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#### LOGO AS FLAG:

Texas Commerce Bank  
stick flag. N.d.

JPMorganChase  
archival photograph.

## SMITH CRITIQUE OF VEXILLOLOGICAL DISTAIN FOR “LOGOMANIA,” OR LOGOS ON FLAGS

The National Standard reprints a 1998 letter from Dr. Whitney Smith to the editor of *Flagmaster*. Dr. Smith succinctly summarizes one of the major challenges to vexillology over the last 20 years.

THE FLAG RESEARCH CENTER

29 September 1998

*Flagmaster*  
Flag Institute  
York  
United Kingdom

To the Editor:

In No. 91 a column appear under the title “What Is Logomania?” As it was unsigned, it must be assumed that it represents the view of the Flag Institute or at least of the Editor of *Flagmaster*.

The column attacks the practice of putting logos on a plain field, describing such a design as “a pathetic substitute for a flag” and labeling French regional flags of this type “monstrous.” The implied remedial program suggested—an attack on such designs and the substitution of “beautiful heraldic flags”—was exemplified by the representation of a knight on a horse slaying “the serpent of logomania.” The writer of this letter is in basic sympathy with the opinion that many logos are ill-designed, that the creation of an excellent flag should never be reduced to the simplistic formula of placing a logo (good or bad) on a plain background, and that many flags in the heraldic tradition are indeed esthetically pleasing.

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Texas Commerce Bank  
Logo .....2



**THE BANK OF TEXAS:** The sign at the Dallas location of Texas Commerce Bank, 1986. *Portal to Texas History.*

## THE LOGO OF TEXAS COMMERCE BANK

From at least the early 1970s, Texas Commerce Bank used the elements of the Texas flag in its logo. Texas Commerce Bank was a Texas owned- and operated-bank that operated from 1964 to 1987, when it merged with Chemical Bank New York. It was formed from the 1964 merger of the two largest banks at the time in Houston, the National Bank of Commerce and the Texas National Bank. Those banks were formed through the purchase and merger of several Houston banks, some of which traced their origins to 1886. Famed New Deal financier Jesse H. Jones, chairman of the Reconstruction Finance Corporation, had been associated with the National Bank of Commerce since 1912 as founding director, principal stockholder, president, and chairman. In 1966, the bank adopted the marketing name Texas Commerce Bank; in 1968, it expanded overseas by opening by acquiring a significant stake in a London bank. During the 1970s, it continued expanding throughout Texas by acquiring or merging with a number of smaller banks. After the 1987 authorization of branch banking in Texas, Texas Commerce Bank completed its merger with Chemical New York to create the fourth-largest banking group in the United States. *Sources: Univ. of Houston Lib.; Fort-Worth Star-Telegram.*

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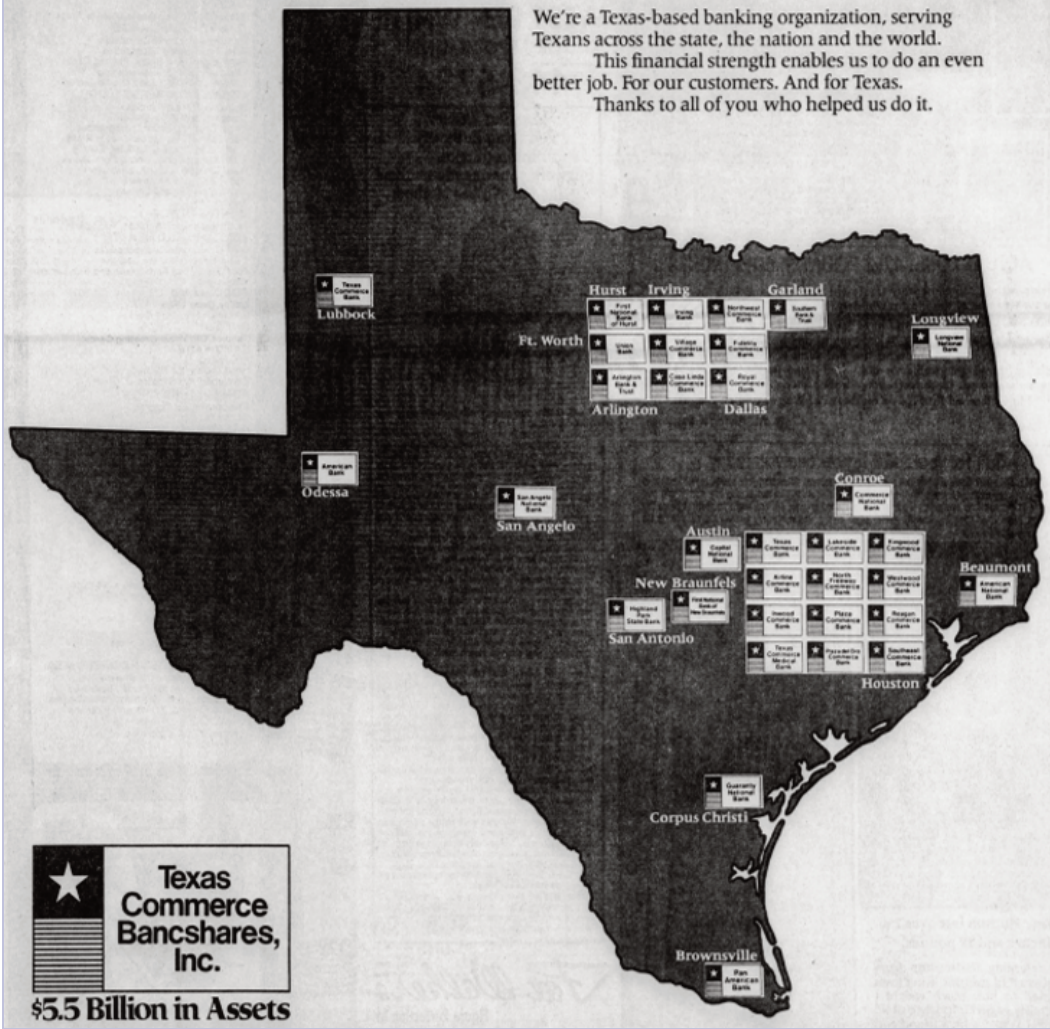
**VEXILLOLOGICAL ASSOCIATION OF THE STATE OF TEXAS**  
**HUGH L. BRADY** FF Acting President | **CHARLES A. SPAIN** WSF Secretary-Treasurer



