The image shows the front cover of an antique book. The cover is decorated with a complex marbled paper pattern, featuring swirling, feather-like designs in shades of grey, black, and white. A dark, rectangular label with a decorative, scalloped border is centered on the cover. The text on the label is printed in a white, serif font. The spine of the book is visible on the left side, showing several raised bands and a small white label with handwritten text.

THE SEAL
OF THE
UNITED STATES

UNIV. OF MICH.

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THE SEAL
OF THE
UNITED STATES.



1000 COPIES PRINTED.

No. 147.

Department of State,

Washington, Dec. 30, 1892

To the Librarian, University of Michigan

Sir:

I have the pleasure of transmitting to you the accompanying monograph, describing the origin of the Seal of the United States, for the use of your library.

Very respectfully yours,

John W. Foster.





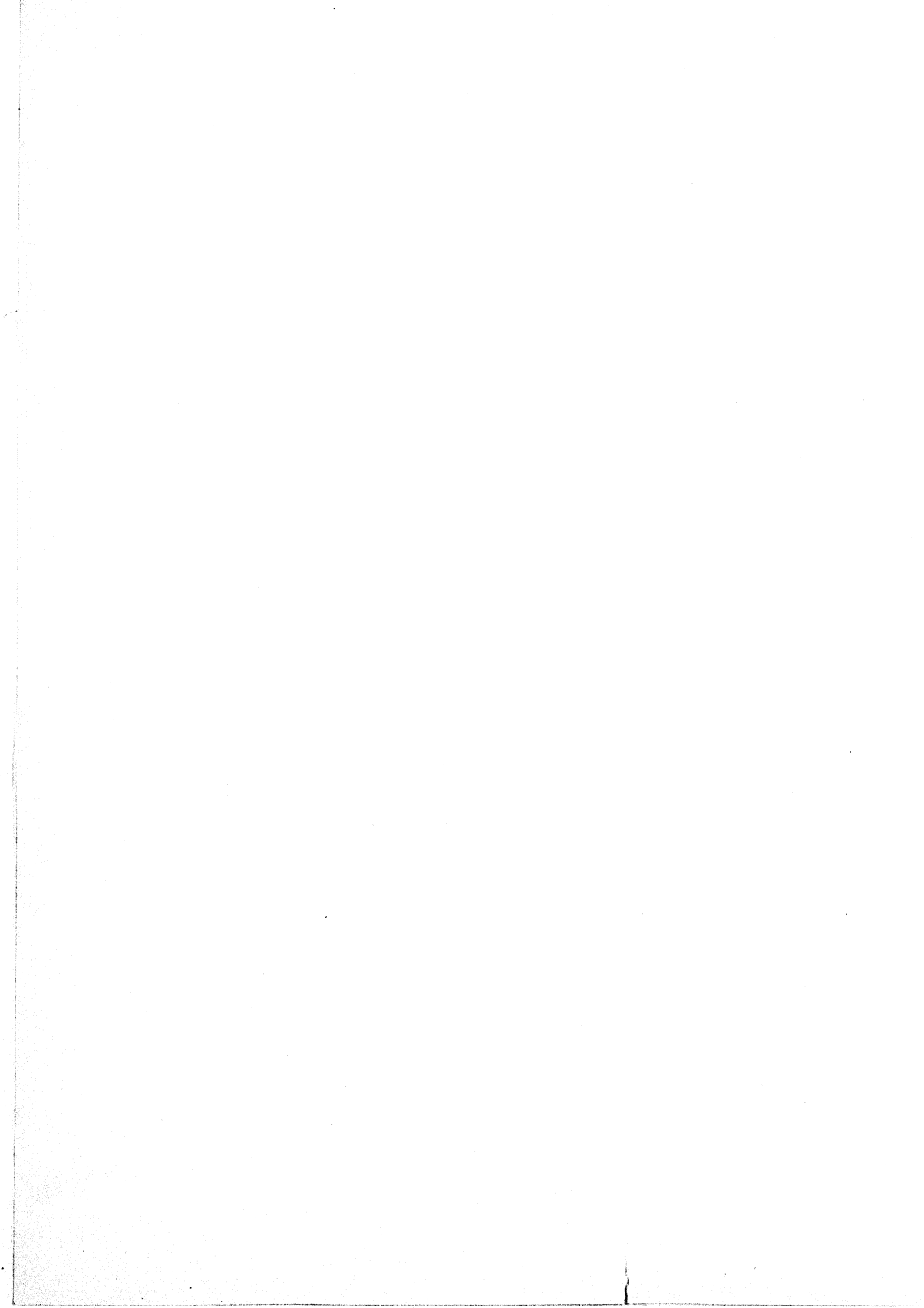
THE

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SEAL OF THE UNITED STATES

HOW IT WAS DEVELOPED AND ADOPTED

WASHINGTON
U. S. DEPARTMENT OF STATE
1892



DEPARTMENT OF STATE,

Washington, May 23, 1892.

The Honorable JAMES G. BLAINE,

Secretary of State.

SIR: In compliance with instructions received through the Chief Clerk, Sevellon A. Brown, Esq., I have the honor to transmit a sketch, showing, from authentic and official sources, the development of the seal of the United States and the national arms.

The illustrations were drawn by Mr. Walter Manton, of the Department, from the original designs.

I am, sir, your obedient servant,

GAILLARD HUNT.

THE SEAL OF THE UNITED STATES.

On July 4, 1776, after the Declaration of Independence had been read in the Continental Congress, it was "*Resolved*, That Dr. Franklin, Mr. J. Adams and Mr. Jefferson be a committee, to prepare a device for a Seal of the United States of North America."*

