



HISTORY OF
CORNELL MARKS



August 2004

THE FOLLOWING TIMELINE PROVIDES A SUMMARIZED HISTORY OF THE VARIOUS MARKS—seals, emblems, shields, crests, logotype, logos—that have been used, officially and unofficially, by Cornell University since its inauguration in 1868.

This timeline includes information drawn from official records and publications of the university (from Kroch Library archives and shelved collections), art on display across campus (castings, carvings, stained glass, etchings, et cetera), office files (from offices of former vice presidents for university relations), private collections of university memorabilia, and oral tradition and anecdotes. It is not a complete record (and, as such, cannot be considered a definitive history) but a work in progress.

October 6, 1868

OCTOBER 6, 1868 (the day before the university's inauguration and that of its first president)

At its eighth meeting, the Cornell University board of trustees adopted the Great Seal of the university (also known as the Presidential Seal), creation of which it had originally authorized in November 1866.

The Great Seal (described in the Bylaws of Cornell University), circular in form and 2-1/2 inches in diameter, carries in its center the profile of university founder Ezra Cornell, his name, and his statement, "I would found an institution where any person can find instruction in any study." The words "Founded A.D. 1865" and the university's name, "The Cornell University," appear in the outer circle.

The Great Seal was first published in the *Cornell University Register*, 1868–1869. (In this first publication, the profile of Ezra Cornell is facing left; over the coming years, the art of the profile seems on occasion to appear in a flipped position, resulting in Ezra's profile facing to the right.)

The seal is the only symbol affixed to Cornell academic diplomas. Other reproduction of the Great Seal (generally in commencement materials) is not allowed except with permission of the university president.

The Great Seal was revised once, in 1943, to make it smaller. [see "Corporate Seal," below]

1896 [exact date being researched]

The Cornell Medallion (also known as Ezra Cornell's Portrait Medallion), designed by H.S. Gutzell, was cast by the Cornell Foundry, then part of the College of Engineering. (The Medallion has been cast at least seven times, in total.) It was meant to depict the seal of the University, yet it does not exactly reproduce the Great Seal. The Medallion originally was cast in bronze, in brass, and in iron. Some duplicates were cast in iron. Two bronze Medallions were set in the center of the forged-metal tracery of the Eddy Street Gate, erected in 1896 at the Cascadilla Hall entrance to campus. The brass version is inside the McGraw Clock Tower entrance to Uris Library. There are three known cast-iron versions of the Medallion; one is in the university archives in Kroch Library and the other two are in the possession of individual alumni.

DECEMBER 9, 1910

In response to their original concern that the Great Seal was not appropriate for decorative use (June 12, 1908), the university faculty approved a design for a University Emblem. It was created expressly for the use of stationers, engravers, printers, decorators, stonecutters, workers in stained glass, etc.

The University Emblem is a shield containing elements designed to reflect the connection between the university, the State of New York, and the United States. The state and the nation are repre-

sented by their respective official shields or coats of arms—the nation’s shield, which appears in the upper left of the Cornell shield, contains 13 red and white vertical stripes, representing the original 13 colonies, topped with a solid bar of blue, representing the unifying force of the U.S. Congress; a portion of the state’s coat of arms, which appears in the upper right of the Cornell shield, includes commercial ships on the Hudson River, reflecting commerce and economic prosperity, with a bright sun shining on the surrounding landscape, implying bountiful resources. The Cornell Emblem also includes, on a field of carnelian and white, an open book with Ezra Cornell’s words, “I would found an institution where any person can find instruction in any study.”

Origins of the colors:

Carnelian and white as the university’s colors date to 1868. The reference originated informally from the colors of a red felt banner holding cut-out white letters spelling “Cornell University” that was used during the inauguration of the university and its first president, Andrew Dickson White, on October 7, 1868. Some university historians believe that the colors also may have been chosen as a play on the names of the university’s founder Ezra Cornell (hence, “carnelian,” the actual name of a reddish-orange gemstone that was popular at the time) and first president Andrew Dickson White (hence, “white”).

On Thanksgiving Day, 1897 (at the Cornell–Penn football game), the colors of the red and white uniforms of Cornell’s football team so impressed a spectator in the crowd—Herberton L. Williams, an executive with the Campbell’s Soup Company—that he persuaded his company to change the labels on their soup cans and adopt the Cornell colors. (This change, which helped advertise the soup product, increase sales, and win for the company a gold medallion for excellence at the Paris Exposition of 1900, was later deemed the singular most important decision in the firm’s success.) [We believe that this original Campbell’s red is the color still in use by the company today—details being researched.]

Origins of the design:

The university faculty, through a special committee on the insignia appointed by the university president, had held a competition for the emblem design (authorized by the trustees at their December 10, 1909 meeting); 150 designs were submitted and two awards were announced on June 10, 1910—the \$200 top prize to Messrs. Bailey, Banks, and Biddle of Philadelphia [their connection to Cornell is being researched]; and a special \$50 prize to Edwin S. Healy of Bloomfield, New Jersey (at the time, a Class of 1912 undergraduate in Cornell's College of Civil Engineering). However, neither of the winning designs was immediately adopted; instead, the trustees requested the committee to continue its work (toward a "fuller discussion of the design") and report again at the trustees' October 1910 meeting. (Trustee proceedings for October and November 1910 do not include any mention of the insignia committee.)

