

# History of the Arizona State Seal

Janice K. Brewer  
Arizona Secretary of State

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# The History of the State Seal

The seal sits atop countless pages of official state documents, stationery, and statute books. Arizonans have seen it on their tax return, driver's license, and election pamphlet.

What is little known is that the Arizona seal has graced instruments of the state for the last century and a half, undergoing several dramatic changes over the years. One element of the seal, however, remains the same today as it was 140 years ago.

When President Lincoln approved a bill in 1863 providing for temporary government in the Territory of Arizona, he appointed Richard McCormick, a former businessman and journalist, to be its secretary. Although Congress hadn't given McCormick the authority to create a territorial seal, he knew one would be necessary to authenticate official documents.

He designed his seal and brought it west in 1863. The Spartan artwork (which to some was comic) featured a bearded miner standing casually in front of a wheelbarrow, pick, and short-handled spade. Two bare mountains rose in the background, and at the bottom was the phrase "Ditat Deus," God enriches. (Figure 1)

Perhaps in response to criticism of his seal, McCormick introduced a revised version (Figure 2). The redesign was more elaborate and included new shadowing and a small stream at the miner's feet. Gone were the wheelbarrow and spade, replaced with a more befitting long-handled shovel. The mountains now featured a pointed peak, which may have been Thumb Butte, west of the capital in Prescott. "Ditat Deus" remained in its former place.

Both McCormick seals bore a striking resemblance to the label on cans of Pioneer Baking Powder, a popular brand at the time (Figure 3). Whether to honor or dishonor, the McCormick seal was nicknamed the "baking powder seal" for the duration of its use.

Members of the First Territorial Legislative Assembly had other ideas for the design of a territorial seal. In the fall of 1864 the Assembly approved an act creating a seal and authorizing the secretary "to entrust said seal to proper parties for engraving." The seal was to be 2 1/4 inches in diameter and feature "a view of San Francisco mountain [sic] in the distance, with a deer, pine trees, and columnar cactus in the foreground; the motto to be 'Ditat Deus.'"

Despite these plans for a new seal, Arizona continued to see the baking powder seal. McCormick, evidently preferring his design, took advantage of a provision of the act that allowed him to use the former seal in his official duties "until the seal authorized in this act is prepared." It was not prepared until 1879, 15 years after the act that authorized it. McCormick went on to become governor of the territory in 1866, and the capital moved to Tucson a year later. During the ten years that the capital was in Tucson, the initials "L.S." (Legal Seal) were used to authenticate documents rather than the Arizona miner.

Although the baking powder seal was retired in 1879, a version of the original McCormick seal is still in use by Gila County. It bears a small discrepancy in the motto, "Dit Deus" (Figure 4).

The first known use of the legislatively approved territorial seal was by Secretary John Gosper to certify the Acts of the Tenth Territorial Legislative Assembly on March 3, 1879 (Figure 5). Mulford Winsor, a delegate to Arizona's Constitutional Convention and later a state senator, provided this grandiloquent description of the seal in a 1945 report he prepared while serving as director of the Department of Library and Archives:

"[The seal] was simplicity exemplified, the artwork being rudimentary. The objects are shown in bare outline. Three strokes of the artist's pen dispose of a trio of mountain peaks in the distance. The pine trees — three in the left center,

## The State Seal

### Overview:

### Arizona Constitution Article 22, Section 20, Design of the State Seal

The seal of the State shall be of the following design: In the background shall be a range of mountains, with the sun rising behind the peaks thereof, and at the right side of the range of mountains there shall be a storage reservoir and a dam, below which in the middle distance are irrigated fields and orchards reaching into the foreground, at the right of which are cattle grazing.

To the left in the middle distance on a mountain side is a quartz mill in front of which and in the foreground is a miner standing with pick and shovel.

Above this device shall be the motto: "Ditat Deus."

In a circular band surrounding the whole device shall be inscribed: "Great Seal of The State of Arizona," with the year of admission of the state into the Union.



Figure 1



Figure 2



Figure 3

Figure 4



Figure 5



Figure 6



Figure 7



Figure 8a



one in the right center — bear a striking resemblance to attenuated multiple-deck Chinese pagodas. The columnar cactus is singular in number and effect, smooth, stubby as a fence post, and innocent of any sign of branch or slightest protuberance.

“The deer forms the frontispiece — the pièce de résistance, as it were. A noble five-point buck, he occupies a third of the width and height of the pictorial design, in the geographical centre of the forefront. Standing erect, head thrown far back, facing east, but with one eye on the audience, his forefeet stand firmly on the motto, ‘Ditat Deus.’”

Secretaries of the territory introduced several variations of the legislative seal during the more than 30 years that it was in use. In 1895 Secretary Charles Bruce (Figure 6) added simple shading lines to the mountains, deer, and cactus (although the shading on the cactus was strangely on the wrong side).

