

The History of the School of Nursing Pin

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Traditionally, each school of nursing has its own distinct pin. The pin for the University of Wisconsin—Madison School of Nursing was planned in 1926, since it was to be worn by members of the first graduating class the next year. The design, submitted by a firm, was selected by a committee of five: Miss Helen Denne, director of the school, Miss Lila Fletcher, superintendent of nurses, Miss Christina Murray, instructor in the school, Dr. Robin Buerki, hospital superintendent, and Dr. Joseph Evans, of the Medical School staff.

Apparently, a contest was held for the best design. Interestingly, the design selected bears a strong resemblance to a British medal, Order of the Royal Red Cross, awarded to Miss Denne, who served as a Canadian military nurse overseas in World War I. The medal was given to the School of Nursing after Miss Denne's death.

The School of Nursing pin consists of three parts: The Cross Pattee, representative of nursing; the Caduceus, symbolic of medicine and healing; and the seal of the University, signifying the educational setting of the School.

Details -The pin of the School of Nursing is in the shape of a Cross Pattee. It consists of the seal of the University superimposed upon a caduceus and a maroon cross. Often mistakenly called a Maltese Cross, the four—armed Cross Pattee dates from the Middle Ages, when it was worn by the Knights Templar, a military nursing order. (A true Maltese Cross has eight points, each of the four arms having an indentation).

The broad wings of the Cross Pattee are symbolic of the wings of a bird covering her young, thus signifying the protection given by those bearing the symbol. In the School of Nursing pin, the top arm of the Cross Pattee is covered by the wings of the caduceus, represented as a staff surrounded by wings. According to Greek Mythology, the staff of the

caduceus was given to Mercury, messenger of the gods, by Apollo, god of the art of healing.

The wings of the caduceus represent the winged sandals of Mercury.

This serpent was the mythological symbol of creation and the healing process. The periodic shedding of the snakes' skin led to the ancient belief that they were immortal and had special healing powers.

In the center of the pin, over the caduceus and the Cross Pattee, is the round design of the seal of the University. This official seal was designed by John Lathrop, first Chancellor of the University, and adopted by the Board of Regents on February 11, 1854. According to Lathrop, the design depicted "the human eye upturned to receive the light falling upon it from above; the motto in illumined letters above the eye, 'Numen Lumen' (God our light); the Latin legend around the rim of the seal 'Universitatis Wisconsinensis Sigillum'. No records indicate the source of Chancellor Lathrop's inspiration for the seal. In their *History of the University of Wisconsin*, Merle Curti and Vernon Carstenson stated that "the seal, sanctified by age and by usage, continues to be the signet of the University despite its obscure symbolism and its unfamiliar motto of uncertain origin."