

Iowa's Bicentennial Medal

Lyle Bruere

THE NATION'S BICENTENNIAL CELEBRATION in 1976 will be a time to renew our patriotic spirit; to perpetuate the memory of our country's founders, the men and women who fought in the American Revolution. Likewise it will be an occasion to become better acquainted with the brave pioneers who settled Iowa.

A ground swell of interest in genealogical records has already begun and, by 1976, will undoubtedly involve increasing numbers of persons in the exploration of our young country's history. The Bicentennial, however, will be more than looking back. It will be a time to look ahead. Hopefully the past 200 years of progress through trial and error will provide a measuring stick for the next 200 years. This sentiment is portrayed in Iowa's Bicentennial Medal. A contemporary interpretation of the international symbol for the plow is shown against a concave, frosted surface background. Silhouetted behind the plow on a slender pick is the clover-leaf symbol for Iowa—"A Place to Grow." This design symbolizes, in a tasteful, artistic manner, both the agricultural heritage of the state and the hallmark of growth for the future of Iowa. It's just possible that when Iowans celebrate the Tricentennial and look back to see what was used as our Bicentennial logo, they'll be impressed by our futuristic design.

The design for Iowa's Bicentennial medal was first exhibited for public view on May 26, 1972 when Governor Robert Ray presented a \$5,000 check from the Franklin Mint to the artist, Mrs. I. Virginia Kreye-Janowski of rural Solon. The AP, UPI wire services, Des Moines and Cedar Rapids TV stations, Des Moines radio newsmen and a *Des Moines Register* photographer-reporter worked quietly during the presentation, which took place in the State House. Caught up in the whirl of the cameras was Mr. Tadeus Janowski, an



Photograph by John Kelley

Pictured above is Mrs. I. Virginia Kreye-Janowski, in white, whose design (displayed on the cover of this issue) will be used on Iowa's Bicentennial Medal and other memorabilia during 1976. In this picture the artist stands beside Governor Robert Ray who presented her with a \$5,000 check from the Franklin Mint. The happy lady is presenting Francis J. Fitzpatrick, Jr., vice president of the Franklin Mint, to the Governor. Looking on are the author, Lyle Bruere (Mrs. Edwin W.), far left, and Robert M. Stone, center background, both members of Iowa's Bicentennial Commission.

eminent architect in Poland, Canada and the United States, who had flown from Syracuse, New York to attend the presentation. Mrs. Janowski's father, Dr. George W. Kreye, retired head of the modern language department at Boston University, had flown from that city for the ceremony.

Dr. Kreye proudly watched his daughter as she discussed her design with the Governor and the press. Mrs. Janowski told the press, "I owe my success to Tadeus; he's my teacher and mentor." Her children, Randy, eleven, and Heather, nine, stayed close to their mother and smiled gently as the Governor greeted them with handshakes.

Francis J. Fitzpatrick Jr., vice president of the Franklin Mint, Franklin Center, Pennsylvania, had flown in the night before the presentation. With him was John Kelley, Franklin's staff photographer. Robert Stone of Chariton, member of the Iowa American

Revolution Bicentennial Commission, and myself completed the official party. While the occasion was a dignified one, the sincere and warm informality of the Governor was contagious; the resulting atmosphere was personal, comfortable, and one of much happiness. Mrs. Janowski had entered the contest in February, 1972 while completing her degree in Education and Art at the University of Iowa. The slender, attractive brunette, a thirty-year-old mother from rural Solon, had submitted a design that was chosen from among 220 entries in the competition for first place in the Iowa Bicentennial Medal contest. Within minutes after the official ceremony acknowledging her design as the winner, the mass communications media had the picture and story on the wires and in the air. During the next thirty-six hours many Iowans read, saw and heard about the state's Bicentennial design. During the next three years, countless more will come to know it.

But the mass media lacked the time and space to delve into the events, extending over a year's time, which culminated in this fifteen-minute ceremony. The media was not able to present much more than the highlights. For instance, the enthusiasm for the design that won third place and will be used during the Bicentennial, the many people and decisions involved—these aspects of the medal competition couldn't be detailed in today's fast-moving media. Yet, the how and why of Iowa's Bicentennial medal design will be of interest to Iowans in general, history buffs in particular, and it is hoped that this article will reveal the whole story.