The committee reported on August 10 as follows: †

The great seal should on one side have the arms of the United States of America which arms should be as follows:

The shield has six Quarters, parts one, coupé two. ‡
The 1st Or, a Rose enamelled gules and argent for England: the 2nd Argent, a Thistle proper for Scotland: the 3d Vert a Harp Or for Ireland: the 4th Azure a Flower de luce Or for France: the 5th Or the Imperial Eagle Sable for Germany; and the 6th Or the Belgic Lion Gules

* Journals of Congress, vol. 1, p. 397.

† Reports of Committees Relating to Congress, vol. 23, Department of State MS. archives. All the committee reports bearing on the seal are in this volume.

‡ See note at the end for a glossary of heraldic terms used.

for Holland, pointing out the countries from which these States have been peopled.

The Shield within a border Gules entwined of thirteen Scutcheons Argent linked together by a chain Or, each charged with initial letters Sable, as follows: 1st N. H., 2nd M. B.,* 3d R. I., 4th C., 5th N. Y., 6th N. J., 7th P., 8th D. C., † 9th M., 10th V., 11th N. C., 12th S. C., 13th G., for each of the thirteen independent States of America.

Supporters, Dexter the Goddess of Liberty ‡ in a corselet of Armour, alluding to the present times, holding in her right hand the Spear and Cap and with her left supporting the shield of the States; Sinister, the Goddess Justice bearing a sword in her right hand and in her left a Balance.

Crest, the Eye of Providence in a radiant Triangle whose Glory extends over the shield and beyond the Figures. Motto: E PLURIBUS UNUM.

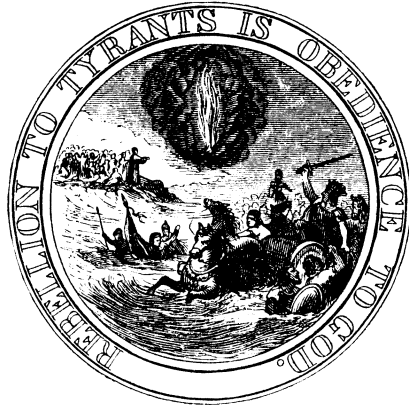
Legend round the whole atchievement, Seal of the United States of America MDCCLXXVI.

