

The Great Seal
of
West Virginia



Obverse

JOHN D. ROCKEFELLER, IV
Secretary of State

The Great Seal and Coat-of-Arms of West Virginia

Report of the Legislative Committee made September 23rd, 1863, based on suggestions and designs of the Honorable Joseph H. Diss Debar of Doddridge County.

“The disc of the Great Seal is to be two and one-half inches in diameter; The *obverse* to bear the legend ‘The State of West Virginia,’ the constitutional designation of our Republic, which with the motto, ‘Montani Semper Liberi—Mountaineers always free’—is to be inserted in the circumference. In the center a rock with ivy, emblematic of stability and continuance, and on the face of the rock the inscription, ‘June 20, 1863,’ the date of our foundation, as if graven with a pen of iron in the rock forever. On the right of the rock a farmer clothed in the traditional hunting garb, peculiar to this region, his right arm resting on the plow handles, and his left supporting a woodman’s axe, indicating that while our territory is partly cultivated, it is still in the process of being cleared of the original forest. At his right hand a sheaf of wheat and a cornstalk on the left hand of the rock, a miner, indicated by a pick-axe on his shoulder, with barrels and lumps of mineral at his feet. On his left an anvil, partly seen, on which rests a sledge hammer, typical of the mechanic arts, the whole indicating the principal pursuits and resources of the state. In front of the rock and the hunter, as if just laid down by the latter and ready to be resumed at a moment’s notice, two hunters’ rifles, crossed and surmounted at the place of contact by the Phrygian cap, or cap of liberty, indicating that our freedom and liberty were won and will be maintained by the force of arms.

“The *reverse* of the Great Seal is to be encircled by a wreath composed of laurel and oak leaves, emblematic of valor and strength, with fruits and cereals, productions of the State. For device, a landscape. In the distance, on the left of the disc, a wooded mountain, and on the right a cultivated slope with the log farmhouse peculiar to this

region. On the side of the mountain, a representation of the viaduct on the line of the Baltimore & Ohio Railroad in Preston County, one of the great engineering triumphs of the age, with a train of cars about to pass over it. Near the center a factory, in front of which a river with boats, on the bank and to the right of it nearer the foreground, a derrick and a shed, appertaining to the production of salt and petroleum. In the foreground a meadow with cattle and sheep feeding and reposing, the whole indicating the leading characteristics, productions and pursuits of the State at this time. Above the mountain, etc., the sun merging from the clouds, indicating that former obstacles to our prosperity are now disappearing. In the rays of the sun the motto ‘*Libertas et Fidelitate*’ Freedom and Loyalty—indicating that our liberty and independence are the result of faithfulness to the Declaration and the National Constitution.

“The committee further recommend that the above device and motto, for the *obverse* of the Great Seal be also adopted as the Coat-of-Arms of the State.”

This report was adopted September 26th, 1863 by Joint Resolution No. 20:

“Resolved by the Legislature of West Virginia:

“1. The legend, mottoes and devises reported by the committee on the subject, are hereby adopted as the legend, mottoes and devices of the Coat-of-Arms and great and less seals of the State respectively.

“2. So much of the report of the said committee as is descriptive of the said legend, mottoes and devices is hereby directed to be published with these resolutions in the volume of the acts and joint resolutions passed at the present session of the Legislature.

“3. The Governor is authorized and requested to have engraved a great and less seal, of the dimensions, and bearing the devices, &c., recom-

mended by the said report, the same to be the only legal official seals of the State and also to procure proper presses for conveniently using the same." (Acts of 1863, page 268.)

The *obverse* of the Great Seal should form the basis of the design in colors of the Coat-of-Arms of the State on the State Flag.



Reverse

The illustrations on the front and back of this leaflet are of the obverse and reverse of the Great Seal impressed on indented wafers as affixed to official papers by the Secretary of State.

The Constitution of West Virginia, Article 2, Section 7, provides that:

"The present seal of the State, with its motto "*Montani Semper Liberi*," shall be the great seal of the State of West Virginia, and shall be kept by the Secretary of State, to be used by him, officially as directed by law."

The *reverse* of the Great Seal has not been in use in recent years.

The Less Seal of the State is the same as the Great Seal except in dimensions, and the Secretary of State is, by statute, the keeper of this seal also.