

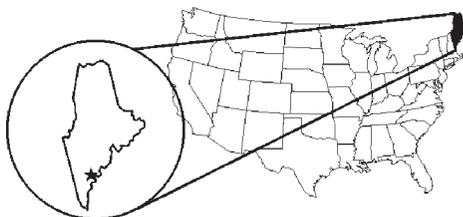
PORTLAND, MAINE



Population Rank: U.S. ... # 428
Maine # 1

Proportions: 3:5 (usage)

Adopted: Unknown (official status uncertain)



DESIGN: Portland's flag has a navy blue field bearing the center portion of the city seal in yellow, approximately half of the hoist width of the flag in diameter. This image (the city's seal excluding its outer ring with inscriptions) shows a shield overlaid on an anchor, three points of which show; one on each side of the shield and one below it. The stock of the anchor appears above the shield and on it perches a phoenix, wings outstretched, facing the fly, clutching an inverted open wreath. The device on the shield is a ship, resembling a Roman galley with oars and sails, sailing on an ocean toward the hoist. The supporters are dolphins curved downwards around the shield and facing each other. The dolphins, shield, phoenix, anchor, and ship are white with blue

details, while the sea is blue with white outlines. Above the seal arches **CITY OF PORTLAND, MAINE**, and curved below it is **RESURGAM**, all in gold.

SYMBOLISM: Portland, a large coastal city, uses many maritime symbols on its flag including the anchor, the dolphins, and the ship upon the sea. The Roman galley may reflect the classical allusions popular in the mid-19th century when the seal was adopted.

What might appear to be a seagull is in fact a phoenix, holding a wreath, a mark of esteem. The phoenix, the mythical bird fabled to consume itself by fire and then rise from its own ashes, is an emblem of immortality and resurrection. Along with the motto, *RESURGAM* (“I arise”), the phoenix alludes to the rebuilding of Portland after it was twice destroyed by fire, first by the Indians in 1690 and later by the British in 1775. In 1866, the seal became an even more appropriate symbol of the city’s destruction and rebuilding when one-third of Portland was consumed in a fire which left 10,000 people homeless.

HOW SELECTED: Unknown. The seal was adopted on 7 January 1835.

DESIGNER: Unknown.

MORE ABOUT THE FLAG: The phoenix as a symbol for Portland can be traced to its use on an early militia color. Recorded in *The Cumberland Gazette* of 25 October 1790: ... *Amongst others, that of a Standard gave great satisfaction. The ground of it is a bright buff, and the device [alluding to Portland’s quick recovery from the two earlier disasters] is happily designed. It represents a Phoenix rising from its ashes.*