Congress Instituted Commission

On July 4, 1966, a national American Revolution Bicentennial Commission was established by the United States Senate and House of Representatives. The purpose of the Bicentennial of the American Revolution celebration program is to remind all Americans and citizens of the world of the freedom that exists in the United States, what it has meant in the past, what it means today, and how it may contribute to the future welfare of the world in mankind's quest for freedom.

In 1970, Iowa's sixty-third General Assembly passed an act creating the Iowa American Revolution Bicentennial Commission, and appropriated \$1,000 at its inception. Governor Ray appointed seven members to the Commission and designated Robert W. Dillon, retired general manager of KRNT Properties, as temporary chairman.

Other appointees were: C. Robert Brenton, Brenton Banks, Des Moines; Donald N. Kersten, attorney, Fort Dodge; William G. Murray, professor of economics at Iowa State in Ames and one of the organizers of the Living History Farms; Donald C. Muhm, farm editor, the *Des Moines Register*, and recipient of many journalistic awards; Robert M. Stone, owner of Travel Host, Inc., Des Moines, and resident of Chariton, where he is affiliated with the Golden Rod Farms; and myself, Lyle Bruere, from Cedar Rapids.¹

Each appointee realized that for the next six years he, or she, would be voluntarily devoting his or her time, talent and expenses toward the realization of a successful Bicentennial in Iowa.

The legislature designated fourteen additional persons to serve on the Commission: Melvin Synhorst, Secretary of State; Charles O. Laverty, senator from Indianola; Lee H. Gaudineer, Jr., senator from Des Moines; Charles E. Knoblauch, representative from Carroll and Donald D. Alt, representative from West Des Moines; Dr. William J. Peterson, who was at the time superintendent of the State Historical Society, Iowa City; Jack W. Musgrove, curator, Iowa Department of History and Archives, Des Moines; Fred Prierwert, director State Conservation Commission; Willard Boyd, W. Robert Parks, and John J. Kamerick, presidents of University of Iowa, Iowa State University, and University of Northern Iowa, respectively; Chad A. Wymer, director of Iowa Development Commission; Steve Zumbach, who was at the time president of the student body at Iowa State University; and Kenneth R. Fulk, secretary of the Iowa State Fair Board. Dr. Peterson is now consultant and superintendent emeritus of the Historical Society; his chair was filled by Dr. Peter Harstad, who succeeded him as superintendent. Senators Laverty and Gaudineer and Representative Alt chose not to run for re-election. Appointed to fill their chairs were Senator Forrest W. Schwengels of Fairfield, Senator Norman Rodgers of Altoona, and Representative Quentin V. Anderson of Ellston. Former Representative Knoblauch is still at the legislature, but as a member of the lobby. At this writing his vacancy has not been filled. Administrative Assistant William Jackson attends

¹ I was nominated by Cedar Rapids Attorney Gerald T. Sullivan. I wish to express my gratitude to Mr. Sullivan as well as attorneys B. D. Silliman, Raymond R. Stefani, Forrest W. Rosser and businessmen Theodore A. Johnson and Clifford H. Jordan for their recommendations. I am indebted to Representative Joan Lipsky and former Representative Ivor Stanley, who made personal calls on the Governor in my behalf.

Commission meetings and is our link with Governor Ray. Senator C. Joseph Coleman of Clair, chairman of the World Food Exposition Study Committee, is often present at Bicentennial meetings, as are the proxies for the three university presidents: Max Hawkins for the University of Iowa, George Hamilton for Iowa State, and Dr. Edward Voldseth for the University of Northern Iowa.

The Commission scheduled its first meeting for January 5, 1971, but a mighty blizzard dumped tons of snow and ice onto Iowa and only ten persons, nine from Des Moines and Don Kersten of Fort Dodge² were able to make their way to the capital. Another meeting was immediately called for January 14, the date of the Governor's inauguration.

