North American Vexillological Association

NAVA NEWS

Vol. 31 • No. 3 ISSN 1053-3338 May/June 1998

NAVA 32
QUÉBEC CITY, QUÉBEC
OCTOBER 9-11, 1998

The registration form for NAVA 32 is included in this issue of NAVA News. The convention will be held at the Loews Le Concorde Hotel in the Grande Allée district, which is often called the Champs-Elysées of Québec City. The hotel is just blocks from L'hôtel du parlement/Parliament Building, where the Québec National Assembly sits. Thanks to the efforts of our Québec City host Jean-Robert Zonda, we are receiving a very favorable room rate during the height of the tourist season.

If you have questions about the convention, please contact convention committee chair David Breitenbach at (313) 331-6843 or e-mail him at 1stvp@nava.org. If you have questions about presenting a paper, please contact program chair Gus Tracchia at (718) 847-2616 or e-mail him at gustracc@aol.com.

PRESIDENT'S COLUMN
by Charles A. Spain, Jr.

As NAVA’s president, I oftentimes feel more like a petty bureaucrat than an amateur vexillologist. Providence apparently provides, however, because I recently received a letter that really made me feel great about what we do in NAVA:

Oneida Indian Nation
March 12, 1998

Mr. Charles A. Spain, Jr., President
North American Vexillological Association

Dear Mr. Spain:

Thank you very much for the complimentary copy of Flags of the Native Peoples of the United States [Raven volumes 3-4]. It now has a place in our Nation's Library as another valuable reference tool.

It is wonderful to see that an organization such as yours has been so serious-minded about preserving the pieces of Native culture that exist as sovereign flags. Many people do not know about the status of sovereign Indian nations, and your book should certainly prove enlightening. It is helpful to sovereignty when a nation’s flag is right before your eyes. This Nation certainly appreciated the very accurate and positive report that was included detailing our Oneida Nation flag and the distinction between this Nation and others that it provided.

I am enclosing a copy of our recent annual report and a Nation newsletter for added information and for your reading pleasure. You will clearly see by reading it what sovereignty has meant to the Oneida People. Sovereignty has given us a chance to rebuild our community through the economic tool of enterprises.

Thank you for your interest. The Nation greatly appreciates your organization’s objectives.

Ray Halbritter
Nation Representative

I also had the recent privilege to speak to the Houston area chapters of the Daughters of the American Revolution on the occasion of U.S. Flag Day, June 14. Not only did I get to spread the gospel of vexillology (I warned them in advance I would not be presenting the American Legion-type speech), but I also finally read former NAVA president Scot M. Guenter's book, The American Flag, 1777-1924: Cultural Shifts from Creation to Codification. Cranbury, New Jersey: Associated University Presses, 1990 (ISBN 0-8386-3384-6). All I can tell you is if you have not read Scot’s book, you simply must. It is everything that vexillology should be and an absolutely fascinating study of United States social and political history.

Be sure and fill out the NAVA 32 registration form that is included in this issue. I hope to see as many of you as possible in Québec City!
Knoxville (Tennessee) News Sentinel, April 18, 1998. Recent tornados did more than damage buildings in Nashville, Tennessee; they literally “blew the stars out of Tennessee.” The storm ripped the central circular device (containing three stars) out of the Tennessee state flag that was flown atop the state capitol during the tempest. The flag was replaced the next day. (Submitted by Kenneth F. Barnes).

Houston (Texas) Chronicle, May 7, 1998. The Commandant of the Corps of Cadets at Texas A&M University in College Station, Texas, has banned use of the Confederate battle flag, claiming it is a divisive symbol. The ban is being challenged by the right-wing group, Southern Legal Resource Center, based in Black Mountain, North Carolina. (Submitted by Charles A. Spain, Jr.).

Florida Today, March 28, 1998. The countdown has begun for the creation of the new Canadian territory of Nunavut. It will the first major North American political subdivision governed by Native peoples. (Submitted by Bernard J. Couture, Sr.). Editor’s Note: A flag is being designed for Nunavut.

