



Flags and the anniversaries of 2017: myths, mistakes, misconceptions

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Abstract

Canada celebrates its 150th birthday in 2017. Its recorded flag history has however been flawed by incorrect assumptions and misconstrued labels. We need to set the record straight on a number of points, including the colonial badges attributed to Canada. Other countries also commemorate a 150-year anniversary in 2017: the United States purchased Alaska in 1867, the Mexican Empire ended with the execution of Maximilian, and a compromise in Europe produced a new entity, Austria-Hungary, from the Hapsburg dominions. Each event involved flag change. The French Republic celebrates its 225th anniversary this year; its flag almost disappeared in 1848 but the poet Lamartine kept the tricolour flying. 1947 saw the emergence of India and Pakistan; the ideas that the departing viceroy Mountbatten proposed for their flags will astound this gathering. A free Trieste flourished from 1947. What are the true stories behind these anniversaries?

When was the last time you celebrated an event? I mean really, really celebrated; that is – let's say, of course – with flags.

Well, I am going to suggest to you several opportunities for flying flags with gusto this very year. Yes, we have flag-pertinent anniversaries for Canadians, Italians, the French, South Asians, and at least ten other nationalities – many of those present at this Congress.

Alongside these anniversaries I would like, with your forbearance, to clear up some myths, remove some incorrect beliefs or misconceptions, some 'fake news' and even partisan lies that have stuck to or gathered about the flags concerned in these anniversary celebrations.

Canada

Allow me to begin with my own country. This year marks Canada's 150th anniversary. Four colonies – Upper Canada, Lower Canada, New Brunswick and Nova Scotia – confederated under the British North America Act. This act itself was not a flag event nor did it lay out a distinct citizenry; it provided a term for a new, composite and self-governing country, but one within an imperial system, a 'Dominion'. Conrad Swan calls it a 'completely new experiment in governing'.

A mercantile flag for the new country emerged only in 1892, 25 years later; a distinct coat of arms for Canada was granted in 1921; constitutional independence, via the Statute of Westminster, came in 1931; Canadian citizenship only became a reality in 1947; a Canadian governor-general was first appointed in 1952; and a truly official national flag followed only in 1965, 98 years after Confederation. Doesn't this indicate that ours is a land of evolution not revolution?



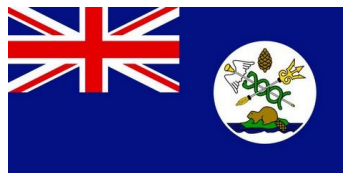
Although our flag is only 52 years old, it was in 1867 that Alexander Muir penned the anthemic song 'The Maple Leaf Forever', and no 150th anniversary celebration in Canada will fail to display the Maple Leaf flag, as well as the multi-coloured maple of the special flag made for this year's event.

There are at least two ideas to be shattered in Canada's vexillology. There is the flag first proposed by the Liberal government of Prime Minister Lester B. Pearson as his choice for a national flag – it was a tribar of blue, white and blue, and in the central panel was a branch of maple bearing three leaves in red. Given its strong association with Mr Pearson and the need for a clear identifying label, this flag was soon dubbed 'the Pearson Pennant' – a label that in recent years has been applied incorrectly to the Maple Leaf flag.



Proposed national flag of Canada, subsequently known as 'Pearson's Pennant'

