

Conway's Office  
Apr. 22<sup>nd</sup> 1888  
To the Hon. S. B. Conway  
Pres. of the Legislative Council.

In the request of the Honorable  
the Legislature Council, supported by a  
Resolution adopted on the 22<sup>nd</sup> ult. and  
only transmitted to this Department  
as to the Legislative Council, and  
every respectfully considered and  
which it affords me the order  
please to comply.

In accordance, therefore, with  
the request of the Honorable the  
Legislative Council, the Legislative  
Council of the Territory of Iowa, have  
transmitted for inspection. It is also  
accompanied by impromptu, or what  
I prefer, the device is believed to be  
simple; and with the highest regard  
to the good taste and without criticism  
of the Honorable Council, it is my  
most respectful expression of a desire  
idea, intimately associated with the history

improving, in every possible point of  
view, that such substance shall  
it ever occur to our Legislature  
to forget.

The Honorable the Legislative  
Council will pardon the presence  
of these reflections, which are  
occasional effects of a day not  
demanded, - which I have the  
pleasure to remain, as before,  
your very obedient and  
respectful servant

Wm. B. Conway,  
Secy of the Territory.

If the Legislative Council which we  
have the happiness to inhabit, and for  
which it is the same day, and a  
number of the Legislative Council  
to provide more, suitable and  
salutary laws.

The Legislative Council of the  
Territory will decrease to the Honorable  
Council the Legislative Council, the House and  
appropriate members of our national  
power being in its hands, in its  
error and delay in its  
an existing law, and which the  
idea that certainly ~~is~~ <sup>is</sup> a  
well known fact to make the Legislative  
with force and the heart to  
help with the Legislative Council  
improving, it is my duty to present  
a touching appeal to our many  
dear citizens a water-plating the way  
of a delay in the  
no case, ~~the Legislative Council~~  
~~request submitted to the~~  
we should it fail to accomplish it  
of the immense importance of

# ANNALS OF IOWA.

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## THE GREAT SEALS OF IOWA.

BY C. C. STILES.

The Great Seal of a sovereign state, like the signature of a private person, is a symbol of authenticity. This symbol of our commonwealth, embracing that of the Territory of Iowa, has been associated with some very interesting circumstances. Most of the information possessed by the general public in regard to our Great Seals is based on accounts by the late Hon. Theodore S. Parvin. Mr. Parvin was a witness to and a participant in many vital affairs in the foundation of the Territory and of the State. His contributions to the published sources of information are quite voluminous, and in the main are accurate.

As to the Great Seals and their origin, Mr. Parvin seems to have written without some of the original source materials at hand at the time he presented his recollections, and not until comparatively recent days has any one else had aids of a different character from those used by him. But after the establishment of the Hall of Public Archives, and the gathering together of the various documentary materials that lay for half a century inaccessible in various vaults in the Capitol,

new light has been thrown upon this and various other transactions of the officials of the Territory and the State. For the purpose of adding to the information Mr. Parvin and others made available, and not in any sense for the purpose of controverting recollections of Mr. Parvin, I present by original evidences the subject of the selection, the use, the manufacture and the evolution of the seals of our Commonwealth.

The writings of Mr. Parvin, to which I allude, are in the main as follows:

Territorial Seal of Iowa.

*A. B. F. Hildreth, Esq., Editor of the St. Charles Intelligencer:*

Dear Sir:—I have, this winter, received from three different parts of the State requests to furnish an account of the "Great Seal of the State of Iowa." You, with many others, have doubtless observed, that while all commissions and documents issued from the Executive Department of the State Government bear an impression called "The Great Seal of the State of Iowa," upon the maps of the country, all collections of State Seals, and even the recent large and valuable Report of the State Geologist, has as its "coat of arms" the "Great Seal of the Territory of Iowa." Whether this be the result, in the first two instances cited, of ignorance or not, I am unable to say. In the last case cited, I know that Prof. Hall selected the "Territorial" seal from his own good taste, with the "advice and consent" of Gov. Lowe, who, with every other gentleman of refinement, cannot but regret the bad taste that conceived and adopted the conglomerate devices of our present "Great Seal." The description of these seals is not so much sought after as their history. "The Great Seal of the Territory of Iowa" originated with the Hon. Wm. B. Conway, first Secretary of the Territory of Iowa, and was engraved by Mr. Wm. Wagner, of York, Pennsylvania. At the request of the Legislative Council, Mr. Conway addressed to that branch of the Legislative Assembly a communication, of which the following is a copy, extracted from page 45 of the Journal of the Council:<sup>1</sup>

\* \* \* \* \*

This communication was referred to a committee who reported the following resolution, which was adopted, viz:

"*Resolved*, That the seal submitted to the Council by the Secretary of the Territory, be adopted by the Council as the 'Great Seal of the Territory of Iowa.'"

<sup>1</sup>See letter as shown on pp. 567-8. Original on file in Hall of Public Archives.

The seal is one inch and five-eighths in diameter, and the word "Great" is not upon the seal, notwithstanding the Hon. Secretary in his communication and the Council in their resolution have it prefixed.

The devices upon the seals for the Supreme Court, District Courts, Commissioners' Court and Probate Courts were all designed by the Hon. Secretary, and were all as appropriate in their several spheres as that of the "Great" seal of the Territory. This latter seal was never adopted by the Legislative Assembly, but by the Legislative Council, the higher branch thereof, which held its sessions in the lower story or basement of the old Zion Church in Burlington. There are some facts connected with the early history of this seal which I must omit, as well as the history of the seal of the State, which latter I will continue in another paper.