The Press Journal (Vero Beach, Florida), March 31, 1998. Five students were suspended for wearing “anti-swastika” pins. The pins, which feature a swastika crossed out by a red line and the slogan “Fight Racism” were banned by Dallastown Area High School in Pennsylvania. School Officials argued that people might misinterpret the prominently displayed swastika. A federal court, however, ruled in favor of the students’ constitutional right to wear the pin. (Submitted by Bernard J. Couture, Sr.).

Northern Territory News (Darwin, Northern Territory, Australia), no date. Member of Parliament John Bradford complained that the “racist” One Nation Party (a right-wing party in Australia) was exploiting patriotism for political gain. The party proposed that the government should allow tax deductions for the purchase and installation of one Australian flag per home. (Submitted by Ron Strachan).

The Mail Tribune (Medford, Oregon), May 4, 1998. For most of this century, Mexico’s ruling PRI party has enjoyed a monopoly on using the Mexican national colors (green, white, red) as party colors. Debate in the Mexican Congress, however, may result in a change. Although a measure that would end the monopoly passed the Chamber of Deputies (lower house), it faces an uncertain future in the PRI-dominated Senate (upper house). (Submitted by James R. White).

Charleston (South Carolina) Post & Courier, no date. At the African-American Flag House in Charleston, SC, a unique African-American flag is apparently flown. No illustration is provided, but it is described to have 14 stars, each with a meaning. Enquiries about this flag can apparently be made to Mr. Steve Esteves, African American Flag House, 37-B Radcliffe Street, Charleston, SC 29401 USA, phone number (803) 965-5482. (Submitted by Jan Oskar Engene).

San Francisco Examiner, no date. Hip-Hop and rap music have been criticized for their sometime violent overtones. A radio station that plays such music is hoping to improve the image. The station unveiled a “Flag of Racial Unity,” composed of five vertical stripes (beginning with the hoist) of black, brown, red, yellow, and white. (Submitted by Jan Oskar Engene).

San Francisco Chronicle, April 23, 1997. Alameda County, California, hoisted a special flag to remember children who have died violently. It is called the “Children’s Memorial Flag” and depicts a row of children holding hands; a chalk outline surrounds the central child. The flag’s red background symbolizes the anger and resistance of the parents. The flag will be flown on the fourth Friday of every April and on the first Friday after a local child is killed. (Submitted by Jan Oskar Engene).

Reuters News Services. July 14, 1997. A British book publisher has offered U.S. President Bill Clinton a full achievement of arms, which include a number of U.S. symbols. It includes devices to represent First Lady Hillary Clinton and daughter, Chelsea. The supporters are said to be a Native American chief in full regalia holding a peace pipe, and an unchained African-American woman. (Submitted by Jan Oskar Engene)

The Vexi-Bits editor would like to apologize to Vexi-Bits contributor Ana K. Weisz for misspelling her name.

Please submit contributions to: John H. Gámez, 276 Claremont, San Antonio, Texas 78209-6806 USA
In April 1912, the White Star liner Titanic departed from England on her maiden voyage, only to go down both in the North Atlantic and history. Recently, interest in the lost ship has enjoyed a surge of popularity as a result of a highly acclaimed motion picture.

The flags flown by RMS Titanic are of some interest and shed light on the subject of maritime flags.

1. **The Blue Ensign.** An ensign is a maritime flag of national character worn by a ship to denote her nationality. By universal custom, it is worn from the stern staff (ensign staff) when the ship is moored, anchored, or made fast alongside, and is often shifted to the gaff (provided a ship has one) while underway. Titanic's mainmast had a gaff. As a civilian British ship, Titanic was eligible to wear the British Red Ensign, in accordance with section 73 of the Merchant Shipping Act, 1894.

