

NEWS YOU CAN USE: RICH IN HISTORY: THE OA LOGO

By Donnie Stephens



The OA's centennial celebration in 2015 marks a time when many Arrowmen reflect on the Order's history and change over the past century. Notable among these changes is evolution of that which most readily identifies the Order of the Arrow: its iconic logos.

The logos of the Order of the Arrow have a rich, although brief, history. For the first half of the Order's existence, American Indian themes were used to denote the Order's identity, but no standardized image had been adopted. It was not until the 1967 World Jamboree when the first OA logo would be revealed, although that design was never intended to be a "logo".

"The first logo of the Order of the Arrow was actually a jacket patch introduced at the 1967 World Jamboree. The patch featured a multicolored American Indian chieftain. It was a very powerful image, and became an immediate hit at the Jamboree and an icon within the Boy Scouts of America," explained Bill Topkis, a member of national OA Recognition, Awards, History, and Preservation committee.

This OA jacket patch persisted as the recognized logo for the Order of the Arrow from the World Jamboree in 1967 up to 1975, when it was decided that a simpler design was needed that could be more easily re-created by local lodges. Commercial artist and

Distinguished Service Award recipient Michael Feigenbaum was recruited to develop this simpler, yet equally as powerful image to mark the OA for future generations.

The second OA logo made its debut at the 1972 National Planning Meeting. It featured a simplified image of an American Indian, and was affectionately known as the "MGM Indian" because of its resemblance to the logo of Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer Studios in use at the time.

Topkis explains the reasons behind the logo's immediate success, saying "The logo's likeness to an already iconic image made it easily identifiable to many Scouts. This branding affirmed the Order of the Arrow's position as a national organization with a rich history and lore, and it really was quite a profound image."

The "MGM Indian" served as the face of the Order of the Arrow from 1975 to 1998, when a logo change was adopted as part of the national Order of the Arrow committee's 1998 strategic plan. In discussing actions taken to achieve the vision spelled out in the plan, it states:

"We will adopt a new logo, one focused on the Arrow rather than the Indian . . . By taking the Arrowhead from the Arrow on the sash as our logo, we unify our image and strengthen the identity embodied in our name, the Order of the Arrow."

Thus the modern logo of the Order of the Arrow was adopted—a logo which features the "arrow pointing upwards" surrounded by the words "Order of the Arrow, Boy Scout of America."

The Order of the Arrow's logos serve as the face for this national organization of cheerful service, and the evolution of these logos provide a primary example for the Order's rich history. Since 1967, the logos of the Order of the Arrow have not only marked us as an organization, but remain very powerful icons within the Boy Scouts of America today.

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