

BOOTH WESTERN ART MUSEUM PEACE MEDALS

Presidents Day 2020

WHAT IS A PEACE MEDAL?

Peace medals have been used as a symbol of friendship and goodwill for hundreds of years. When European countries first began colonizing the New World, they would give the leaders of native groups a medal or token as a gift, in hopes of a peaceful relationship. These peace medals usually featured an image of the king or queen of whatever country made them. These images were important to European colonists because they showed American Indians who their new trade partners were. For the American Indians, these peace medals were highly valued as a status symbol-Europeans only gave them out to members of a tribe who were powerful enough to affect their trade relationships



A French Peace Medal, given to a Huron chief by French fur trappers

Courtesy of Stack's Bowers Galleries,



A British peace medal, with an image of King George III.

Image from Yale University Art Gallery



© Ethelinda Robbins, **Montana 1880**, 2001, oil on canvas, 2001.028.001

The peace medals that Lewis and Clark handed out on their journey were highly valued by the American Indians they met. Above is a painting from our Modern West Gallery showing a Plains brave wearing a peace medal. Look for other peace medals in the art as you walk through the museum!

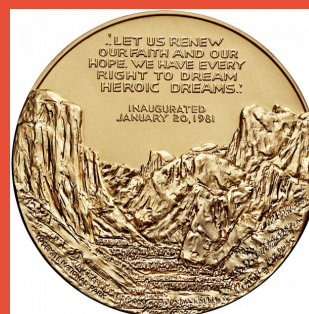
Peace Medals from Lewis and Clark

After the American Revolution, the United States began minting their own peace medals. Because the United States doesn't have a monarch, we used images of the presidents instead, starting with George Washington.

When Thomas Jefferson sent Lewis and Clark out on their expedition into the West, he gave them many peace medals, and asked Lewis and Clark to give them to all the tribes they came across. When they gifted them to new tribes, Lewis and Clark used the medals to introduce them to the "Great Father," or their new president.

PRESIDENTIAL PEACE MEDALS TODAY

The last Presidential peace medal was made in 1890 during Benjamin Harrison's administration. Instead, the United States Mint produces a new Presidential Medal with an image of each president and a quote from their time in office. Try designing your own presidential medal. What kind of message or quote would you include?



Using just the dates on the back of these medals, can you figure out which president issued them?