# TOBACCO \& TEA, CHOCOLATE \& CHEWING GUM: <br> VEXILLOLOGY <br> AND THE COMMON MAN <br> BEFORE THE STUDY EXISTED <br> Don Healy 

Vexillology is now in its second quarter century as an organized field of study. It marked its birthday, the publication of the first Flag Bulletin in 1962, at the 12th International Congress of Vexillology in San Francisco.

In San Francisco, papers were presented that reviewed the first twenty-five years and the hopes for the second quarter century. To complete the picture, at this time, let's look to vexillology in the years preceding the birth of the study.

In those days of yore, interested individuals were few, yes, fewer than we are today, and far between. The study of flags was kept alive by a handful of men - men like Karl Faschinger, H. Gresham-Carr and Byron McCandless.

These now legendary men operated in a near vacuum, depending upon direct correspondence with their peers, endlessly acquiring shreds of material through their own research that, to the greater public, seemed of little or no interest or importance.

Books were rare. Those that did exist were traditionally designed for use as reference materials for the naval, merchant marine or yachting worlds.

Flag charts served the same clientele and were replete with errors that still haunt us today. These charts, as well as the books of the time, contained glaring omissions, especially concerning flags from Latin America, the Far east, Arabia, Africa and the Pacific.

Periodicals did not exist. An occasional National Geographic would appear and those that did, continue to be used as references in modern times. Other than that, a flag enthusiast had to hope for an occasional mention in journals dealing with heraldry or military studies. Flag study was often lumped together with these and was considered by many an offshoot of heraldry.

For the serious scholar, the study of flags was nearly a barren wasteland. A gloomy picture, indeed!

The sad situation facing the true student of flags was remarkably contrasted by the wealth of vexillological information available to the common man. Looking back 30,50 or even 100 years, the disinterested masses were inundated from all directions with flag data.

What was amazing was the source of this data? Was it the press? Encyclopedias? Atlases? No!

This flood of material came from cigarette and cigar packages, candy wrappers, and inserts in boxes of tea and bubble gum. Assorted other products, as well, could provide information, but these were the most common.

Known generically to collectors as cigarette silks, cigarette cards and commercial cards, these silks and cards (I'll just call them cards from now on) covered a myriad of topics. Theatrical performers, butterflies, Indians, dogs, cats, military officers, horses, ethnic costumes, and world leaders could all be found on these giveaways.

By far the most dominant topic was athletes, and of the entire genre, baseball cards, football (both American and regular) cards and cricket player cards still dominate the field in both popularity and price.

Flags have appeared on these cards from the 1880's through to the 1980's. Their finest hour, however, was in the first forty years of the 20th century.

Flags were not, as one might assume, a rare topic, but rather, one of the most common. In several instances, flags were even combined with other topics to broaden their appeal. Not nearly as common as flags, but still well represented, were shields and coats-of-arms.

The phenomenon was not restricted to any one country, either. Sets exhibited here represent the United States, Britain, the Netherlands, South Africa and Germany; however, I've even seen sets (though not flag related) from pre-World War II China. Other nations such as Argentina, Australia, New Zealaṇd, Italy, Switzerland, East Germany and Uruguay have produced them.

Virtually all of these cards were parts of larger sets. The marketing concept was to combine brand loyalty with the natural urge to collect things. Frequently, additional "gimmicks" were tied to these collections as we shall see. Many-of these sets had multiple lives, either appearing in different countries or in different products.

Although many more sets exist than will be shown here, over 400 sets relating to flags and/or arms are known to exist. This sampling does give a reasonable overview to those unfamiliar with them.

One of the earliest sets, dating from 1880, consists of 150 different cards offered by Helmar cigarettes, (Fig 1) a brand produced by the American Tobacco Co. from the United States. It is a very colourful set depicting the arms of all nations, the various states of Germany, the United States and component parts of Italy and several Indian tribal seals. Most are extremely accurate, especially if you accept some artistic impression as permissible.