However, because Titanic's captain (Captain Edward J. Smith) was a member of the Royal Naval Reserve (RNR) and because at least 12 of her crew were members of the RNR, she received permission (i.e., a warrant) from the Admiralty to wear the plain Blue Ensign in lieu of the Red. Other British merchantmen meeting these requirements were granted this privilege. In 1912 as now, the Blue Ensign announced a British civil ship in the hands of RNR men; this explains why today's liner Queen Elizabeth II often wears one. While theoretically available to any British merchantman, the numbers of RNR ratings required in the early decades of the century tended to make the ensign privilege available to stately liners, while more remote for, say, a shorthanded tramp steamer or coal carrier. As can be imagined, wearing the Blue Ensign was a matter of prestige because it was a relatively exclusive distinction.

Though prestigious, the Blue Ensign does not mean a ship becomes part of the Royal Naval Reserve; the commercial ship that wears it remains privately owned. In contrast, Naval Reserve ships are Crown owned, have an obvious naval appearance (they are gray), and wear the White Ensign and Union Jack.

A ship-specific Admiralty Warrant (since 1964, a warrant from the Ministry of Defence) is issued to merchantmen authorizing display of the Blue Ensign. In addition, a list of all British ships so entitled individually listed by name, together with their eligible captains and owners—published in the periodically issued Navy List. Should the captain be replaced, the authorities must be notified, the warrant is withdrawn, and the Navy List is modified. This same procedure applies today, though the number of RNR ratings required to be among the crew has been reduced since 1912.

Titanic was eligible to wear, and in fact wore, the Blue Ensign. While in port, this was hoisted at the ship's stern staff, from 0800/0900 until sunset; underway, from the gaff on the mainmast (the mast nearest the stern). James Cameron's Academy-Award winning motion picture, Titanic (1997), correctly depicted this. It is very likely Titanic hauled down her ensign from the gaff after losing sight of the Irish coast, never to hoist it again. There was no reason to have hoisted it at sea, other than perhaps briefly hoisting it to announce Titanic's national identity to a passing craft. Presumably, the ensign went down with the ship, secured in its locker. While a few older movies have depicted Titanic's ensign flying proudly as the ship sinks at night hundreds of miles from land, this melodramatic notion is unseamanlike and improbable. A British manual of seamanship from the 1930s laments that British merchantmen had become so accustomed to hauling down the ensign for frugality's sake, they did so even to cross the English Channel from France, a distance shorter than 50 nautical miles. Flying the ensign at night, a thousand miles from land was unthinkable.

Contemporary news accounts mention Titanic wearing the Blue Ensign in port, and it can be safely assumed that when flown by this ship in port and along the coast, it was flown daily, and given naval treatment in port (it was not flown in port during the night).

a. The Jack: A jack is a flag of national character smaller than the ensign worn at a ship’s bow on the jackstaff. After centuries of sailing-ship practice, the custom has developed that a jack is worn only when a ship is anchored, moored, or made fast alongside. In British marine practice, a jack may be properly flown while steaming, provided the ensign is simultaneously displayed and the ship is either dressed with masthead ensigns, or is saluting a national holiday. Otherwise, however, oceangoing ships do not ordinarily fly a jack while underway.

Britain’s civil jack is the so-called “Pilot Jack,” a Union Jack surrounded with a white border one-fifth the width of the jack. This flag dates from 1823, when it was designed by the Admiralty to be a pilot-summoning signal (a signal flag announcing, “I need a pilot”). A pilot is a locally knowledgeable guide to local waters. The flag was initially intended to be a jack, however.

Since 1634, British law has consistently restricted use of the familiar Union Jack to military ships. In the nineteenth century, British civilian ships desirous of flying a jack instinctively started to use the pilot-summoning signal as their jack. This extralegal use later received tacit official approval in July 1864, and today, certain non-military ships operated by the British Government wear it as a civil jack. Most modern commercial ships, however, do not bother with a jack.

A jack is pulled down when a ship raises anchor or casts off and gets underway. Like the ensign, it is flown from between 0800/0900 and sunset while in port. It must be accompanied by the ensign at the stern.