Theodore S. Parvin.

Muscatine, Feb. 24th, 1859.<sup>2</sup>

Seal of the State of Iowa.

*Editor Intelligencer:*

I am unable to furnish much concerning the history of our great seal, but hope that this paper may lead the Hon. W. E. Leffingwell or some other competent person, to supply my omissions.

I find from an examination of the Journal of the House of Representatives, that on the 9th of December, 1846, Mr. Leffingwell, in pursuance of previous notice, asked and obtained leave, and introduced H. R. file No. 2, joint resolution, authorizing the Secretary of State to procure a State seal. This joint resolution underwent various amendments in each branch of the General Assembly until the 25th of February, 1847, it was passed in the shape of a law. The journals are so meager that I can learn nothing of its original draught. The law reads as follows, viz:<sup>3</sup>

\* \* \* \* \*

Now, all this is encompassed within the radius of one inch, and if Solomon were to revisit this earth and see this great seal, he would recall his declaration that there is nothing new under the sun. I may justly apply to this great seal the remark made by an ex-Mayor of a certain sign on Second st.: "That no man would violate the second commandment were he to bow down to it or serve it, for it is not in the likeness of anything that is in heaven above or that is in the water under the earth."

\* \* \* \* \*

The old territorial seal, so neat and chaste in its design, was lost in the removal to Des Moines (pity it had not been the other),

<sup>2</sup>ANNALS OF IOWA, 1st ser. v. I, pp. 264-66, April, 1864.

<sup>3</sup>Laws of Iowa, First G. A., Ch. CXII, p. 164. See act as set out at page 576 hereof.

and to preserve some of the old county seals from a similar fate, I would suggest to our County Judges the propriety of depositing them in the collections of the State Historical Society at Iowa City.

T. S. Parvin.<sup>74</sup>

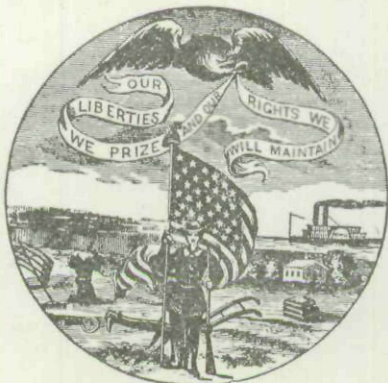
Muscatine, Feb. 28, 1859.

At the time of the publication of these articles Mr. Parvin was the editor of the ANNALS OF IOWA. In the Editorial Department he published a note with illustrations of the two seals, which is herewith reproduced:<sup>5</sup>

*Territorial and State Seals of Iowa.*—By the help of our tasteful and enterprising publishers, we are enabled to present our readers with proof impressions of these Seals, to accompany our article on pages 264, 266, and we appeal to the good taste of the reader to sustain the correctness of our criticisms thereon.



TERRITORIAL.



STATE.

In the next number of the ANNALS Mr. Parvin gives place to a good-natured debate upon the merits of these two seals, as follows:

Great Seal of Iowa—again.

[We gladly give a place to the following characteristic letter from our old friend of many years. "Old Enoch" has no "axe to grind" and he ably argues "the other side." The Lieut. Gov. is the author of Iowa's motto upon the monument to the "Father of his

<sup>4</sup>ANNALS OF IOWA, 1st ser. v. I, pp. 266-67, April, 1864.

<sup>5</sup>ANNALS OF IOWA, 1st ser. v. I, p. 287, April, 1864.

Country." "Iowa—her affections, like the rivers of her border flow to a perpetual union."—Ed.]

Eldora, May 5, 1864.

Hon. T. S. Parvin, Iowa City.

*My Dear Old Friend:*—I have received from you the April number of the "ANNALS", and thank you for it. I am well pleased with it. Of course you have my "*individual efforts*" to the extent of *one* subscriber, and here is my 50 cents.

I like the general plan and object of the "ANNALS." The early history of Iowa and of the pioneers who have left their indelible impress for good upon the State, is worth preserving, and you, in my judgment, are the right man in the right place to do it.

I have read with a good deal of pleasure your "criticism" on the "Great Seal of the State of Iowa," and that also of the "Territory." There is an independence of expression in it that I like. I love to see a man *think for himself*, and then *say* what he thinks. But I do not agree with you one bit in your opinion.

Like you I lived in Iowa when it was a Territory, and when the Territorial seal was given up for the State seal. I *like* the change. I never did like the Territorial seal. The Eagle on it is a coarse, ill-begotten thing, keeled over, with great haunches as big as a New Foundland dog's, hanging out, and with one foot standing on nothing, and the other one, ditto. It looks for all the world as though it had been pilfered from an old counterfeit Mexican dollar. It is not *our* living *American* Eagle, soaring on his spreading pinions above the reach of harm.

"The god who mounts the winged winds,"

as is beautifully delineated on the State seal,

"above the earth with wings

"Displayed on the open firmament of heaven."

There is nothing that is *civilized* about the Territorial seal, unless it is considered civil to keel an eagle over on his back—nothing but claws and an Indian's bow and arrow and a wild eagle—nothing that a "white man is bound to respect." If it only had a "cussed little Indian" on it, barbarism would be perfectly delineated in all its naked deformity. If Jeff Davis had adopted it for a vignette on his Confederate Scrip instead of the "National Government" for the "note of the Iowa National Bank," I would not have been so much surprised at it.

