

<http://www.borchertfield.com/2016/01/flying-milwaukees-flag.html>

[Borchert Field](#)

Welcome to BorchertField.com, the online museum of the American Association Milwaukee Brewers, 1902-1952

Because Milwaukee was playing baseball long before 1953.

Wednesday, January 6, 2016

Flying Milwaukee's Flag



In the first decades of the 20th Century, before the introduction of mass communication, the Brewers would fly a special flag over downtown Milwaukee indicating there was to be a game that day.

While researching [my article on this unique form of one-way communication](#), I came across an interesting fact: at the time the Brewers first started hoisting their baseball standard up the flagpole in 1914, the city itself didn't have an official flag. It seems so strange now, in our era of branding and merchandising, that a city could go for so long without such a prominent symbol. The story of how Milwaukee finally got a flag (and got the flag it flies today) is a long one, but it does have a connection to baseball and the Brewers, so I'll ask you to bear with me.

Milwaukee has a flag now, of course. It was created in 1954 and boy, is it a doozy.



I doubt that many Milwaukeeans have an attachment to their flag. It's ugly, awkward and cluttered. It's such a non-symbol of the city that virtually all of the images to be found online are *wrong*. That graphic above, seen everywhere from Amazon to Wikipedia, is not the flag of Milwaukee. This is what the real flag looks like:



You can tell at a glance by the style of the numbers along the right side. The design isn't any better—if anything it's even busier—but at least you can tell what all those little blobs are supposed to be.

This detailed image, taken from a city park sign, lacks the "MILWAUKEE" lettering but provides us our best look yet at some of the fine details.



MilwaukeeFlag.com

The parks graphic isn't quite the same as the city flag; it has been condensed down into a more squared-off shape and some elements have been removed. There are also some small differences in the details still present, like the stalk of barley.

A similar graphic appears on the side of city vehicles, although the sharp-eyed viewer will once again notice minor discrepancies in the details.





MilwaukeeFlag.com

In any form, it's a Frankenstein's Monster of symbols, imagery and colors, without any overriding theme beyond "kitchen sink". The *Milwaukee Sentinel* on October 6, 1955 said the flag "*symbolizes Milwaukee's history, culture, recreation, war service and her status as a great port and industrial center.*" That's an awful lot for one banner to carry.

That grand mission, and the resulting complexity, lends itself to all these variations and blunts its use as a cohesive symbol of the city. But I'm getting ahead of myself. Now that we see where we are today, let's review how we got here.

There had been attempts at a municipal jack before the Frankenflag, going at least as far back as this Civil War-era banner (which is itself one of the elements thrown onto the 1954 flag):



I can't find any information about this flag online. I don't know what if anything the colors or shapes was supposed to mean, nor precisely how long it was in use. If it wasn't thrown into the current flag's mix, this flag may well have been totally lost to history. (*edit: It has been suggested that this may actually be a service flag; a possibility that's worth [a closer look](#)*)

We do know that by the late 1890s, civic-minded Milwaukeeans felt the need for a city standard. In December of 1897 the *Milwaukee Journal* held a contest for Cream City residents to submit their own designs, offering cash prizes in the amount of \$15 for the winner and \$10 for a runner-up.



The contest rules seem to have been simple enough:

The competition is open to all. One person may send in as many designs as he or she may desire. The designs may need not necessarily be in colors, although it will be a great advantage to the design. When colors are not shown they must be indicated in writing on the design. Very brief explanations of the contestant's ideas in the design will also assist the judges in the making their decisions. Remember that the contest is open to all persons, young and old, who live permanently in the state of Wisconsin.

Every design must be accompanied by an appropriate motto which is to form part of the flag. The deadline was pushed back, in part because people kept sending in submissions without mottoes. The eventual winner was announced on the paper's front page on the 10th of January, 1898.



The winning design, by Mr. John Amberg, was described as:

His design, as reproduced, is a simple but very appropriate one. The most striking quality of the Cream City as portrayed by Mr. Amberg is its Steady Progress. He represents this trait by a small branch of an oak tree with a few clustering acorns on it, an emblem of slow but steady and sturdy growth from small beginnings. The word "Milwaukee" appears below the figure and motto, and the whole is placed upon a cream background, with a border of blue.



The Journal also reminded Milwaukeeans why a city flag was valuable.