Considering that these cards were used, to stiffen soft paper packages to prevent the contents from easily being crushed, they are very beautiful pieces of artwork.

With the quality and accuracy of the set as a whole, it brings into question the three examples one might initially consider as errors. Unfortunately, two of the three represent our host nation and NAVA's northern half, Canada. The third suspect arms are those attributed to India. The inclusion of these arms and the large number of German states points to "Die Wappen und Flaggen Der Herscher und Statten Die Welt" published in 1870 as the source. The unusual arms attributed to Canada are, in truth, the arms of the Canada Company issued in 1826. Australia's "arms" are a common fabrication based upon the arms of New South Wales that predate any unique Australian arms.

Among the earliest flag sets were five series issued by Allen \& Ginter Cigarettes of Richmond, VA. The five groupings of between 47 and 50 cards each were issued between the years 1885 and 1905.

The five sets were entitled "States and Territories", "Flags of the World", "Flags of the World, Second Series", "City Flags" and "Naval Flags".

Each card (Fig 2) had an elaborate background design that related to the flag it pictured. The reverse of the cards offered the purchaser of the cigarettes a complete list of the flags in that particular series.

The most interesting aspects of these series come from two of the five series: the city flags and the "States \& Territories" series. Most US. cities shown, and virtually all the states were without official flags at the time these cards were issued. (Only a handful of States had adopted state flags prior to 1900. Most of these were former members of the Confederacy.)

In the realm of national flags, the most intriguing flag depicted is the one attributed to Zanzibar. Since the national flag during this era was plain red, could this elaborate flag be, in fact, the standard of the Sultan? It does recall the old flag of the Bey of Tunis and one 19th century flag of Persia.

About a decade after the Allen \& Ginter cards appeared, they were reborn and issued by a large variety of independent companies with the backgrounds simplified, but the flags unaltered.

These exact same flag designs seemed to come in various sizes. A larger version existed, offered by several vendors, one of which was a clothing store in northern New Jersey that offered a set of flag cards (Fig 2) at about the same time as the Helmar cards appeared. Marshall and Ball of Newark offered its customers advertising cards bearing the flags of various countries. ne examples here show the Papal States, bearing the arms of Pope Pius IX (1846-1878), Imperial Brazil, Imperial China and Russia, the Czar's flag of the 1842-1858 pattern, all very accurately depicted. Other companies offered the set as well, but the ones I have all come from Marshall and Ball.

Duke cigarettes of Durham NC. issued two sets in 1888. The first (Fig 3) featured not only flags and arms, but also the portrait of the chief of state or some noted individual. Please note the Spanish card bearing the likeness of the infant king Alfonso XIII who ascended the throne at birth. The other Duke set (Fig 4) concentrated on US flags and bore pictures of the various state governors.

In 1904, the British Wills Cigarettes offered several series of Civic Arms (Fig 5). This series offered city and borough arms for the entire British Isles. Each very detailed arms was presented in full achievement. Fifty cards were included altogether.

One of the most prolific sets was the "Flags of All Nations" set offered by the American Tobacco Co. in 1909. This set used identical (Fig 6) artwork found in sets of silks which appeared between 1905 and 1915. These cards reappeared several more times with various companies offering them in sets of 50,100 , or 150 . Altogether 200 different designs existed. One can compare these cards with the silks and note that the designs of the flags are identical, right down to the flapping of the tassels and the folds of the flags themselves. The only major difference was the addition of backgrounds to the cards. Many of the "Flags of All Nations " represented states that no longer existed in 1909.

The 1909 run of these cards could be found with the following brand names advertised on the reverse, representing those brands that included these giveaways:

| Big Rum Cigarros | Derby | Hustler | Jack Rose |
| :--- | :--- | :--- | :--- |
| Puritan | Recruit Little Cigars | Scrap Iron Scrap | Sub Rosa Cigarros |
| Sweet Caporal | Sweet Caporal Wrappers |  |  |

Before continuing, I must explain one brand, Scrap Iron Scrap. This was not what we think of when we talk of scrap iron today: "scrap" was a turn of the century term for chewing tobacco.