Like other large liners of the era, Titanic had a beautifully tapering bow and was naturally equipped with a fine jackstaff. Unlike ships of today, she doubtless had sufficient crew (and ample budget) to make the effort to wear a jack. It appears she did so. Sailing with vast crews in an age attuned to niceties, the lavish Great Liners were an exception to the steady decline in jack usage by civilians throughout the twentieth century.

b. Pilot-Summoning Signals: In 1912, the white-bordered Union Flag still had its original pilot-summoning function, dating from 1823. This traditional role was not formally abolished until April 1970, but it was slowly declining in favor of internationally accepted code flags or radio. (Since 1970, the International Code of Signals “G” and/or radio is solely used for pilot summoning in Britain). In 1912, Titanic could have properly hoisted the white-bordered Union Jack to her foremast in home and foreign waters to summon a pilot. Had she done so, she would be underway, so the jack would not be flown at that time. Alternatively, she could have hoisted the 1901 International Code signal to call for a pilot (the signal flags “P” over “T”), which was also acceptable under Britain’s Pilotage Act in 1912. Sadly, she sank before she reached North American pilotage waters, making this choice moot. However, she may have made such a signal in British ports.

- NAVA News • May/June 1998 • Page Four -
The house flag remained in use after even after Cunard acquired White Star Line in 1934. The Cunard-White Star Line flew the two flags together (a twin house flag consisting of Cunard’s flag directly atop the White Star Line) until 1968, when the White Star flag fell from use. Today, Cunard vessels hoist the White Star Line house flag annually on April 20, to commemorate the death of the last White Star Line officer and the loss of Titanic in April 1912.

4. The Commodore’s Flag of the White Star Line: A flag that may possibly have been flown by Titanic would have been the broad pennant of the White Star Line Commodore. (In merchant shipping practice, a company’s most senior captain is informally designated “Commodore” both as a courtesy and honor; this tradition is different from the naval rank of Commodore). A special version of the house flag may be created by a shipping company to distinguish this rank. Titanic’s captain, E.J. Smith, was indeed the White Star Line’s commodore, but it is not known whether he actually used this distinguishing flag on Titanic. If so, it would have been displayed in lieu of the company’s house flag.

A White Star’s Commodore’s Flag was definitely flown by later White Star commodores. It is simply a white-bordered house flag. Today, some British companies simply use a blue cross of St. George on white to distinguish a commodore.

5. The Royal Mail Pendant: An important flag flown by Titanic was the Royal Mail Pendant, which was displayed from her foreyard, or flown prominently from her foremost. This white pendant was displayed by commercial ships engaged in carrying British mail and confirmed the privileged title Royal Mail Ship (RMS). In 1912, air mail was unknown and speedy ocean liners were expected to swiftly carry trans-Atlantic mail. Ships carrying the mails were accorded special docking privileges, and the pendant was a special distinction, reflecting a ship’s speed and trustworthiness.

The mail pennant was introduced in Queen Victoria’s reign. The version in use in 1912 features the so-called King’s Crown that was introduced by Edward VII (approximately 1901) and remained in use until Queen Elizabeth II introduced the St. Edward’s Crown in 1952. Regardless of its stylistic rendition, the crown symbolizes Royal service; the legend “Royal Mail” and the post horn (all in red) complete the design.

All of Titanic’s five postal clerks remained at their duty stations and went down with the ship.