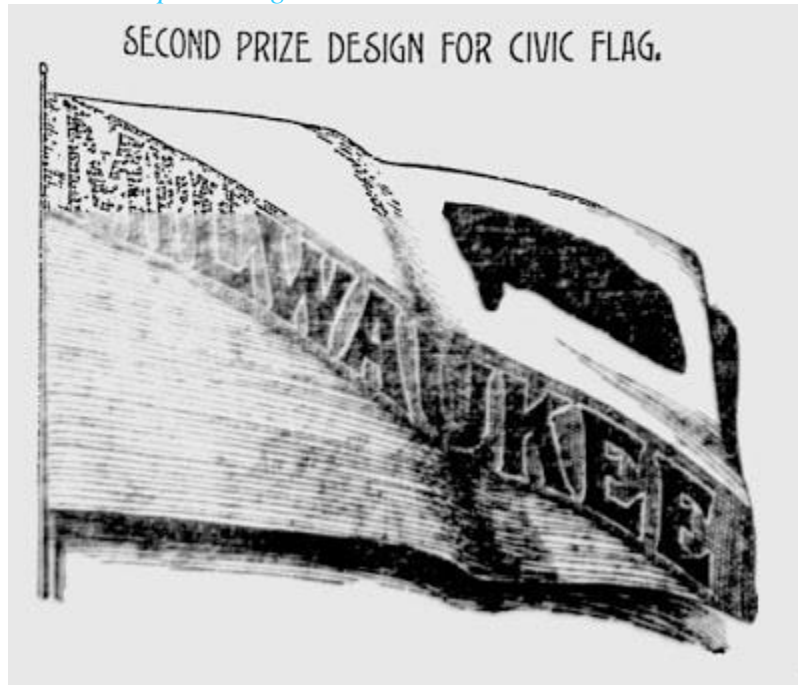
Flags both large and small upon which this design has been printed can be used for decorating stores and houses and all other buildings during celebrations of all kinds. The design can be put on buttons and worn in the lapel when any citizen of Milwaukee goes on a journey. Letter heads and business cards will be an appropriate place for the design, especially those of aldermen and other city officials.

The following day, the second place winner was announced.



The second place design, by Fred W. Dickens of the Whitnall and Rademaker Company, was described as "a neat, distinctive emblem":

His design is notable for its simplicity and chasteness of execution. The design is that of a flag of the regulation shape. The name Milwaukee runs obliquely from the flag staff to the lower right hand corner of the flag, the letters of black on a red background. The upper side of the flag is done in cream and the lower part in light blue.



Mrs. Lydia Ely, speaking for the judges, explained a bit of their process.

"The (winning) flag possesses dignity and artistic excellence, and would lend itself readily to architectural designs, while the choice of the oak as the emblem of Milwaukee's steady growth and progress is most appropriate. The design is eminently suited for decorative purposes, and will look well when floating from the staff, which is one of the points, among many others, that we had to consider.

"The design that was awarded second prize was remarkable for its clearness and simplicity. Either one would work up well on a button to be worn upon the lapel."

Everyone seemed in agreement. John Johnston, one of the judges, expounded on the value of a municipal banderole.

"A civic flag is an excellent thing to have an emblem of the city, its distinctive characteristics such as its present strength and steady advance in the past and its grand opportunities for the future."

Milwaukee mayor William C. Rauschenberger also praised the winner.

"The design is simple but it is artistic and eminently fitting. The very fact that it is simple will be a factor in having it copied largely and used very generally as a municipal decoration."

That might have been, but Rauschenberger was voted out of office just three months later. His successor David Stuart Rose may have been slightly less enthusiastic and the winning design appears not to have been used at all, much less "very generally."

In 1917, Alderman Frederick C. Bogk laid out an ambitious plan for Milwaukee's growth. Among his goals were expanding the harbor, investing in infrastructure, preserving residential districts, annexing the innermost suburbs, and commissioning a city flag. That last one was key to his goal of increasing public-spiritedness among Milwaukee's citizens. Bogk wrote:

"I would wish for the citizens of Milwaukee to pause and reflect, to scrutinize carefully and think deeply upon the various remedies suggested for our municipal ills.... I think our greatest fault heretofore has been our disposition to change according to the vision of each, instead of to work out a harmonious arrangement which would eventually make for the betterment of our municipal government. If citizens will get together and unselfishly work for the common good... I am sure that Milwaukee can get whatever added power is required to make a bigger and better Milwaukee."

Bogk introduced a resolution calling for "an emblem distinctly representative of Milwaukee", but the resolution died in committee, and Milwaukee continued without an official civic banner for the next several decades.

In early 1926, it was briefly suggested that the city adopt a flag for its 80th birthday, to be celebrated that year, but nothing ever came of it. In 1927, a "group of public-spirited citizens" had a flag made up for the police department, featuring "a field of Alice blue... with the city seal in the center, imprinted in golden orange."



It's a bright and sunny color combination.



This flag was "formally adopted by the common council as the municipal emblem of the city" for use by the police department in parades and other ceremonial occasions, but was not used beyond that. A similar flag, with a light blue city seal on a dark blue background, was later given to the fire department by the local Army and Navy garrison.



The following year, the city missed an opportunity to promote their Alice blue flag. When the Hamburg America cruise line decided to christen its newest ship the *MS Milwaukee*, they requested Milwaukee's city flag be brought to Germany for her launching ceremony.

Newspapers across the country picked up on the "perplexing situation" facing Milwaukee's leaders, as they considered how best to respond to the seemingly-simple request. The Associated Press ignored the Alice-blue-with-gold-seal flag, out of ignorance or perhaps to promote a more interesting "no flag at all" theme.

SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 4, 1923

THE PITTSBURGH PRESS

NO CITY FLAG

Milwaukee Unable to Send Banner to Germany.

