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The Story of the City Seal

Origin of City Seal Almost Mystery; Present Form Adopted in 1909; Use of Seals Declining

As a matter of historical interest the story of the official seal of the City of Toledo is significant in that there is need for it to be recorded for posterity somewhere in the Municipal record. It is the purpose of this issue of the City Journal, therefore, to permanently record such facts as have been brought to light after considerable searching through a vague and dim record of the past, a record of some odd 99 years, with respect to various seals of the City of Toledo.

Origin Uncertain

During Toledo's 99 years of corporate existence several official seals have been used. Toledo was incorporated as a city by an act of the Ohio legislature on January 7, 1837. Among the powers specifically granted to the city is one that Toledo "may use a corporate seal, and change the same at pleasure." The original city seal, according to the best authoritative source, Waggoner's "History of Toledo and Lucas County," was adopted on October 26, 1838, and consisted simply of a scroll with the letters L. S., the Latin abbreviation for *Locus Sigilli*, "the place of the seal," in the middle of it.

The earliest official record of the city seal appears in the official rec-

ord of the clerk of Council. An ordinance was adopted July 15, 1839, which provided that "the city clerk within three months shall procure at the expense of the city a corporate seal to be engraved upon brass, copper or other metallic substance after such design and representing such emblems as the Mayor shall prescribe." Thus the design was left to the discretion of the mayor, who was then H. D. Mason. What design was chosen is not known but it is presumed that the scroll of 1838 was continued as the city's official seal. The municipal corporation act of 1852, which made Toledo a second-class city, provided that the city was empowered "to have a common seal, and to change and alter the same at will." Through these years, however, no records exist as to the description so that it is probable that the same seal was continued.

Act of 1868

The first tangible evidence of how the seal came to its present form is found in a resolution passed by the city council on July 17, 1871. This resolution authorized the clerk of council "to procure a seal at a cost not to exceed \$10.00 like the seal described in the Act passed May 9, 1868." Search of this act of the

Ohio legislature revealed that "Seals of . . . municipal officers required by law to use a seal shall be one inch and three-quarters in diameter, surrounded by the appropriate name of the office." It is therefore apparent that the city seal became a circle at this time, and that the inscription "The Seal of the City of Toledo" was added.

Two years later on July 7, 1873, the city council by resolution commissioned an individual named O. J. Hopkins, an engraver, to design and engrave a new seal. It is apparent that the results of this action produced the seal which portrayed Fort Industry which was located on the river bank where Swan Creek joins the Maumee. This seal is reproduced on the next page. It portrays Fort Industry, the rising sun, emblematic of the state of Ohio, and bears the date of incorporation, January 7, 1838, and the Latin motto of the city, "Laborare est Orare," which, freely translated, means "To labor is to pray."

The 1909 Seal

On January 11, 1909, during the administration of one of Toledo's most famous mayors, Brand Whitlock, the city seal was changed to its present form. At that time the city council enacted a resolution

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POINTED PARAGRAPH

The decision of the City Council to study the situation of the bridges over Swan Creek thoroughly and intensively is most heartening news. The several bridges over Swan Creek have been a matter of considerable controversy for the past ten years. They were built in a day when river traffic also plied up and down Swan Creek. The utility of the stream as a course for water traffic has disappeared almost entirely. The creek was abandoned as a navigable stream by the Federal government years ago. Regardless of what the final disposition of the bridges may be these facts remain undisputed.

Beyond all question the bridges over Swan Creek will have to be placed in condition to carry traffic safely and adequately. The present condition of the bridges is such that extensive repairs are needed whether they are put in shape to open and close for water traffic or whether they are closed permanently. If the former course is pursued the maintenance cost of machinery in addition to the cost of keeping the bridges open to traffic will be a considerable item in the future. If the latter policy is adopted the maintenance cost for these

adopting an official flag for the City of Toledo. Specifications for the official flag as set up by the resolution are as follows: "A field divided into three vertical bars of equal width, each bar to be one-third of the whole; the width of the flag to be five parts of its whole length; the two outer bars to be of navy blue, the center bar of pure white; in the middle of the center bar a conventionalized figure of the blockhouse of old Fort Industry, in red, surrounded by a circle of blue; the diameter of the outer edge of the circle to be 2.4 of a part."

Design Significant

The particular design for the official flag as established by the resolution has significance. This is described as follows: "The blockhouse representing old Fort Industry, which was the first settlement of Toledo, represents security and industry and that advancement which came of the pioneer spirit. The circle surrounding it denotes unity, completeness and eternity, and giving the sense of location, represents the State of Ohio. The colors of the flag are the national colors and stand not only for the nation, but the blue for constancy, the white for purity and the red for labor, courage and brotherhood."

Seal Changed

The resolution of 1909 further established that the device of the blockhouse within the circle stand as the official emblem of the city, and that it should be used as the basis of all seals and devices representing the sovereignty of the city. The resolution further provided that wherever possible the date of incorporation of the city, January 7, 1837, should be inscribed as well as the motto of the city, Laborare est Orare. Thus the circle, date of in-

corporation, and motto of the seal of 1873 were preserved.

corporation, and motto of the seal of 1873 were preserved. The city seal in its present form has been in use for 27 years. It was designed by Robert N. Corl, an

architect, then a resident of Toledo but now a resident of the village of Maumee.

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SEAL OF 1873



THE PRESENT SEAL



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Declining Use

Except for historical or traditional significance official city seals do not now have the importance that was once attached to them. The use of seals can be traced back as far as Babylonian times when they were symbolic of great power. They were used only by kings and other high personages who held the power of life and death. During early English times, when few people could read or write, seals were used by high government officials. This traditional or customary use of seals was inherited by the United States and is still preserved, although the importance of seals has declined. Probably the most use of the official seal of Toledo today is in the issuance of bonds and the certification of certain writs, commissions and legal processes by the mayor.