

The Great Seal of Montana Controversy

Most of the articles I write about the history of Broadwater County contain information from the Broadwater Bygones or Hidden Tales Well Told or from Kelly Flynn's book on the history of Diamond City (all books available at the Broadwater County Museum).

The Broadwater Bygones book is especially useful since it was written by local people about all of Broadwater County. However, it is a recounting of events as remembered by those local people and much of it is their memory of other people's memories.

So it inevitably has misinformation. When Linda Huth (curator of the Broadwater County Museum) was doing research for her "A Walk Down Mainstreet" series of talks, she found many inconsistencies in the book that she had to resolve.

One interesting item in the Broadwater Bygones mentions that the current Great Seal of Montana was designed by S.A.D. Hahn who lived in the Bedford area of Broadwater County (the area around the current Cook Mansion).

The first Montana Secretary of State was Louis Rotwitt, who was from Townsend when it was in Meagher County and S.A.D. Hahn was Louis Rotwitt's deputy Secretary of State. According to the Broadwater Bygones, Louis Rotwitt had Mr. Hahn draw a design for a new Great Seal of Montana. The Bygones goes on to cite a report of the Secretary of State on November 21st, 1898 that shows S.A.D. Hahn was paid \$65.00 for designing the new Great Seal of Montana.

However, I did research on the Great Seal of Montana and could not find any reference to S.A.D. Hahn designing the new seal.

According to the Montana Secretary of State website, the original Territorial Seal of Montana was designed by a legislative committee chaired by Francis McGee Thompson of Bannack (first capital of the Montana Territory). The Territorial Seal of Montana was used until Montana became a state in 1889.

According to the Secretary of State website, in 1891 “legislators debated the design of the seal at length and suggested adding Indians, settlers, miners, horses, sheep, cattle — even a train or stagecoach”. The legislature eventually decided to retain the Territorial Seal but changing the word Territory to State.

In 1893 the legislature passed a resolution adopting the basic design of the current Great Seal of Montana and in 1895 House Bill 187 directed payment of \$20.00 to G.R. Metten for his services rendered in 1893 drawing designs for the Great Seal of Montana.

The Secretary of State site (and other sites as well) have no mention of S.A.D. Hahn.

I choose to believe that the Louis Rottwitt had Mr. Hahn design changes to the Great Seal of Montana that were adopted in 1898 and that the Secretary of State website just does not include the information about changes designed by S.A.D. Hahn.