Milwaukee, Nov. 3.—A perplexing situation has arisen at the city hall, due to the fact that William George Bruce, one of the official delegates to the launching of the new Hamburg-American line motorship Milwaukee in Germany, has received a telegram from officers of the line asking that the official city flag of Milwaukee be brought to Hamburg to be used in the ceremony.

Although a design for a city flag was submitted to the council in 1917, the matter has never been passed by that body. A banner composed of alternate angular bars of blue and green with a red circle in the center containing a cream-colored letter M is being considered by the city fathers, although some wag suggested that a beer barrel rampant would be a more fitting design.

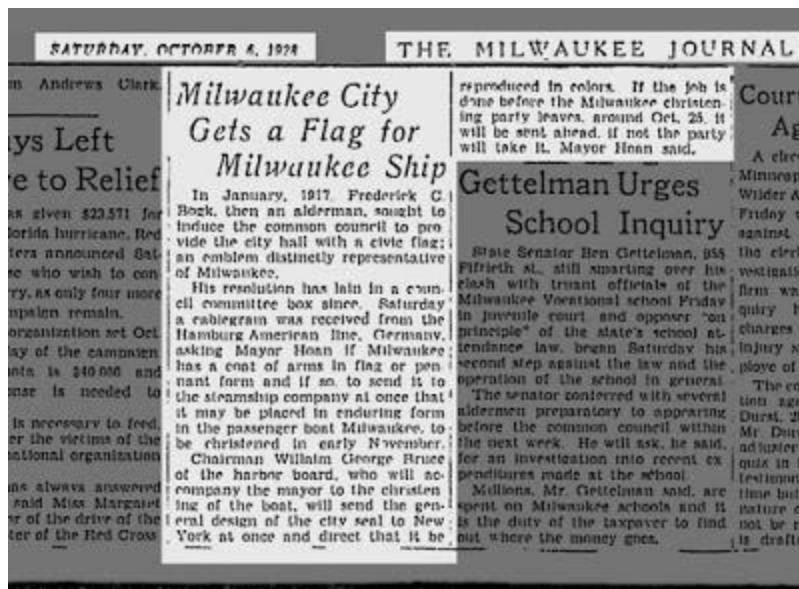
For whatever reason, the common council decided not to consider their existing "municipal emblem of the city". They instead considered commissioning a brand-new design, a *"banner composed of alternate angular bars of blue and green with a red circle in the center containing a cream-colored letter M"*.

Hmm. This might have looked pretty distinctive.



I do rather like the line in the AP report that *"some wag suggested that a beer barrel rampant would be a more fitting design."*

Eventually, the common council decided to order another flag with the city seal, sending the design to New York to "be reproduced in colors" so the Wisconsin dignitaries could take it to the ceremony.



The *MS Milwaukee* sailed under a different flag starting in 1933, when the entire Hamburg America line started flying the Third Reich's swastika-emblazoned maritime ensign.



The opportunity had passed, leaving Milwaukee again without a real city flag.

In 1942 Alderman Fred P. Meyers introduced a new resolution in the common council to change that. He proposed *"a special city flag committee composed of aldermen and public-spirited citizens who, with the co-operation of the art commission and other art institutions would be commissioned to recommend a design to be ready for Milwaukee's one hundred birthday"* on January 31, 1946. The Journal noted that this was the sixth request in forty-four years for a municipal banner.

For the next eight years it appeared that this sixth request would amount to about as much as the previous five. Milwaukee's hundredth birthday came and went with no new ensign. By 1950, however, the city was finally convinced. Alderman Meyers re-submitted his resolution, and an official contest was launched to find the perfect civic flag. Prospective designers were told: *Drawings must be submitted to the City Clerk's office at the City Hall before the deadline. They should not be signed and must be in sealed wrappers without identification marks. Contestants should give their names in sealed envelopes along with their entries. The City Clerk's office will assign a number to each entry.*

Drawings must not be larger than 18 by 20 inches, must be colored, but not more than four colors. Any medium may be used except crayon or charcoal.

The Art Commission received 153 entries, and promptly got to work judging.



Some of the 153 entries in the contest to pick an official city flag were spread out Wednesday at the city hall. Shown with them are Ald. Fred P. Meyers (right), who sponsored the resolution to select a flag, and members of the Milwaukee art commission, who are to do the judging, (from left) Ald. Fred W. Steffan; Walter Liebert, 1948 N. Holton st.; August W. Gross, 4178 N. 15th st., and Carl P. Dietz, 1620 W. Lloyd st. —Journal Staff

Interesting. You can see in the middle of the photograph a flag which seems to be a mash-up of the two previous semi-official designs, with the city seal superimposed over dark/light/dark bars. If those bars were intended to be red and white, it would be a nice synthesis of the 1927 and Civil War flags.

The accompanying article is illuminating as to the process, so I think it's worth quoting at length.

Entries for City Flag Aflutter With Symbols

Beer, Sea Gulls, Music, the Arena Are Among Thoughts Expressed by Contestants

What Milwaukee people think of Milwaukee—their devotion clearly knows no bounds—is revealed by the 153 entries in the contest to design an official city pennant.

