



Coining Wisconsin

The Work of the Wisconsin Commemorative Quarter Council

By Lawrence Barish

And the winner is . . . the winning theme, chosen by Governor Jim Doyle, was agriculture and the design chosen to represent the theme (above) was submitted jointly by the Historic Cheesemaking Center, Inc., and Rose Marty of Monticello.

Photo by Joel Heiman

A stroll through the state capitol building in Madison is a visual feast of symbols representing the state of Wisconsin: historic figures, indigenous animals, and allegorical tableaux, all presented in an assortment of art forms such as sculptures, mosaics, and paintings, and found in a range of sizes, from entire walls to the width of a doorknob. The artists, artisans, and architects who designed and decorated the capitol had a vast canvas with which to work and display their vision for Wisconsin. But what if the available space was far more limited, let's say not quite an inch in diam-



eter? That was the challenge facing the Wisconsin Commemorative Quarter Council (CQC), a group of twenty-three citizens who were charged with the responsibility of reviewing thousands of designs submitted by Wisconsin citizens and making recommendations about which designs best reflected the state's collective identity—and could be captured on the back of a quarter.

One way to define the magnitude of the challenge is by the numbers involved. The almost four-year process from conception to completion involved 3 governors and their administrations, 10,277 Wisconsin citizens who submitted 9,608 designs, 23 individuals who were given the task of evaluating those designs, and 347,662 citizens who cast votes for one of three final designs. In addition, the staffs of the Wisconsin Department of Financial Institutions (DFI), officials at the U.S. Department of the Treasury, and the engravers at the U.S. Mint were instrumental in facilitating the process and shaping the final design. The culmination of that effort will occur in October 2004, when between five hundred million and one billion Wisconsin statehood quarters will circulate throughout the nation, featuring a cow, an ear of corn, and a wheel of cheese.

This is the story of how the design was selected for the Wisconsin quarter, told from the perspective of one member of the council. It is not intended to reflect the views and opinions of all members or of the council as a whole.

The story does not begin with the council, or even one of

the three governors, but with President Bill Clinton, who, in December of 1997, signed into law the 50 States Commemorative Coin Program Act (Public Law 105-124). The law authorized the U.S. Department of the Treasury to issue a commemorative quarter dollar for each state over a ten-year period beginning in 1999 and ending in 2008. The law also provided that the U.S. Treasury would issue five coins per year, recognizing states in the order in which they ratified the U.S. Constitution or were admitted to the Union. Delaware, befitting its status as the first state to ratify the Constitution, was the first to be recognized when its quarter was released in January 1999 with the image of patriot Caesar Rodney, astride his horse, making the eighty-mile journey to the Continental Congress, where he cast the deciding vote in favor of independence. The state quarter program is scheduled to end in 2008 with the release of the Hawaiian state quarter. Wisconsin, the thirtieth state admitted to the union, will be the last of the five states recognized in 2004.

Public Law 105-124 decreed that our nation's coins and currency must reflect "dignified designs of which the citizens of the United States can be proud"; thus no "frivolous or inappropriate design" may be selected. Under the policy established by the U.S. Treasury, the governor was to submit three to five designs to the U.S. Mint eighteen months prior to the scheduled release date. In addition to an illustrated design, each submission was to be accompanied by a narrative explaining the significance of the concept. Although the



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Cows prove to have staying power as a symbol, yet this design for the 1948 centennial stamp was not the final winner.



Lantern Slide CF 6045

This cheesemaker, ca. 1952, adds another wheel of cheese to a vast inventory. Cheese production is a significant part of both state history and economy.



WHS Archives, WHi (W6) 33216

Corn fields in Wisconsin are a common sight, and corn was featured on many quarter designs.

barns, agriculture, and dairy



governor of each state establishes the process to be used in submitting a proposed design, the U.S. Mint and the secretary of the treasury retain the authority for determining the suitability and feasibility of the final choice. So, after receiving the final designs, the Mint reviews them for “appropriateness and coinability” and asks the Citizens Commemorative Coin Advisory Committee and the U.S. Fine Arts Commission to review designs and offer recommendations. After the secretary of the treasury reviews and approves the three to five submissions, they are returned to the governor who makes the final selection of the design for the state quarter.

