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TERRITORIAL SEAL OF IOWA.
BY THE EDITOR.

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:

SECRETARY OFFICE, Nov. 23d. 1838.

To the Hon. J. B. Brown, President of the Legislative Council:

Sir:—The request of the Honorable the Legislative Council, expressed by their resolution, adopted on the 22d inst. was duly transmitted to this Department of the Territorial Government, where it has been very respectfully considered, and with which it affords me peculiar pleasure to comply. In accordance, therefore, with the request of the Hon. the Legislative Council, the "Great Seal of the Territory of Iowa" is herewith transmitted for their inspection, accompanied by some 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 Hon. 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 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 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, while I have the honor to remain, as heretofore, their very obedient and respectful servant, and yours.

WM. B. CONWAY, Sec'y of the Ter.

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."

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 scale for the Supreme Court, District Courts, Commissioner's 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. The 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.

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 amendment 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:

"* * * The Secretary of State 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 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 centre 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.'"

Now, all this is encompassed within a 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 and 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."

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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), 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 collection of the State Historical Society at Iowa City.

T. S. PARVIN.

MUSCATINE, Feb. 28th, 1859.