Reluctant Chairman

At this well-attended meeting, Robert Dillon presided as temporary chairman, but stated he was reluctant to accept the permanent chairmanship. Later he deferred to the wishes of the Governor and Commission members. During the next year, Bob Dillon referred to himself, and members referred to him affectionately, as "the reluctant chairman." That title was to change, as will be seen later.

Numerous meetings were required in order to adequately discuss and launch Bicentennial plans for the state. I was elected a member of the Commission's Steering Committee.³ Gradually, under the direction of Bob Dillon, who gave more of his time than anyone else—sometimes attending five meetings a week—the Iowa Bicentennial Commission began moving ahead. Members worked as a team, projects began to take shape, and carefully selected goals emerged.

Privately-owned mints began contacting the Commission regarding a Bicentennial medal. Among them was the Franklin Mint which was completing plans to mint Bicentennial Medals for each of the

² Kersten was snow-bound with his car as transportation, but he is a licensed pilot and occasionally flies to Bicentennial meetings. He is past president of the Balloon Federation of America and has flown hot air balloons here and abroad. He is also a glider pilot and sky diver. At a meeting in February 1973, Kersten was elected vice chairman of the Bicentennial Commission.

³ For the convenience of legislators, meetings are often scheduled in late afternoon and adjourn before dinner, but after dark. I'm indebted to Mr. and Mrs. Norman C. Johnson who offered me a guest room in their Walnut Hill home for the six years this commission will be functioning.

fifty states. The Commission considered each company, examining the proposals, estimating the results, having the state's Attorney General examine certain points and clarify others, and ultimately deciding which offer would be best, in all respects, for the people of Iowa.

In early 1972, the Franklin Mint announced it was sponsoring a national contest for Bicentennial Medal designs. Under the auspices of the mint, individual competitions were to be held in each state with the winning designs to be part of a set of fifty medals. The Franklin Mint planned to sell complete sets of medals by subscription. This would be accomplished well in advance of the Bicentennial, at which time individual state medals would be available to the public. The contest was advertised in *Life* magazine and art and numismatic magazines. Contest information was sent to art departments in universities and colleges as well as to art centers.

The Bicentennial Commission was informed of Franklin's contest and, after several meetings, terms amiable to both parties were reached. In essence, the Commission would be responsible for the state's design competition and the Franklin Mint would finance it in return for our Iowa expertise. There was to be no endorsement implied and no other obligation on the part of the Commission.

Commissioners felt this was a fine opportunity! By selecting the judges they would have an element of control over the medal design chosen. Commission members hoped—and their hopes were realized—that a design would be selected which could be used as Iowa's official Bicentennial Medal to be sold individually in 1976; there would be no obligation to have individual medals minted by Franklin; the \$10,000 prize money from the Franklin Mint to be awarded the top four Iowa winners would save the taxpayers the much smaller amount of money the Commission could award; tax money needn't be spent for advertising, promotion, or postage, and the prize money and advertising, administered by the Franklin Mint would stimulate submission of quality designs.⁴

On February 25, at a meeting in the State House, Chairman Dillon appointed me chairman of Iowa's Medal Competition. Others appointed were: Representative Don Alt and Dr. Edward Voldseth,

⁴ I reviewed analyses of the Franklin Mint and was happy with the findings. The company has a respected standing among world governments and a reputation for fine workmanship and integrity.

vice president at the University of Northern Iowa, representing President Kamerick.

Iowa's Panels of Experts

Franklin Mint had suggested that five outstanding Iowans be selected to function as a judging panel. The panel's first meeting would be for the purpose of selecting ten semi-finalists. These ten entrees would then be examined by Franklin's National Advisory Panel and returned to Iowa where our judges would meet again to make the final decision on first, second, third and fourth place winners. We felt it might be a more thorough approach to have two separate panels of judges instead of one—and to have sixteen experts in art, history, numismatic and business fields judge the Iowa designs, instead of five. In some states the Bicentennial Commissions appointed five of its own members. Other states were at a disadvantage because appointments to their Bicentennial Commission weren't completed until 1972. By comparison, Iowa's Bicentennial Commission had been meeting steadily and often for two years! We had experience and the confidence to make Iowa's contest different from the other forty-nine states.