Getting the Word Out

Although Tommy Thompson was at the state’s helm when the federal law was enacted in 1997, it was his successor, Governor Scott McCallum, who issued Executive Order No. 27 on September 20, 2001, to begin the formal process to select a Wisconsin commemorative quarter dollar. Governor McCallum established the Wisconsin Commemorative Quarter Council, as an advisory group charged with reviewing the public’s submissions and making recommendations to the governor regarding an appropriate design. The governor appointed a diverse group of twenty-three citizens to the council and placed the Wisconsin Department of Financial Institutions, the state agency that regulates banking, in charge of managing and coordinating the effort. Governor McCallum asked John Kundert, DFI Secretary, to chair the council,

and appointed State Treasurer Jack Voight to serve as vice-chair. Before the council held its first meeting, DFI staff spent considerable time publicizing the state quarter program. The DFI also sought out their counterparts in states that had already been through the design and selection process to learn as much as possible about pitfalls and best practices. A Wisconsin Commemorative Quarter Web site was launched to provide information about the state quarter process and to encourage citizens to submit designs.

Encouraging the public was not a difficult task. As the first state quarters appeared in 1999, interest in them began to spread and newspaper articles appeared throughout the state with comments about the quarters already circulating, and speculation about possible themes for the Wisconsin coin. DFI staff embarked upon an ambitious public outreach campaign, partly in response to Congress’s wish that one of the program’s primary purposes be “to promote the diffusion of knowledge among the youth of the United States about the individual States, their history and geography, and the rich diversity of the national heritage. . . .” The design process was seen as a unique educational opportunity, and was first presented to Wisconsin’s elementary school students.

From October 2001 through January 2002, DFI Research Analyst Rebecca Hogan crisscrossed the state, visiting forty-nine schools and making presentations to over five thousand students. At each school she used a PowerPoint presentation to explain the significance of the state quarter program, dis-



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The love for the outdoors is apparent across the years, as this design for a centennial stamp included fishing, a design element that also made the final round during the state quarter competition. Like the quarter competition, the recreation theme was not the winning design for the 1948 stamp.



PH 6062 A/AS 216.11

Castle Rock at Camp Douglas in central Wisconsin’s Juneau County is a breathtaking image from the Badger State.



Department of Financial Institutions

Donald Henning of Grafton submitted one of the three final designs. His design represents the theme of scenic Wisconsin.

scenic wisconsin



play the state quarters released during the first three years, and encourage students to think about appropriate designs for Wisconsin's commemorative quarter. Other schools participated in videoconferences that allowed many more students to learn about the state quarter program.

At the same time that the school road show was taking place, the DFI contacted state and local news media. The department's communications director, Kim Straka, and communications specialist, Cheryl Weiss, visited television and radio stations in the larger media markets and met with editors and reporters from more than thirty daily and weekly newspapers throughout the state. The department also issued a series of press releases to explain the program and generate interest in the design process.

In addition to making contacts with the media and schools, the DFI's Wisconsin Commemorative Quarter Web site served as the primary communication tool during the review and selection process. Unlike some states that established a committee to both propose and actually craft a design for their state quarter, Wisconsin opted to open the process to the public and encouraged citizens to offer their opinions as to what the state quarter should look like. The Web site provided guidelines and a submission form for those wishing to propose their own design and was eventually used to record votes from the public to determine the most popular design. When the final public vote was taken in September 2003, the DFI state quarter Web site had recorded an astounding 694,013 visits.

In addition, the department produced and distributed a brochure providing similar information. Thousands of brochures were sent to Wisconsin schools, and members of the Commemorative Quarter Council distributed many more to the general public.

Because the council would initially review designs to determine the themes that would be submitted to the Treasury Department, the guidelines in both the brochure and on the Web site listed both appropriate and inappropriate topics. Appropriate design topics included "state landmarks, landscapes, historically significant buildings, symbols of state resources or industries, [and] official state flora and fauna or state icons." Inappropriate design concepts were "logos or depictions of specific commercial, private educational, civic, religious, sports or other organization whose membership or ownership is not universal." In addition, other designs deemed inappropriate were head or shoulder portraits of persons living or dead, and depictions of state flags or seals.