On the other side of the said Great Seal should be the following Device: Pharaoh sitting in an open Chariot, a Crown on his head and a sword in his hand passing through the divided Waters of the Red Sea in pursuit of the Israelites: Rays from a pillow [pillar] of Fire in the Cloud, expressive of the devine Presence and Command, beam-

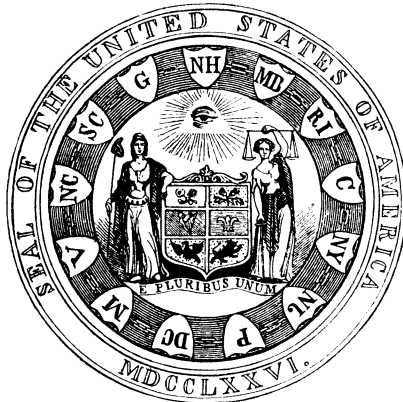
*Massachusetts Bay.

†Delaware Colony. Delaware was, however, no longer a colony.

‡A note following the report says: "The figure of Liberty standing on a Pedestal in a flowing Dress, turning on a column, on which are to be the emblems of commerce, agriculture and arms."



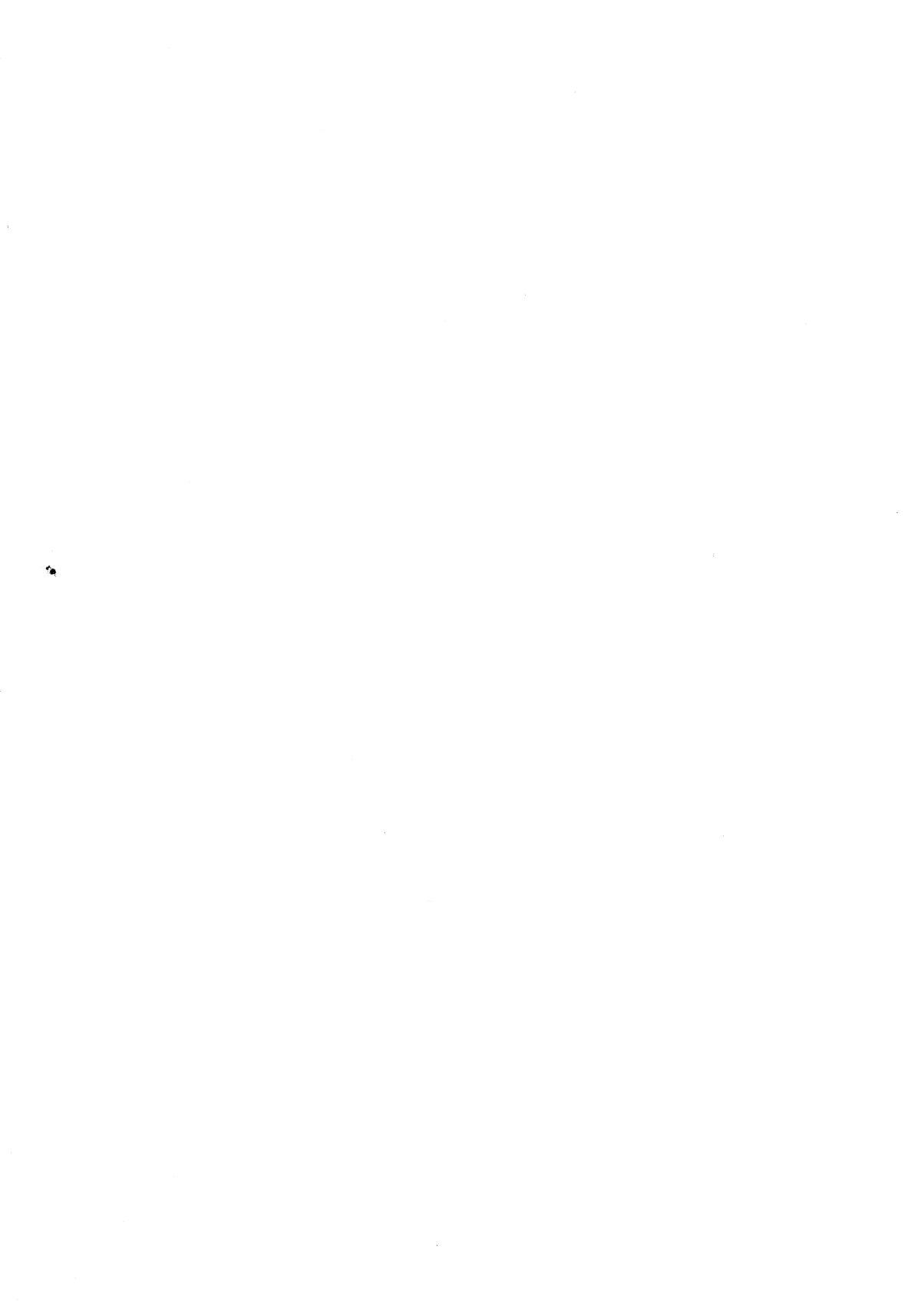
Reverse.



