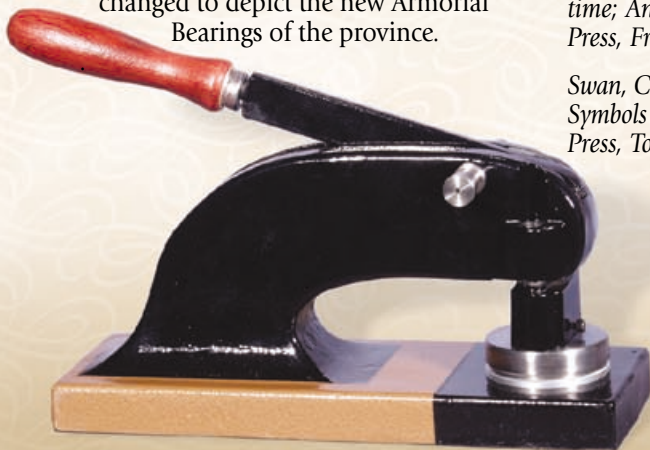




The Great Seal of Prince Edward Island 2002

Section 7 of the *Executive Council Act* provides that there shall continue to be a Great Seal of the province, that the Lieutenant Governor in Council may vary or change the Great Seal, and that the Clerk of the Executive Council shall be its custodian. In this latter role the Clerk is exercising a responsibility on behalf of the President of the Executive Council, as the Great Seal is presented by the Lieutenant Governor to the person named to be President of the Executive Council as he or she takes the oaths required to be sworn to this office.

In 2002 the Lieutenant Governor in Council authorized that the Great Seal of the Province of Prince Edward Island be changed to depict the new Armorial Bearings of the province.



The new Coat of Arms was authorized by Vice-Regal Warrant dated April 26, 2002, and presented to the province at Province House in Charlottetown on December 13, 2002. The new Great Seal was introduced at that time and was first used on the Provincial Proclamation of the taking into use of the complete and augmented Armorial Achievement for the Province of Prince Edward Island.

The dies and press for the new Seal were made by Shaw and Sons of England. The seal measures 65 millimetres in diameter and weighs 14 kilograms.

Footnotes

^[1] *The Motto "Parva sub Ingenti" is taken from a didactic poem on agriculture by the Roman poet Vergil (Georgics, Book II). The actual lines in which the phrase occurs are:*

*".... etiam Parnasia laurus parva sub ingenti matris se subicit umbra."
(.... so too, a small plant, Beneath its mother's mighty shade upshoots the bay-tree of Parnassus.)*

In this context the Motto of Prince Edward Island suggests nurtured growth from small beginnings to greatness.

Sources:

Callbeck, Lorne C.; The Cradle of Confederation, A brief history of Prince Edward Island from its discovery in 1534 to the present time; An Atlantic Advocate Book, Brunswick Press, Fredericton, New Brunswick; 1964.

Swan, Conrad, York Herald of Arms; Canada: Symbols of Sovereignty; University of Toronto Press, Toronto and Buffalo; 1977.



The Great Seal of the Province of



Prince Edward Island



The Great Seal of Prince Edward Island

Introduction

Seals are ancient instruments of identification, rank and authority. A Great Seal is the highest order of seal used by a government. In Canada today, application of a Great Seal to a formal document of a provincial government, legitimizes the document and gives evidence of its approval by the Lieutenant Governor.

The act of sealing documents has been practised for centuries. It was initiated to give evidence of authorization in a time when few people could read or write, and to ensure that commitments, decrees, testaments, deeds, and other such important written records were, in fact, issued by those who had purported to have issued them, and who had the authority to issue such documents. Sealing a document also gave assurance that it had not been altered or otherwise tampered with during delivery. Early seals were designed to identify a family – usually landowners with wealth and power – or an office to which certain powers had been delegated. A seal carved in wood or cast in metal would be pressed into molten wax that had been applied to the document directly, or applied to the overlapping ends of a strip of cloth threaded through the document to attach the pages together. These types of seals resembled large, heavy coins and usually bore two designs, one on each side. Being cumbersome and brittle, wax seals fell out of favour when today's "impress" seals were developed in the 19th century. These emboss with a single design by pressing the paper between two engraved plates. Such seals are often applied to a coloured paper disk and affixed to a certificate, but are more appropriately applied directly over the signature of the authorizing official.