The DFI accepted design proposals from December 2001 through January 11, 2002. Each submission was to be accompanied by a brief written explanation of the design and its significance. Submissions began to arrive at the DFI offices slowly, then gradually increased as the deadline approached. Not surprisingly, considering the emphasis on the educational aspect of the state quarter design program, students submitted the overwhelming majority of entries.



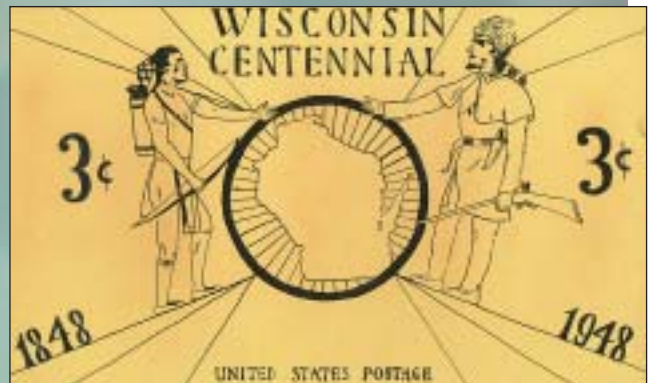
Place File, Red Banks

The theme of early exploration has been widely memorialized in Wisconsin as in this monument to Jean Nicolet that stands at Red Banks.



Department of Financial Institutions

Bob Frankowiak of Milwaukee submitted the image of a fur trader and a Native American which had council support, but was not the final choice.



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The exploration theme, the recommended choice of the quarter council, was also on the minds of designers in 1948, when the centennial stamp was designed. This exploration-themed stamp was not the choice for the 1948 stamp.

Early Exploration and cultural interaction



Commemorative Quarter Council Members

John F. "Jack" Kundert,
Chair
Secretary, Department of
Financial Institutions
Madison

Jack Voight, Vice-Chair
State Treasurer
Madison

Nora K. Weber
(Governor's designee)
Office of the Governor
Madison

Michael Stevens
(designee)
Wisconsin Historical Society
Madison

Ron Rasmussen
(teacher)
Reedsburg Area High School
Reedsburg

Lisa Kvernen
(high school student)
Reedsburg

Clifford L. Mishler
(numismatic)
Krause Publications
Iola

Mark D. Mueller
(artist)
Germantown

At-Large Members

Dean Amhaus
Milwaukee

Lawrence S. Barish
Madison

Gloria Cobb
Lac du Flambeau

Laura M. Davis
Madison

Frank C. DeGuire
Milwaukee

Lee Ellis
River Falls

Reuben K. Harpole
Milwaukee

Roger J. Hillebrand
Belleville

Trent E. Jay
Wauwatosa

Connie Loden
Hurley

Justin J. Perrault
La Crosse

John Reinemann
Madison

Dr. Leon A. Saryan
Greenfield

Douglas W. Stener
Janesville

Margarita Tamez
Evansville

Getting Down to Business

The first meeting of the Wisconsin Commemorative Quarter Council took place on January 17, 2002, at the Department of Financial Institution offices in Madison. In addition to Chairman Kundert and Vice-Chairman Voight, the council was comprised of both state government officials and private citizens. The latter included a high school teacher, a student, an artist, an art teacher, an architect, a coin hobby professional, several coin collectors, and others of various occupations, interests, and backgrounds. Public officials included staff members from the Governor's Office, the Wisconsin Historical Society, and the Legislative Reference Bureau. Council members exchanged introductions and shared perspectives about the task that lay ahead. The common denominator was a shared commitment to meeting the challenge of recommending a state quarter design that captured the essence of Wisconsin, however defined. As the council was soon to learn, this was not an easy task.

