

THE SEALS OF IOWA

[The following brief statement concerning the seals of the Territory and State of Iowa was compiled by Mr. Jacob Van der Zee, Research Associate in The State Historical Society of Iowa.—EDITOR.]

THE SEAL OF THE TERRITORY OF IOWA

The great seal of the Territory of Iowa originated in the year 1838. Its design is credited to William B. Conway, first Secretary of the Territory, and the engraving was the work of a Pennsylvanian, William Wagner.¹ In compliance with the request of the Legislative Council, Mr. Conway transmitted a die of the new seal and some impressions on wax and paper, together with the following communication:²

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; 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 while the idea thus delicately evolved, is so well calculated to make the eye glisten with patriotic 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 de-

¹ This is the name given by Mr. Theodore S. Parvin in the *Annals of Iowa*, Vol. I-V, p. 264. The same writer has another article in the *Iowa Historical Record*, Vol. VII, p. 41, and he there refers to a Mr. Wagoner of Pittsburgh. See also the *Journal of the House of Representatives*, 1838-1839, p. 58.

² *Journal of the Legislative Council*, 1838-1839, p. 45.

clining 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 undervalue and neglect.

The Honorable the Legislative Council will pardon the freedom of these reflections, which the occasion elicits, if it does not justify and demand, whilst I have the honor to remain, as heretofore, their very obedient and respectful servant, and yours,

WM. B. CONWAY,

Secretary of the Territory.

Mr. Lewis of the Committee on Territories reported that the seal submitted by the Secretary had been examined and that its devices were "admirably adapted and appropriate". At the same time he proposed a resolution that the seal should be adopted by the Council as the Great Seal of the Territory of Iowa.

On Mr. Hempstead's motion the report was accepted and the resolution adopted.³ Mr. Wallace, Secretary of the Council, was then despatched to the House of Representatives to read the resolution and present the seal, with impressions upon wax and paper. Later Mr. Nowlin offered a resolution that the Council and House of Representatives of the Territory of Iowa should officially adopt the seal. This resolution apparently met with no immediate favor, because at a later time the Council informed the House of Representatives that its Committee on the Judiciary had found the seal "executed with much elegance and classic taste," and absolutely necessary to carry on Territorial business.⁴ Although the legislative journals⁵ contain no record of the adoption of the seal, the resolution must have passed both houses of the legislature, for it certainly received the approval of Governor Robert Lucas.⁶

³ *Journal of the Legislative Council, 1838-1839*, p. 48.

⁴ *Journal of the House of Representatives, 1838-1839*, pp. 44, 47, 58.

⁵ *Annals of Iowa, Vol. I-V*, p. 266.

⁶ *Laws of the Territory of Iowa, 1838-1839*, p. 516.

A die of the original Territorial seal may be found in possession of The State Historical Society of Iowa.⁷ It may be noted in this connection that the seals of the State University of Iowa and of The State Historical Society of Iowa are modeled largely upon the seal of the Territory of Iowa.

THE SEAL OF THE STATE OF IOWA

On December 9, 1846, Mr. Leffingwell introduced into the House of Representatives as one of the first matters for its consideration a joint resolution to authorize the Secretary of State to procure a State seal.⁸ The Senate refused to accede to the wishes of the lower house, but offered a substitute.⁹ Before this measure was passed by the General Assembly and approved by the Governor, State officers had been specially empowered to use the Territorial seal until a State seal was provided.¹⁰

The Secretary of State received authority¹¹ to purchase for the sum of forty dollars a seal "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 a field of standing wheat, with a sickle and other farming utensils, on the left side near the bottom; a lead furnace and 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

⁷ See *Annals of Iowa*, Vol. I-V, p. 287, for an impression of the seal.

⁸ *Journal of the House of Representatives*, 1846-1847, pp. 49, 68, 410, 416.

⁹ *Journal of the Senate*, 1846-1847, pp. 43, 48, 287.

¹⁰ *Laws of Iowa*, 1846-1847, p. 32.

¹¹ *Laws of Iowa*, 1846-1847, p. 164.

beak a scroll, with the following inscription upon it: *Our liberties we prize, and our rights we will maintain.*"

There is in the rooms of The State Historical Society of Iowa a small rectangular wooden plate labeled "The First Seal of Iowa". It was probably designed as a model for the official circular seal described in the legislative act.¹²

¹² An impression of the State seal can be found in the *Annals of Iowa*, Vol. I-V, p. 287.