Obverse.

THE FIRST DESIGN.

[From a drawing by Benj. J. Lossing from the description.]



ing on Moses who stands on the shore and extending his hand over the Sea causes it to overwhelm Pharaoh.

Motto: Rebellion to Tyrants is Obedience to God.

Two features of this design were preserved in the seal as finally adopted—the Eye of Providence in the triangle, which now appears upon the reverse, and the motto *E pluribus unum*. The latter was a familiar quotation to the colonists as the motto of the Gentleman's Magazine, and naturally suggested itself as the most appropriate description of the new order of things, when the several colonies united in their opposition to Great Britain.*

The legend "Rebellion to Tyrants is Obedience to God," intended for the reverse of the seal, is a singular illustration of an historical myth. Thomas Hollis, of England, born in London in 1720, and one of the early patrons of Harvard College, in his memoirs, states:†

The following Epitaph is often seen pasted up in the houses of North America. It throws some light upon the principles of the people, and may in some measure account for the asperity of the war carrying on against

* The first use of the motto is traced in Preble's History of the Flag, p. 694.

† Memoirs of Thomas Hollis, Esq., F. R. and A. S. S.; London: MDCLXXX; vol. 2, p. 789.

them. The original is engraved upon a cannon at the summit of a steep hill near Martha Bray [Bay] in Jamaica :

STRANGER

ere thou pass, contemplate this cannon,
 Nor regardless be told
 That near its base lies deposited the dust
 of JOHN BRADSHAW;
 Who, nobly superior to selfish regards,
 Despising alike the pageantry of courtly splendor,
 The blast of calumny,
 And the terrors of royal vengeance,
 Presided in the illustrious band of Heroes and Patriots,
 Who fairly and openly adjudged
 CHARLES STUARD
 Tyrant of England
 To a public and exemplary death;
 Thereby presenting to the amazed world
 And transmitting down through applauding ages
 The most glorious example
 of unshaken virtue,
 Love of Freedom,
 and impartial justice
 Ever exhibited on the blood-stained theatre
 Of human actions.
 Oh, Reader,
 Pass not on, till thou hast blest his memory!
 And never, never forget,
 That REBELLION TO TYRANTS
 IS OBEDIENCE TO GOD.

A copy of this supposititious epitaph, in Jefferson's handwriting, was given to his young

friend, De Lyon, one of the Frenchmen who was with Lafayette on his tour of America in 1824. The manuscript was dated 1776, and stated that the inscription had been found three years earlier on the cannon at Martha Bay, Jamaica. A note, evidently by Mr. Jefferson himself, his biographer states, says:

From many circumstances there is reason to believe there does not exist any such inscription as the above, and that it was written by Dr. Franklin, in whose hands it was first seen.*

The whole story is transparently untrue. Bradshaw was first buried with a great deal of ceremony in Westminster Abbey. Upon the Restoration his corpse was taken from the coffin and hung, after which the trunk was thrown into a hole at the foot of the gallows and the head publicly displayed, as the custom was in those days. Some members of the court of which he was president are said to have gone to Jamaica, but early in this century the historian of that island stated, from his own knowledge, that the report of the epitaph was a fiction.†

* Randall's *Life of Jefferson*, vol. 3, p. 585.