The entries were unveiled Wednesday morning and hung in three tiers at the north end of the council chamber in the city hall. They are strung out beneath the portraits of Mayors Carl F. Zeidler and Henry Hase, one representing the new, and the other the old, Milwaukee. They will remain on display until early next week.

When the home people think of their city, the entries show, they think of industry, beer, the harbor, the parks, the city hall, the new arena, sea gulls, shipping, art, music, grain, meat products and education. They think of a lot more besides, but these are the assets most frequently pictured or symbolized.

Top Prize is \$100 Bond

Judges in the contest, which has a top prize of a \$100 savings bond, are members of the art commission, four of whom were present when the designs were taken from their envelopes and hung on wires. They were Carl P. Dietz, former alderman and present chairman of the commission; Ald. Fred W. Steffan of the 9th ward; Walter Liebert, architect, and August Gross, architect. Francesco Spicuzza, artist, and Peter T. Schoemann, president of the school board, were absent.

The commission voted to take its time in naming the winners so that the public could view the exhibits. The point was also raised that it would do the common council a lot of good to see how Milwaukee looks to their artistic constituents, even though the council itself does not figure into any of the designs.

Beer is probably the most frequently saluted asset in the contest. Tributes to lager run all the way from mama and papa, sitting at a table with a red tablecloth under a very green tree, to delicate designs involving hops. Papa and mama in the drawing noted are clearly saying "Prosit!" to each other and there is a strong hint of an oncoming hiccup in papa's expression.

Is It Gertie or Gull?

Another impressive design shows a steer, a wheel, a keg of beer, grain and a vast expanse of green - the last for the city's parks. The rest need no explanation.

A preliminary survey by the diligent judges made note of a design showing a bird with wings spread to form an "M". Along with the bird were gears, a boat and a cool glass of beer. There was some discussion as to what type of bird it was. Some bystanders suggested it was Gertie, the famous duck, but the consensus settled on a sea gull.

The gull, at any rate, is pictured with a downcast look, indicating drowsiness, and there was some disposition to connect this pose with the beer. Other observers pointed out, however, that gulls seldom get a chance at the various brews hereabouts.

Attention also was drawn to a design saying "Milwaukee, Wis." and pointing up the lighthouse, the city hall, factories and shipping. This one made no mention of beer, to the manifest disappointment of sundry volunteer critics.

...

Chairman Dietz revealed, during the preliminary inspection, that the art commission is not necessarily committed to adopting the winning design as the city's official pennant. He suggested that the eventual flag might be made up of a combination of ideas. Or everything may be thrown out as inadequate.

That last bit is interesting, because that's exactly what the city did. They chose a winner, and then promptly went about disregarding the results of their own contest.

The winner was a seventeen-year-old Milwaukeean named Alfred P. Dannenmann.



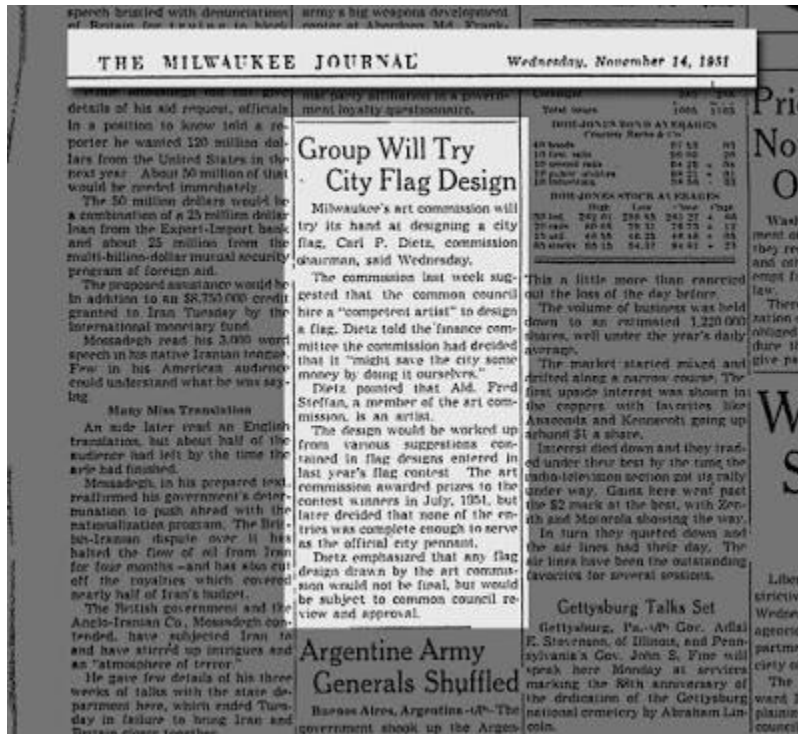
The contest for a Milwaukee flag was won by this entry at the city hall Tuesday. It was designed by Alfred P. Dannenmann (not shown), 17, of 2859 N. 4th st. Shown are Carl P. Dietz, chairman of the city art commission, and Francesco Spicuzza, an artist and a member of the commission. The first prize was a \$100 savings bond.

Mr. Dannenmann's flag featured a large banner with the city name across the top, the founding date along the bottom, and three large gears representing "HOMES", "INDUSTRY", and "SHIPPING" superimposed over a lightning bolt.