Many strange, dubious or unusual flags appear in this vast set. For example, the dubious Australian arms we saw in the Helmar set of arms now appear on a plain white flag. India, Burma, Paris and Berlin are among others that received this "white background" treatment. Only Burma, to my knowledge, has ever had such a flag attributed to it.

The size of this set necessitated it being more comprehensive than many other "Flags of the World" collections.*This set included national, merchant and naval flags, royal standards, pilot flags, signal flags, yacht club burgees and even canoeing association flags. Only one other flag set is larger. The Universal Tobacco Co of South Africa offered a set of "Flags of All Nations" in 1935. (Fig 7).

The ten years between 1905 and 1915 seems to have been the high water mark for the cigarette silk (Fig 8). The two leading distributors of them were the American Tobacco Co. in the United States and Geoffrey Phillips Ltd. of Great Britain. However, literally thousands of silks are now considered to be of anonymous origin due to their nature. These silks kept reappearing, the last being from the United Tobacco Company of South Africa which issued 65 in 1935.

The silk, when new, came with a paper backing. On this backing was an advertisement or logo of the company offering this premium. The backing was generally removed, thereby removing any link to its issuer.

Whereas the American Tobacco Co.'s 1909 card issue was available in only one size, silks came in a wide variety of sizes (Fig 9). The dyes used to create the 1909 cards were, as we have seen, the same ones used to create the smallest of the silks. The larger sizes tend to be more elaborate than the small sizes.

In intermediate sizes one can find silks bearing coats of arms as well as national flags. These arms differed slightly from issue to issue, but the flags remained unchanged. (Fig 10).

One unusually informative set, shown here (Fig. 11) from Zira and Nebo brands, offered not only the national flag, but also the national floral symbol - Scotland's thistle, Canada's Maple leaf etc., and the opening bars of the country's national anthem.

The inclusion of multiple "themes", like the flags, flowers and songs of this set is a recurring concept in the issuance of cards or silks.

The most amazing aspect of the cigarette silks, at least for the vexillologist, is that flags and arms, alone or with additional themes like these (Fig. 12) entitled "Flag Girls" is the single most common subject to be found. Some 85 different sets have been documented by the London Cigarette Card Co. Ltd, alone.

Yet another American set, offered by the $P$. Lorillard $C$. in their cigarette products around 1911 was entitled "Standard Bearers of Different Countries" (Fig 13). This set consisted of 24 different soldiers in their national military uniforms bearing large flowing flags.

The "Standard Bearers" set was intended to appeal to flag enthusiasts as well as military collectors. Both groups might have been surprised by the Queen's Guard from Great Britain proudly holding the British Red Ensign, which is reserved for use at sea.

This set was offered in brands called Nebo, Zira, Tiger and Honest Scrap (that name is my favorite so far).

The 1920's offered a large number of Sets. Britain saw sets from both the Will's and Player's Cigarettes. These sets (Figs. 13a, 13b, 13c,) date from 1926, 1928, and 1929 respectively and included 25, 50 and 25 cards each. The Wilbur-Suchard Chocolate Co. of Philadelphia offered a set of 36 "Flags of the World" (Fig 14) in their candy bars. Actually only 35 flags could be found in the bars themselves. If you wanted to get the 36 th flag, the United States, you had to write the company. If you listed the first 35 flags and included the names and addresses of four friends you would receive the 36 th flag and an album for the collection.

Supplying an album for the collection, whatever the series, was almost always a part of the deal in older sets. From the 1930's the Kensitas' Cigarette Co. of Great Britain offered this album (Fig 15) for its set of sixty silks. The album pages (Fig 16) offered a brief history of the country and certain vital statistics as well as a place to glue the silk. This is, by the way, the latest example of silks, I've been able to find.

In the 1960 's, the Lipton Tea Co. Ltd of Great Britain informed collectors of its set of 60 "Flags of the World" (Fig 17) cards that they could obtain an album from any Lipton store.