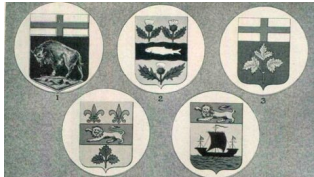
A second error in Canadian and British vexillology is the supposition that the original provinces (and the others that followed) all used a red (or blue) ensign with the provincial coat of arms (granted from 1868) in the fly. Some flag enthusiasts claim this is so because a private British flag chart illustrates such flags. Unfortunately, a portion of this chart appeared in Whitney Smith's *Flags through the Ages and Across the World* (1975), and Smith, while making no comment on the validity of the flags shown, does call them blue and red colonial ensigns (pp. 186-7). In the great era of postcard use at the turn of the last century, a set of postcards was printed for each province showing a shield of the coat of arms hovering over the fly end of the flag. A war recruitment poster shows a New Brunswick version of a red ensign, but this probably reflects local patriotism and artistic license. These rarely seen items may have led a few to believe that such flags existed, but in over 30 years of searching pertinent provincial archives and the public and university libraries of the major Canadian cities this researcher has found no evidence to support the use of such flags or even their appearance. On the other hand historians have found evidence of a Vancouver Island ensign and suggestions of an Upper Canada (Canada West) flag; Prince Edward Island (PEI) research is ongoing. Ontario and Manitoba did adopt as official provincial flags a red ensign with the provincial coat of arms in the fly.



Left, seal of Upper Canada, which perhaps appeared on an ensign; right, Blue Ensign of Vancouver



Another point to consider is the great difficulty experienced by Canada in persuading the Admiralty to permit a mercantile ensign peculiar to the country even as late as 1892. The Admiralty flag books in some years illustrate the provincial arms within a white disc, so several enthusiasts insist that this signifies that a red or blue ensign with this badge was official. The flag number of *National Geographic* (XXXII, no. 4, Oct 1917) greatly fostered an interest in flags and certainly advanced vexillology, but it erred in placing the coats of arms of Canada's provinces within a blank circle, naming the result a badge.



*Left, arms of the provinces of Canada: top, left to right, Manitoba, Nova Scotia (granted 1868), Ontario; below, Quebec, New Brunswick
Right, flag of the Governor of Nova Scotia, depicting the arms of Nova Scotia (granted 1625 by the Lord Lyon, readopted 1929)*

On joining the Confederation, a province renounced its colonial status. Moreover, the four new provinces only received grants of arms in 1868 (except for Nova Scotia, which held an old grant from a different heraldic authority) and had no badges. They were subsumed within one greater colony which united the newly granted coats of arms of its parts into a Canada badge. Of all the badges shown only that of Newfoundland would have been accurate, as it did appear on a red ensign for that colony (Newfoundland did not join the Canadian Confederation until 1949). The maritime flag books of the USA and even Germany also seem to suggest that the badges they illustrate in some editions would have been used on blue or red ensigns.



Left, Red Ensign bearing the arms of New Brunswick (First World War patriotic postcard); right, Red Ensign bearing the arms of Alberta (contemporary postcard)

Three more points: the catalogues of Canada's great emporium, Eaton's, which for almost two centuries supplied most Canadians with a mail-order service of the first magnitude, make no mention of such a flag. The flags they sold included blue and red ensigns, Union Jacks, even a Canadian ensign, but nary a sign of any colonial badge-type ensigns. Nor did the flag charts in use by



shipping companies include any flags of this type. The major writers on British and Canadian flags and coats of arms, and especially flags at sea – Cumberland, Groom, Matheson, Perrin, Spence, Stanley, Swan, Thorne, Vachon and Wilson – mention no such flags. Spence reminds us, of course, that the Lieutenant-Governor of a province long used the badge of a white circle bearing the provincial coat of arms, following the pattern established for the Governor-General. Even the most assiduous collector and disseminator of information on defaced British ensigns, Rudi Longueville, has affixed the note 'not used' to the pertinent badges. Vachon is not fully explicit but does state that the Admiralty had to repeatedly request the colony (Canada) for information on its armorials.