Despite the results, the art commission was unimpressed with the submissions, first suggesting

that the common council hire a "competent artist" to design a new flag, and then in late 1951 deciding that the commission "might save the city some money by doing it (them)selves."



Which is exactly what they did. Alderman Fred Steffan cobbled together the various elements, even as he lost his bid for re-election during the several-year process.

And *that*, my friends, is how you end up with a city flag that features renderings of three specific local buildings, a factory, a church, two homes, four distinct industries, an Indian head, Aladdin's lamp, a body of water, the name of the city, the year of its founding, a flock of seagulls and a different, smaller flag. Guess they ran out of room before they could add the ten lords a-leaping.

Steffan's design was a snapshot of the Cream City at the middle of the 20th century. Among the (many) symbols of civic pride thrown into the mix were two very new sports facilities; the Milwaukee Arena (later MECCA), opened in 1950, and the even-newer **Milwaukee County Stadium**, [originally built for the Milwaukee Brewers](#) but by this time Home of the Braves. Which brings us to our Brewer connection.



The flag even features tiny baseball players!

And so, with Steffan's conglomeration complete, his design was officially approved by the Common Council on September 21, 1954. Nearly sixty years after the *Journal* first decided that Milwaukee needed a city flag, she finally had one.

The *Milwaukee Journal* proudly proclaimed "City Gets a Flag After 108 Years". They didn't mention that their own paper had been trying to push the Common Council towards this action for nearly 60 of those years.



Now the flag had to be produced in cloth. The Common Council decided to order one single copy for its own use. That first Milwaukee flag was manufactured by C.A. Burghardt & Sons, who submitted to the city clerk a low bid of \$186.41 (almost \$1,700 in 2016 dollars).

When Burghardt's flag was finally ready, on January 25, 1955, it was presented to the Council. It measured three feet high and five feet wide, trimmed in gold fringe.



The new City of Milwaukee flag was presented to the Common Council Tuesday. The 5x3 foot flag, which will hang on the Council Dias behind the council president's chair, was designed by former Ald. Fred W. Steffan. City activities are illustrated by designs of the City Hall, a giant ship, the County Stadium and Arena, a church, a spike of wheat and smoke stacks and a huge gear. Ald. Fred P. Meyers introduced the Council resolution which led to the designing of the flag. *Sentinel photo.*

"THE CITY OF MILWAUKEE'S NEW FLAG", proudly proclaimed the *Milwaukee Sentinel's* local headline the following morning.

Century-Old Miller Story Told on Film

The hundred years ago, a German brewmaster named Frederick Miller presented to America with his own formula for beer and \$2,000 in gold to establish the Miller Brewing Co. The century-old story of the Miller family unfolds on film Tuesday afternoon before 1,000 spectators in the Grand Theatre, 2211 N. Milwaukee St. The 45-minute Technicolor production began the story of the family's ancestral home in the Danube River valley and ends with the dedication of the new Miller brewery in the Menomonee River Valley.

BREWED FOR ROYALTY

As St. Frederick Miller already was brewmaster in the Massachusetts, he gained an opportunity to increase his production and bring in European liquor, Miller brewed the rich world for the new.

In Milwaukee Miller found a land promising for raising grain and with hills in which to grow his beer. He established the Miller Brewery. One of his last acts was to design the Miller bottle — clear to reveal his product, which he brewed with his own formula.

The film told of the woman who were brewed the brewer's wife, Mrs. J. Miller, it shows the late Frederick C. Miller holding his ancestral home at Milwaukee, planning his extensive program after World War II and detailing the new brewery.

MILWAUKEE SENTINEL
SPORTS, BUSINESS SECOND NEWS SECTION WANT ADS
PLANKINTON AT MICHIGAN WEDNESDAY, JAN. 18, 1934 Highway 6-2090

