

## North Carolina Awards <sup>[1]</sup>

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## North Carolina Awards

by John L. Humber, 2006

See also: [History of the North Carolina Awards](#) <sup>[2]</sup>



The North Carolina Award. Image from the North Carolina Museum of History.

<sup>[3]</sup>The North Carolina Awards are the highest civilian honor given by the state. [Established](#) <sup>[4]</sup> by the [General Assembly](#) <sup>[5]</sup> in 1961, they were first conferred in May 1964 and have been granted annually since then. State senator [Robert Lee Humber](#) <sup>[6]</sup> of [Pitt County](#) <sup>[7]</sup> (1898-1970) conceived the awards to recognize the superior achievements of North Carolinians in [science](#) <sup>[8]</sup>, [literature](#) <sup>[9]</sup>, the [fine arts](#) <sup>[10]</sup>, and [public service](#) <sup>[11]</sup>, as well as of one North Carolinian living outside the state who had been distinguished in one of the areas. Humber hoped that the awards would inspire others to excel in their chosen fields.

Shortly before his death, eminent American sculptor [Paulanship](#) <sup>[12]</sup> produced the design for the 2 3/4-inch diameter 14-carat gold medal presented to every recipient. Sculpted on the front in bas-relief is the [Great Seal of North Carolina](#) <sup>[13]</sup> with the words "State of North Carolina Award" around the border. On the reverse are two scrolls, the first located in the center of the medal, inscribed with the name of the recipient and the date of the award and surrounded by a wreath. The second scroll is on the lower margin below the wreath and inscribed with the field for which the recipient is recognized. Encircling the central scroll and wreath along the outer margin is the motto Humber penned for this medal: "Achievement Is Man's Mark of Greatness."

The North Carolina [Department of Cultural Resources](#) <sup>[14]</sup>, through a five-member North Carolina Awards Commission appointed by the [governor](#) <sup>[15]</sup>, administers the North Carolina Awards. The commission works through committees of knowledgeable persons in the four fields from which nominees are considered. Anyone can submit nominations to the Awards Commission for consideration. By the early 2000s more than 200 individuals had received the award, including Hiram Houston Merritt (science, 1967), Samuel J. Ervin (public service, 1973), [Andy Griffith](#) <sup>[16]</sup> (fine arts, 1984), [Maya Angelou](#) <sup>[17]</sup> (literature, 1987), David Brinkley (public service, 1988), John Hope Franklin (literature, 1993), and LeRoy T. Walker (public service, 2004).

### Additional Resources:

"The North Carolina Awards." North Carolina Department of Cultural Resources. <http://www.ncdcr.gov/NC Awards.aspx> <sup>[18]</sup>

(accessed November 13, 2012).

North Carolina Awards Commission. *North Carolina Awards*. 1964-present.  
<http://digital.ncdcr.gov/cdm/ref/collection/p249901coll22/id/39993> [19] (accessed November 13, 2012).

"An Act to Establish Annual Awards for Outstanding Achievements by Citizens of North Carolina." *1961 Session laws and resolutions passed by the General Assembly*. Winston-Salem, N.C.: Winston Printing Company. 1961. p.1572-1573.  
<http://digital.ncdcr.gov/u/?p249901coll22,385550> [4] (accessed November 13, 2012).

#### Image Credits:

"Medal, Accession #: [H.1980.27.1](#) [3]." 1975. North Carolina Museum of History.

"2012 North Carolina Awards" (photo set). Flickr user ncculture. October 31, 2012.  
<https://www.flickr.com/photos/ncculture/sets/72157631902382507/> [20] (accessed November 13, 2012).

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[Encyclopedia of North Carolina, University of North Carolina Press.](#) [26]

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