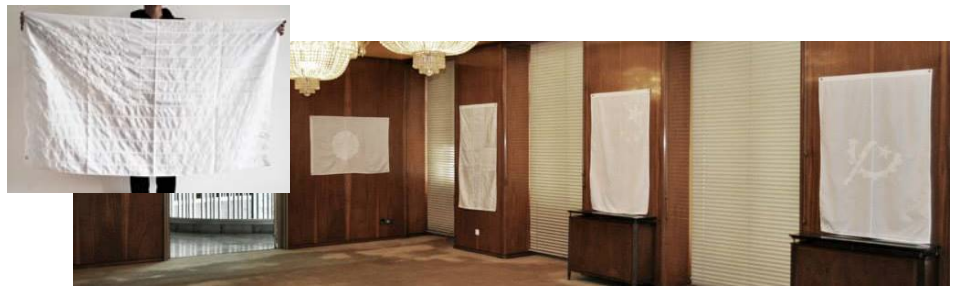
instead “[forcing] the viewer to contemplate only the act of painting itself”. Johns then divulged, mysteriously, that it had come to him in a dream, rooted in a trip he took with his father to a monument to their ancestor William Jasper, who died in the American Revolution saving a flag from enemy hands. And how could it not be seen as a commentary by the young, gay, and left-wing Johns on 1950s America in which ideals of free speech and free association were buried under layers of homophobia and McCarthyism?

In *White Flag*, Johns laid the foundation of a life-long project in which he painted and repainted the American flag many dozens of times and ways, continually returning to it and questioning it.

For his 1986 book *Stars and Stripes*, Kit Hinrichs invited fellow graphic designers and illustrators to reinter-



James Cross (paint on cloth), 1986.



An exhibit of João Felino's white flags at Lisbon's Museum of Design and Fashion, 2014.

pret Old Glory to make a related point: that the U.S. flag itself *invites* reinterpretation, and that those obsessed with “protecting” it from “misuse” are misguided. James Cross’s flag covered by thick white paint is, like all the other submissions, an expression of the American ideal of liberty, to make and remake our own meanings independent of formal codes and standards. The book presents all the re-workings without commentary, leaving them to the reader to interpret.

For Wermke and Leinkauf, their flag stunt is a similar expression of individual freedom and resistance. Though mysterious (and to the NYPD embarrassing and even scary) when taken out of context, the event is better understood as part of a series of “interventions” they’ve carried out. They declare:

*We investigate the boundaries of public space in urban environment through different kinds of interventions and performances. We temporarily override limitations and constraints without permission or invitation. Our aim is to question common standards and to show the beauty beyond these standards.*²

This particular stunt was a tribute to fellow German John Roebing,

who designed the Brooklyn Bridge and died during its construction, and his American-born son Washington Roebling who oversaw its completion—and to the bridge itself as a wonderful accomplishment and public space. Their intervention calls attention to the two huge flags that are part of the bridge’s design, and (unlike the other three cases) to the power of flying a flag in a public place.

Coincidentally, while Wermke and Leinkauf were displaying all-white U.S. flags they had made in Brooklyn, artist João Felino was displaying an all-white Stars and Stripes he had made in Lisbon’s Museum of Design and Fashion (MUDE). Felino’s work is more overtly critical, pointing to the ways in which national colors divide the world’s people, fostering an “us vs. them” mentality.

As the director of MUDE puts it:

*Without the color, the differences erode, revealing the organization and the common rules of composition that the design of all flags must respect. Thus, this installation evokes the commonalities that unite all countries, despite their cultural and historical differences.*³

This nicely expresses the idea that

there is a “language of flags” that unites all nations in common needs of self-expression, respect, and autonomy, but also in the material requirements of flag design itself. Flags are about free speech and liberty, but also standards and constraints.