The members of  
Texas Commerce Bancshares  
welcome The Capital National Bank  
in Austin to our  
family of banks.

**33 banks. \$5.5 billion strong.**

We're a Texas-based banking organization, serving  
Texans across the state, the nation and the world.  
This financial strength enables us to do an even  
better job. For our customers. And for Texas.  
Thanks to all of you who helped us do it.





**Texas  
Commerce  
Bancshares,  
Inc.**

**\$5.5 Billion in Assets**

**THE BANK OF TEXAS:**  
TOP: Bank flag flying in  
New York at time of  
Chemical Bank merger,  
c. 1987.  
*JPMorganChase  
archival photograph.*  
BOTTOM: Newspaper ad-  
vertisement using logo to  
indicate bank locations,  
c. 1980s.  
*JPMorganChase  
archival photographs.*



## SMITH: DISMISSING UNAESTHETIC LOGO FLAGS INDULGES PRECONCEIVED IDEOLOGICAL PREFERENCES

*continued from page 1*

Nevertheless, the writer is very much opposed to the spirit evinced by the concluding sentence of the column—"May we and other vexillological societies do as well [i.e. slay the serpent of logomania]!"—and to similar currents among other vexillological publications and societies. Ultimately, the beauty or ugliness of a flag or coat of arms is a value judgment based on personal taste and preference, a subject which should have no place in a scientific discipline such as vexillology presumes to be. Individuals may well wish to stimulate design excellence and denounce design and usages they find in poor taste, but *as vexillologists* they should be committed to the objective and dispassionate analysis of what symbols exist, how they are employed in human interaction, what changes have taken place over time, and similar questions.

To dismiss logo flags as pathetic and monstrous is to exhibit that unscientific bias usually associated with superpatriots or those with a political bias who filter all information according to their preconceived ideological preferences. The fact of the matter is that "logo flags" not only exist, they are increasing in numbers and usage. Vexillologists are obliged to develop a rigorous analysis of why this is happening, whether they like logos or not. To make an analogy: the doctor dealing with an individual severely injured in an automobile accident cannot throw up her hands and say "This patient looks disgusting! I refuse to operate on him."

Vexillologists are unlikely ever to stem the rising tide of non-traditional designs, but they certainly are in a position to ruin the likelihood that vexillology will some day be recognized by the rest of society—and academia in particular—as serious scholarly study. The image vexillologists have in the media and elsewhere always runs the risk of being a strange group of people who collect colored pictures of a specific kind of object and who have strong prejudices against similar objects considered too ugly to consider collecting. If logomania presents a threat to good flag design, anti-logomania presents an even greater threat to the integrity and vitality of real vexillology.

Sincerely yours,  
Whitney Smith, Ph.D.  
Director

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