Seventy-five years ago, in 1942, there was an organisation in Canada called the League for a National Flag (*Ligue du drapeau national*). Its proposal for a national flag was widely circulated, and a stand, for or against, was taken by many writers and editors nationwide. The field of the proposed flag is divided diagonally from upper hoist to lower fly, red over white, with a green unstylised (i.e. natural) maple leaf in the centre. No one in politics understood better than Liberal leader William Lyon Mackenzie King (prime minister, with breaks, from 1921 to 1948) the pitfalls in that period of a debate on a flag for Canada and its potential to divide the country. Here is a parliamentary excerpt showing how he was able to avoid the issue once more: 'Mr. Lacroix: What is the obstacle which prevents the government from adopting a national Canadian flag? Mr. Mackenzie King: If by "obstacle" is meant "legal obstacle", there is no obstacle to His Majesty, on the recommendation of the Canadian government authorizing the creation of a national Canadian flag. The government would not make such a recommendation without the prior approval of the House of Commons. It is the view of the government that, with the war conditions what they are, it would not be justified in asking the House of Commons to debate the matter at the present time.'



*New national flag for Canada,
proposed by the League for
a National Flag, 1942*

France

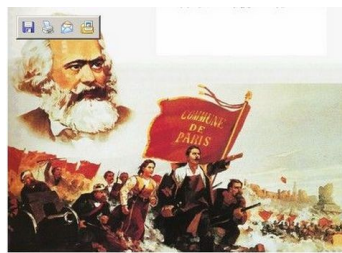
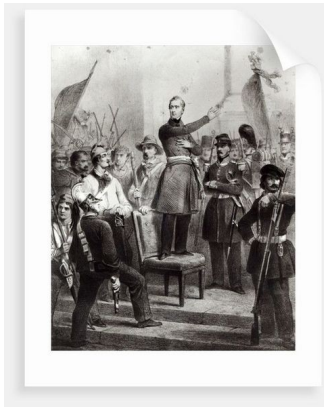
The year 2017 marks the 225th anniversary of the French Republic. The National Convention met in September 1792 and voted to abolish the monarchy immediately and establish a republic. Smith (1975) tells us that a tricolour was adopted then, the colours promoted by a Frenchman loved by the Americans, and born 260 years ago. He is the Marquis de Lafayette, who 'proposed the combination of the colours of Paris with the royal white into the tricolour cockade of modern France (*Encyclopaedia Britannica*, vol. XIII, 1929). Lafayette said of this cockade, '[It] will go around the world, and ... triumph over the tactics of Europe.'



*Tricolour flags at celebrations
commemorating the Marquis de
Lafayette*



In 1847, 170 years ago, another Frenchman, Alphonse de Lamartine, wrote a history of the Girondins in support of republican ideals, and during the revolution of the following year he too rose to reject the red flag and defend the tricolour: 'The tricolour is the flag ... of France, of our victorious armies, of our triumphs. To our enemies, France and the tricolour are a single idea, equal in prestige and indeed in terror! / Think of all the blood that must be shed to make another flag so renowned. / Citizens, I'll never adopt the red flag and I'll tell you why I oppose it with all my patriotic fervour. Under the Republic and the Empire the tricolour has circled the world, with your liberties and your glories; the red flag has never travelled beyond the Champ-de-Mars, dragged through the blood of the people.'



*Left, Lamartine speaks in favour of the French tricolour;
right, flag of the Paris Commune, 1871*

Lamartine did great good by moderating the revolutionary and destructive ardour of the Parisian populace in 1848. How many countries can say their leading figures have commented favourably on the national flag?

And what, the Editor of *Flagscan* was often asked, do the colours of the tricolour represent? He answered 'officially, absolutely nothing!'; the statutes and the constitution of the French Republic only name the flag's colours and state the order in which they appear on the field. Only the fervour of the religious, the praise of the orator, the invocations of poets, and objects of historical interest attempt to assign or suggest meaning to the red, white and blue.

USA

In 1867, 150 years ago, the territory of Alaska, Russian America, was purchased by the American government. Vexillologically, this meant the removal of the Russian flag from North American soil. 'The Russian Double Eagle was lowered for the last time – but not without awkward incidents – and the Stars and Stripes made their first appearance over Alaskan soil in a ceremony formalising the transfer of the territory of Alaska from tsarist Russia to the USA at the price of two cents per acre.' However, this has been depicted in flag books as part of America's flag heritage. The territorial, now state, flag of Alaska was not to enter our arena of banners until 2 May 1927. This flag of the northern sky is now 90 years old, its prize-winning designer Benny Benson, a 13-year-old Alaskan native and mission student. Benny Benson, whose life saw many family tragedies, died of a heart attack in 1972, 45 years ago. 'Eight stars of gold on a field of blue / Alaska's flag. May it mean to you, the blue of the sea, the evening



sky ... and flowers nearby ...' (Poem by Elinor Dusenbury, cited in Whitney Smith, *Flag Book of the United States*, p. 103).