The questions that Jasper Johns first raised in *White Flag* in 1955 continue to resonate. How can flags be at once commonplace but extraordinary, standardized but re-interpretable, divisive but universal, and admitting so many layers of interpretation and meaning? The “simple”—but provocative—act of turning a flag white is a surprisingly rich way to explore fundamental vexillological concerns.

1 Past Things and Present: Jasper Johns Since 1983, at the SNGMA, Edinburg, 2004. <http://www.andrewgrahamdixon.com/archive/readArticle/363>

2 Cultural Hijack: Bedford Square, London, 25 April–26 May 2013. <http://www.culturalhijack.org/index.php/home/participating-artists/87-wermke-leinkauf>

3 Bárbara Coutinho, Press Release for *Flags of the World*, 22 May–31 August 2014 (Google translation from the Portuguese). http://www.mude.pt/public/uploads/pressreleases/presskit_flags.pdf

For more on white flags and art, David Dunnico’s *A White Flag on the Moon and other stories about Flags and art and stuff* is full of fascinating examples and analysis. Available at <http://artandflags.wordpress.com>.

Tribal Flag Art at the Portland Art Museum

Our own **Portland Art Museum** holds significant collections of Native American art. Not only are they particularly strong in Pacific Northwest tribal art, but the holdings encompass the entire continent's indigenous peoples.

The U.S. flag occurs frequently in Indian art. Three such pieces are currently on display at PAM.

For more information on the subject, refer to Herbst & Kopp's excellent *The Flag in American Indian Art*, New York State Historical Association, 1993. (ISBN-13: 978-0295973142)



RUG, 1991 Bertha Harvey (American [Navajo], active 20th Century. Wool. Gift of Robert W. Patton, Jr., 2001.72.



FLAT BAG, c. 1885 Glass beads on hide with cotton lining.

The Elizabeth Cole Butler Collection, 2012.25.72.

Note the unusual color reversals in what is still clearly meant as a U.S. flag.

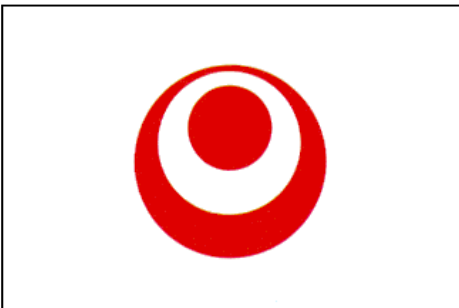
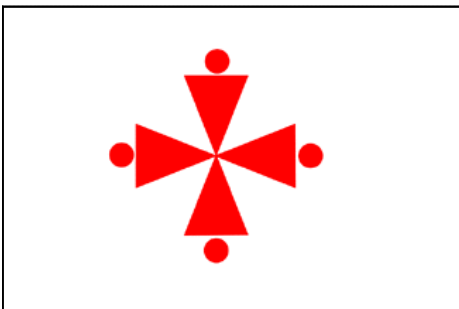
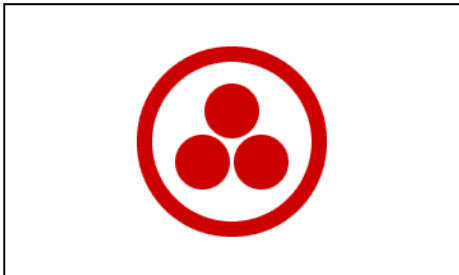
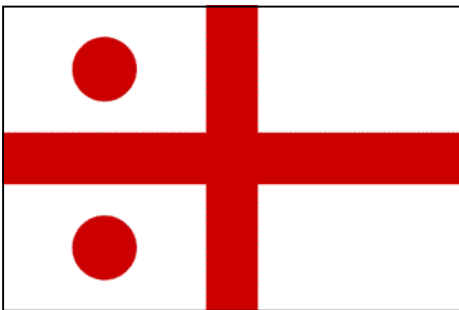
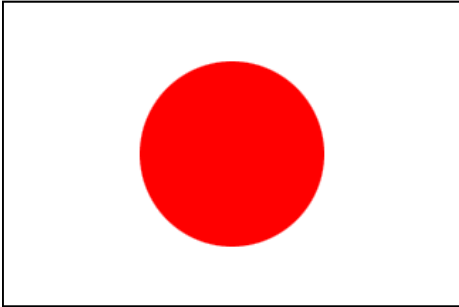


BELT, c. 1930 Unknown Plateau tribe. Glass beads on cloth. Bequest of Elizabeth Cole Butler, 2012.67.28.