† Edwards's *History of the British West Indies*, vol. 1, p. 213 (fifth edition).

The device* of this committee did not meet with a favorable reception, and no drawing of it appears to have been submitted. The report was laid on the table, and nothing further was done until March 25, 1779, when the matter was referred to a new committee, composed of James Lovell, of Massachusetts; Scott, of Virginia; and William Houstoun, of Georgia. They were not men of especial prominence. Lovell † had been a teacher in the Latin School of Boston and master of another New England school, and Houstoun, ‡ the brother of Governor John Houstoun, was a lawyer with an English education. The committee reported May 10, 1780, the original report § reading as follows :

The Seal to be 4 inches diameter. On one side, the Arms of the United States, as follows : The Shield charged on the Field with 13 diagonal stripes alternate red and white. Supporters, dexter, a Warriour holding a sword; Sinister, a figure representing Peace bearing an Olive Branch.

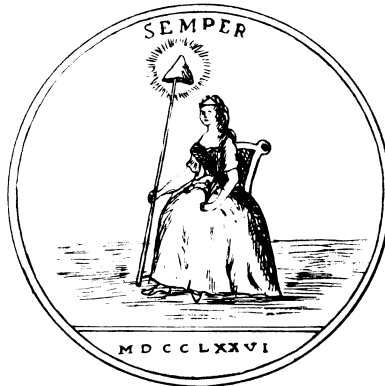
*The historian Lossing attributes it to Jefferson, who called in as an assistant "a little West India Frenchman named Du Simitiere" (Harper's Magazine, July, 1856, vol. 13, p. 179). The drawing given here was first made by Lossing.

†Appleton's Cyclopaedia of American Biography.

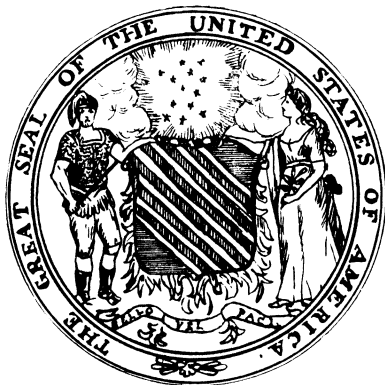
‡Biographical Sketches of the Delegates from Georgia to the Continental Congress, p. 118.

§The date in the MS. is May 10, 1779, but this is doubtless a mistake for 1780, as the coincidence in the date of the two reports is only to be explained upon this theory. The "original report" appears to be a copy.

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Reverse.



Obverse.

DEVICE OF THE SECOND COMMITTEE.
[Traced from the original and reduced one-half.]

The Crest, a radiant constellation of 13 stars. The Motto BELLO VEL PACI. The Legend round the achievement SEAL OF THE UNITED STATES.

On the Reverse—The Figure of Liberty seated in a chair holding the staff and cap. The Motto SEMPER. Underneath MDCCLXXVI.

This report was modified so as to make the seal three inches in diameter. It advocated also “a miniature of the face of the Great Seal to be prepared of half the Diameter, to be affixed as the less seal of the United States.”

In this device appeared for the first time the constellation of the thirteen stars and the thirteen alternate red and white stripes; but the latter were here diagonal, whereas they finally appeared as perpendicular. The idea followed naturally the design of the national flag, which Congress had adopted June 14, 1777.

After debate the report was ordered to be recommitted to a new committee, composed of Middleton and Rutledge, of South Carolina, and Boudinot, of New Jersey.

Two years later the records show activity in the effort to evolve a suitable device, and in the meantime the committee reports had been re-

ferred to the Secretary of Congress, Charles Tomson. The name of Arthur Lee, who had returned from France and was now a member of Congress from Virginia, also appears as one of the members to whom the designs were submitted. It was at this time that the assistance of William Barton, A. M., a resident of Philadelphia, was sought. He submitted the following:

Device for an *Armorial Achievement** for the Great Seal of the United States of America, in Congress assembled; agreeable to the Rules of Heraldry—proposed by William Barton, A. M.