Left, flag of the Russian-American Company;
right, 'Alaska's Flag', by Elinor Dusenbury

This Russian double eagle is the symbol of the Romanov dynasty. Strangely enough, the royal standard of the last British king to reign over the American colonies has never been claimed by American flag historians. Hulme refers to the planting by Raleigh of the standard of Elizabeth I. Even the eminent vexillologist Dr Whitney Smith, in his *Flag Book of the United States*, failed to name George III's standard, despite his very lengthy coverage of British flags and mentions of Spanish and French royal banners and flags. Barraclough and Crampton mention only the royal standard of Henry VII.

The standard of George II remained in use under George III (until 1804, so at the time of the American Revolution) and is of great interest because it adds German charges to the usual British complement. The American colonies with a large German population could not have been unaware of this standard or the arms from which it is derived. George Louis, the Electoral Prince of Hanover, who became King George I in 1714, displayed the arms of Hanover in the fourth quarter of the British royal arms. In this form the arms lasted until 1801. The change reflected the new king's Hanoverian domains (Brunswick-Lüneburg, surmounted by the Imperial Crown of the Holy Roman Empire, for the imperial office of Archtreasurer).

It is interesting to note that in 1810, during their raid on Fort York in Upper Canada (now the site of Toronto), the Americans captured this royal standard, found in the Governor's rooms, and have retained it until this day (despite Canadian requests for its return). This act also attests to the existence of such a royal standard, only slightly modified from George III's standard in use at the time of the American Revolution.



Royal Standards: left, King George II; right, King George III

Quite a different series of flag events began 100 years ago, in 1917. The Bolshevik Revolution initiated the rise of red flags in the 'new' Russia and with it the first 'Red Scare' in North America (USA and Canada). All sixteen flags of the Soviet republics were basically red. In America membership of the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW or Wobblies) peaked in 1917 at 150,000, and the



Wobblies' flag was, of course, red with a black logo. In 1942, in its first year of participation in the Second World War, the USA found itself an ally of the Soviet Union, and *Life* magazine that year reported on a beauty contest sponsored by the Young Communist League.

A second 'Red Scare' occurred in 1947, 70 years ago, when President Harry Truman signed the Federal Employees Loyalty Program, and the era of McCarthyism with its witch hunts began. Fear of being labelled 'red' was so strong that a National League baseball team, the Cincinnati Reds, felt obliged to change its name to the Cincinnati Redlegs, and their pennants reflected this. The name was reversed for the 1961 season and, with the gradual adoption of proper flags by baseball teams, a number of Cincinnati Reds flags are now promoted. Although sports pennants do not seem to figure in vexillological studies, various websites state that a pennant is a commemorative flag typically used to show support for a particular athletic team.

Among the vexillological victims of the 'Red Scare' was the first state flag of Oklahoma, the 'red earth' state. It was red with a white star bearing the number 46.



The original flag of Oklahoma, in use 1911-25

Austria / Mexico / Trieste

In 1867, 150 years ago, the entity known as Austria-Hungary appeared, resulting also in a new flag. Aggravated by military disasters, the absolutist nature of the Hapsburg dominions had come under attack. Federalists demanded equal rights for all nationalities in the Empire; Centralists wanted a unified state under (Austrian-) German leadership, Emperor Franz Josef was eventually convinced to satisfy the Hungarians and the German-speaking elements and concluded a compromise (in German, *Ausgleich*, 'a balancing').