History of the Great Seal of Prince Edward Island

In 1769, Prince Edward Island, then known as St. John's Island, having been granted colonial status independent of Nova Scotia by the British Crown, received a Great Seal. The design approved on July 14, 1769, at the Court of St. James, showed on one side, His Majesty's Armorial Bearings in the centre and the following Latin inscription (abbreviated, to accommodate the limited space) around the circumference: *Georgius Tertius Dei Gratia Magnae Britannicae Franciae et Hiberniae Rex Fidei Defensor Brunsvici et Lunaeburgi Dux Sacri Romani Imperii Archiitresaurarius et Elector* (George III by the Grace of God King of Great Britain, France and Ireland Defender of the Faith, Duke of Brunswick and Lunenburg, Arch-Treasurer of the Holy Roman Empire, and Elector). The other side bore an early representation of part of the design that appears on today's Shield of Arms – an island base from which grows a large acorn-bearing oak tree on the right, and on the left a smaller tree (described as a "shrub"), the trunk of which divides into three distinct trunks. Underneath, the inscription, *Parva sub Ingenti* (traditionally translated as "the small under the protection of the great")^[1], defined the relationship of the colony to England, the mother country. Around the circumference of this reverse side was the Latin inscription *Sigillum Insulae Sanctii Johannes in America* (Seal of the Island of St. John in America).

The 1769 Seal, sometimes referred to as the Great Silver Seal, was stolen and removed from the colony in 1775 when the captains of two armed vessels, members of the American Revolutionary Forces of George Washington, were sent to intercept British ships carrying arms

and supplies to Quebec. The Americans were supposed to have lain waiting for the British in the St. Lawrence River, but instead took to piracy in the waters around Nova Scotia. They landed in the undefended Charlottetown harbour in November of 1775, kidnapped the colonial administrator and one of his clerks, and set sail for their winter harbour in Massachusetts. Before departing they looted homes and storehouses and damaged or removed valuables including the settlement's winter provisions, the Governor's Commission and the Silver Seal of the Island, which has never been recovered.

The next known Great Seal for the Island was issued in 1815, bearing again on one side the Arms of the Monarch (now altered to reflect the union of England and Ireland as one kingdom, and with a reduced list of titles "George III, by the Grace of God, King of Great Britain, Defender of the Faith") and on the other, the oak tree motif. The inscription around the second side of the 1815 Seal acknowledged Prince Edward Island as the new name of the colony, adopted in 1798 to eliminate confusion with the cities of St. John's, Newfoundland and Saint John, New Brunswick, and to honour Prince Edward, the Duke of Kent, who was then Commander-in-Chief of the British North American forces.

Subsequent seals of similar design were cast and authorized for use following the deaths of George III in 1820 and George IV in 1830. Following the death of King William IV and the accession of Queen Victoria in 1837, there was a period of two years before a new colonial Seal was issued. The 1839 Seal was the Island's first single-sided "impress" seal. In the lower portion it depicted the oak tree design bordered by the Latin inscription *Sigillum Insulae Principis Edvardi* (Seal of the Island of

Prince Edward), and in the upper area, the Royal Armorial Bearings bordered by the Latin inscription *Victoria Dei Gratia Britanniarum Regina Fidei Defensor* – Victoria by the Grace of God Queen of the Britains, Defender of the Faith. The Victoria Seal was in use for over a century. It was replaced in 1949 with the first provincial (non-colonial) Great Seal, authorized by a Minute of His Honour the Lieutenant Governor in Council on April 26 of that year. This Minute-in-Council rescinded and replaced an earlier Minute-in-Council of November 2, 1948 in which Council, "having under consideration the illegibility of the inscription on the Great Seal of the Province, together with the improper titular description of the Sovereign thereupon" authorized the Provincial Secretary to "procure a replacement of the Great Seal with the proper description of the Sovereign, the present Arms of His Majesty the King and the Provincial Arms in the form in which they already appear." The new Minute-in-Council of April 1949 recognized the illegibility of the inscription on the Great Seal but made no reference to the Sovereign or to the Royal Arms. The Minute authorized a replacement "depicting the Arms of the Province of Prince Edward Island granted by Royal Warrant dated May 30, 1905, and bearing in circular form on the outside thereof the legend "Great Seal of the Province of Prince Edward Island." In 1984 a new seal was cast to improve the quality of print. At this time the word "Canada" was added to the inscription.

Great Seal Deputed of Prince Edward Island of George III, 1815 University of London Library, Fuller Collection: IV/1