Knowledgeable Iowans were asked to recommend qualified judges for the medal competition. Nominees' credentials and qualifications were verified and each was recommended personally by a second person in his community before being asked to become a member of the judging panel. A time consuming process? Yes. But by the 10th of March, 1972, Iowa had two panels of carefully selected judges of the highest calibre; a panel of twelve individuals for the semi-final judging and a panel of five for final judging.

The Franklin Mint was impressed with Iowa's excellent cross-section of judges and the balance between history and art experts on each panel. I was impressed too, and to inform the public, I released the names of the judges to the AP, UPI, and sent individual releases announcing each judge's appointment and acceptance to the newspapers in his locale. The semi-final judges were: Robert W. Dillon; Mrs. Joe Patrick, director art education program, Des Moines Art Center; Professor Condon Kuhl, art department Drake University and recipient of a first place award from the Sterling Silversmiths Guild of America, all of Des Moines. Other judges were: Professor Louis Glenn Zirkle, art department, Grinnell College; Dr.

Leland L. Sage, professor of history, emeritus, University of Northern Iowa, Cedar Falls and author of a forthcoming book on Iowa history, *History of Iowa* (Iowa State University Press, 1972); and Donn Young, director, Cedar Rapids Art Center. Completing the panel of semi-final judges were: Dr. John Christianson, chairman, history department at Luther College and assistant director of the Norwegian-American museum, Decorah; Dean Robert Ray, University of Iowa, and Dean G. Oakes, president of the Iowa Numismatic Association, both of Iowa City; Representative Don Alt of West Des Moines and Senator Gene Glenn of Ottumwa, with myself as chairman.

Historic Date

April 19 is the anniversary of the Battles of Lexington and Concord and it seemed a fitting date on which to begin the selection of Iowa's Bicentennial Medal. Eleven judges met at the Cedar Rapids Art Center for the task. Senator Glenn was unable to attend. Miss Jane Passmen, account executive for the Franklin Mint, was present and of invaluable help in answering questions: The size of the medal? How would a particular design mint? Could we make certain suggestions or alterations on any design? Would the edges of the medal be embellished or plain? What about the back of the medal?

The task of judging 220 entries was difficult but pleasant. The judges performed as efficiently as possible considering there were so many entries. All entries were of standard size, encased and sealed in plastic. The lower left corner of each was screened out, making it impossible to identify contestants. The panel's desire was to select a design befitting *all* Iowans. Designs which depicted certain geographical sections of the state were appraised, but the panel felt that since every part of Iowa has something of outstanding historical significance, it would be impossible to single out one as being more important than the rest. Entries which had more local than statewide interest included the following: the Floyd Monument at Sioux City; the Shot Tower at Dubuque; the Carillon Tower at Iowa State University at Ames; the Midwest Old Settlers and Threshers Reunion at Mount Pleasant; the first state capitol at Iowa City; the present one at Des Moines; Knoxville, the home of Dixie Cornell Gebhard, who was DAR State Regent when the Iowa DAR designed the Iowa flag, then presented the copyright to the state; and the Little Brown Church at Nashua.

Other entries were of Herbert Hoover; Dr. James A. Van Allen, world renowned physicist from the University of Iowa, Iowa City; Iowa's Nobel Peace Prize winner, Dr. Norman Borlaug of Cresco, and the late artist Grant Wood of Cedar Rapids.

One of the most memorable entries was of the Indian massacre at Spirit Lake. Since it was impossible to identify the artists, one can only surmise that this entry came from a child. It was gratifying to think of this youngster, deciding on this historical event, and actually caring enough to draw an entry for Iowa's Bicentennial Medal Competition.

After considering all 220 entries, the judges used the following system to select Iowa's ten semi-finalists. Any judge could select any number of designs as worthy of serious consideration and have them pinned to the wall mat. All hanging entries were appraised and discussed before each judge voted for the ten designs he or she had chosen as the best. Ballots were opened and read, and all entries except those receiving at least one vote were removed from the competition. After more study of the remaining entries, the judges wrote their ballots again, rating each entry according to the following point system:

A maximum of five points for Aptness (in regard to appropriately commemorating the contributions of Iowa to the heritage of the nation).