The resulting flag design emphasised a duality, one half of the lower bar on the flag in Austrian colours, the other in Hungarian colours. This flag appeared in Hulme (1890) and in *National Geographic's* flag number in 1917.



Flag of the Austro-Hungarian monarchy, bearing the arms of Austria and of Hungary

A member of the royal house of Hapsburg, Maximilian, born 185 years ago (1832), was crowned emperor of Mexico in 1863 with French military support. We quote Smith, 'The new regime, welcomed by conservatives, ... established three new flags – the imperial standard, the war ensign, and the civil ensign.' The last was plain, i.e. no emblem in its central white panel, and this is the



merchant flag of Mexico today. The other two with a crowned eagle vanished when, to the dismay of European ruling classes, Maximilian was arrested, charged with treason and executed on the order of Benito Juarez, president of the re nascent Mexican republic. The empire of Mexico ceased at Maximilian's death on 19 June 1867, 150 years ago, and the imperial flags were discarded.



Top, Emperor Maximilian and Empress Charlotte; bottom left, the Mexican flag under the Emperor; bottom right, the flag of the Empress

Another child of the Austrian domains was the port city of Trieste. The year 2017 marks the 70th anniversary of the creation of Europe's fourth free state after Danzig (1920), Fiume (1920 – not recognised internationally) and the Irish Free State (1921). (This writer discounts the German use of 'Freistaat' for republic, e.g. Bavaria, Thuringia.) This '*territorio libero*' was the Free Territory of Trieste, a port city contested by Italy and Yugoslavia and occupied and run in 1947 by an Allied Military Government (Zone A). As an aside, the city was 'liberated' by New Zealand troops and also occupied by Yugoslav partisan forces. Caught in a Cold War hotspot, one NZ soldier said, 'This is a helluva way to end the war.'

Although described as 'independent' by Wikipedia, the territory never enjoyed self-government and even its postage stamps were Italian stamps overprinted AMG-FTT. Maura Hametz tells us that, to avoid unrest, there were restrictions on the use of the Italian flag, and that voting in some parts of the territory favoured independence but not so in the city itself. (So important was the return of Trieste to Italy that Italian girls born in those post-war years were sometimes named 'Triestina'.) The author also points out that Slovenes wishing to return to their native city were not admitted. In Trieste (Zone B), a few local stamps were initially in use, but these too were soon replaced by Yugoslav postage stamps overprinted 'STT Vujna' (s= slobodan, vujna =military).

However, the Free Territory of Trieste did possess a flag and a coat of arms. These emblems first appeared in vexillological literature in books by Kannik and Gresham Carr in the mid-fifties. The flag, with a blue field, appeared on a



Marshall Plan poster in 1950. But the official flag was red of field with a white device, a spearhead, in the centre. Carr (p. 307) gives its proportions as 100 by 70 and calls the device 'a spear-like halberd'. Kannik states, 'Trieste is now incorporated in Italy and this flag is therefore no longer used'; but he is incorrect because it continues to be used as the city's flag.

What is the origin of the Triestine flag and arms? It seems that the spearhead (*Lanzenspitze*) originated in the grant of arms by Holy Roman Emperor Frederick III to Trieste (*Triest* in German, *Trst* a Slavic form, anciently *Tergeste*). The lance head was considered an attribute of St Sergius, a secondary patron of the city (although Trieste's cathedral is dedicated to St Justus Martyr – San Giusto – the city also contains a church named for St Sergius Martyr). His halberd, said to be of iron yet never rusting, is conserved in the cathedral. Legend says Sergius was a tribune in the region of Tergeste. He had befriended numerous Christians, and when he was to be transferred to Syria he predicted an omen would appear should he undergo a martyr's death. In Syria he and his companion Bacchus were denounced, arrested and executed for their Christian faith, while in Trieste his halberd rained down from heaven – the sign he had promised. His Christian fellows in the city preserved the weapon and made it the emblem of the city. An Italian heraldist has called the lance the symbol of knightly honour and a generous soul; the noblest weapon in heraldry. The normal orientation of the lance or spearhead is with the point chiefwards. The red field may express the idea of martyrdom or an Austrian connection as Trieste was considered archly loyal.