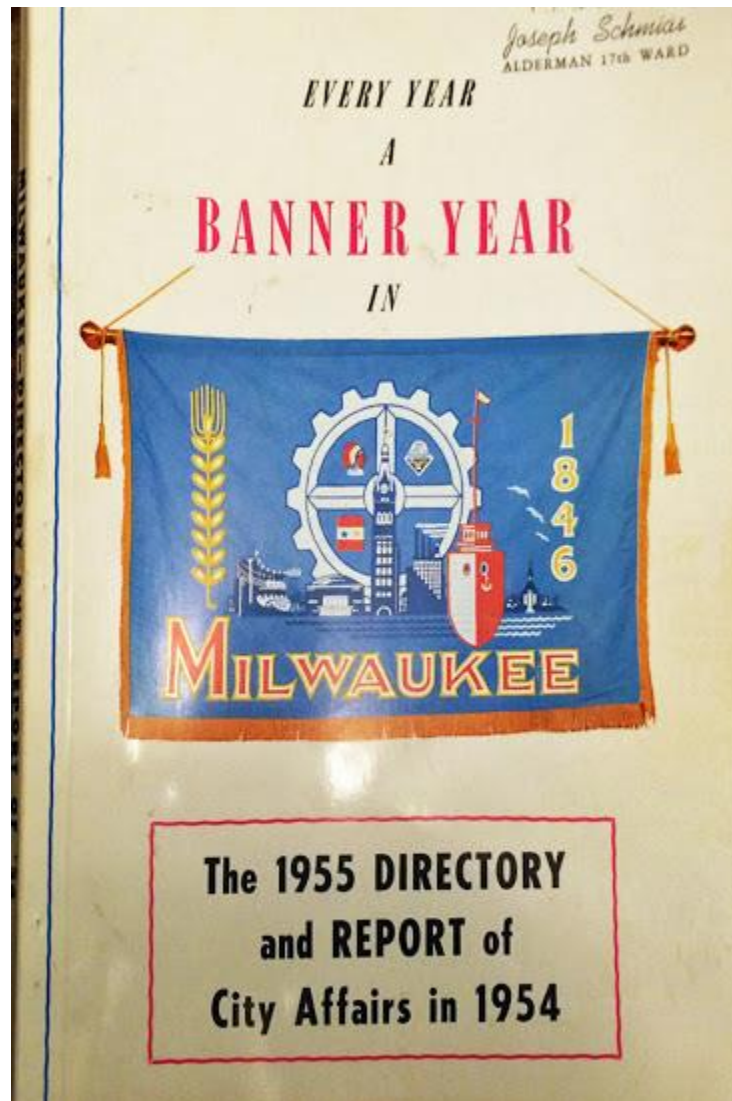
THE CITY OF MILWAUKEE'S NEW FLAG

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Hits Schools 'Marshmallow Dressing'

A charge that the Milwaukee *Sentinel* ...

And so, it was finally done.



At first, the design was exclusively for municipal use. Burghardt's copy was hung on the north wall of the Common Council chambers behind the chair of the president. In 1969 the city began to make copies of the flag available for purchase; until that point the city's few copies had only been loaned out for special occasions.

Even in this relative obscurity, it didn't take long for Steffan's hodgepodge design to wear out its welcome. By the early 1970s, barely two decades after its introduction, Milwaukee's flag had come to be seen as dated and stale. A new contest was created to replace it.

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Only a handful of entries were left Wednesday as the judges picked winners in a competition to design a new City of Milwaukee flag. Judges Leon Travanti (left), Jan Arnow and Ald. John R. Kalwitz (not shown) recommended that a composite flag be designed.

—Sentinel Photo by Richard C. Greenwell Jr.

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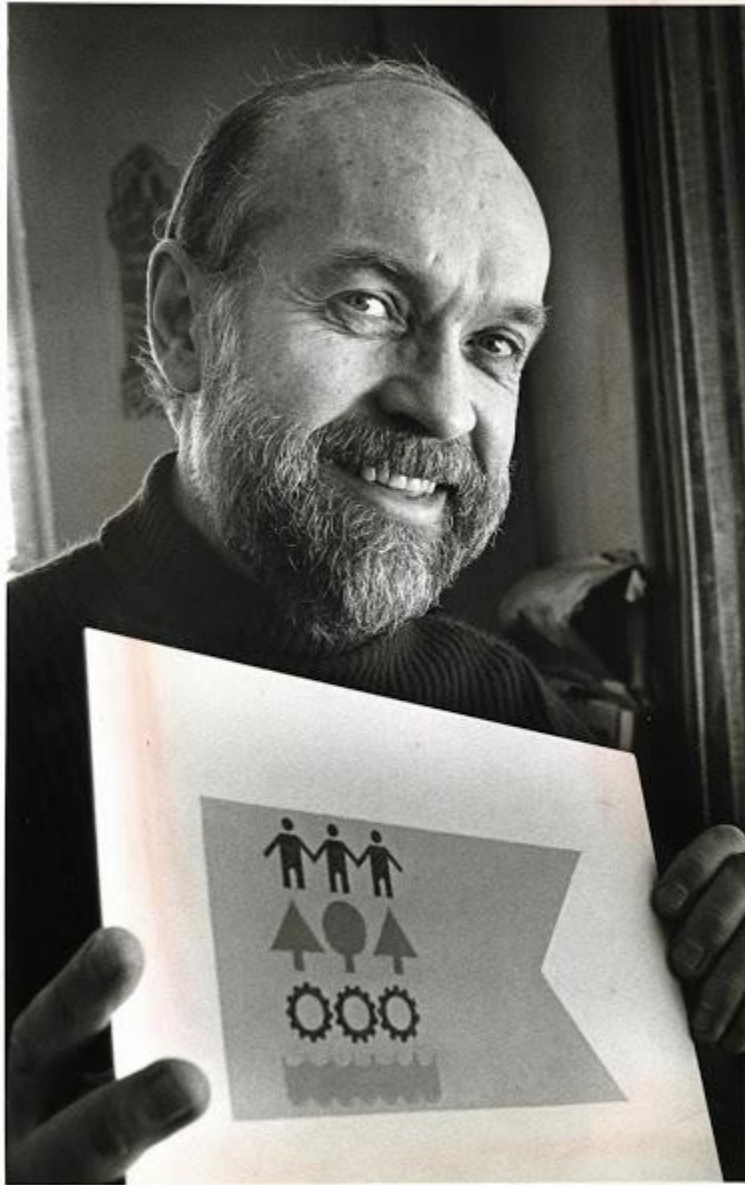
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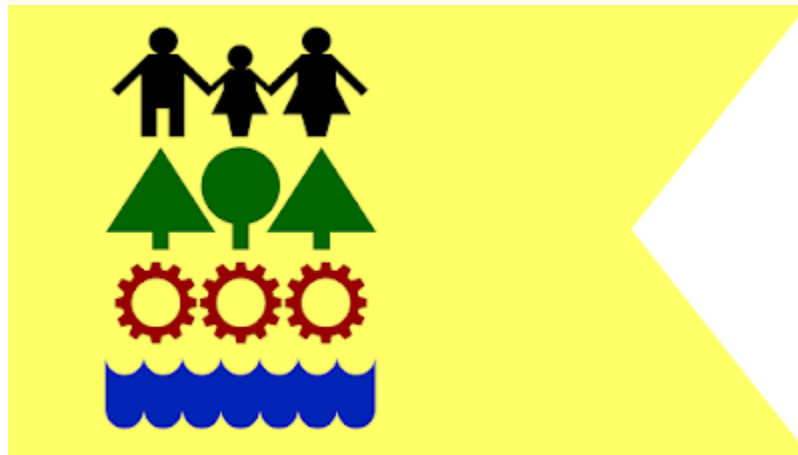
The winner was local artist Lee Tishler, who came up with a notched yellow banner featuring symbols of Milwaukee's people, parks, industry and lakefront.