Bruce also employed a seal showing everything in deep shadow. A seal used by Secretary Charles Akers in 1899 brought the scene back to daylight, but the deer reportedly appeared to have stomach cramps and the nearby cactus now had a suspicious dent.

An improvement in the seal’s artwork came in 1905 when Secretary W.F. Nichols adopted a drawing from Phoenix artist Walter Rollins (Figure 7). In it the deer faced left, the mountains bore more resemblance to the San Francisco peaks, the trees and cactus were more realistic, and grass grew in the foreground. As always, “Ditat Deus” remained the motto. This was the last seal used before statehood, and it appeared on the original copy of the *Arizona Constitution* adopted in 1910.

The subject of a new seal for the state was discussed informally by delegates at the Constitutional Convention, but the matter did not get serious attention until Delegate M.G. Cunniff of Yavapai County submitted a proposed design by Phoenix newspaper artist E.E. Motter. A special committee of three delegates formed to consider the Motter seal, and on the penultimate day of the Convention it recommended adoption of the language that became Article 22, § 20 of the Constitution, which describes the present seal (for description see Overview, previous page).

The committee’s report met with sharp protest from delegates who wanted to retain the territorial seal. Morris Goldwater from Yavapai County argued for tradition and said that “any man who has lived in this territory under the present seal as long as I have can continue to live with it until he dies, without hurting himself.” E.E. Ellinwood of Cochise County, the committee’s chairman, explained that the committee’s aim was to “get away from cactus, Gila monsters, and rattlesnakes” and feature other industries of the state. After lengthy debate that at times wandered into other political issues, delegates on December 9 approved the new seal by a vote of 28 to 11, with 13 members absent. Delegates adjourned the Convention later that day.

Like the McCormick seal, the territorial seal lives on: Mohave County and the Corporation Commission use versions of the original territorial seal and the Rollins seal, respectively (Figure 8 a & b).

It was probably Ellinwood who was responsible for the image of the miner on the seal (Figure 9). Unlike the McCormick seal’s miner, the state seal miner was modeled after a real person: Bisbee prospector George Warren. In 1880 when pioneer photographer C.S. Fly visited Bisbee during its boom, he took a photo of Warren posing as a miner.

A print of this photo hung in the office of William Brophy, founder of the Bank of Bisbee and general manager of the Phelps Dodge Mercantile Company.

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During the Constitutional Convention in 1910, Delegate Ellinwood, a former director of the Bisbee bank, borrowed the picture of Warren from Brophy to use as a model for the seal. Warren's signature pose, with right arm and leg propped up, became part of the first state seal.

In the years since statehood, state agencies have used a host of great seals with variations in every element of the basic design, from missing clouds to redrawn mountains to typeface alteration. (The cow – rarely “cattle grazing” – is often unrecognizable or even absent from some seals.)

The two most prevalent versions (the original Motter seal and one introduced in the early 1980s, Figure 10) contain several noticeable differences. It has also been colorized (see below), but the true version of the seal is the one described in the *Arizona Constitution*.

What hasn't changed in the seal over the many years since Arizona became a territory is the seal's simple promise that “God enriches.”

**Figure 9**  
Bisbee prospector George Warren, circa 1883, photo by C.S. Fly.

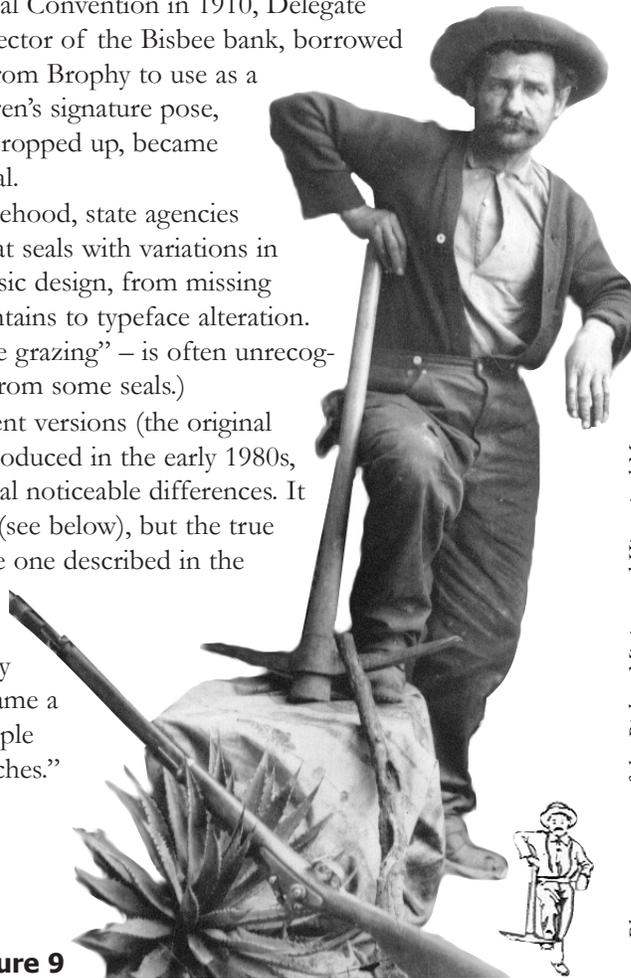
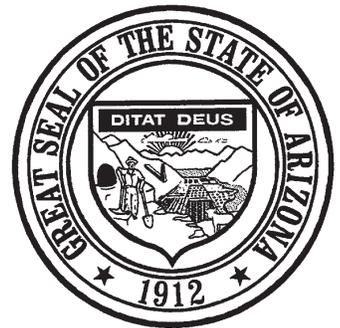