Now turn your eye to the *State* seal, and remember that we live in a progressive age,—that we are civilized, christianized and enlightened people. See the cottage house, the orchard, the plough, the waving grain, the harvester's sickle, the sheaf of wheat, the leaden

ore, and the majestic boat of commerce, all displaying an improved *mind*.

Then there is prophetic of *this very day*, standing in front, a bold and fearless son of Iowa,—a citizen soldier, *in the very dress* of an Iowa soldier, bearing onward and upward that blessed old flag of our country, crowned by the cap of liberty. See how manly and firm he stands, and then think of Pea Ridge and Springfield, and Donelson, and Shiloh, and Vicksburg, and Corinth, and Missionary Ridge, and every other hallowed spot where sleeps an Iowa soldier slain, and then say if it is not a fit emblem of Iowa.

Then away above all these, born on eagle's wings, that *is* an eagle, floats that glorious motto that the patriotic, brave sons of Iowa have already taught traitors must *continue* to float there, and must be respected while it waves.

No sir. No more of the great seal of the Territory of Iowa for me. It does well enough to represent Iowa as it *was* when Black Hawk, with his strings of beads and buckskin breeches on, sat chief in his wigwam and ruled the land. But the "Great Seal of the State of Iowa," with its device of civilization and liberty, and industry, and progress, and valor, is the natural and fit motto of *to-day*. It represents Iowa as it is and *is to be* and not as it *was*. I wish there was a *meeting-house* "within this radius of one inch" in addition to what is there, the thing would then be *perfect*.

There, I have said three times as much as I intended to when I began, but it is *my opinion* nevertheless. I do not suppose it will agitate you very much, as you know my way of expressing my opinion about as well as I do yours.

I am truly,

Your Friend, E. W. Eastman<sup>6</sup>

Pursuing the subject of seals, Mr. Parvin offered the editor of the *Historical Record* the following communication:<sup>7</sup>

*Editor Historical Record:*

During a late visit to the rooms of the Historical Society, Mr. Lathrop, Librarian, showed me the "Great Seal of the Territory of Iowa". I well remember that when it arrived from the hands of Mr. Wagoner, of Pittsburg, the engraver, Secretary Conway brought it to the Governor's office to show it, and how pleased we all were at the appropriateness of the design and the *poetical* description the Secretary had written of it, and which a few days later he communicated to the Legislature.

I have thought you would like for publication and preservation in the Record an account of the history of the seal. I have here—

<sup>6</sup>ANNALS OF IOWA, 1st ser. v. I, pp. 329-31, July, 1864.

<sup>7</sup>*Historical Record*, v. VII, pp. 41-2, January, 1891.

tofore transcribed from the Journals of the Council of 1838 the communications and actions had thereon, which I place at your disposal.<sup>5</sup>

T. S. Parvin.

\* \* \* \* \*

Thus is given substantially the foundation for the general information the public has upon the origin, institution, and development of the seals of our Territory and State.

I present herewith a copy of the Council Resolution and of Secretary Conway's original letter, which in minor details only, differ from those presented by Mr. Parvin:

Council Chamber, Nov. 22, 1838.

Hon. Wm. B. Conway,  
Secretary of the Territory of Iowa,  
Sir.

I have the honor to transmit herewith a copy of a Resolution adopted by the Council this day.

Resolved

That the Secretary of the Territory of Iowa, be and is hereby requested to transmit to the Council, the great seal of this Territory with its impression for inspection etc

Very respectfully your Obedient Servant,

B. F. Wallace, Sec'y of the Council.<sup>6</sup>

Secretary's Office,  
November 23d, 1838.

To the Hon. J. B. Brown,  
Pres't. of the Legislative Council,  
Sir.

The request of the Honorable, the Legislative Council, expressed by a Resolution, adopted on the 22d inst. was duly transmitted to this Department of the Territorial Government,—where it was very respectfully considered, and with which it affords me peculiar pleasure to comply.

In accordance, therefore, with the request of the Honorable, the Legislative Council, the "GREAT SEAL OF THE TERRITORY OF IOWA" is herewith transmitted for inspection. It is also accompanied by impressions, on wax and paper. The DEVICE is believed to be simple; and with the highest deference to the good taste and sound criticism of the Honorable Council, it is regarded as perfectly expressive of a distinct idea, intimately associated with the history of the delightful country, which we have the happiness to inhabit;

<sup>5</sup>The transcribed portions added by Mr. Parvin were excerpts from the Council Resolution of Nov. 22, 1838, and Sec. Conway's letter of Nov. 23, 1838, which follow.

<sup>6</sup>Original letter on file in Hall of Public Archives.



and for which it is the sacred duty and lofty privilege of the Legislative authorities, to provide wise, equitable and salutary laws: The slightest examination of the Seal will disclose to the Honorable Council, the EAGLE, the proud and appropriate emblem of our national Power, bearing, in its beak, an *Indian Arrow* and clutching, in its talons, an *unstrung bow*; and whilst the idea thus delicately evolved is so well calculated to make the eye glisten with pride and cause the heart to beat high with the pulsations of conscious superiority, it nevertheless presents a touching appeal to our manly sensibilities in contemplating the dreary destiny of a declining race; nor should it fail to admonish us of the immense importance of improving, in every possible point of view, that vast inheritance which it was their peculiar misfortune to neglect.