Official records of the university faculty show that a design was approved by the university faculty at its December 9, 1910 meeting. It is unclear in the records whether this was one of the original winning designs, a revision thereof, or an altogether different design. It is also unclear whether the faculty submitted this final design to the board of trustees for approval and, if so, on what date; trustee proceedings for December 1910 do not include any mention of the insignia committee or emblem.

(Further confusing the details and the timeline, the 1909–1910 President's Report cites a design competition for the insignia, which at that time had not even been authorized by the trustees, and also cites the insignia committee and later the faculty as having "accepted a design submitted by Edwin Healy, a member of the Class of 1912"—no mention is made in this report of the Bailey, Banks, and Biddle winning design; perhaps Healy's design submission/acceptance pre-dated the official competition? The report states that the Healy design was "referred to the Board of Trustees for their approval" and implies that the trustees did

not approve the design, instead sending it back to the faculty for further consideration.)

In its original version, the shield is shown with a scalloped top edge (also known as a three-point top); occasionally it is shown with a flat top edge. Over the early years of usage, the actual rendition of the art seems to vary with each artist (indicating that much of the art was hand drawn and not copied exactly); sometimes the shield is elongated, sometimes it is shown with double or triple outside lines (implying depth in three dimensions), sometimes the elements of the shield are drawn more ornately and other times more simply. (Oddly, the raised dots in the upper background section, the vertical lines in the lower left background section, and the horizontal lines in the upper bar of the nation's shield in the upper left—which originally indicated heraldic/printing codes for gold and red and blue, respectively, when the art was rendered in full color—remained as vestiges even when the art was rendered in one or two colors.)

November 1925

The university faculty, on seeing the actual color “carnelian” (in the 1912 edition of *Color Standards and Color Nomenclature* by Robert Ridgway), deemed it was too pale (or orange)—it did not match the deeper reds that had been used historically by the Cornell community; they changed the name of the official university color to “carmine” (another red color in the 1912 edition of *Color Standards and Color Nomenclature* by Robert Ridgway, the accepted international color standard of the time)—this red more closely matched the deep red in common usage throughout the university.

1930

1930 [exact date and details being researched]

Another version of the University Emblem is designed. It includes, around the shield (which was by then drawn most often with a flat top edge in lieu of the three-point scallop), a circular border that contains the name of the university and its founder. (The circular border is sometimes shown with a wavy outer edge, which implies the look of the melted edge of a seal stamped in wax.)

From this point onward, this newer, more complex version of the emblem is referred to as the "University Emblem," and the original University Emblem is referred to as the University Shield or the University Crest. (These name references are colloquial in nature; no official change in name of the university marks seems to have been made by the trustees.)

This Emblem remained in use for several decades.

1943

1943 [see reference above; exact date being researched]

The Cornell University board of trustees adopted the Corporate Seal—1-1/2 inches in diameter, a similar but smaller version of the Great Seal. This seal (described in the Bylaws of Cornell University) was developed for use on legal instruments and official documents other than diplomas.

1982

1982 [exact date being researched]

The executive committee of the board of trustees, upon recommendation from the university president, changed the official university color from "carmine" to "cadmium red medium" (a common oil/acrylic pigment for painting) or "scarlet." [details being researched as to why this change was made]

EARLY TO MID 1980S [exact date being researched]

Under the direction of then vice president of university relations, John Burness, a review of the university's various communication and marketing materials shows that there are many styles in use but no integrated identity system. As a result, Burness initiates and promotes the concept of image development for the university. He establishes a single graphic identity as the university's contemporary mark—the Cornell logotype (designed by university graphic designer Claude Schuyler)—and standardizes its usage throughout campus.

The type treatment includes the word "Cornell" in all-capital Palatino font stacked atop the smaller-sized, letter-spaced, all-capital word "University." The logotype was first used in Cornell's undergraduate admissions viewbook, the *Big Red Book*.

1984

To standardize the shade of red used in Cornell materials, Cornell's Office of Publication Services changed the official Cornell red to #186 red in the Pantone Matching System, the color standards system of the contemporary graphic arts industry. The selection of PMS 186 was intended as a visual match to Cornell's "cadmium red medium" or "scarlet," based on observed historical usage.

1990

[exact date being researched]

A campus-wide communications audit, coordinated by the university vice president for university relations, Henrik Dullea (and conducted by Siegel and Gale), concluded that Cornell did not have a strong graphic brand and recommended that the university establish a standardized graphic identity that could be integrated throughout all campus communications. (There is no record of development or implementation of this concept at the time.)

2000 [exact date being researched]

Based on a campus-wide communications audit coordinated by the university vice president for university relations, Henrik Dullea (and conducted in 1999 by Lippincott and Margulies), it was recommended that a new university brand architecture and signature system be developed to achieve consistency in the university's public image.

Under the direction of the office of the university vice president for university relations, a team of university graphic designers, working with input gathered from campus constituencies, designed a new mark to be used as a contemporary brand for the university, thus replacing the Cornell logotype.

The mark is a red square (PMS 186 red) with the single word "Cornell" (all-capital Palatino, reverse type) centered vertically and horizontally therein. A companion graphics standards system also was developed to assure consistency of usage. (The standards for use of the new mark also discourage use of the University Emblem.)