A maximum of three points for Originality of Design.

A maximum of two points for Artistic Merit (considering the design as a commemorative medal).

The ten entries receiving the most points were declared semi-finalists. Panel members had some problems and frustrations, but eleven experts agreeing on ten designs out of 220 speaks well for the judges! In a letter to me, Dr. John Christianson noted that the expertise of many fields contributed to the achievement. "Thank you for the pleasure of serving on your committee," he wrote, in part. "You brought together a most enjoyable group of judges with a wide range of interests . . . We chose the ten semi-finalist designs, and after all, that was our purpose."

The 220 entries, still encased in plastic covers, were returned to the Franklin Mint, where the ten semi-final designs were reviewed by its National Advisory Committee. The findings of this committee were in no way binding upon the Iowa judges. Franklin's advisory panel included such eminent persons as the following: Dr. William

Alderson, director, American Association for State and Local History; Dr. Bruce Catton, senior editor, *American Heritage Magazine*; Dr. Thomas C. Cochran, president, American Historians; Thomas B. Hess, editor, *Art News Magazine*; G. A. McLellan, president Business Committee for the Arts; Miss Susan E. Meyer, editor, *American Artist Magazine*; Gilroy Roberts, sculptor and chairman emeritus of the Franklin Mint; and Norman Rockwell, artist and illustrator.

The Final Judging

On May 11, the five-member panel met for final judging in the sunny, pleasant library of the Cedar Rapids Art Center. I decided later that my most difficult task had been finding a time when these four very busy, committed people could meet.⁵

Final judges who selected Iowa's Bicentennial Medal design were: Dr. Rosemary Carroll, department of history, Coe College, Cedar Rapids; Maynard Reece, internationally recognized artist from Des Moines; Professor Donald G. Finegan, art department, University of Northern Iowa, Cedar Falls; Professor James W. Whitaker, department of history, Iowa State University, Ames, and again, myself as chairman.

The original entries were not returned to the panel for this final judging. Each judge was given an elongated sheet of paper containing the ten semi-final entries photographed in the size of the medal. Beside each entry were two ratings. The Advisory Committee had given a composite rating to each entry based on artistic merit, originality and relevance to the historic theme. Franklin had given each entry a separate rating on its suitability for minting.

"Polite endeavor" describes the work of the final judges. These experts discussed each entry in depth, and then with seeming ease, while observing every amenity, selected the first, second, third and fourth place winners. The judges thoughtfully inquired if I would like a recommendation to the Bicentennial Commission that the winning entry be adopted as Iowa's official medal. It was unanimously recommended.

⁵I had set the semi-final judging for April 19 because of its historical significance. The only possible time I could bring the final judges together was on May 11, but Biblical students will recognize that this was Ascension Day.

Iowa's Winning Artists

Several days later the Franklin Mint telephoned the identities of Iowa's four winners to me and I telephoned the happy news to each of them. 1. Virginia Kreye-Janowski won first place and \$5,000. Second place winner was Charles Townsend, a free lance artist who is on the staff at Iowa State University at Ames and resides in Des Moines. Townsend was awarded \$2,500 from Franklin for his design. His entry displayed two hands cupped together holding black Iowa soil, with roots growing up into grain. The earth symbol was placed in the upper right background.

Third place winner was James W. Sargent, artist and former advertising manager of the Humboldt newspapers. Sargent was awarded \$1,500 for his design of a wheel and a hand plow on a sea of grass. In the foreground the word "Iowa" appears to the left of the plow, and the inscription "Agricultural Heritage 1845-1976" appears around the rim.

Fourth place and a \$1,000 cash award went to Thomas F. Chouteau, associate professor of Art at St. Ambrose College, Davenport. Chouteau submitted a penciled sketch emphasizing space, light and air as typical of Iowa. Also included were a couple and two children symbolizing that the most important thing grown in Iowa is its people. The background shows an Iowa landscape.