Left, the Imperial Austro-Hungarian arms, with the arms of 'Triest' (bottom right); right, Trieste's modern arms

An aside to New Zealand delegates: the New Zealand 2nd Division and the 28th (Maori) Battalion featured strongly in the liberation of Trieste. Were their colours and badges in use then or in evidence in the campaign? New Zealand's flag turned 115 in 2017.

India and Pakistan

The 70th anniversary of the national flags of India and Pakistan occurs this very month, August 2017. These flags feature in Salman Rushdie's novel, *Midnight's Children*. 'On the stroke of midnight ... Clock-hands joined palms in respectful greeting as I came. Oh, spell it out, spell it out: at the precise instant of India's



arrival at independence, I tumbled forth into the world.'

The birth of the Dominion of Pakistan took place at midnight on 14 August 1947. Its flag is green with a white vertical bar at the hoist, a white crescent and star on the larger green portion. The flag design is the same as that of the Muslim League, with a white bar to symbolise the minorities.

On 22 July 1947 the Constituent Assembly at New Delhi adopted a tricolour of saffron, white and green as the national flag of India. A wheel in blue symbolises unity. Pandit Nehru, leader of the Congress Party, expressed the hope that the flag would be the symbol of freedom not only to India but to all who may see it. In *Freedom at Midnight*, Collins and Lapierre stated that Congress voices contested the right of 'Gandhiji's toy', the spinning wheel, to appear on the flag. The place of honour was assigned to another wheel, the chakra, the sign of the conquering warriors of Ashoka, founder of a Hindu empire. When Gandhi learned of this, he wrote, with deep sadness, 'I shall refuse to salute a flag which carries such a message.' But as Mr Rushdie pointed out, 'The process of revision should be constant and endless.'



*Flag of the newly independent India,
bearing a central chakra*

In negotiations for the transfer of power, the Viceroy of India, Lord Louis Mountbatten, had tried mightily to persuade Jinnah and Nehru to use British symbols, urging that the new dominions include the Union Jack in the canton of their proposed national flag. Crosses on the flag of India, a nation largely Hindu, or of Pakistan, a Muslim state!! What must he have been thinking? Of course the leaders politely declined. Rumours soon spread that the Union Jack would figure in the new national flag. A correspondent wrote to Gandhiji that if that happened, he would 'tear the flag to pieces'.



*Mountbatten's proposed Indian flag
with a Union Jack canton*

On the eve of Independence Day in 2001, the Indian Navy got rid of a 250-year-old colonial leftover, a St George's Cross that cut across its ensign, flags and pendants. History, however, has a quirky way of repeating itself. So, on 25 April 2004, the Indian Navy brought back the cross, with some Indian touches. The crosses, however, were described as a horizontal red stripe and a vertical red stripe intersecting at the flag's centre.

Rushdie also wrote, 'Religion was the glue of Pakistan, holding the halves together.' But geography, language and cultural differences trumped religion when Bangladesh (East Pakistan) separated in December 1972, 45 years ago.



The Americas

The anniversary of Chile's flag comes up soon. Rarely mentioned in standard vexillological literature is the first national flag of Chile, a tribar of blue, white and yellow, dedicated on 30 September 1812. This writer first saw the flag in a Santiago historical museum and he later acquired a commemorative postage stamp illustrating it and the 'Mother of Chile', Javiera Carrera, who is credited with having sewn this first national flag.



Chile's first national flag is displayed on a modern postage stamp

The numerous and widely spread islands of the British West Indies were united in a new country called the Federation of the West Indies, which came into being on 3 January 1958. The arms of the new Federation were granted 1 August 1957, 60 years ago. In chief is a lion in gold on red, below a gold shield with a white triangle on a Barry wavy (blue and white) bordure. The latter part translated into a blue flag with four white waves, a golden sun over all. With the secession of Jamaica, the Federation folded and it was dissolved in 1962, 55 years ago.