The Honorable the Legislative Council will pardon the freedom of these reflections, which the occasion elicits if it does not demand,—whilst I have the honor to remain, as heretofore,

Your very obedient and respectful Servant,

Wm. B. Conway,  
Sec'y of the Territory.<sup>10</sup>

Further reports and resolutions in regard to the Territorial seal follow:

Council. (Committee report by Lewis)

Nov. 24 1838

The committee on Territories, having had under consideration the communication from the Secretary of the Territory of Iowa, on the subject of the Great Seal of the Territory, beg leave to report—

That they have examined said seal, submitted by the Secretary, with its devices. Your committee are of the opinion that its devices are admirably adapted, and appropriate for the Great Seal of this Territory, and would, therefore, submit the following resolution:

Resolved, That the seal submitted to the Council by the Secretary of the Territory, be adopted by the Council as the Great Seal of the Territory of Iowa.<sup>11</sup>

And, On motion of Mr. Hempstead, the report was received and resolution adopted.

The above resolution was reported to the House November 24, 1838, with this additional message:

"And have instructed me also to present to the House of Representatives the seal with impressions upon wax and paper as re-

<sup>10</sup>Original letter on file in Hall of Public Archives. Italicized words in communications of Wm. B. Conway, whether quoted from other publications or from the original manuscript, are underscored in the original in every instance.—Ed.

<sup>11</sup>*Journal Council of Iowa Territory*, 1838-41, p. 48.

ceived from the Secretary of the Territory, in which resolution they ask the concurrence of the House.<sup>12</sup>

In the House Journal is found record of the adoption of this Resolution:

On motion of Mr. Nowlin,

Resolved, by the Council and House of Representatives of the Territory of Iowa, That the seal submitted to the Legislative Assembly by the Secretary of the Territory, be adopted as the great seal of the Territory of Iowa.<sup>13</sup>

From "Laws of 1838-39" we have the following Resolution:

No. 3:—*Resolved, by the Council and House of Representatives of the Territory of Iowa, That the seal, submitted to the Legislative Assembly, by the Secretary of the Territory, be adopted as the great seal of the Territory of Iowa.*

Approved, January 4, 1839.<sup>14</sup>

Governor Lucas approved the above resolution as shown by entry in the Executive Journal:

Jan'y 4th, 1839

Joint resolution on subject of Territory Seal &c approved<sup>15</sup>

Hardly had the adoption of this seal by the Territory been made, when there arose a question as to its custody. Numerous accounts have been presented of the controversy between the Secretary of the Territory and the Governor. Bearing on the subject, I present the following, hoping for the discovery of additional actual and original documents with which to supply the apparent omissions:

January 26-1839

To Charles Weston, Esq.

Dr. Sir:

\* \* \* \* \*

You will call at the office of the Governor and request him to give you the Territorial Seal. This seal is my own personal property, and its use is to be exclusively confined to this Department, in States and Territories.— You will call and get and seal all the Commissions,— and if the Governor refuses to let you have the Press, you will call on Webber & Remey and borrow the price of it, which I have requested them to give you, and tender the money to the Governor in the presence of some respectable and disinterested witness—and if he does not let you [have the] seal and the

<sup>12</sup>*House Journal*, 1838-41, p. 44.

<sup>13</sup>*House Journal*, 1838-41, p. 47.

<sup>14</sup>*Laws of Iowa*, 1838-39, p. 552.

<sup>15</sup>Shambaugh's *Executive Journal of Iowa*, 1838-41, p. 200.

press, my order is preemptory that not one of the Commissions shall be delivered to the Governor or any other person until I can procure the means of sealing them in the Department of the Territorial Government with which I have the honor to be interested.

Yours

Wm. B. Conway<sup>16</sup>

Official.

Secretary's Office  
Territory of Iowa  
February 9, 1839

To the President of the United States

Sir.

The Legislative Assembly of the Territory adjourned on Friday the 25th of January.

\* \* \* \* \*

Some few days before the adjournment, Governor Lucas sent one of his Aids-de-Camp, a certain Col. Jesse E. Williams, to the office of the Secretary, with the verbal request that the "*Great Seal of the Territory of Iowa*" should be allowed to be taken for a few minutes, into the Executive office, agreeably to the wish of the Governor. To which the Secretary consented, and delivered the seal, not believing or apprehending, by any means, that it was a project to obtain a surreptitious possession of the Great Seal of the Territory— But it seems that the Secretary was mistaken.

Finding that the Governor would not answer the Secretary's letter of the 26th of January, nor deliver the appropriation bill, adopted by the Legislature, with or without the Executive approval, nor do any act or thing that would enable the Secretary to return home to his family, where he had not been for more than three months, an order was given to Charles Weston, Esquire of Burlington, \* \* \* \* \* to call on the Governor and procure the *seal* of the Territory and seal the commissions, then in the Secretary's office which were all filled up and signed by the Secretary of the Territory.

There was a *seal press* in the Governor's Office which had been purchased at the Governor's request, by the permission of the Secretary, ungracefully extorted from him, last September. This press was for the use of the Territory, but it was not brought on, until recently. The Secretary gave Mr. Weston \$75 in gold to tender to Gov. Lucas for the Press, the cost of it in Ohio was something like \$45— On Sunday the 27th of January the Secretary left Burlington and proceeded to this place (Davenport, the center of the Territory on the river and immediately opposite Rock Island)

<sup>16</sup>Original letter on file in Hall of Public Archives.

where he is now preparing the laws for publication, which laws are to be printed at Du Buque (still farther north) by Legislative agreement, and as the Act of Congress requires the Secretary to *reside in the Territory*, this is his residence, during the recess of the Legislature.