ARMS

Barry of thirteen pieces, Argent & Gules; on a Canton, Azure, as many Stars disposed in a Circle, of the first: a Pale, Or, surmounted of another, of the third; charged, in Chief, with an Eye surrounded with a Glory, proper; and, in the Fess-point, an Eagle displayed on the Summit of a Doric Column which rests on the base of the Escutcheon, both as the Stars.

CREST.

On the Helmet of Burnished Gold damasked, grated with six Bars, and surmounted of a Cap of Dignity, Gules, turned up Ermine, a Cock armed with gaffs, proper:

* See note at the end for glossary of heraldic terms used.

SUPPORTERS.

On the dexter side: the Genius of America (represented by a Maiden with loose Auburn Tresses, having on her head a radiated Crown, of Gold, encircled with a sky-blue fillet spangled with silver stars; and clothed in a long, loose, white garment, bordered with Green: from her right shoulder to her left side, a scarf semé of Stars, the Tinctures thereof the same as in the Canton; and round the Waist a purple Girdle fringed Or; embroidered, Argent, with the word "Virtue":)—resting her interior Hand on the Escutcheon, and holding in the other the proper *Standard of the United States*, having a Dove, argent, perched on the top of it.

On the sinister side: a Man in complete Armour, his sword-belt, Azure, fringed with Gold; the Helmet inscribed with a Wreath of Laurel, and crested with one white and two blue Plumes: supporting with his dexter Hand the Escutcheon and holding, in the exterior, a Lance with the point sanguinated; and upon it a Banner displayed, Vert,—in the Fess-point an Harp, Or, stringed with Silver, between a star in Chief, two Fleurs-de-lis in Fess, and a pair of Swords in Saltier, in Bass, all Argent. The Tenants of the Escutcheon stand on a Scroll, on which the following Motto:

"DEO FAVENTE,"

which alludes to the *Eye* in the Arms, meant for the Eye of Providence.

Over the crest, in a scroll, this motto—

“VIRTUS SOLA INVICTA”—

which requires no comment.

The thirteen pieces, barways, which fill up the field of the Arms, may represent the several States; and the same Number of Stars upon a blue Canton, disposed in a Circle, represent a new Constellation, which alludes to the new Empire, formed in the World by the Confederation of those States. Their Disposition, in the form of a circle, denotes the perpetuity of its continuance, the Ring being the Symbol of Eternity. The Eagle displayed is the symbol of Supreme Power & Authority, and signifies the Congress; the Pillar, upon which it rests, is used as the Hieroglyphic of Fortitude and Constancy; and, it's being of the Doric order, (which is the best proportioned and most agreeable to nature) & composed of several Members or parts, all, taken together, forming a beautiful composition of Strength, Congruity & Usefulness, it may with great propriety signify a well planned Government. The Eagle, being placed on the summit of the Column, is emblematical of the Sovereignty of the Government of the United States; and, as further expressive of that Idea, those two charges or figures are borne on a Pale, which extends across the thirteen pieces, into which the Escutcheon is divided. The signification of the Eye has been already explained.

The Helmet is such as appertains to Sovereignty and the Cap is used as the Token of Freedom & Excellency.

It was formerly worn by Dukes "because," says Guillim, "*they Had a more worthy Government than other subjects.*" The Cock is distinguished for two most excellent Qualities, necessary in a free country, viz: *Vigilance & Fortitude.*

The genius of the American Confederated Republic is denoted by her blue Scarf & Fillet, glittering with Stars, and by the flag of Congress which she displays. Her dress is white edged with green colours, emblematical of Innocence and Youth. Her *purple* girdle and radiated *crown* indicate her sovereignty: the word "*Virtue*" on the former is to show, that *that* should be her principal ornament, and the *radiated* Crown, that no *Earthly* Crown shall rule her. The Dove on the Top of the American Standard denotes the mildness and lenity of her Government.

