

## About the Oregon State Seal

A committee composed of three prominent Oregonians presented the design for the seal to the Constitutional Convention of 1857. The design chosen was submitted by Harvey Gordon (1828-1862), who was by profession a surveyor.

This seal was adopted as the last official act of the territorial legislature in 1857. In 1859, the new state legislature added a thirty-third star to indicate that Oregon was the thirty-third state admitted to the Union. Since the adoption, many versions of the state seal have been issued by various departments and agencies of government. Some included a setting sun and some have the eagle's head turned the opposite way. Because of the resulting confusion about which seal issued was official, Governor Tom McCall, who served as the state's top leader from 1967 to 1975, asked all state departments to follow the bronze seal on the floor of the Capitol rotunda, even though it has a setting sun, which is not included in the official description.

As originally adopted, the seal consists of a shield supported by 33 stars. The words "The Union" are on the banner in the middle. Above the banner are mountains, an elk with branching antlers, a wagon, the Pacific Ocean on which a British man-of-war ship is departing, and an American steamer ship arriving. Below the banner is a sheaf, a plough, and a pick-axe. Above the shield is a crest in the form of an American eagle. The legend surrounding the seal is "State of Oregon" and "1859."



The bronze state seal on the floor of the Oregon State Capitol rotunda.

The components of the seal each have symbolic significance. "1859" signifies the date of Oregon's admission into the Union. The 33 stars show that Oregon was the thirty-third state to join the Union. The American eagle at the top denotes the Union of the States -- Peace Through Strength -- depicted by the olive branch and the arrows. The fact that Oregon was never wholly dominated or governed by a foreign power is shown by the British man-of-war ship leaving while the American steamer is arriving.

## **Suggestions for teachers**

Ask students to:

- Design a school or class symbol. They can also design their own personal seals.
- Discuss the meaning of each the components of the state seal.
- Compare the Oregon state seal with seals from other states. What are the similarities and differences?
- Draw the state seal.

Source: Oregon Blue Book