On Monday the 28th of January, Charles Weston of Burlington, called in a most respectful manner, on the Governor (Lucas) and requested the seal of the Territory, in the name and on behalf of the Secretary thereof, from whom he then held an order in his hand, for that purpose, and he Charles Weston did moreover then and there, tender to Governor Lucas the sum of one hundred dollars, on behalf of the Secretary, for the \$45 Seal Press, and this tender was made in the presence of Quarter Master General James M. Morgan, one of the Governor's staff, and the Governor did then and there refuse to deliver either the Seal or the Press to Mr. Weston, who on that occasion, and for that purpose, represented the Secretary of the Territory, who, if he had been at Burlington, could not, without endangering the public peace, have gone into the Executive presence, on the business referred to.

The Governor told Mr. Weston, and in the presence of the aforesaid Quarter Master General, James M. Morgan, that he, the Governor, was the keeper of the Seal, and that his office was the proper place for it, and that the Secretary had no right to leave Burlington.

In the event which happened, as was apprehended, the Secretary left a peremptory order, with Mr. Weston, that not one of the Commissions, which had been filled and signed by him (the Secretary) pursuant to the list of names and stations, submitted to the Governor, should be removed from his (the Secretary's) office until the seal had been properly affixed thereto, in said office.

This appears to have been peculiarly gratifying to Governor Lucas, who proceeded forthwith, (assisted by his Colonels, and Generals and other officers) to fill up, sign and *seal*, and distribute *other* commissions, expressing his wish that the name of the Secretary should not appear on any commission issued by him, the said Governor Lucas.

And therefore the Secretary of the Territory of Iowa, has the honor to request the President of the United States, to authorize and direct the Honorable Mr. Secretary Forsyth, to enclose a special order, to the Secretary of the Territory of Iowa, directed to his excellency, Robert Lucas, Governor of said Territory, and requiring him the said Governor, to hand over, and deliver up, the Great Seal of the Territory of Iowa, to the Secretary thereof, or to his order without fraud or further delay.

\* \* \* \* \*

The special orders, now respectfully requested, will be enclosed to the Secretary, at Davenport, Territory of Iowa, whilst, with the highest regard, he has the honor to remain,

Your very obedient and respectful Servant,

Wm. B. Conway,

Secretary of the Territory of Iowa.<sup>17</sup>

Official.

Secretary's Office  
Territory of Iowa  
August 26th, 1839

To his Excellency,

M. Van Buren, President U. States.

Sir

In an official communication of the 8th of January (more than seven months ago) the undersigned performed the unwelcome duty of apprising the President of the United States of a misunderstanding, then of recent origin, which existed (and still exists) between the Governor and the Secretary of this Territory.

\* \* \* \* \*

On the 9th of February last, the undersigned had the humiliating honor of informing the President of the United States, in an official communication of that date, that His Excellency, Governor Lucas, had surreptitiously obtained possession of the *Great Seal* of this Territory, which he still retains, and which he refused to deliver up, in compliance with an order duly presented for that purpose, and of which seal, in contemptuous violation of all usage and right, he proclaims and *fancies*, himself to be the legitimate Keeper. The effects produced in a business point of view by this strange assumption, would if set forth in detail extend this communication far beyond its contemplated limits. But it is anxiously believed that the fact alone will arrest and fix the attention of the President on the hideous deformity of the principle which that fact embodies.—

Separate and distinct responsibilities, duties and rights, not to insist on the proper civilities of official intercourse, unavoidably impart to this fraudulent capture and forcible detention of the Great Seal all the features of a tyrannical outrage, which cannot be justified by arguments more correct than those which may be drawn from the mere ravings of insane power. As well might the President (if he were deranged) seize upon the Seal of State in the office of the Honorable Mr. Secretary Forsyth. \* \* \*

\* \* \* But Mr. Forsyth in the case supposed could resign. And so the undersigned would have done long ago, if he held his office subject to the vulgar control of Governor Lucas. \* \*

The Governor and the Secretary of Iowa are *both* amenable to the President of the United States, and the difficulties which implicate

<sup>17</sup>Original letter on file in Hall of Public Archives.

their public conduct *having been referred* to the latter, the only legal umpire in the case, it is therefore impossible that the undersigned should anticipate a decision by any change of attitude, which might tend, however remotely, to favor the belief that he would thus shield any portion of his official conduct from vigorous examination. Nor will it be rashly believed, that the President could be induced to lend even the dubious sanction of his hesitation or silence to the commission of outrages on inferior officers of the Government, whose proper pride of character may be higher than their stations, and whose kind feelings as men, should not be goaded, by protracted and triumphant insult, into the ferocity of tigers. The undersigned, therefore, renews his application of the 9th of February last, and prays that a special order may issue, from the proper Department, requiring the Governor to deliver up the Great Seal of this Territory, to the undersigned or to his order.