What's that Flag?

By David Ferriday

The unifying theme is obvious, but can you name these seven flags? Answers in the next issue...



What Was that Flag? Answers to the last quiz

By Scott Mainwaring

The theme linking these flags: they represent Portland, Oregon's **nine** sister cities. Congrats to Ralph Kelly, of Sydney, Australia, who first solved the quiz.



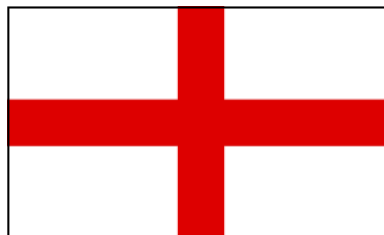
Sapporo, Japan



Ashkelon, Israel



Kaohsiung, Taiwan



Bologna, Italy



Suzhou, China



Ulsan, Korea



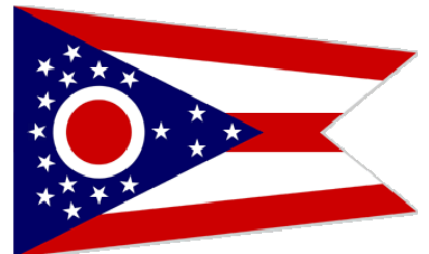
Khabarovsk, Russia



Mutare, Zimbabwe



Guadalajara, México



Portland Flag Miscellany

A local alternative newspaper, the *Portland Mercury*, recently published the schedule for Pedalpalooza, a gigantic annual month-long celebration of bicycling in Portland.

The cover's not-so-subtle reference to Eugène Delacroix's 1830 *Liberty Leading the People* perhaps anticipated one of the most popular events, the World Naked Bike Ride.