After their initial discussion, the group quickly got down to work. In order to provide the council with a sense of what lay ahead, for this first meeting the DFI staff had arranged a video conference with the committee's counterparts in Indiana to learn about the process that state had employed in designing their state quarter. A representative of the Indiana Office of the Governor and the Indiana Arts Commission summarized their experiences and discussed some of the issues the Wisconsin council would likely face. One major consideration was the technical problems associated with transferring an illustration to an actual engraving. According to the Indiana contact, the proposed design of the Indiana quarter had to be modified because the engravers felt that the design was too detailed. The final design was a race car superimposed on an outline of the state with the inscription "Crossroads of America" and nineteen stars signifying Indiana's admittance as the nineteenth state admitted to the union.

Following the video conference, DFI staff members briefed the council on their efforts to publicize the state quarter program in schools and the media, and the subsequent number of submissions these efforts generated. The council determined that it would need the continuing help of DFI to organize and reduce the submissions, a logistical challenge to say the least. How do twenty-three people examine almost ten thousand packets of information and reach a consensus about the merits of what they have looked at? Council members concluded that the highest number of designs that could be reviewed as a group was fifteen hundred, and with just over 9600 design, that left six groups of about fifteen hundred to be prepared by the hard-working DFI staff members for the next meeting. At that meeting, the council would begin the process of evaluating the designs within these six large groups, and use these groups to determine general categories from which

the council members would establish a narrower set of themes. Three themes and sample designs of each would ultimately go to the U.S. Mint.

When the Wisconsin Commemorative Quarter Council gathered at the DFI offices for their second meeting on February 18, 2002, a mountain of state quarter submissions bearing designs of various shapes, sizes, and artistic merit awaited them. In an attempt to introduce some semblance of order, the DFI staff had sorted through the 9,608 entries before the second meeting, discarding the inappropriate and organizing the remainder by subject matter. DFI staff eliminated designs that featured the Green Bay Packers, portraits of Vince Lombardi, logos, flags, cheese heads, bratwurst, beer steins, and the like because they did not meet the various criteria established by the U.S. Mint. There were also a significant number of state quarter designs that portrayed some aspect of the September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks. These designs, submitted primarily by Wisconsin school children, were moving and poignant but had to be eliminated because the subject matter was not deemed specific to Wisconsin. The remaining submissions were grouped by general theme—resulting in thirty-two categories among the six general groups. The category with the most submissions, over two thousand or 22 percent of all entries, was “dairy,” which included designs featuring milk, cheese, or cows. The “barns” and “agriculture” categories comprised an additional 20 percent of the designs. Other popular design categories included state symbols, either individually or in combination; robins, deer, badgers, and violets. Finally, symbols and events from Wisconsin’s history rounded out the subject matter.

DFI staff members had pressed six offices into service as



Photo by Andy Kraushaar

Though the Packers and Lambeau Field are much beloved throughout Wisconsin, these were not appropriate subjects for the state quarter.

viewing galleries. The plan was for the council members to first identify general subjects or themes, and then to select specific designs that best represented those themes. Council members were free to use the categories that the DFI had used or to determine different categories as well.

The council divided into six groups, and each one, accompanied by a DFI staff member, visited all of the six viewing areas and spent about twenty minutes in each area considering the submissions arrayed on every conceivable flat surface. After all the groups completed their assessments, the council members reconvened to compare notes. DFI had created a ballot with its thirty-two organizational categories as entries, twenty-nine of which were kept by the council. In addition to the agriculture and dairy themes previously mentioned, other categories included “Frank Lloyd Wright,” “Polka,” “Military and Shipping,” “Logging,” “Circus,” and the avian-affirming “Eagle,” “Robin,” and “Dove.”

After the members cast their ballots, twelve categories emerged. The themes chosen for discussion were:

- Historical (including themes of exploration, invention, and innovation, such as the establishment of the nation’s first kindergarten in Watertown)
- Agriculture
- Barns
- Nature (including the Great Lakes, Mississippi River bluffs, and wildlife)
- State Symbols (either individually or in combination)
- Native Americans
- Madison (including the State Capitol and its statuary, and the Wisconsin Idea)
- Eagle (including Old Abe, the Civil War mascot)



A vocational student holds a badger at The Ranch, a training center for mentally and physically disabled young adults, December 19, 1968. The badger became the official state animal in 1957.