\* \* \* \* \*

The undersigned seeks no triumph over Governor Lucas. He wages no war against obstinate imbecility. He merely asks the President to protect him in the possession of his clearly defined official rights, that he may be thus enabled to perform his proper official *duties*. To be a Secretary of State *without a Seal!* a recording officer *without the records*, or things to be recorded!! an accounting, and accountable officer, *without evidence of the authority* which requires and sanctions his disbursements!!! This Sir, is to possess very equivocal honors, beneath the degrading lustre of which even contented meanness could not hope to mitigate the severity of official responsibilities, under the rigorous system which enlightened opinion is happily predisposed to enforce.—

With very considerate regard I remain your respectful and obedient Servant,

Wm. B. Conway,  
Secretary of Iowa.<sup>18</sup>

The extent of this controversy and its end has been already well presented by Dr. John C. Parish.<sup>19</sup>

Authority to continue in use the Great Seal of the Territory of Iowa until the Great Seal of the State of Iowa could be procured, was provided in the following:

AN ACT relative to State Seals.

Section 1. *Be it enacted by the General Assembly of the State of Iowa.* That for the want of State seals, the State officers shall, until proper seals are provided, use the territorial seals of their respective offices.<sup>20</sup>

The foregoing act was approved on January 27, 1847, and on February 9, 1847, there was enacted a statute providing for

<sup>18</sup>Original letter on file in Hall of Public Archives.

<sup>19</sup>Parish's *Robert Lucas*, State Hist. Soc. Iowa City, 1907.

<sup>20</sup>*Laws of Iowa*, 1st G. A., Ch. XIV, p. 82.

a loan of \$55,000.00, and appointing William F. Coolbaugh as the Agent for the State, for the negotiation of the loan and transferring of the bonds. Touching the seal of the Territory, Mr. Coolbaugh submitted to the State Auditor the following communication:

Burlington Iowa April 8, 1847

J. T. Fales Esq.

Dear Sir,

I am inclined to think after reflecting on the matter, that it will not do to affix the old Territorial Seal to the State Bonds.— It might subject us to the trouble of getting a new set of Bonds entirely, besides materially deferring the consummation of the loan.

We had therefore better get the new seal, even if it should occasion some delay. So soon as completed please send them either by mail or other safe conveyance, to me

Governor Briggs would perhaps like to see the Bond executed by me and I would be obliged to you if you would send him a copy, with a list of my sureties by mail.

Yours respectfully

W. F. Coolbaugh<sup>21</sup>

But I find from the originals and impressions upon the canceled bonds that they used the Territorial Seal only.

A rather interesting phase of the history of the Great Seal of the Territory of Iowa is traced from the impressions of the seal upon the original documents assembled in the Hall of Public Archives. It will be observed that Mr. Parvin expressed the pleasure which this seal gave to those interested in its selection and adoption as the formal symbol of the sovereignty of the Territory. The recollections of this pleasure remained vivid with him until he became the editor of the ANNALS OF IOWA, and even sustained him in his partisanship in favor of its artistic quality as against that of the design adopted for the Great Seal of the State of Iowa. But after discussing the meaning of the design, and after inveighing against the design of the Great Seal of the State of Iowa, and with the evident purpose of proving his point to the readers of the ANNALS by reproducing it side by side with a reproduction of the Great Seal of the State of Iowa, in connection with his note in regard thereto, he yet presents a design not at all the same as the design described by Secretary Conway and as adopted by the legislative and executive authority of

<sup>21</sup>Original letter on file in Hall of Public Archives.

# Robert Lucas,

GOVERNOR OF THE TERRITORY OF IOWA.

TO ALL TO WHOM THESE PRESENTS MAY COME—GREETING.

**Know Ye.** That reposing special trust and confidence in the integrity and ability of *T. S. Parvin*

I have nominated, and by and with the advice and consent of the ~~Legislative Council~~ appointed him

*Librarian, of the Territory aforesaid—*

And I do hereby authorize and empower him to execute and fulfil the duties of that office according to law **TO HAVE AND TO**

**HOLD** the said office, with all the rights, privileges, and emoluments thereto belonging, *until the end of*  
*the next session of the Legislative Assembly.*

unless the Governor of the said Territory, for the time being, should think proper to revoke and determine this Commission

**IN TESTIMONY WHEREOF.** I have caused these Letters to be made Patent, and the

Great Seal of the Territory to be hereunto affixed

**GIVEN UNDER MY HAND,** at Burlington, *Fifth* day of

*April* in the year of our Lord one thousand eight hundred and thirty-nine,

and of the Independence of the United States of America, the 63d.



BY THE GOVERNOR.

*Robert Lucas*

Theodore S. Parvin's Commission as Territorial  
Librarian of Iowa



the Territory, and which was impressed very early in its official use upon his own commission as Librarian. Perhaps the most striking difference between the original and the reproduction Mr. Parvin sets out, is in the bow held in the talons of the eagle. In Conway's description, in the original die by Wagner, and the impression on the Parvin commission, the bow appears to be an ordinary Indian bow, unstrung. In the Parvin reproduction it is a classic bow with string taut.

The seal Mr. Parvin reproduces might better be regarded as an adaptation of the original Territorial seal. This, and other adaptations of the Great Seal of the Territory of Iowa, have long and often been used by different public and private persons as a reproduction of the original.

But from the date of Mr. Parvin's commission, to-wit: April 10, 1839, until the final official impression which was made upon the issue of bonds, after the admission of the State of Iowa to the Union, there appears no other or different design as the Great Seal of the Territory of Iowa.

