

NEBRASKA STATE QUARTER DESIGN

Submitted by John A. Gale, Nebraska Secretary of State and Chairman,
Nebraska Quarter Design Committee

The U.S. Commemorative Quarter Design Program was launched by the U.S. Mint in 1999, and will run through 2008. The program allows five states each year to have a quarter design issued on behalf of each state. Some 25 states will have their quarters minted by the end of this calendar year, with at least 500 million quarters released with each new design. The quarters will circulate for at least 30 years.

Twenty-seven state quarters have already been issued. Their backs picture what each state collectively wants to show about itself. For instance, Ohio's has a drawing of an early aircraft and an astronaut, referring to the Wright brothers and Neil Armstrong, first man on the moon, all important to Ohio's heritage. Missouri's coin illustrates the Lewis and Clark expedition. New York's shows the Statue of Liberty; Alabama's informs the world that Helen Keller was a native.

The states release their quarters in order in which they joined the Union. Nebraska, as the 37th state, joined the union in March 1867, placing it between Nevada and Colorado. The Nebraska quarter will be launched in March 2006.

In preparation, the Nebraska Legislature designated Secretary of State John Gale as Chairman of the Quarter Design Committee, together with seven other members: Tom Bassett and Virgil Marshall, appointed by the Governor, Gordon Howard and Dr. Michael Schuyler, appointed by the Nebraska Historical Society; Jodi Rave appointed by the Nebraska Humanities Council; and Norman Geske and Roger Bruhn, appointed by the Nebraska Arts Council.

The Nebraska Quarter Design committee solicited design ideas from the state's school children, especially those who will be in fourth grade next year.

"We think it can be a very nice fit with what fourth graders already study, which is Nebraska history," said Secretary of State John Gale, the quarter committee's chairman.

Letters asking for student involvement were sent to 1,800 fourth-grade teachers in public, private and home schools across the state.

Similar letters were sent to principals or associations encouraging design ideas from other students, as well.

The committee held a kickoff rally for the design solicitation process at the State Capitol in September, just after school started, and several members dressed in period costumes took a traveling "road show" across the state to promote the "Kick off." They visited Kearney, Grand Island, North Platte, Gering, Lincoln and Omaha. Nebraska was the first state with a statewide "Kick Off."

Even though the committee involved students in the process, adults were also encouraged to give ideas.

“This is us, this is Nebraska, and we want as much public input as possible,” Gale said.

The State Quarter Design Committee set a goal of at least 5,000 by the deadline of May 1, 2004, but actually received 6,500! Many of them featured common elements such as covered wagons, Chimney Rock, the Capitol, buffalo, cranes, ears of corn, farm scenes, Arbor Day, Boys Town and the Platte River.

All design ideas were submitted by May 1, 2004, and the committee members have been reviewing the designs. Plans are that 5% of all designs will receive a Certificate of Excellence. Also, 100 representative designs will be placed on the Secretary of State website for public enjoyment.

According to Secretary Gale, “The design is selected by each state to highlight its’ history, landmark features, legendary persons, and it’s uniqueness. The object is to help educate the general public about each of the states and their history.” Secretary of State Gale added, “This is an opportunity for all Nebraskans to show pride in their state by submitting a design.”

Gale commented, “You can’t buy much with a quarter these days. You might be able to plug a parking meter for 30 minutes, or buy a gumball still with a quarter, but often times the quarter is overlooked. Chances are when you put your quarter into the vending machine you don’t stop to ponder the many changes the quarter has been through—from what it is made from to the designs on each side of the coin. However, that is all changing with the 50 State Quarters Program. Of the 500 million issued with each quarter launch, over 130 million of each release will immediately go into amateur and collector collections to be enjoyed and studied.”

For further information on the Quarter Design Program go to this website.

http://www.usmint.gov/mint_programs/50sq_program/index.cfm?flash=yes&action=about_50sq