



OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR
STATE CAPITOL
SALEM 97310

GOVERNOR ATIYEH'S MEDALLION

The Governor's medal is a 2-1/2 inch solid bronze medallion produced by Medallic Art Company of Danbury, Connecticut. Medallic Art is the country's leading producer of high-relief fine art medals including Presidential Inaugural medals, the Congressional Medal of Honor and International Olympic Committee Medals. Each of Governor Atiyeh's medallions is numbered and only 275 have been struck. The name of the Governor is engraved on the edge of the medal and they are presented only by him.

One side of the medallion depicts the Oregon State Seal. Although artists have created many artistic renditions of the State Seal, that used on the Governor's medallion is usually referred to as the "modern State Seal," first used on the large carved seal at the base of the rotunda in the State Capitol in Salem.

On May 17, 1859, House Bill 3, providing for a seal of the State of Oregon, was read for the first time. It was signed into law June 2nd of that year by Governor John Whiteaker. The passage of this bill was the culmination of several years of work by a select committee of the Constitutional Convention assigned the job of designing a State Seal. It is generally agreed that Harvey Gordon was the designer of the Oregon State Seal, and that it was he who submitted the basic design to the committee.

From the Journal of the Oregon Constitutional Convention we find the following description of the seal: "... an escutcheon supported by thirty-three stars, and divided by an ordinary, with the inscription, 'The Union.' In chief - mountains, an elk with branching antlers, a wagon, the Pacific Ocean, on which a British man-of-war departing, an American steamer arriving. The second - quartering with a sheaf, plough, and a pick-axe. Crest - the American Eagle. Legend - State of Oregon."

The American Bald Eagle

An adult Bald Eagle has dark blackish-brown body feathers, with white head and tail feathers, yellow feet with large black talons, yellow beak, and eyes ringed in black. At about sixteen pounds with a six and one-half foot wingspan, this eagle appears smaller when it is perched or nested, but when it is in flight, the size, power, agility, and grace of this bird may be fully realized. The pastel study of the American Bald Eagle is the sixth in a series of eagle studies by Jim Sargent. The first in the series was a pencil drawing, also of the Bald Eagle and was featured on the 1992 Silver Eagle Company calendar and limited edition print series. This year the pastel study of the American Bald Eagle was selected to be reproduced on the 1997 calendar and print series because this eagle has been the visual image used by the Silver Eagle Company for many years and will continue to be in the future. This art series of eagles has illustrated rare birds of prey from parts of the world that hold these birds in very high esteem. The Harpy Eagle is the national symbol of Panama. The Phillippine Eagle, the African Fish Eagle, and the Golden Eagle all share the same mantle of dignity and admiration in their world. Even in the most remote jungles of the world, where the tribes of people compete with these birds of prey for food, the tribes keep these birds, not as pets, but as symbols of the power and nobility of the people in the tribe. The American Bald Eagle is the national symbol of the United States, and as such, this symbol has been reproduced in every conceivable fashion with every visual medium possible for the last 220 years. Currency, stamps, documents, seals, stocks, bonds, and art have fueled the public awareness of the Bald Eagle. Thousands of companies and associations in the country use the word "Eagle" in the title of their companies or the visual image of an eagle in association with their name, including the U.S. Postal Service. Electronic promotion, print advertising and mass image projection programs may have made the American Bald Eagle the most recognizable image in the world. In this country, where most people have never seen a Bald Eagle, it is illegal for anyone, except a Native American, to have even a feather of the eagle the rest of the world views as the bird of freedom. The artist, photographers, art directors and image makers have a historical responsibility to consider along with producing their art because a beautiful visual image of the American Bald Eagle will surely outlive its creator.

Understanding the Subject

"Alis Volat Propriis" is the Latin motto for the State of Oregon. "She flies with her own wings" is the translation. In 1859 when the Oregon Territory became the State of Oregon, the state motto was replaced on the state seal with the words "The Union" to declare strong support to the United States at this critical period of time just before the start of the Civil War. The state motto has never returned to the state seal as it was on the original territorial seal. The original territorial seal was engraved in New York in 1840 and reflected both a limited state of the art in engraving and a lack of understanding about the Oregon territory. The engravers in New York had put a Mohawk Indian on the Oregon seal, along with the other five main elements handled in the same assuming fashion. In 1983 governor Victor Atiyeh personally contracted Jim Sargent to research the original territorial seal, to review all available drawings and related documents, and to draw a modern rendition of the territorial seal of the state of Oregon. This new rendition was to be cast in bronze as "The Governor's Medal," a 2 1/2 inch medallion with the state seal on one side, the new territorial seal on the other side, and the governor's name engraved on the eagle of the medallion. Just 275 numbered medallions were to be cast by Medallion Art in Danbury, Connecticut, the country's leading producer of high relief fine art medals, including the presidential inaugural medals, the congressional medal of honor, and the international olympic committee medals. These special medals are to be presented only by former Governor Victor Atiyeh to individuals and heads of state that do exceptional things for the State of Oregon. Wow! What an opportunity for me! The Oregon Historical Society provided me the historical writing and photo reference material for all the elements for the seal except one, the eagle. The historical writing called the bird "The American Eagle" not a Bald Eagle and stated that it should be depicted as about to take off in flight. After several trips to the library and hundreds of photos of the American Eagle, I still had no answer to the questions about the difference between takeoff and landings. How should the wings be drawn to illustrate lift-off not landing? Though such a small point, this detail was holding me up. I had drawn and painted eagles many times, even used one on my business card, but it was at this moment that I realized that I had never seen a Bald Eagle, not even at a zoo. Now the sleepless nights began. I was going to blow the opportunity of a lifetime over a very small detail. If by some miracle I could take one of the many photos I had of the Eagle landing and draw it on the seal, who would really know? Everyone! I don't think I could even get it past former Governor Atiyeh. He's also an artist and very much detail oriented, and if I did get it past him, it would be cast in bronze, forever exposing my lack of knowledge. After three weeks of controlled panic, I found a bird expert that clearly explained to me the wing action of the Bald Eagle in lift-off and how it differs from landing, and I was able to complete this project. The subject of the artwork for this year's Silver Eagle Company calendar and limited edition print series are the eyes of the eagle from a distance that most people will never see--very close. I have seen many photos, taken with a telephoto lens of these same views, but my inspiration for the artwork came from a moment in 1992, on Whidbey Island, Washington when I was less than ten feet away from an American Bald Eagle. It is common knowledge that an eagle's eyesight is six times more powerful than a man's, but an eagle uses its eyes to communicate also--by means of communication more powerful than words.

Thank you for your interest in my work.

Jim Sargent


Note:

The governor's medal was awarded first place in an international competition for bronze casting in New York in 1985. On December 27, 1993 Victor Atiyeh, Governor of the State of Oregon, 1979-1987, presented the governor's medal No. 193 to Jim Sargent.

JIM SARGENT

ARTIST



YOU MAY CALL ME AT

541-878-3799

JIM SARGENT

ARTIST



YOU MAY CALL ME AT

541-878-3799