The Great Seal of the State of Iowa was provided for by the Constitutional Convention which assembled at Iowa City, May 4, 1846. Sections 15 and 16 provide:

There shall be a seal of this State, which shall be kept by the Governor, and used by him officially, and shall be called the Great Seal of the State of Iowa. All grants and commissions shall be in the name and by the authority of the people of the State of Iowa, sealed with the Great Seal of this State, signed by the Governor and countersigned by the Secretary of State.<sup>22</sup>

The provision that the seal should be kept by the Governor was evidently for the purpose of avoiding future controversy as to what official should be the keeper of the Great Seal.

During the session of the First General Assembly after the adoption of the Constitution of 1846, the matter of the device to be used and the procuring of the Great Seal for the State as provided for in the Constitution, was taken up and the following proceedings were had:

Joint Resolution No. 2,<sup>23</sup> authorizing the Secretary of State to procure a seal, was introduced in the House by W. E. Lef-fingwell, passed that body on December 11, 1846, and was re-

<sup>22</sup>*Laws of Iowa*, 1st G. A., Constitution, Art. 5, sec. 15-16, p. 10.

<sup>23</sup>Two Joint Resolutions and one bill of the 1st G. A. were entitled H. R. File No. 2. See *House Journal*, 1846, pp. 40, 67, 68.

ported to the Senate. It was referred to a committee composed of Francis Springer, Philip B. Bradley and Thomas H. Benton, who reported a substitute, which was passed by the Senate February 24, 1847, and passed by the House on the same date. The substitute for House File No. 2 reads as follows:

State Seal.

AN ACT authorizing the Secretary of State to procure a State Seal.

SECTION 1. *Be it enacted by the General Assembly of the State of Iowa.* That the Secretary of State be, and he is, hereby authorized to procure a seal, which shall be the Great Seal of the State of Iowa, two inches in diameter, upon which shall be engraved the following device, surrounded by the words, "The Great Seal of the State of Iowa"—a sheaf and field of standing wheat, with a sickle and other farming utensils, on the left side near the bottom; a lead furnace and a pile of pig lead, on the right side; the citizen soldier, with a plow in his rear, supporting the American flag and liberty cap with his right hand, and his gun with his left, in the center and near the bottom; the Mississippi river in the rear of the whole, with the steamer Iowa under way; an eagle near the upper edge, holding in his beak a scroll, with the following inscription upon it: *Our liberties we prize, and our rights we will maintain.*

Sec. 2. The sum of forty dollars shall be, and is hereby appropriated for the purchase of the seal aforesaid, out of any money in the treasury not otherwise appropriated.

Sec. 3. This act shall take effect and be in force from and after its publication in the weekly newspapers in Iowa City.

APPROVED, February 25th, 1847.

Published in the Reporter and Standard March 3d, 1847.<sup>24</sup>

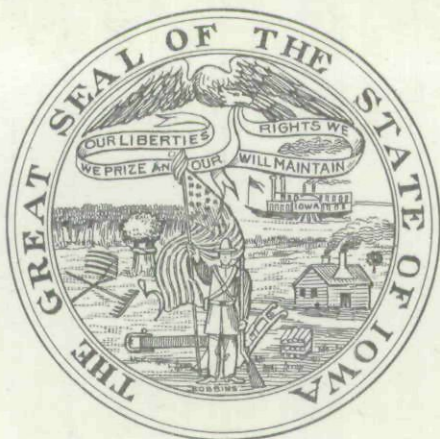
The die for the seal produced under authority of the law was engraved by Charles A. Robbins, for which he received \$35.00 by warrant issued May 5, 1847.

This Act passed by the first General Assembly does not appear in any of the codifications of the laws, the present Code containing only the constitutional provision for a Great Seal. "I find no act passed with reference to the Great Seal since the Act of February 25, 1847, nor do I find any act or provision in the session laws or the Code of 1851 or of subsequent codes, repealing or revising this first act; hence, the assumption is that the authority for the present Great Seal lies in this Act of February 25, 1847."<sup>25</sup>

<sup>24</sup>*Laws of Iowa*, 1st G. A. Ch. CXII, p. 164.

<sup>25</sup>Statement by C. A. Robbins, Assistant Attorney General.

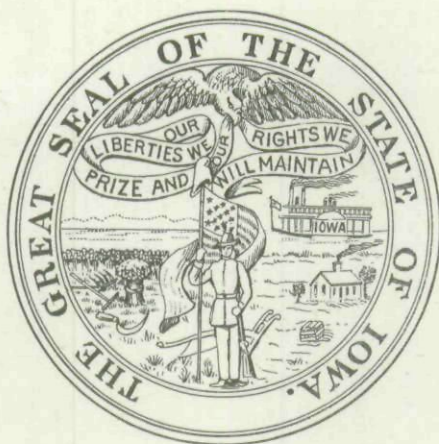
In tracing the evolution of the Great Seal of the State of Iowa from impressions upon official documents in the Hall of Public Archives, I find many minor changes have been made in the device from time to time, but in each the provision made for the device in the Act of February 25, 1847, has been substantially followed. I have searched for authority for even minor changes in the device, but have failed to find any. I believe the changes were made by engravers on their own motion and responsibility at the times new dies were ordered.



No. 1, 1847-1856.

The first seal carried out the provisions of the Act of 1847 in regard to the device, but its diameter was two and three-sixteenths inches instead of two inches as specified. The farming utensils used in addition to those provided in the Act were a grain cradle and rake. The furnace was shown as having two chimneys; the plow with beam pointing to our left; a tree standing to the right of the furnace; the flag slightly furled; the soldier as facing to the front, but slightly to his right. At the base of the inner circle and just beneath the soldier was the name of the engraver "Robbins" in very small letters. This die was used until 1856.<sup>26</sup>

<sup>26</sup>Reproduction of impression of first die executed for the Great Seal of the State of Iowa; used 1847-1856. See notarial commission issued by Governor Hempstead to J. N. Jerome, Sept. 29, 1854, in Hall of Public Archives.



