

Seal of the State of Illinois

The Great Seal: The first seal used in what is now Illinois was that of the Northwest Territory, first used in 1788. The Seal of the Illinois Territory followed in 1809.

The three state seals subsequently used in Illinois' history differed from the territorial seals in that the eagle held a banner in its beak with the words of the state motto, "State Sovereignty, National Union." The words "Seal of the State of Illinois" and the date "Aug. 26, 1818," the date that the first Illinois Constitution was signed in Kaskaskia, appeared between the circles.

After Illinois gained statehood in December 1818, the First General Assembly decreed on February 19, 1819, that state officials should procure a permanent State Seal. The seal they decided upon was a duplicate of the Great Seal of the United States. This First Great Seal of Illinois was used until 1839 when it was recut. The new version became the Second Great Seal.

Secretary of State Sharon Tyndale was responsible for creating the seal in use today. In January 1867, he told Senator Allen C. Fuller that the old seal had outlived its usefulness, and a new one was needed. He asked Fuller to sponsor a bill authorizing a new seal. But a controversy arose when the Senate discovered that Tyndale planned to use Fuller's bill to change the wording "State Sovereignty, National Union" to "National Union, State Sovereignty" in light of the Civil War.

The Senate disagreed with Tyndale and amended and passed the bill on March 7, 1867, restoring the original wording. Though Tyndale followed the General Assembly's decree that he not reverse the words of the State Motto, he changed the banner's placement on the seal so that, though "National Union" followed "State Sovereignty," it was much more prominent. Moreover, the word "Sovereignty" was upside down, further decreasing its readability.

The State Seal has been recut more than once since 1868, but Tyndale's design has remained essentially unchanged. The Secretary of State is the keeper of the Great Seal of the State of Illinois. Reproduction or use of the State Seal, or the State Flag, is permissible only in strict accordance with the provisions of Chapter 5 of the Illinois Compiled Statutes.

Source: https://www.cyberdriveillinois.com/publications/illinois_bluebook/statesymbols.pdf

