



E Pluribus Unum – ‘Out of Many, One’

Great Seals have their origins in the royal seals of the 7th, 8th, and 9th centuries, but the first seal to be called “great” was that of England’s King John (1199-1216).

The Great Seal serves as official emblems and are used in authenticating important documents and representing a nation's values and ideas.

A few hours after the Declaration of Independence was adopted by the Continental Congress appointed a committee (Franklin, Adams, and Jefferson) to design a seal for the United States on July 4, 1776.

In an August 14, 1776 letter to Abigail, John Adams recounted some of the debate. Benjamin Franklin, Adams wrote, suggested “Moses lifting up his wand, and dividing the Red Sea, and Pharoah, in his chariot overwhelmed with the waters,” and the motto, “Rebellion to tyrants is obedience to God.”

Thomas Jefferson imagined Americans as “the children of Israel in the wilderness ... led by a pillar of fire by night,” alongside representations of early Britons “whose political principles and form of government” the United States assumed. Adams concentrated on Hercules, the mythical figure of strength, “resting on his club,” gazing towards a figure of virtue, and impervious to sloth and vice.

The committee consulted with Philadelphia artist Pierre Eugène du

Simitière. Choosing a design of his, with slight changes, for the obverse, and one by Franklin for the reverse, it reported to the Continental Congress on August 20, 1776.

The Continental Congress tabled the report and deferred further action. However, elements carried over into the seal that was adopted: the shield, the motto E Pluribus Unum (“Out of Many, One”) (seemingly suggested by Franklin or Pierre Eugène du Simitière), the “Eye of Providence in a radiant Triangle,” and the date “MDCCLXXVI.”

‘Out of Many, One’ - out of 13 colonies came one nation. As our nation’s motto, E Pluribus Unum speaks of the union between the states and the federal government in order to form a single entity.

Eventually, in 1782, Charles Thomson, Secretary of the Continental Congress, designed a seal to symbolize our country’s strength, unity, and independence. The olive branch and the arrows held in the eagle’s talons denote the power of peace and war.

The eagle always casts its gaze toward the olive branch signifying that our nation desires to pursue peace but is ready to defend itself.

The shield is “born on the breast of an American Eagle without any other supporters to denote that the United States of America ought to rely on their own Virtue,” Thomson explained in his original report.

The seal shares symbolism with the colors of the American flag. In addition, the number 13 — denoting the 13 original states — is represented in the bundle of arrows, the stripes of the shield, and the stars of the constellation.

After undergoing numerous changes, on June 20, 1782, the seal was officially adopted by the Continental Congress.

The Great Seal's design, used as our national coat of arms, is also used officially as decoration on military uniform buttons, on plaques above the entrances to US embassies and consulates, and in other places. Both the seal and the reverse (the reverse is never used as a seal), appear on the one-dollar bill

Today the Secretary of State is the custodian of our national symbol, the Great Seal of the United States. The seal is impressed upon documents such as treaties and commissions, and it is also found on documents such as US passports and the reverse of the \$1 bill.

This broadsheet is dedicated to the 250th Anniversary Celebration of the Declaration of Independence for more information visit the National Society Sons of the American Revolution website at: www.sar.org

Presented by: The Hawaii Society Sons of the American Revolution
<https://hawaiisar.org/> For more:
<https://tinyurl.com/mt9wrw24>