—Journal Photo

Artist L.G. Tishler displayed his winning design for a new city flag.

Tishler's original entry included three male figures across the top, which were revised to an adult male and female flanking a female child.



It is very 70s in its bold iconography, isn't it?

Like Alfred P. Dannenmann a quarter-century earlier, Tishler was awarded a \$100 savings bond (this time at a ceremony at City Hall), and then his design was quietly shelved. The common council considered borrowing bits and pieces of it for another composite design, but thankfully decided against it.

Tishler's "winning" entry had been entirely forgotten when in 2001 another alderman launched another flag redesign contest. Adding to the poor sense of history, this seems to be when the current flag was mistakenly dated 1955.



By this point, County Stadium had been torn down, a fact that didn't go unnoticed by Alderman Jeff Pawlinski, author of the resolution. Pawlinski was quoted as saying *"I think a change is needed because the old one is obsolete."* His co-sponsor, Alderman Mike D'Amato, was slightly more poetic. *"I think (the city flag) needs to represent who we are as a city now and (in) the future."*

History, wrote Percy Bysshe Shelley, is *"a cyclic poem written by time upon the memories of man."* He must have been familiar with Cream City politics. Once again, prospective designers submitted their ideas, and once again the city found them lacking. This time, the judges found

the entries so uninspiring that, having reluctantly picked five winners, they recommended the common council adopt "none of the above".



Plus ça change, plus c'est la même chose, but can't say I really blame them there. If these finalists were representative of the entries, there's not much to recommend. Each one was an over-designed mess. In January 2002 a council committee voted to delay the process indefinitely, and Pawlinski officially abandoned his quest the following November.

In recent months, the terrible state of the flag has been brought to the public's attention, perhaps more than it ever has before. In May of last year Roman Mars, host of the design/architecture show *99% Invisible* on San Francisco public radio, gave a TED Talk entitled "**The Worst-Designed Thing You've Never Noticed**". That thing was, of course, city flags.

Mars played audio clips from Milwaukee graphic designer **Steve Kodis** and **Ted Kaye**, author of [Good Flag, Bad Flag](#) to talk about municipal flags design: the good, the bad, and the Milwaukee. **Roman Mars:** Even though seal-on-a-bedsheet flags are particularly painful and offensive to me, nothing can quite prepare you for one of the biggest train wrecks in vexillological history. Are you ready? It's the flag of Milwaukee, Wisconsin. (*Laughter*) I mean, it's distinctive, I'll give them that.

Steve Kodis: It was adopted in 1955 (*sic*).

RM: The city ran a contest and gathered a bunch of submissions with all kinds of designs.

SK: And an alderman by the name of Fred Steffan cobbled together parts of the submissions to make what is now the Milwaukee flag.

RM: It's a kitchen sink flag. There's a gigantic gear representing industry, there's a ship recognizing the port, a giant stalk of wheat paying homage to the brewing industry. It's a hot

mess, and Steve Kodis, a graphic designer from Milwaukee, wants to change it.

SK: It's really awful. It's a misstep on the city's behalf, to say the least.

RM: But what puts the Milwaukee flag over the top, almost to the point of self-parody, is on it is a picture of the Civil War battle flag of the Milwaukee regiment.

SK: So that's the final element in it that just makes it that much more ridiculous, that there is a flag design within the Milwaukee flag.

RM: On the flag. Yeah. Yeah. *(Laughter)* Yeah.

Now, Milwaukee is a fantastic city. I've been there. I love it. The most depressing part of this flag, though, is that there have been two major redesign contests. The last one was held in 2001. One hundred and five entries were received.

