

## About the Collection

*The collection was assembled by Darrell C. Crain, Jr. in honor of his father, who designed medals for Presidents Wilson, Harding, and Coolidge. Dr. Crain graduated from The George Washington University School of Medicine (1932) and was a member of the Ford and Rockefeller Inaugural Medal Committees.*

*Darrell Crain, Sr. began as an engraver with Harris & Co., later joining with his friend, Clarence Pearson, to form Pearson & Crain. After Pearson's death, Mr. and Mrs. Crain continued with D.C. Crain Jewelry Co., until both reached the age of 88. By the time of his death in 1969, Crain had designed and created insignia, rings, medals, cups and awards for over one hundred different civic, educational, religious, and fraternal organizations. Other than the inaugural medals, his most famous creation was the President's Cup which Coolidge commissioned in 1926 and was awarded annually to the winner of the Potomac speedboat races.*

*When Darrell Crain, Jr. presented the medals to The George Washington University in 1976, this was the only complete set of inaugural medals in existence. Since then, the Smithsonian Institution has developed a collection with medals representative of each inauguration. However, the Crain collection at GW remains unique in its completeness. Today, it is still the only collection containing at least two specimens of each medal so that both obverse and reverse may be viewed at once.*

## General Information

Inaugural medals usually range in size from 45mm to 70mm in diameter. The largest medals in this collection are the 74mm Theodore Roosevelt medal by Tiffany and the 76mm FDR medals (1933 and 1937).

The smallest medals are the 42mm McKinley (1901), the 42mm FDR (1941), and the 28mm Nixon bronze (1969). Generally, the medals are struck in gold, silver, or bronze, although Reagan inaugural medals included a copper medal in 1985.

Franklin Roosevelt's first medal is interesting for its deep relief of the casting and the youthful depiction of the president. His later medals show a marked aging during his time in office. The second Franklin Roosevelt medal is unique in that it is the only medal to have the president depicted on one side and the vice-president on the other. The double, or jugate, portraits include Taft and Sherman (1909), Eisenhower and Nixon (1957), Nixon and Agnew (1973), and Reagan and Bush (1985). Unlike coinage of the United Kingdom, the profiles shown do not alternate president by president. Each is allowed to choose his "best side." The angles shown vary from conventional right and left profiles, to forward face with the 1985 Reagan medal.

The collection also includes the Ford and Rockefeller Vice-Presidential medals. These are the only medals, other than Ford's Presidential medal, not struck in conjunction with the official quadrennial inauguration. The Ford Vice-Presidential medal commemorated the first inauguration of a vice-president under the terms of the Twenty-Fifth Amendment. Rockefeller was similarly honored. Previous transitions where vice presidents had stepped into the presidency (as with Theodore Roosevelt, Coolidge, Truman and Lyndon Johnson) had not been celebrated with official medals. Ford had a second medal struck upon becoming president and is the only president to have a presidential and a vice-presidential medal.

## Gold Medals

The inclusion of five presentation gold medals (exact duplicates of those given to the president) is of great significance. Aside from the FDR Library and Museum, which holds the four gold medals presented to Franklin Roosevelt, no other collection has more than one gold presentation medal. The gold Woodrow Wilson medal of 1917 was originally presented to Colonel Robert Harper and the gold Calvin Coolidge to William T. Gallihier, chairmen of their respective inaugural committees. The gold medal from Harding's inauguration presented to Vice-President Coolidge is on indefinite loan to the collection, courtesy of President Coolidge's son John Coolidge. This is the only Harding gold known to exist. Harding's own medal has never been found. These three gold medals were designed by Washington engraver and jeweler, Darrell Crain, Sr. The gold medals for Eisenhower's 1953 (one of two) and 1957 inaugurals were struck for the Honorable Leonard Hall, Chairman of the Republican National Committee. Dr. William Cooper, a friend and co-worker of Mr. Hall, was instrumental in securing the donation of these medals to The George Washington University, prior to Mr. Hall's death.

## Silver Medals

Most of the silver medals are rare, and two are believed to be unique. Although records indicate that 55 silver McKinley medals and 30 Woodrow Wilson 1913 medals were struck, only ten of the former and four of the latter have been located. The silver medals marking Taft's inauguration and that of Wilson in 1917 are believed to be the only ones produced. The University purchased the Taft medal in 1986 and the Wilson medal had been found in Mr. Crain's safe after his death. He had engraved "Crain" on the rim. Only six silver medals are known to have been produced for Harding's inaugural and four for FDR's first. The Truman silver medal is one of nine struck, three of which have been located. This medal was presented to Woodward &

Lothrop, a local department store, in recognition of its outstanding inaugural display and was later given to the collection by Andrew Parker, president of Woodward & Lothrop. The silver medal from Eisenhower's 1951 inaugural is one of 25 unnumbered specimens given to inaugural committee members (788 numbered medals were sold publicly) and was made available to the collection by Judge Joseph McGarraghy, Chairman of the Inaugural Committee. The displays for Ford, Rockefeller and Reagan feature silver medals in two different sizes. In each case, the smaller medal was sold to the public and the larger given to members of the inaugural medals committee. The comparative rarity of each is illustrated by noting that 5,000 of the 63mm size medals were struck for President Reagan's first inaugural and only eight of the 70mm size.

#### Bronze Medals

Although most bronze medals have been produced in large quantities to help defray the inauguration expenses, several of these in the collection are significant. The Theodore Roosevelt medal by Tiffany is one of 15 known to survive of the 125 minted. With it is the only known uniface specimen, apparently cast as a die trial. Similarly, only about ten Harding and Coolidge bronze medals have been located. The two bronze medals shown for Franklin Roosevelt's first inaugural are of different thicknesses. The thicker medal is one of 50 struck by Medallion Art; the thinner, one of 1500 struck by the U.S. Mint.

#### Additional Information:

Dusterberg, Richard B. *The Official Inaugural Medals of the Presidents of the United States*. 1976.

MacNeil, Neil. *The President's Medal, 1789-1977*. New York: Clarkson Potter, 1977.

Levine, H. Joseph. *Collector's Guide to Presidential Inaugural Medals and Memorabilia*. Danbury, Conn.: Johnson & Jenson, 1981.



*Dr. Darrell C. Crain at the Donor Reception at the time of his gift to The Gelman Library, May 16, 1976. Photographed by Marvin Ickow.*

**Special Collections Department  
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The Gelman Library System



## The Darrell C. Crain Collection of Official Presidential and Vice-Presidential Inaugural Medals

at  
**The Gelman Library  
The George Washington University**



On the occasion of his second inauguration, William McKinley decided to have commemorative medals made as presentation gifts to the inaugural committee members and other officials. The year was 1901, marking the introduction of the first *Official Inaugural Medal*, a medal planned, produced, and distributed under the direction of the Official Inaugural Committee and its Subcommittee on Medals.

The Crain Collection, displayed in the Special Collections Department of The Gelman Library, is one of the rare complete sets of these medals, starting with the McKinley medal of 1901 and continuing through the second Clinton/Gore inauguration in 1997.