Image ID 11446



WHS Museum, N06156

In 1936 the nation joined Wisconsin in celebrating the centennial of Wisconsin's territorial days, when half-dollars featured one of the most visible labors of that era—mining. The reverse side presented a badger from whom the miners earned a nickname for themselves and for the state.



WHS Museum, N07070

Connecticut selected the Charter Oak tree, an important symbol of Connecticut history, for its quarter design. Connecticut used the same symbol in 1935, when the oak that hid the charter from the British appeared on the state's tercentenary half-dollar.



WHS Museum, N07113

The Great Lakes Exposition took place in Cleveland, Ohio, from June to October 1936 and was promoted as "worthy of World's Fair" status. The U.S. Mint issued a coin that same year with Brenda Putnam's design of the lakes featured on the tails side.

- Dairy
- Wisconsin Dells
- Badgers
- Combination (any design that included elements of two or more themes)

The members then turned their attention to selecting specific submissions from each category. They decided to select up to ten submissions from each category to bring forward for discussion before the full council. Ultimately, a total of thirteen submissions were selected and three designs from each of the thirteen were designated for discussion at the next meeting of the CQC, for a total of 157 (the council allowed one category to have four submissions).

The council reconvened several weeks later on March 7, 2002, and spent the day reviewing the submissions with the goal of reducing the number of themes to the six that, in the opinion of the members, best represented Wisconsin. Early in the review process, it was apparent that a fundamental question regarding the purpose of the state quarter program and the design of the Wisconsin quarter needed to be addressed. Should the design of the Wisconsin coin reflect the intent expressed by Congress "to promote the diffusion of knowledge . . . [regarding] history and geography," or should it instead incorporate a design to make the coin immediately recognizable as the Wisconsin state quarter? In other words, should the design of the Wisconsin quarter highlight an immediately recognizable and significant aspect of the state or should it reflect a theme that, while not as well known, tells a story and educates the public about Wisconsin's traditions, culture, or history? It was an issue on which the CQC members never reached a consensus, although they wrestled with

it throughout their deliberations. It was also the defining issue that characterized the final choice.

At this third meeting of the council, the members spent time discussing what makes Wisconsin unique and sets us apart from the other forty-nine states. The obvious connections to agriculture and the dairy industry were discussed as well as the various state symbols that have been adopted over the years. Other less tangible, but nonetheless significant characteristics of the state, such as its progressive tradition, good government, and the influence of the Wisconsin Idea were cited. The difficulty in translating these concepts to the small confines of the quarter dollar coin was discussed and it was also noted that there were relatively few submissions that reflected these themes.

Designs that featured only one state symbol such as the white-tailed deer, wood violet, or sugar maple tree were rejected because the council felt that the symbols on their own were not unique to Wisconsin and said little about the state. Some members argued that images of the Wisconsin capitol, although an impressive and symbolic building, did not seem to be sufficiently distinct from other capitols, including the U.S. Capitol. Submissions that combined multiple elements, resulting in a cluttered or difficult to recognize design, also were examined with a critical eye.

Although several states, including Connecticut and Georgia, featured a single design element, which in the opinion of some members was visually attractive, Wisconsin's diversity made a single design theme less feasible. Absent a logical counterpart to Connecticut's Charter Oak or Georgia's peach, more complex designs for the Wisconsin quarter were considered. A review and discussion of designs of the sixteen state quarters already minted and the designs of those that had been approved generated a wide range of opinion

regarding which designs were most attractive, effective, or captured the essence of the individual state.

This discussion also included a debate about whether the final design should have an outline map of the state. Some council members argued that Wisconsin's geographical boundary was distinctive and recognizable and added interest to the design; others felt that a state outline said little about the state and tended to clutter the design. One issue on which the council came to an easy agreement was the state motto. Council members unanimously agreed that whatever design was eventually recommended, it should incorporate "Forward," the official state motto.

