

The great seal of the United States of America



The first committee on the great seal was formed on the afternoon of July 4, 1776 and consisted of Benjamin Franklin, Thomas Jefferson and John Adams. The great seal as finally adapted was largely the work of Charles Thomson, Secretary of Congress; and William Barton a private citizen of Philadelphia. The design was officially adapted on June 20, 1782, by fundamental law (Constitution). The great seal was again ratified after the Constitution was adapted in 1789.

The great seal of the United States of America is the only Government seal in the world to have two sides. The face depicts an American eagle, representing national sovereignty, which is breasted by our national shield.

The eagle is holding in its right talon an olive branch of 13 leaves and 13 olives symbolizing peace. In the left talon are 13 arrows signifying the original colonies fight for liberty. A ribbon held in the eagle's beak is inscribed "E PLURIBUS UNUM" or "One out of many", in reference to the unity of the 13 colonies as one Government. Over the eagle's head is a grouping of 13 stars wreathed in clouds, again representing the original colonies.

The pyramid on the reverse of the great seal represents permanence and strength. Its unfinished condition denotes the belief of the great seal's designers

that there was yet work to be done. This means that the United States will always grow, build, and improve with a continuous evaluation of truth. The 13 layers of stone in the pyramid refer to the 13 original states and the individual rights of states. The separate stones represent local self-government.

The words "ANNUIT COEPTIS" mean "God has favored our undertakings" or "enterprise". At the bottom are the words "NOVUS ORDO SECLORUM" meaning the "New order of the ages". At the base of the pyramid is the Roman inscription for 1776, the year our country was founded. Both mottoes on the reverse are condensations of excerpts from Virgil's Aeneid.

The "Eye of Providence" within a glory of light place above the pyramid represents an all-seeing Deity meaning spiritual above the material. It also represents education and freedom of knowledge. According to Treasury records, the only previous use of the reverse of the great seal was in 1882, when a centennial medal was issued by the United States Mint to celebrate the 100th anniversary of the great seal's adoption.

Researched by Leonard (Lenny) Rowland Co-founder of AACC