

**HOW MANY TIMES DO PATTERNS OF 13 APPEAR
ON THE GREAT SEAL OF THE UNITED STATES?
SEE WHAT YOU CAN FIND.**

FRONT:



- 13 stars in the constellation
- 13 letters in E PLURIBUS UNUM
- 13 stripes in the shield
- 13 arrows in the bunch
- 13 leaves in the olive branch
- 13 olives on the branch



The shield, or escutcheon, stands without support, indicative of an independent nation



Stars in the first Seal had a random pattern, only later did they take the modern fixed arrangement

BACK:



- 13 letters in ANNUIT CŒPTIS (counting the O and E separately)
- 13 levels in the pyramid



The eye of providence appeared in the first concept sketch for the Seal



Middle School student Annie Lee's vision of the Seal's future meaning emphasizes the importance of national unity amid a diverse U.S. populace, a theme as essential today as it was over 225 years ago

THE UNITED STATES DIPLOMACY CENTER

Dedicated to increasing public awareness of diplomacy and the work of the U.S. Department of State, the U.S. Diplomacy Center, Bureau of Public Affairs produces traveling exhibitions and organizes conferences and educational programs. Currently the Center is developing a permanent exhibition hall with interactive displays and education programs that will tell the story of American Diplomacy and help prepare youth for the global challenges of tomorrow.

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For more information about the Seal, the Bureau of Public Affairs, U.S. Department of State has produced an illustrated booklet to download free from the internet at <http://www.state.gov/documents/organization/27807.pdf>. For a detailed study, readers can turn to *The Eagle and the Shield: A History of the Great Seal of the United States* by Richard S. Patterson and Richardson Dougall, reprinted in 2005.

Paul Claussen's career at the Office of the Historian, Bureau of Public Affairs, Department of State lasted from 1972-2007. He brought great knowledge to shaping the content of the exhibition during the planning phase.

Sadly, Paul passed away April 21, 2007. We hope by dedicating this exhibition to him we can show our appreciation for his great contribution to diplomatic history.



THE GREAT SEAL
of the
UNITED STATES



*Celebrating the 225th Anniversary
of the Great Seal
of the United States:
Past, Present and Future*

**This exhibition celebrates
the Seal's role in our nation's
history and the meaning it holds
for future generations.**



**Dedicated to the Memory of M. Paul Claussen,
Diplomatic Historian, Office of the Historian,
U. S. Department of State**

**Presented by the U.S. Department of State,
Bureau of Public Affairs, United States Diplomacy Center**

Meanings of the Symbols on the Great Seal of the United States

The eagle, shield, olive branch and arrows; constellation with its overhead clouds, rays and stars; the pyramid and all-seeing eye on the back captured the essence of the new nation our Founding Fathers sought to establish.

Even though the U.S. existed in the minds and hearts of its founders, the country also had to be recognized among the other nations of the world. On July 4, 1776 the signers of the Declaration of Independence asked John Adams, Benjamin Franklin and Thomas Jefferson to create a Great Seal of the United States.

It took three committees, six years and several artists to complete the project. In 1782 the Continental Congress approved a design by Charles Thomson, the Secretary of the Congress, which artist William Barton modified. Since then, the Seal essentially has not changed.



Signing the Declaration of Independence in 1776, back of the current two dollar bill.



Harriston Association, Bryn Mawr, PA

Charles Thomson, Secretary of the Continental Congress created the 1782 design for the Great Seal with help from William Barton



National Archives

First sketch of the Great Seal by Charles Thomson



Historical Society of Pennsylvania

Artist William Barton added finishing touches to the front, designed the back of the Seal, and described the Seal's heraldic symbolism

The final drawing incorporated ideas from earlier drafts. These included the motto, “E PLURIBUS UNUM” (“FROM MANY, ONE”), the eye of providence and shield from artist Pierre du Simitière’s first sketch in 1776.



Library of Congress

Pierre du Simitière illustrated unity by placing the arms or symbols of the 13 states around the outside of the new nation’s shield; and on the inside, the arms of six countries that contributed large populations to the U.S.—England, Scotland, Ireland, France, the Netherlands and Austro-Hungary.

Symbols on the Front or Obverse

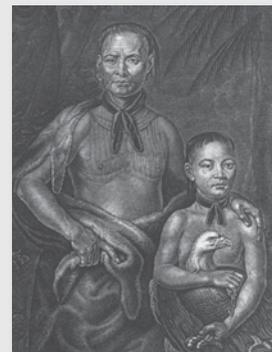
Along with the motto “E PLURIBUS UNUM,” (“FROM MANY, ONE”) the shield’s vertical stripes represent the 13 states, while the blue bar across the top stands for Congress, the Federal system, uniting the country under one government.



In 1782, describing symbols on the Seal he devised, Charles Thomson wrote, “The Olive branch and arrows denote the power of peace & war which is exclusively vested in Congress.” The eagle always faces the olive branch, never the arrows.

The power and authority, virtue and strength of the eagle safeguards unity under its outstretched wings.

The eagle holds the olive branch in its right claw, the arrows in its left



Library of Congress

Colonists observed Native American reverence for the bald eagle, which this c.1700 picture illustrates.

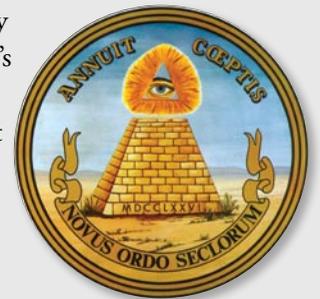
THE SEAL STANDS FOR INDEPENDENCE

Look closely at the Seal. Nothing supports the shield or binds it to the eagle. According to Thomson, “The Escutcheon [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.—”

Clouds float above the eagle, encircling a blue background decorated with 13 stars, surrounded by a ring of light rays. The constellation proclaims a new and independent State taking its place among other sovereign powers.

Symbols on the Back or Reverse

Artist William Barton, who worked closely with Charles Thomson to modify the Seal’s front, created the design that essentially became its reverse. The U.S. has never cut a die for the reverse, but its image appears on the back of the one dollar bill.



THE SEAL STANDS FOR STRENGTH

The pyramid signifies strength and duration—a hope for the future of the new republic. To illustrate that building a nation is a work in progress, the pyramid remains unfinished, without its pointed top.

THE SEAL STANDS FOR PROVIDENCE FAVORING OUR UNDERTAKINGS

The eye and motto “ANNUIT COEPTIS,” (“HE [GOD] HAS FAVORED OUR UNDERTAKINGS”), allude to providence guiding unusual events that favored the American cause. The date, 1776 (MDCCLXXVI) and motto “NOVUS ORDO SECLORUM” (“A NEW ORDER OF THE AGES”) make clear that a new system of democratic rule by the people had begun.