Ted Kaye: But in the end, the members of the Milwaukee Arts Board decided that none of the new entries were worthy of flying over the city.

RM: They couldn't agree to change that thing! *(Laughter)* That's discouraging enough to make you think that good design and democracy just simply do not go together. But Steve Kotas is going to try one more time to redesign the Milwaukee flag.

SK: I believe Milwaukee is a great city. Every great city deserves a great flag. Kodis is right. Milwaukee deserves a flag that can be a true rallying point for her people.



For inspiration, we need only look to the City of Big Shoulders. Chicago has a truly awesome flag; four red stars on a white field, bordered above and below with pale blue bars.

Chicagoans love it. They fly it everywhere. Not to mention that they'll buy anything with its design.



Chicago's Major League Soccer team even incorporates the city flag into one of their uniforms. And it's beautiful.



Chicago's not alone in that. Washington's soccer team **DC United** has also adopted a flag motif.



You may recognize the District's flag across the eagle; inspired by the Washington family crest, its twin bars and three stars are iconic.

This pennant is as popular in its hometown as Chicago's flag is in its, and has similarly inspired much merchandising.



It's no accident that these flags are so beloved. They feature simple, bold designs that are as versatile as they are distinctive.

These are the five rules of good flag design, as identified by the North American Vexillological Association and extrapolated by Kaye and Mars:

1. **Keep it simple.** The flag should be so simple that a child can draw it from memory.

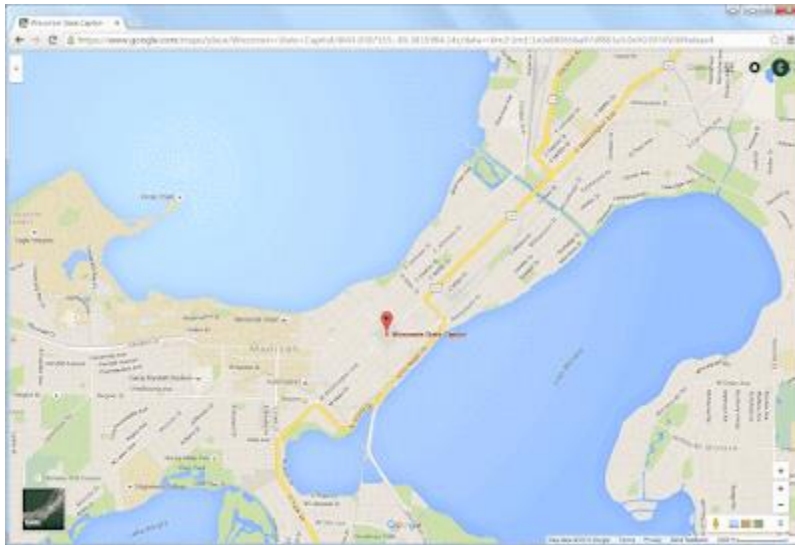
2. **Use meaningful symbolism.** The flag's images, colors or pattern should relate to what it symbolizes.
3. **Use two to three basic colors.** From the standard color set: red, white, blue, green, yellow and black.
4. **No lettering or seals.** Never use writing of any kind. If you need to write the name of what you're representing on your flag, your symbolism has failed.
5. **Be distinctive.**

That Number Four is interesting. What would the judges of the Journal's 1897 contest think?

Chicago's flag ticks all the boxes. As does Washington's. Closer to home, so does the flag of Wisconsin's state capital.



Madison's flag, adopted just seven years after Milwaukee's, is its opposite in virtually every way. It has equally resonant symbolism yet abstracts those symbols into a more powerful design. A white bar separates two light blue fields as the isthmus separates Lakes Mendota and Monona. In the center, the state capital building is represented by a black outline of its footprint.



It's clear, beautiful, and meaningful, especially when contrasted with the glut of images on the Cream City's banner.

We would do well to remember what makes those three flags great, because once again Milwaukee is

reconsidering its own. Maybe.

Steve Kodis was included in the TED Talk because he is spearheading a charge to redesign the city flag.



Kodis [has clearly and concisely articulated the goals](#) behind his drive. He writes in part:

This initiative to redesign Milwaukee's flag is less about the flag itself and more about the way we perceive ourselves. Who we are, and how we visualize it.

I couldn't agree more.

Milwaukee Flag is now accepting submissions through its website MilwaukeeFlag.com. And since I've talked at length about how bad the current flag is, it's only right that I try my hand.

Every designer can submit up to five proposals. I'll let you know when I've settled on mine.

Posted by Chance Michaels at [7:08 AM](#) 

Labels: [County Stadium](#), [video](#)

2 comments:

1. 

[ibadibam](#) March 7, 2016 at 10:22 PM

I can't find a single reference to the miniature flag in any Civil War histories. There were several regiments mustered in Milwaukee, including the "Milwaukee Regiment", the 24th

Infantry. Most of the regimental colors were blue flags with the state seal (today's state flag is based on these flags), although I can't find any documentation on the colors of the 24th.

It's possible that more information about this two-starred flag is available in the original 1954 flag ordinance, on file at the City Legislative Reference Bureau.

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