*Photo Courtesy of Humboldt
Independent Newspapers*

James Sargent

"I'm Your Proud Chairman"

At the next Commission meeting Bob Dillon announced that he was no longer our "reluctant" chairman. "I'm proud of you people. I'm proud of this group and what it's accomplished," he said. "I used to be your reluctant chairman," he continued, "but not any

more. From now on, I'm your proud chairman." There were other reasons and commissioners responsible for Dillon's compliment but surely the Medal Competition played a part. Iowa was the only state to have two panels of judges, and one of the first to complete its competition, announce a winner, have the Governor present that winner with \$5,000 from Franklin, and reveal the Bicentennial design to its citizens.

When our "proud" chairman, the Governor, and other commissioners previewed the final medal entries, they all agreed that Mrs. Janowski's design was well chosen, but there was something about James Sargent's design of the wheel and hand plow which retained their attention. I remembered the comments of both panels of judges, and personally, I felt it would be nice if Iowans could have a choice between the official design, depicting the "new," and Mr.



First



Second



Third



Fourth

These are the four award-winning designs in Iowa's Bicentennial Medal Contest.

Sargent's design portraying the "old" Iowa. Therefore the Franklin Mint was asked for the copyright so that Sargent's design would not be lost.

When asked if the Bicentennial Commission could use his design, in addition to the first-place winning design, on Bicentennial memorabilia, James Sargent graciously replied:

I am, of course, thrilled and pleased to become a part of the American Revolution Bicentennial and am happy that you are asking for the copyright of my design so that it may find further use in Iowa. My people have been in this country since before it became a nation and I am a direct descendent of two Revolutionary War veterans, one of whom is buried in Iowa at Stratford. His name is Benjamin Bell. So my thanks to you, the Iowa Commission, the judges and all who made this prize available. I also wish to thank the Franklin Mint for making this competition available to all the states and all contestants.

At a meeting at the Flynn Mansion on the Living History Farms, October 6, 1972, the Commission accepted both copyrights and adopted Mrs. Janowski's design as official. Iowans will have a choice of logos to use on Bicentennial memorabilia—two excellent choices. Those desiring to use either design should ask permission of the Bicentennial Commission. The Iowa design will appear not only on the individual medals to be struck for 1976, but will be used on jewelry, china plates, T-shirts, stationery and other items of good taste during the celebration.

Half a Medal

Next came the decision of what to do with the back of the medal. There were several options open to the Commission. The Great Seal of Iowa was a possibility, and it was felt the Governor would give permission to use it. Another option was the national Bicentennial logo, a star surrounded by three-dimensional ribbon trim, set on a leaf against a dark rectangular background. Bicentennial Commissioners agreed on a suggested arrangement and I made up a layout for the back of the medal.

In keeping with the clean, uncluttered design on the medal's front, the back will show the eagle, from the Iowa flag (which appears on the Great Seal) with the streamers reading "Our Liberties We Prize And Our Rights We Will Maintain." Beneath the eagle will appear the word "Iowa" and the words, "American Revolution Bicentennial 1976," will edge the medal.

The many people involved thus far with our Bicentennial Medal

probably don't know Bruce Fishwild. But their worthwhile efforts have surely fulfilled his requisite for a desirable medal. Throughout the Medal Competition I kept his remark in mind. Bruce Fishwild is City Editor of the *Cedar Rapids Gazette*. One day we were discussing the possibility of Iowa having a good Bicentennial medal. He smiled across his desk and said sincerely, "It'll have to be *awfully* good if you want *me* to buy one!"

Iowa's Bicentennial medal will be among the fifty-state Bicentennial Medal Collection minted by Franklin Mint. We are anxious to see how our design compares with those of the other states. But we are more anxious that you like the medal and hope you like it well enough to buy one! Those of you who do hopefully will appreciate the efforts of the many people, who worked over a period of six years, toward making Iowa's Bicentennial Medal a reality. Join us in expressing appreciation of the efforts of the many who, 200 years ago, set in motion the events which we will celebrate and commemorate in 1976.



*This design will appear
on the reverse side of
Iowa's Bicentennial Medal.*

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