Editor’s Note: Exact replicas of all the flags and signals mentioned in this article (Blue Ensign, Royal Mail Pendant, White Star Line flag, Commodore’s Flag, “Pilot Jack” and Pilot Flag) are manufactured in 12” x 18” nylon and in certain larger sizes and are available from Flag Services Company, Inc., of Reno, Nevada, USA. For information, contact NAVA member, Mr. Jim Ferrigan, III at (888) 404-3524.
**NAVA News Advertising Form**

Please publish the accompanying ad in the following issue(s) of *NAVA News* (maximum of six issues in advance; note ad submission cutoff dates):

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<td>(Nov 15)</td>
<td>(Jan 15)</td>
<td>(Mar 15)</td>
<td>(Mar 16)</td>
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<td>(Sep 15)</td>
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Next available issue:

Print the ad in the following size:

- Full page
- Half page
- Quarter page
- Full page insert
- Classified ad

If classified ad, list number of words:

Advertiser is: NAVA member [ ] nonmember [ ]

Enclosed is a check or money order payable to “NAVA” in the amount of US$ [ ] (see rates on reverse). In submitting this ad, I/we agree to the terms of NAVA’s advertising agreement (see text of agreement on reverse).

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Mail with typed text of ad to: North American Vexillological Association 1977 N. Olden Ave. Ext., Ste. 225 Trenton, New Jersey 08618-2193 USA
1997-1998 NAVA Officer & Committee Roster

NOTES: Contact information is not repeated for individuals who serve in more than one capacity. The president is an ex officio member of all committees.

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cooperjox@chesapeake.net

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Dr. Scott M. Guenter, chair
Mr. Nicholas A. Artimovich, II
Dr. John M. Purcell
Dr. Whitney Smith
Mr. Charles A. Spain, Jr.
## NAVA 1995-1997 Balance Sheets

### ASSETS

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<td><strong>29,203</strong></td>
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### LIABILITIES & FUND BALANCE

#### LIABILITIES

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<th>30 Sep 97</th>
<th>30 Sep 96</th>
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#### FUND BALANCE

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<th>30 Sep 97</th>
<th>30 Sep 96</th>
<th>30 Sep 95</th>
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<td><strong>22,264</strong></td>
<td><strong>18,652</strong></td>
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<tr>
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<td><strong>36,306</strong></td>
<td><strong>29,203</strong></td>
<td><strong>25,612</strong></td>
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*All amounts are in U.S. dollars.*
NAVA XXXII
Québec City, Québec
October 9 through 11, 1998

Site: Loews Le Concorde Hotel
1225, place Montcalm
Québec QC G1R 4W6
(418) 647-2222
(800) 463-5256 Canada or (800) 235-6397 USA

The rate in Canadian dollars is $152 single/$167 double occupancy plus 13.5% tax
Guaranteed reservations must be made before September 9, 1998
Contact the hotel directly for reservations

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(313) 331-6843

For presentations contact:
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Name

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Companion(s)

Mailing address

Home phone (____)____________ Work phone (____)____________

For those arriving early, there will be an additional sightseeing tour of Québec City on Friday, October 9 at 2:00. There is an additional charge of US$15 each for this tour (subject to minimum attendance).

Please indicate any special dietary or other needs:_____________________________
Convention Schedule (subject to change)

Friday, October 9
2:00 Optional tour of Québec City

Dinner on your own

7:00 Reception at Québec National Assembly (business attire)

Saturday, October 10
9:00 Annual business meeting

noon Lunch on your own

7:00 Cocktails, banquet at 8:00 (business/formal attire)

Sunday, October 11
8:30 Presentation of papers

noon Lunch

4:00 Closing ceremony

Cancellations: Fifty percent of fees will be refunded for requests e-mailed (treas@nava.org) or postmarked on or before September 1. No refunds after September 1, 1998.

Detach

Regular registration US$125 (US$145 if postmarked after Sept. 1) $_______

Preferred first name for badge: ________________________________

Companion registration US$45
(Friday reception and Saturday banquet) $_______

Preferred first name for badge: ________________________________

Optional sightseeing tour US$15 per person. Number _________ $_______

Exhibit table space Yes $_______
(no charge for NAVA members, US$25 for nonmembers)

TOTAL $_______

Make check/money order payable in US dollars to NAVA and send with this form to the NAVA treasurer:

Peter Orenski
101 Bel Air Dr.
New Milford CT 06776-2441 USA