While discussing the Lipton set, one flag must be mentioned. The flag representing Bermuda shows a blue ensign bearing the usual arms of the colony. What is unique, however, is the canton. It bears the British flag of 1606-1801 without the cross of St. Patrick.

Was this an accident? Not at all.
The reverse of the card states "An interesting point about this flag is the retaining of the 1606 flag". Supposedly, this was intended as a "reminder of its great age as a colony". Did this flag really exist as late as 1966 when this series was issued?

To return to our sort of chronological procession through flag sets, the ,1930's produced some of the most attractive flag and arms cards ever manufactured.

From Great Britain, again, came this set (Fig 18) from Players Cigarettes. The "Flags and Cap Badges" set consisted of fifty cards. The beautiful detail of this is unmatched by any set of flag cards issued before or after by England. This is another set that sought to combine flag and military interest. This particular set dates from 1930, although the company offered similar series in 1907 and 1910. Six years later, this company offered "Flags and Arms", a set of fifty cards (Fig 19) detailing both emblems and flags from related nations.

Germany offers two examples of cigarette cards from the 1930's.

The first, (Fig. 20) actually multiple sets offered by Abdullah cigarettes, depicted arms of nations and cities. Sets I and III are represented here. Set I had 110 cards, while set III had 150 city arms all different from those in set I. It is assumed that set II offered still other arms not included in either of these two. Set III gives a wide ranging overview of civic heraldry and includes such little seen arms as those from Moscow, Leningrad, and Sevastopol in the Soviet Union.

Sultan cigarettes from Dresden offered a set of 200 cards (Fig 21) to celebrate Germany's hosting of the 1936 Olympic Games in Berlin. This set, for which Karl Faschinger served as consultant, was possibly the most attractive set ever issued.

The Sultan set consisted of both flags and arms (Fig. 22). Flags were odd-numbered cards, arms were given the even numbers. For instance the flag of Tonga is \#199, its arms are \#200.

Each card, whether flag or arms, was bordered in gold foil mixed with blue, green, brown or red trim. The background for the subject was consistently a light beige. Under each flag was a white strip that bore the name of the nation. For the arms, the name was written in brown directly against the beige background.

The flag or arms shown on the card was raised slightly. The detailed work, especially on the arms, was enhanced by the liberal use of metallic gold or silver.

Another set of cards devoted to coats-of-arms or seals, was a set of 25 issued by the Typhoo Tea Co Ltd of Birmingham, England (Fig 23). This set saluted the important products of the British Empire's colonies. Each bore the badge of a colony and a product associated with that colony.

The post World War II era was marked by a great drop in the quality of artwork. What did increase was the aim at a younger audience.

Topps Chewing Gum Co., widely known for the ubiquitous "baseball cards" which dominate this field in the United States today, issued a surprisingly educational set of 80 cards entitled "Flags of the World" (Fig 24). This set, for which I have a personal fondness - I remember collecting these cards with a passion when I was a small child - came in the traditional "baseball card" format. For those unacquainted with that format, a slab of slightly stale pink bubble gum came wrapped with five cards from the series.

This set is best remembered for its reverse, (Fig 25) though the inclusion of Tibet in this 195356 set makes it a desirable collectable. In Britain this set appeared in 1959 and 1960 and was issued by the American and British Chewing Gum Co.

The interesting reverse side for this series included mini language lessons that informed the collector that the pronunciation for the Tibetan word for "friend" was "RUG" and "thank you" was "LAWLESS".

A couple of years later, around 1961, Topps issued its "Midgee Flags of the World" series. This series (Fig 26) was of a smaller size, thus the name. It was similar in size to the traditional cigarette card size we saw in the 1909 series. The 1961 series scrapped the language lessons of the 1953 series for a brief history of the country.

That same year, Goodies Ltd of Britain offered a small set (Fig 27) of 25 cards containing an unusual mix of flags and colonial arms that defies labelling as a particular theme.