The Knight in Armour with his bloody Lance represents the military Genius of the American Empire, armed in Defence of its just Rights. His *blue* Belt and *blue* feathers indicate his Country, & the White Plume is in Compliment to our gallant Ally. The Wreath of Laurel round his helmet is expressive of his success. The Green Field of the Banner denotes Youth and Vigor; the Harp is emblematical of the several States acting in Harmony and Concert; the Star, *in Chief*, has reference to America, *as principal* in the contest; the two Fleurs de lis are borne as a grateful* Testimonial of the support given to her by France;

* Note by Barton: "In the Arms of Scotland, as Marshalled in the Royal Achievement, the double Tressure which surrounds the Lion is borne *flory* and *counter flory* (with Fleurs de lis); which is in consequence of a Treaty that was entered into, between Charlemagne, then Emperor and King of France, and Achaius, King of Scotland, to denote that the French Lillies should guard and defend the Scottish Lion."

and the two Swords, crossing each other signify a state of War. This Tenant and his Flag relate totally, to America at the time of her Revolution.

WILLIAM BARTON.

This elaborate design contains very little that was subsequently used, but it is here that the eagle appears for the first time.

Barton submitted another device of a similar character, so far as the obverse is concerned:

Device for an Armorial Atchievement & Reverse of a Great Seal, for the United States of North America: proposed by William Barton Esq., A. M.

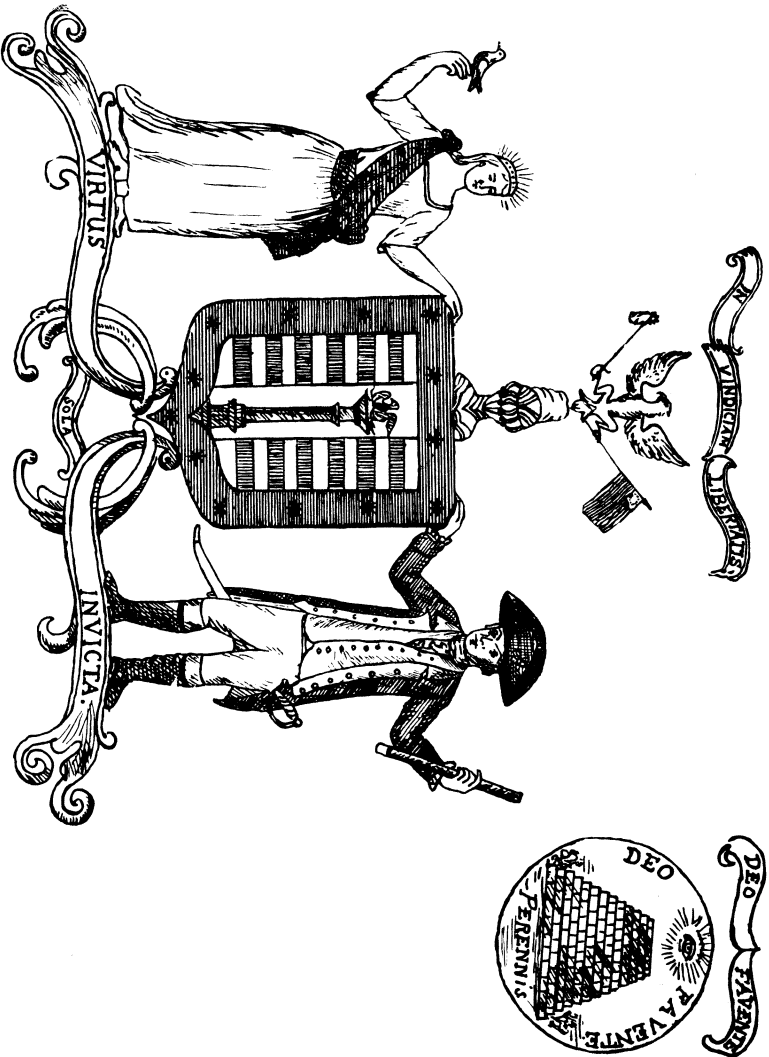
Blazoned according to the Laws of Heraldry—

ARMS

Barry of thirteen pieces, Argent & Gules; on a pale, Or, a Pillar of the Doric Order, Vert, reaching from the Base of the Escutcheon to the Honor point; and from the summit thereof, a Phœnix in Flames with Wings expanded, proper; the whole within a Border, Azure, charged with as many stars as pieces barways, of the first.