Flag of the short-lived Federation of the West Indies

And Paraguay's national flag turns 175 on 27 November 2017. It is probably one of the oldest flags in South America, first established by the dictator Dr Francia in 1812 and with few modifications in continuous use from 1842. The idea that the family name Francia, earlier Franza, inspired him to imitate the flag of France is offset by his more provable love of French philosophy - Voltaire, Rousseau, the Encyclopedists, etc.

In his account of this flag, Gordon holds it up to ridicule perhaps because of the infamy associated with Dr Francia's cruel and long dictatorship. Like the flag (the emblem on the obverse differs from that on the reverse), 'El Supremo', as the dictator-for-life was known, had two sides. In his daily life he was a simple republican, on his walks and rides a Draconian imperial demanding deference. Some say he robbed state coffers, others that he enriched the national treasury; he was a priestly candidate in his youth, a grasping anti-clerical in maturity. The author of his biography in *Encyclopedia Britannica* (1929) says that, but for Francia, Paraguay would have been incorporated into either Argentina or Brazil.

Africa

In 1927, 90 years ago, the Union of South Africa adopted a compromise flag, first hoisted on 31 May 1928. The design was based on the so-called 'Prinsenvlag' of orange, white, and blue horizontal stripes. The South African addition to the design was the inclusion of three smaller flags centred, with



rather tricky positioning, in the white stripe: the Union Jack, the flag of the Orange Free State, and the flag of Transvaal. The controversy over a flag had lasted many years and in 1927 even generated political cartoons in *Punch*.



Cartoons from Punch: left, 'Under two flags'; right, 'Hail, Baby Bunting!'

Ghana's flag, adopted on independence in 1957, is 60, although it was not in use until 1963-6. Ghana was the first African country to borrow the Ethiopian colours for its national flag, soon to be followed by at least a dozen others, while its black star forms a beacon for the decolonisation of Africa,

Ethiopia, in fact, is the only 'ancient' state in Africa, the only nation that managed to preserve its independence throughout the era of European colonisation. 'O Generous Ethiopia!' - the name was often a reference to all of Africa, while the South Atlantic on some maps was once called the Ethiopic Ocean. Walt Whitman and Emily Dickinson both used an image of an Ethiopian in poems written in the 1860s. Dr Whitney Smith tells us that the basic design of Ethiopia's flags goes back 120 years.

Liberia's flag turned 170 on 26 July 2017. Its red, white and blue colours, patterned after those of the USA, were assailed by Sir Harry Johnston as un-African. He offered a flag of green, black, gold and white - an unusual and unsuccessful move then, not at all like today's internet where proposals for changing national flag colours and designs appear daily on flag sites like FOTW.



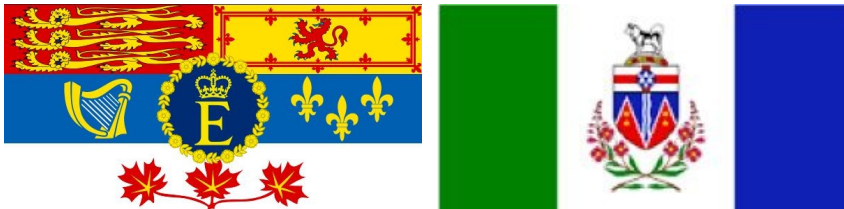
Sir Harry Johnston's proposed national flag of Liberia

Canada again

In conclusion, we'll speak again of Canadian flags. The flag for the use of the Queen of Canada was presented on 15 August 1962, 55 years ago. The provincial flag of Alberta was introduced in 1967, a 50th anniversary. It has been said that Alberta is 'the most American' of Canada's provinces, the 'Texas of the North'. Is it only a coincidence that this province chose a blue flag with its



emblem in the middle, a practice similar to that of many American states? Or that it referred to the flag as 'the Banner' of the province as did Indiana when it adopted a state flag? The old coat of arms of Newfoundland, granted 380 years ago (1637), was restored in 1927, having been forgotten and replaced by a tableau-like badge. And our territory of Yukon has a flag that is now 50 years old, designed by student Lynn Lambert and bearing the colours of the wilderness, green, white and blue.