After considerable discussion, the members voted and selected six themes which best represented Wisconsin from the twelve themes identified at an earlier meeting:

- Early Exploration and Cultural Interaction
- Agriculture, Barns, and Dairy
- Scenic Wisconsin
- The State Capitol and statue *Wisconsin*
- Old Abe
- Badgers



Image ID 9566

The statue Wisconsin by Daniel Chester French was raised to the top of the capitol building in July of 1914. The building and its symbolic details were the subjects of many quarter designs.

DFI staff members drafted a description of each theme to accompany the submissions that were selected to represent that theme.

The council decided to select three designs for each of the six themes, for a total of eighteen individual designs. In a selection process that encouraged public participation, professional design and artistic merit were not the most significant criteria. Whereas submissions that showed a high degree of artistic or technical excellence, regardless of theme, certainly attracted the notice and attention of council members, not all of the visually appealing and polished designs made it through the selection process. For example, a submission bearing a stylized rendering of Old Abe, the Civil War eagle, did not advance because, as the work of an out-of-state artist who had submitted designs for other state quarter competitions, council members feared it might make the Wisconsin quarter too close to another state's in style. Later in the process, the Mint eliminated another striking design from consideration because it determined that the artwork was too detailed and could not be engraved.

The CQC selected the eighteen preliminary state quarter designs and had copies of the selected designs sent to Governor McCallum on March 13, 2002. The DFI also posted copies of the selections on the state quarter Web site and asked citizens to vote for their top three themes, using the three designs in each of the six themes as examples.

Over thirty-six thousand votes were cast during the balloting period that ran from March 15 to April 1, 2002. Three themes emerged as the clear favorites of those voting: Scenic Wisconsin; Agriculture, Barns, and Dairy; and Early Exploration and Cultural Interaction. Based on these results, Governor McCallum sent the three designs that illustrated each of the three themes, for a total of nine designs, to the U.S. Mint.



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The final design of the 1948 Wisconsin stamp reflected some of the same themes that emerged in discussions about the 2004 state quarter.



Image ID 7536

Long before the quarter design competition stirred up interest in Old Abe the War Eagle and his Civil War exploits, he was photographed by H.H. Bennett for whom the connection was more personal. Abe and Bennett served together in the war.

Despite the design's excellence and historic relevance, this designer's work on other state quarters risked a repetition of style that the council wanted to avoid.



Daniel Carr, Designs Computed

He also requested that the state motto be included in the final design of the Wisconsin quarter.

At this juncture, the state quarter council had completed the first part of its assignment of narrowing down the mountain of submissions to a manageable number and making its initial recommendations to the governor. It would prove to be the final time that the entire council met in person. It was not until eighteen months later that the council was asked to make its final recommendations. A reception was held to recognize the eighteen individuals who submitted the designs that were

considered and voted upon via the Web site. Also attending the March 26, 2002, reception in the Governor's Conference Room were members of the Commemorative Quarter Council and the media.

The Mint Throws in Their Two Cents

After the Mint received the nine designs, they began the review process that every state quarter design must undergo. The Mint enlisted the services of the Citizens Coinage Advisory Committee and the U.S. Commission of Fine Arts to review the designs and make recommendations. The evaluation process considered factors such as artistic, aesthetic, and technical design; historical accuracy; proper representation of elements; and feasibility of converting a design to an engraved impression on a coin. Based on the review, the Mint suggested a number of changes in the designs. There were several discussions between representatives of the U.S. Mint and the DFI regarding design issues. Eventually, after a delay of eight months, in part due to state quarter design issues in states with release dates before Wisconsin's, five of the nine designs were modified and approved by the Mint.

During this review phase, changes in the Office of the Governor and the Department of Financial Institutions brought a number of new players to the state quarter selection process. Governor Jim Doyle assumed office in January 2003, and Lorie Keating Heinemann was appointed DFI secretary in March 2003. The membership of the state quarter council remained unchanged.

From the five designs approved by the U.S. Mint, the governor selected three finalists, each representing one of the three design themes that had been previously voted on by the public. The scenic Wisconsin design featured a white-tailed deer surveying his domain as a muskie leaps from the water in the background. Several pine trees and the suggestion of a farm in the distance completed the bucolic scene. It was submitted by Donald Henning of Grafton. The early exploration entry was drawn by Bob Frankowiak of Milwaukee and depicted a fur trader and Native American negotiating a trade with a canoe in the foreground and a dwelling in the background. The agriculture design, jointly submitted by the Historic Cheesemaking Center, Inc., and Rose Marty of Monticello, reflected Wisconsin's status as America's Dairyland with a design consisting of the head of a cow, a wheel of cheese, and an ear of corn.