Photo courtesy of the Bisbee Mining and Historical Museum

**Figure 8b**



**Figure 10**



## The Arizona State Seal Today

The official state seal was approved by Article 22, Section 20 of the *Arizona Constitution* and adopted in 1911. The state's key enterprises are symbolized on the face of the seal.

In the background is a range of mountains with the sun rising behind the peaks.

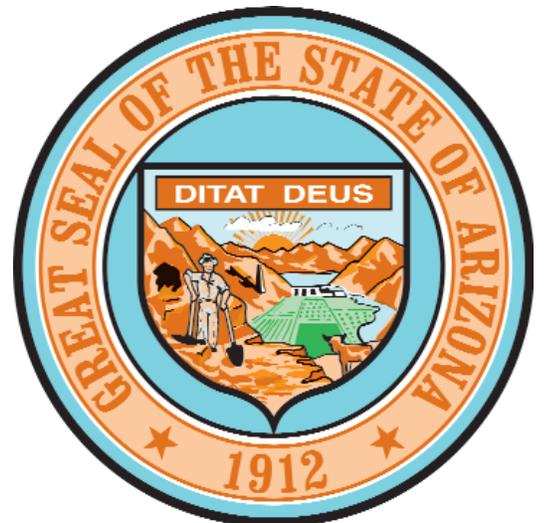
At the right side of the range of mountains there is a storage reservoir and a dam, below which, in the middle distance, are irrigated fields and orchards reaching into the foreground with grazing cattle to the right.

To the left, the middle distance depicts a mountainside with a quartz mill. In the foreground is a miner with a pick and shovel. Above this is the motto “Ditat Deus,” meaning God enriches.

In a circular band surrounding the whole seal is inscribed “Great Seal of the State of Arizona” and the year of admission to the Union, 1912.

The official state seal is the one described in the *Arizona Constitution*, but this color version has been in use by state agencies for more than 20 years.

Much like the black and white state seal, the colorized version has been altered over the years. Colors have been added, deleted, and manipulated with desktop publishing programs. The seal to the right is used on many state publications. ★



Graphic provided by Department of Administration, Interagency Printing Services  
Janice K. Brewer - Secretary of State

# The Secretary of State's Office and the State Seal

The office is required under the law to be the official keeper of the state seal. Secretary of State Jan Brewer acts as the official custodian under A.R.S. § 41-121 (3).

Secretary Brewer affixes the great seal, with her attestation, to public instruments to which the official signature of the governor is attached under A.R.S. § 41-121(4), see lower left. It is also attached to Secretary of State proclamations, certified copies of filed documents, to election canvass', and the Presidential Elector Ballot - Certificate of Vote that is filed with the president of the U.S. Senate and the National Archives and Records Administration (left), among other public records.



## Use of the Seal - Restrictions under the law

Secretary Brewer grants and denies permission to use the Great Seal of the State of Arizona under A.R.S. § 41-130 which states, "41-130. Use of state seal restricted; violation; classification

A person may use, display or otherwise employ any facsimile, copy, likeness, imitation or other resemblance of the great seal of this state only after obtaining the approval of the secretary of state. The secretary of state may grant a certificate of

approval upon application by any person showing good cause for the use of the great seal of this state for a proper purpose. The great seal of this state shall in no way be employed by anyone other than a state agency for the purpose of advertising or promoting the sale of any article of merchandise whatever within this state or for promoting any other commercial purpose. The secretary of state may promulgate rules for the use of the great seal of this state or any facsimile, copy, likeness, imitation or other resemblance of the great seal. Any person who knowingly violates this section is guilty of a class 3 misdemeanor."

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand and caused to be affixed the Great Seal of the State of Arizona.

*Jan Brewer*  
GOVERNOR

DONE at the Capitol in Phoenix on this 13th day of February in the Year Two Thousand Five and of the independence of the United States of America the Two Hundred Twenty-Ninth.

ATTEST:

*Janice K. Brewer*  
SECRETARY OF STATE



Any person who wishes to use the state seal must put their request in writing to Secretary Brewer. Contact the office at 602-542-0681 for more information or write to:

Secretary of State Janice K. Brewer  
1700 W. Washington St., 7th Fl.  
Phoenix, AZ 85007