Left, flag for use by the Queen of Canada; right, flag of the Yukon

The white trillium or wake robin became the official provincial flower of Ontario in 1937, 80 years ago. It does not appear on the flag of Ontario but shares a place with the fleur-de-lis on the green and white flag of Ontarian Francophones. (It may have been unknown to the designer, but a bicolour of green and white, adopted in 1842 – 175 years ago – by the St-Jean-Baptiste Society, flew in Quebec from 1842-88.)



Flag of Ontarian Francophonie, depicting a trillium in the fly half

Thirty years ago, the Canadian Heraldic Authority granted a very handsome flag to Quebec City. The flag officially bears a golden yellow ship on a deep blue field surrounded by a crenellated white border representing the city walls. The ship, the *Don de Dieu*, is that of the city's founder, Samuel de Champlain; it also signifies that the city was one of North America's major nineteenth-century seaports. Fittingly for Canada's oldest city, the flag was the very first grant made by the Canadian Heraldic Authority and, despite the scramble to get things together, was certainly a harbinger of the excellent designs to come. The heraldic colours used have many meanings, but blue is also predominant in the city's coat of arms to emphasise its foundation by the French.

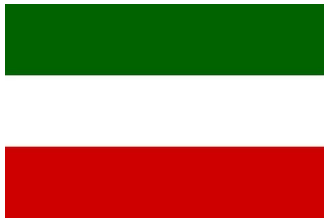


Banner of arms of Quebec

Lastly, 2017 marks the 180th anniversary of the Rebellion of 1837 in the two Canadian colonies – Upper Canada, led by William Mackenzie, and Lower Canada under Louis Papineau. Was this uprising nothing more than an uncontrolled riot? Or was it a major insurrection that led to responsible



government? It certainly produced a number of flags of great historic interest: the flag of Liberty, the flag of the Patriotes, and the flag of Montreal.



Left, flag of the Lower Canada rebellion, 1837-9; right, variant with added star and rifleman, sometimes used by modern separatists

The need for reconciliation between its citizens after the Rebellion of 1837-8 prompted Jacques Viger to propose a coat of arms for Montreal that was charged with symbols of its four main peoples – the French, English, Scots and Irish living in harmony; a banner of the arms was adopted in 1939 as the city flag. The year 1939 saw a significant royal visit? Did their Majesties catch the reflection of Canada's royal arms in the emblems on Montreal's flag? In 2017 the flag will be much in evidence as Montreal celebrates its founding as Ville Marie on 17 May, 375 years ago.



Left, 'Liberty flag' used during the Upper Canada rebellion, 1837; right, banner of arms of Montreal

This account of anniversary stories is not meant to be exhaustive. There will be other anniversaries, some more significant to you than those mentioned here. But in addition to urging you to celebrate a flag-related event, this speaker has striven to add further information of interest to vexillology, to correct and update information and cast more light on flags that have been forgotten, overshadowed, or ill remembered. May one or several of you be inspired to look at the flag anniversaries that make 2019 a significant year for vexillology and present them at our next ICV. Thank you, esteemed FIAV leaders and fellows, delegates and guests, ladies and gentlemen. Go out now and wave the flag of your choice in this year of significant flag anniversaries!



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Kevin was born in Toronto, where he has lived for most of his life except for short stays in Edmonton and Orangeville. He obtained a Master's degree in Teaching/Information Sciences in 1985. His partner of 49 years died in 2016. Kevin has been for many years a mentor to newcomers – he is affectionately called *abuelo del inmigrantes*, which means grandfather of immigrants, and is an active volunteer in clubs such as Mundo Lingo, Couchsurfing and Babel.