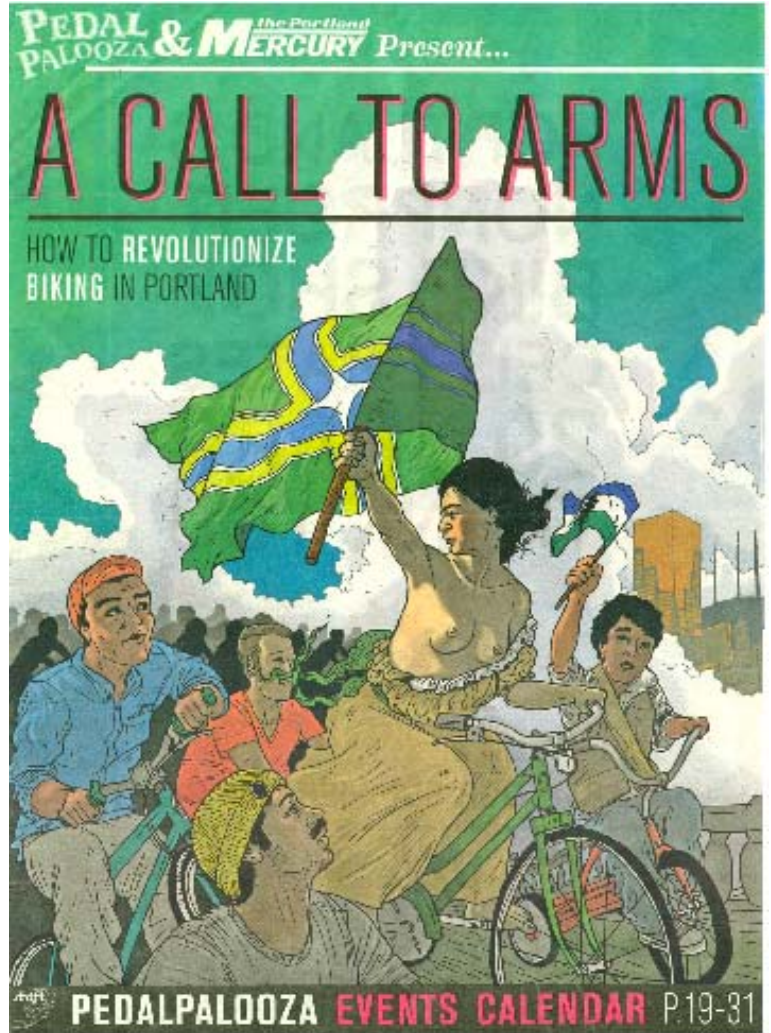


Liberty Leading the People, 1830

Thank-you to [Scott Mainwaring](#) for fastidiously tending the PFA website and posting the *VT* there with alacrity every two months.

The Portland Pedalpalooza Bike Festival uses the flag of Portland (along with Cascadia's) to promote an eclectic mix of over 260 events.

(Source:
Portland Mercury
6/4/2014)

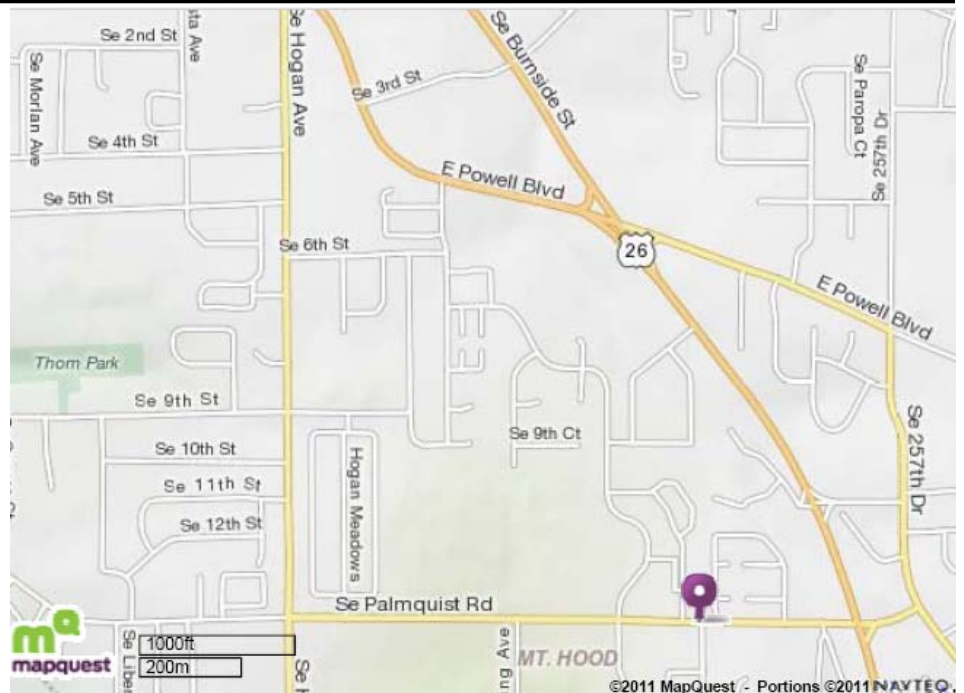


November Meeting

The next meeting of the Portland Flag Association will be at 7 p.m., Thursday, November 13, 2014, at Michael Orelove's house, 2905 S.E. Palmquist Rd. #4, Gresham. He lives in a trailer park and the address is for the overall park; the trailer is #4. (503) 703-4495.

See the map at right.

We look forward to seeing those of you who have missed recent meetings, and see some different flags, hear some new stories, and engage in provocative discussion.



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.