Brooke Bond Tea Ltd. of Britain issued a handsome set of 50 cards (Fig 28) in 1966. This company, known to Canadians and Americans for their Red Rose Tea, naturally emphasized Commonwealth nations, but the artwork is superb.

These series and the previously mentioned Lipton Tea set mark the end of flag cards as a common giveaway. The timing, around 1962, is almost eerie. Vexillology is bom, in 1961, in the United States and 1966 in Britain. Vexillology for the common man fades away.

From the decade of the 1970's only British sets exist. The two represented here come from Lyon's Maid Ice Cream in 1974 and F.W. Dobson in 1978. The twenty seals (Fig 29) of British counties and cities is well done, but they can't compare to the workmanship found in earlier issues. The Dobson issue, 144 cards (Fig 30) in all, is remarkably uninteresting and only worth mentioning because sets of flag cards are rare from the last 25 years.

An occasional spurt is heard every now and then. FIAV member, the National Flag Foundation of Pittsburgh, Pa. worked with the Kellogg Cereal Co. to supply souvenir flag cards (Fig 31) to those attending the 1981 Boy Scout Jamboree, but this was a much smaller audience than flag cards once commanded.

Possibly the poorest set ever issued, a British set of 98 cards (Fig 32) from Monty Gum, was intended for distribution in the Arab world. If one examines this set carefully, one will find that the manufacturer simply cut the flag pictures from Whitney Smith's Flags Across the World and Through the Ages and framed them to produce this set. Little, or no, care was taken in preparation. Malaysia, amongst others, had its upper stripes removed because the country's name overlapped the flag in the book. Cambodia and Vietnam are represented by out of date flags because those flags were the first ones to appear in the alphabetic listing for these nations that had conflicting governments.

Angola, which by 1980 had been independent for some five years, still bears the old Portuguese flag appearing in the Smith book.

The Netherlands' Schele Co. issued a set of cards (Fig 33) in 1982 to honor the World Cup Soccer Finals in Spain. This is another poor quality set not even bothering to differentiate shades of blue, or properly representing the color black. Thankfully, only 24 of these cards exist in the set.

Flag cards will eontinue to appear every so often. 1988 saw the first issue of flag cards since the Dutch issue. This small set of twelve cards (Fig. 34) however, was entitled "The Language of Tea", not even hinting at its flag content. Fortunately they were produced by Brooke Bond Tea people, and their quality is unusually good for the last quarter century but otherwise is unremarkable. This set includes the new Egyptian flag and for the same reason, Tibet reappears for the first time since the Topps set of 1956.

The flag cards will never be as popular as they once were. Only in Great Brit in, where cartophily, the collection and study of trade cards, is a popular hobby, will new iss res appear with any regularity. The rest of the world has seen the non-sports segment of the market taken over by cards honoring new TV series or recent movies and popular rock stari.

As vexillology grows into an accepted field of study it has been removed from the day to day contact with the wider public. A great tool for "spreading the word" has been lost $\vdots$, all those now so avidly interested in the subject. Imagine how much more popular vexillology could be if these former everyday items continued to keep flags in the common consciousness of the public.

For vexillologists, these cards offer a means of accumulating flag data other than charts, books, or actual flags. This source of flag data has for too long been ignored by vexillologists, these little giveaways are of great value in documenting flags over the last century, and they are generally inexpensive!

As the flag girls from a 1903 issue from the American Tobacco Co. wave good-bye, I close my survey, hoping to have acquainted you with a new aspect of vexillology - Vexillological Cartophilia.






Fig. 5





## WILLS's




Fig. 6







Fig. 9








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Fig. 14



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Fig. 16
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grapes. The eapital is Lusbon, with a popajation of about 587,000 centrot in is especially foteresurg Inumueh as althoor This Flap is especialify toteresing Ingomuch as althoogh
a Republic, Portugal still retains the Arms of the old Mostarchy:






## Fig. 21





Fig. 22



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Fig. 23








Fig. 24 Fig. 25



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Fig. 27

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Fig. 28 :


Fig. 30


Fig. 29
DURHAM

Fig. 31