The three designs were posted on the DFI Web site and members of the public were again asked to vote, this time for their favorite design. During the third week of September, 347,662 votes were cast. The agriculture design was the clear

favorite of those voting, garnering 137,745 votes or about 40 percent of the total. The early exploration design was the second most popular, receiving 112,907 votes, about 32 percent. The scenic Wisconsin design received 97,010 votes or about 28 percent of the votes cast.

The Recommendations

With a deadline for a final decision fast approaching, the CQC was notified that the time had come for the council to make a final, single recommendation to the governor. The council had not met since March 2002 and a meeting scheduled for July 2003 had been canceled because the Mint had not completed its review of the Wisconsin quarter designs. A conference call was arranged for the morning of September 29. Following a brief discussion, the members were asked to vote for one of the three designs. With nineteen of the twenty-three members voting, there was no clear consensus. Nine members voted for the exploration design, eight for the agriculture design, and two for the scenic design. Because of the closeness of the vote, it was decided to schedule another conference call the following day and limit the choice to the two designs receiving the most votes. During the period between the conference calls, several of the council members took the opportunity to e-mail their colleagues to make one final pitch for their favorite design. Again, opinion was divided as to whether the agriculture design or the early exploration design imparted a more meaningful message. One supporter of the agriculture design argued that this design was a better choice because it reflected this state's long-time connection to farming and has more meaning for Wisconsin citizens than the early exploration design, an experience not unique to Wisconsin. However, a supporter of the exploration design pointed out that Congress had enacted the state quarter program to allow states to educate the public about their respective history and traditions and that the early exploration design was more in keeping with that goal. Others argued that the early exploration design recognized the state's cultural diversity and common heritage and thus was a better representation of Wisconsin than the agriculture design.

Several members were also influenced by the fact that a majority of the public favored the agriculture design and argued that the council should consider that preference. In the end, however, it was not surprising that no clear consensus was reached. When the council's final vote was tallied, the early exploration design outpolled the agriculture design by a vote of thirteen to eight. The results were sent to Governor Doyle and that action constituted the last official act of the Wisconsin Commemorative Quarter Council.

Drawn and Quartered

When the deadline for choosing a design was just days away, Governor Doyle finally ended the suspense. In a press

release issued on September 30, 2003, the Governor announced his selection of the agriculture design rather than the early exploration design. He cited the public support for the agriculture design as being instrumental in influencing his decision. The governor informed the U.S. Mint of his decision, thus ending the design phase of the Wisconsin state quarter selection process. Soon, a quarter-dollar coin bearing the image of a cow, an ear of corn, and a wheel of cheese will take center stage as the thirtieth coin in the state quarter program. Fittingly, it will be the first state quarter with a strictly agricultural theme.

The road that the members of the state quarter council traveled as they pored over the thousands of state quarter designs gave them a first-hand look at the diverse and vibrant cultural landscape that constitutes the Badger state. Wisconsin citizens submitted thousands of creative and imaginative designs that reflected this diversity. It became apparent very early in the process that it would be difficult to single out one design that would adequately reflect Wisconsin's collective identity and accommodate all the views expressed by members of the council. The fact that there were so many worthy alternatives to consider is a testament to the vitality of the state, our shared values and traditions, and the achievements of our citizens. In the end, it was the process itself, perhaps more so than the choice of the design, which was most significant. It provided an opportunity for all Wisconsin citizens to take a step back and consider what it is that makes Wisconsin a special place. The dialogue that followed was expressed in numerous newspaper editorials, letters to the editor, classroom discussions, and dinner table conversations. In October, the U.S. Mint will produce millions of Wisconsin state quarters which will be a tangible reflection of its citizens' pride in being able to call Wisconsin home. ❧

About the Author

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