

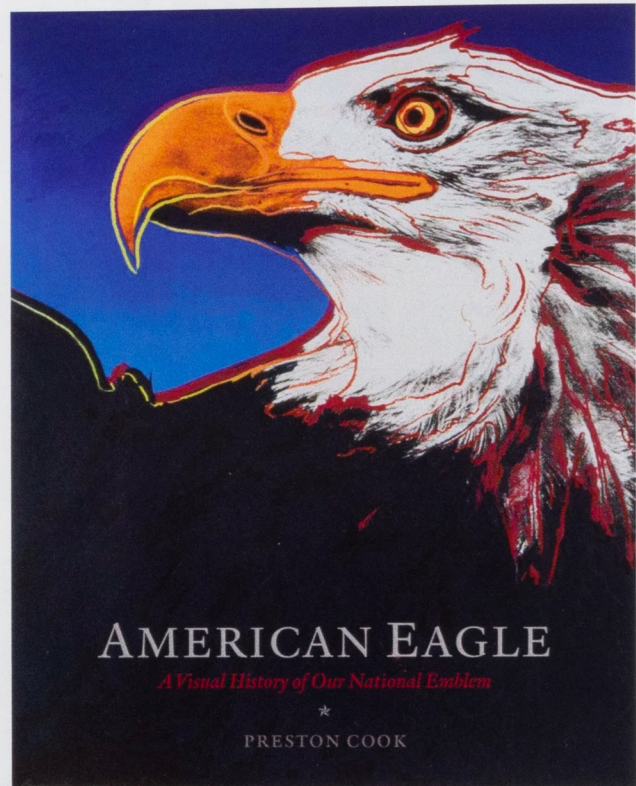
Book Reviews

Preston Cook, with a forward by Rolf Thompson, executive director, American Eagle Center. . *American Eagle: A Visual History of Our National Emblem*. San Francisco, Goff Books, an imprint of ORO Editions, 2019, 264 pp., lavishly illustrated in full color. ISBN 978-1-941806-28-9, \$75.00 hardcover.

Preston Cook, the collector who amassed over twenty-five thousand items “of art, documents, ephemera, and objects, each bearing the image of an American bald eagle” (xi), has authored and produced a stunning, full-color book reproducing and cataloging the collection. The book measures 14 x 11 x 11½ inches and contains 264 pages of heavy coated stock. The hefty format, designed to present the illustrations to greatest advantage, is difficult to handle without support. I read the review copy on a dictionary stand and thoroughly enjoyed it. I was also consistently impressed by the thoughtfulness with which the book was organized and produced. In view of current concerns regarding deforestation and its impact on climate change, it was encouraging to read on the printer’s imprint and copyright page that the publisher, Goff Books, “in association with Global ReLeaf,¹ arranges to plant trees to replace those used in the manufacture of paper products for its books.”

Cook describes himself as “a collector by nature” and a voracious one at that, declaring “You can’t have too many eagles” (xi). He was drafted into the US Army in 1966 and the collection began after discharge when he cut the eagle-embossed, gold-plated brass buttons off his dress uniform and sewed them onto his civilian blazer. Having no prior knowledge of eagles or of forming collections, Cook learned as he went, with amazing results in breadth and scope as recorded in this book. Early on he decided to limit his focus to the bald eagle, native only to North America, and researching its symbolism taught him about American history. Over the years, Cook has discovered and met other eagle collectors and amassed a library of related books and research materials.

His omnivorous appetite for eagle images drove Cook to acquire art and artifacts, two-dimensional and three-dimensional objects. Paintings, prints, photographs, posters, documents, ephemera and memorabilia, sculpture and carving, toys, comic books, calendars, carnival prizes, clothing and headgear, pins, badges, and medals are among the items reproduced. Thinking ahead to the disposition of his collection, Cook decided to build a new museum to



house it, and chose a site in Wabash, Minnesota, on the banks of the Mississippi River where “hundreds of eagles come to rest during the winter” (xii). This became the National Eagle Center, and the collection was moved there in 2016.

Cook believes the eagle is “a window into American life, a way of looking at our country through a symbol that has inspired artists, soldiers, public officials, and homemakers for centuries” (xii). The book, which eloquently illustrates this, is divided into eight topical chapters, each with a one-page commentary, followed by examples from the collection. Everything is reproduced in color. All illustrations are numbered, with accompanying catalog descriptions on the same double page spread. Chapters include “The Official Eagle,” “Military & War,” “Politics & Protest,” “Culture & Entertainment,” “Art & Decoration,” “Commerce,” “The Natural Eagle,” and “Travel & Transportation.” The Chronology, supported by 299 notes, is an interesting array of information on all things, people, and events related to eagles. It charts the ups and downs of the eagle population,

and the design and approval process for the Great Seal of the United States. The References & Notes are arranged by chapter and essentially function as a bibliography.

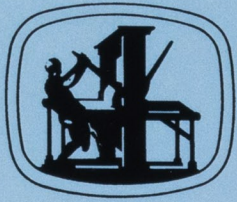
American Eagle is visually stunning and highly engaging. Through its pages the reader can explore a great collection of cultural history, intelligently presented.

SALLY PIERCE

Vineyard Haven, Massachusetts

NOTE

1. Global ReLeaf is an international campaign run by the nonprofit conservation organization American Forests.
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