No. 2, 1856-1865.

Impressions of another die appear in 1856. It seems identical with the first except that the furnace is shown as having one chimney; the name of the engraver "Robbins" is omitted, and several minor changes made in placing the different devices.<sup>27</sup>

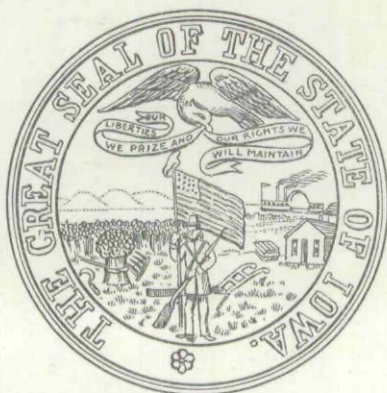


No. 3, 1865-March, 1869.

Impressions of a third die appear in 1865. Its diameter is two inches, outer rim; the soldier faces to his right; the beam of the plow points to our right; the flag floats free; the tree

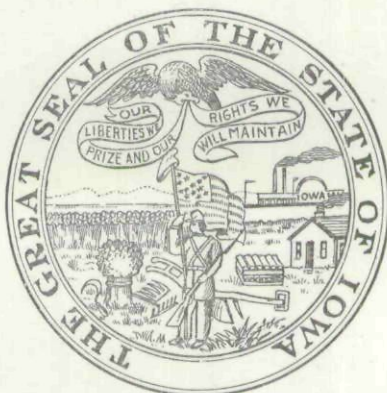
<sup>27</sup>Reproduction of impression of second die executed for the Great Seal of the State of Iowa; used 1856-1865. See Proclamation of Governor Kirkwood, Sept. 23, 1860, in Hall of Public Archives.

on the right of the furnace is omitted and there are other minor changes.<sup>28</sup>



No. 4, March-May, 1869.

Impressions of a fourth die appear in March, 1869, the most important changes being: A different style of letter is used; the plow is restored to first position; the rake is omitted and the steamboat "Iowa" is reduced in size.<sup>29</sup>



No. 5, May, 1869-September, 1881.

Impressions of a fifth die appear in May, 1869, wherein the plow is again reversed; the soldier holds the gun differently;

<sup>28</sup>Reproductions of impression of third die executed for the Great Seal of the State of Iowa; used 1865-March, 1869. See Governor Stone's warrant of discharge for Finley Rainsbarger, Jan. 15, 1868, in Hall of Public Archives.

<sup>29</sup>Reproduction of impression of fourth die executed for the Great Seal of the State of Iowa; used March-May, 1869. See notarial commission issued by Governor Merrill to Thos. F. Rice, March 2, 1869, in Hall of Public Archives.

the steamboat "Iowa" is increased in size; the rake is replaced. This die was in use until in September, 1881.<sup>30</sup>



No. 6, September, 1881-June, 1882.

Impressions of a sixth die appear on documents dated in September, 1881, wherein the rake and sickle are omitted; the soldier faces to the front; the steamboat is reduced and a different style of letter is used. This die was used until in 1882.<sup>31</sup>



No. 7, June, 1882-December, 1888.

Impressions of a seventh die appear in June, 1882. The rake and sickle were replaced; the flag was again slightly furled;

<sup>30</sup>Reproduction of impression of fifth die executed for the Great Seal of the State of Iowa; used May, 1869-Sept., 1881. See Proclamation of Governor Merrill, June 17, 1869, in Hall of Public Archives.

<sup>31</sup>Reproduction of impression of sixth die executed for the Great Seal of the State of Iowa; used Sept. 1881-June, 1882. See Proclamation of Governor Gear, Sept. 5, 1881, in Hall of Public Archives.

trees are shown at the front and rear of the furnace; the beam of the plow is toward our left; the size of the steamboat is increased and other minor changes are made. This seal was used until in December, 1888.<sup>32</sup>



No. 8. December, 1888, to date.

Impressions of an eighth die appear in 1888. The outer rim was increased in size and a beaded line shown outside of the lettering; the size of the steamboat "Iowa" was greatly reduced; the grain cradle was left out; the trees at front and rear of furnace were omitted; the furnace changed in appearance and other minor changes made. This die has remained in use and is at present in the press in the office of the Governor.<sup>33</sup>

A comparison of these impressions shows that about five distinct types have been used. These types are illustrated by Nos. 1, 3, 4, 7 and 8. The comparison also shows that Nos. 2 and 7 are very similar, differing mainly in diameter and in the placing of the lettering on the outer rim. Nos. 3 and 5 are very similar in design and Nos. 4 and 6 are of the same type.

The history of the seals of the Territorial and State courts will be treated in a future article.

<sup>32</sup>Reproduction of impression of seventh die executed for the Great Seal of the State of Iowa; used June, 1882-Dec., 1888. See Proclamation of Governor Sherman, Sept. 20, 1884, in Hall of Public Archives.

<sup>33</sup>Reproduction of impression of eighth and present die executed for the Great Seal of the State of Iowa. See Proclamation of Governor Larrabee, Dec. 29, 1888.

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