

OSVOD Water Rescue Society Award Badge, issued on 30 July 1934 to a Member of the Women's Swimming Team that Won the First Prize in a Competition.

Brass, enamels; measures 32.0 mm in height not including the suspension chains x 46.5 mm in width; weighs 8.9 g including the chains. Two- piece construction: the steamship, anchor, and ring-buoy are a separate part superimposed on the diamond-shaped base and held by wires. Inscribed "OSVOD" on the white field and "USSR" on the white half of the ring-buoy. The reverse is hand-engraved "1st Place in the OSVOD Swim Meet. Women's Team. 30 July 1934".

This very interesting and rare piece is essentially the same as the pre-WW2 membership badge of the OSVOD organization, but it was customized by removing the screw post (its stump ids filed off but is still clearly visible) and adding a thin "coat hanger-style" strip of brass at the top with the eyelets that support a chain. The customization was apparently to provide enough space for the presentation engraving and also to allow the recipient to wear the badge essentially as a jetton, attached to a pin or button and without making a hole in her clothes. The conversion was done in a most professional manner, without ruining the appearance of the badge and in particular, its fragile enamel. In all likelihood, it was commissioned by one of the larger OSVOD chapters that had access to both the highly skilled jewelry workshop (or possibly, the original manufacturer) and the money to pay for the job.

Very fine condition. The enamel in the upper portion of the badge is very well preserved and shows a beautiful luster. The ring-buoy has small chips in the center of its white portion, while its small red enameled segments have been repaired. The blue enamel representing the sea has small chips and flakes that are not immediately noticeable without a magnifying glass. The black enamel on the ship is perfect. The rivets connecting the two main parts of the badge are intact and tight; the chains are clearly of the period and probably original. Overall, a very impressive piece exhibiting early, imperial level workmanship and free of glaring flaws.

OSVOD is the universally used acronym of the Soviet "volunteer" organization by the rather long-winded full name of "Union of Societies to Promote the Development of Water Transport and Preservation of People's Lives on the Water Routes of the USSR". It was formed in 1931 from the earlier OSNAV Water Rescue society. Although the Soviet OSVOD had millions of members and remained active for decades until the dissolution of the USSR, prior to WW2 its badges were issued to only a relatively few active members and VIPs. These early awards are quite rare, especially in decent condition.

/Avers 8, p. 348, fig. 1700.b/.

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