



**STATE QUARTERS**

Criticized as uninspired, the Michigan quarter nevertheless has a great number of fans who think its design is just fine.

by Barbara J. Gregory [ANA115657](#)

**S**CHEDULED TO DEBUT this month is the 26th coin in the United States Mint's 50 State Quarters™ Program. This time, the spotlight is on Michigan, the "Great Lakes State." As such, the quarter's reverse has a watery theme, but collectors find themselves on opposite shores when it comes to the design's merits. ©

# By Water Divided, in Spirit United

MAP: ©CORBIS QUARTER: U.S. MINT

The design process began nearly four years ago, when the Michigan State Numismatic Society began circulating fliers.

The design process began nearly four years ago, when the Michigan State Numismatic Society (MSNS) began circulating fliers, encouraging the public to get involved in the creation of the state's quarter. The MSNS established its own Michigan State Quarter Committee, headed by ANA life member Patrick Heller, in the fall of 2000.

The following January, Michigan Governor John Engler announced plans to form a Michigan Quarter Commission and in November appointed 25 members, among them four numismatists: Heller, Ann Bobrofsky, Steven Roach and Craig Whitford. The public was invited to submit design suggestions by February 15, 2002, to the Michigan State Numismatic Society, local coin clubs and shops, and the Michigan Department of History, Arts and Libraries (DHAL). Heller, along with MSNS member Ashley Brown and DHAL staff members, sorted the submissions into categories and submitted them to the Commission.

Says Sarah Lapshan, DHAL public information officer, "The Department of History, Arts and Libraries essen-



PHOTOS: ©CORBIS

tially 'housed' the Quarter Commission. Therefore, we took the lead in coordinating meetings and facilitating communications with the Mint."

More than 4,300 entries were received from 73 of the state's 83 counties. From those submissions, the Commission selected five design concepts and forwarded them to Governor Engler's office, which unveiled them in an April 3, 2002, press conference. Ultimately, the suggestions were sent to the United States Mint for rendering by staff artists, then given to the Citizens Commemorative Coin Advisory Committee and the U.S. Commission of Fine Arts for evaluation.

In keeping with official Mint guidelines, the designs were emblematic of the state. Each showed an outline of Michigan, with Lakes Michigan, Superior and Huron clearly delineated on all but one. The most popular design, as indicated by an online poll of the state's residents, also included images of the Mackinac Bridge, a lighthouse, a canoe, a white pine, an early automobile and the North Star.

Notes Daniel Carr, an artist and sculptor who submitted three designs

▲ To members of the Michigan Quarter Commission, the state is multi-dimensional, represented by far more than Detroit, its largest metropolis, and the automotive industry.

for consideration, "I'm not sure what the purpose of the contest was, since it appears the state outline design was mandated from the start by Michigan Governor Engler. Several Michigan residents were unhappy with the state outline designs and pursued the possibility of convincing the new governor [Jennifer Granholm, elected in November 2002] to overturn Governor Engler's choices," he says. Carr's submissions featured the Mackinac Bridge, pine trees and a stylistic gear with 26 teeth, identifying Michigan as the 26th state admitted to the Union. (His third design also incorporated a sailboat and a conceptualized automobile.)

Ultimately, it was decided the coin would carry nothing more than an image of the state, in frosted relief surrounded by the Great Lakes, and the legends MICHIGAN/1837 and GREAT/LAKES/STATE, along with the date and E PLURIBUS UNUM. Says



PHOTO: DANIEL CARR

▲ Artist/sculptor Daniel Carr submitted three designs for the reverse of Michigan's quarter, none of which made the final cut.

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Steve Roach, an ANA life member and recent University of Michigan graduate, “It’s unfortunate that a classic automobile or the Mackinac Bridge couldn’t have been incorporated in the final design. At the same time, he adds, “these would have interfered with the coin’s simple, spare elegance.”

Roach feels the design effectively represents his home state, “but without much sparkle or pizzazz. The final design seems perfunctory,” he says, and “certainly not indicative of the many great designs that were submitted by the public.”

However, Commission member Keith Molin, president of the Michigan Historical Commission, disagrees. “If our objective was to tell the story of our state in a neat, concise way, then we achieved our goal.” He confirms that the dominant theme of the submitted designs was Michigan’s geographical significance. “We were worried about offending some sectors of the state by omitting other elements, but then we realized we had to focus on Michigan as a whole.”

According to Molin, “The most interesting and revealing aspect of the process was the many different ways people see their state—all with a passion and reverence that can’t be denied. The selected design was my first choice. It met the criteria, and I’m delighted with it.”

Patricia Hill-Burnett, a portrait painter by profession, also was appointed to the Commission. “It was a fascinating experience,” she says of the selection process. “I felt the design should be kept simple. It was impossible to include everything and have it all be visible on a quarter. Nobody but a Michigander would recognize the Mackinac Bridge. Plus, we really couldn’t picture a particular kind of car, as we didn’t want to favor one manufacturer over another,” Hill-Burnett explains.

“The coin is very informative. Michigan has more coastline than any other state, and the reverse of the quarter illustrates this perfectly,” she says.

Patrick Heller realized from the start that the inclusion of multiple icons would cause production problems at the Mint. “My numismatic background was helpful in the decision-making process, as I was familiar with the limitations of coin manufacture,” he says.

As far as the final design is concerned, Heller admits he “was hoping for more, but there was no way every element would fit.” To those critical of the end product, he explains diplomatically, “Michigan’s location and geography made it possible for a great number of industries to flourish here, so the image of the state surrounded by the Great Lakes really represents everyone.”

### Michigan at a Glance

**Name Origin:** Algonquin for “Great Water”

**Nicknames:** Wolverine State, Great Lakes State

**Residents:** Michiganders, Michiganites



**Area:** 57,022 sq. mi. of land, 39,698 sq. mi. of water

**State Capital:** Lansing

**State Tree:** White Pine

**State Flower:** Apple Blossom

**State Bird:** American Robin

**State Fish:** Trout

**State Reptile:** Painted Turtle

**State Soil:** Kalkaska Sand

**State Fossil:** Mastodon

### Michigan Milestones

**1622:** The French establish missions and settlements.

**1787:** The region becomes part of the Northwest Territory.

**1803:** The region becomes part of the Indiana Territory.

**1837:** Michigan is admitted to the Union as the 26th state.

**1863:** The 24th Michigan Infantry fights at Gettysburg. Nearly 400 men perish, the greatest loss of any Northern regiment in the Civil War.

**1888:** Dr. George F. Heath of Monroe prints and distributes *The American Numismatist*, and three years later forms the American Numismatic Association.

**1894:** Dr. John Harvey Kellogg applies for a patent on “flaked cereal,” and Battle Creek becomes America’s “Cereal City.”

**1897:** Michigan’s first automobile manufacturer—the Olds Motor Vehicle Company—begins operations in Lansing.

**1909:** The first concrete road in the nation is laid in Detroit.

**1914:** The Ford Motor Company increases the daily wage of assembly-line workers to \$5.

**1957:** Mackinac Bridge connects the Upper and Lower Peninsulas.

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