CREST

On a Helmet of Burnished Gold, damasked, grated with six Bars, a Cap of Liberty, Vert; with an Eagle displayed Argent thereon holding in his dexter Talon a Sword, Or,



Face p. 16.

WM. HARTON'S SECOND DEVICE.
[Traced from the original and reduced one-half.]

having a wreath of Laurel suspended from the point ; and, in the sinister, the Ensign of the United States, proper.

SUPPORTERS

On the dexter side, the Genius of the American Confederated Republic: represented by a Maiden, with flowing Auburn Tresses; clad in a long loose, white Garment, bordered with Green; having a sky-blue scarf, charged with Stars as in the Arms, reaching across her waist from her right shoulder to her left Side; and, on her Head, a *radiated* crown of Gold, encircled with an azure Fillet spangled with Silver Stars; round her Waist a purple Girdle, embroidered with the word "Virtus" in silver:—a Dove, proper, perched on her dexter Hand.

On the Sinister Side, an American Warrior, clad in an uniform Coat, of blue faced with Buff, and in his Hat a Cockade of black and white Ribbons; in his left hand, a Baton Azure semé of Stars Argent

Motto over the crest—

"IN VINDICIAM LIBERTATIS"

Motto under the Arms—

"VIRTUS SOLA INVICTA"

Reverse of the Seal:

A Pyramid of thirteen Strata, (or Steps) Or. In the Zenith, an eye, surrounded with a Glory, proper.

In a Scroll, above—or in the Margin

“DEO FAVENTE”

The Exergue

“PERENNIS”

Remarks

The Imperial Eagle of Germany (which is Sable, and with two Heads) is represented with a sword in one Talon, and a sceptre in the other.

The Phœnix is emblematical of the expiring Liberty of Britain, revived by her Descendants in America.

The Dove (perched on the right Hand of the Genius of America) is Emblematical of Innocence and Virtue.

The Sword (held by the Eagle) is the Symbol of Courage, Authority and Power. The Flag or Ensign denotes the United States of America, of the sovereignty of which the Eagle is expressive.

The Pillar is the Hieroglyphic of Constancy and Fortitude, and is likewise emblematical of Beauty, Strength & Order.

The Pyramid signifies Strength and Duration.

Here the first design of the reverse of the seal is clearly fixed; it being the same as the one finally adopted, except for the motto.

The next device was by the Secretary of Congress, Charles Tomson.

Device for an Armorial Atchievement and Reverse of a Great Seal for the United States in Congress Assembled.

ARMS.

On a field Chevrons composed of seven pieces on one side & six on the other, joined together at the top in such wise that each of the six bears against or is supported by & supports two of the opposite side, the pieces of the chevrons on each side alternate red and white. The shield born on the breast of an American Eagle, on the Wing and rising proper. In the dexter talon of the eagle an olive branch & in the sinister a bundle of arrows. Over the head of the Eagle a constellation of stars surrounded with bright rays and at a little distance clouds.

In the bill of the Eagle a scroll with the words

“E PLURIBUS UNUM”—

Reverse

A pyramid unfinished

In the zenith an eye in a triangle surrounded with a glory, proper.

Over the eye these words

ANNUIT CŒPTIS

On the base of the pyramid the numerical letters

MDCCLXXVI

and underneath these words

NOVUS ORDO SECLORUM.

N. B. the Head and tail of the American bald Eagle are White, the body and wings of a lead or dove colour.

Here, it will be observed, a step further was made. The eagle bearing the shield on its breast, grasping the olive branch and arrows, and the constellation surrounded by clouds appear as they now actually are. The motto, too, is the same, and is held in the same way. The reverse appears as it was finally adopted.

The words "*Annuit cœptis novus ordo seclorum*" have commonly been taken as one motto, meaning "the new series of ages is favorable to our undertakings;" but, from the "remarks and explanation" accompanying the description of the seal as finally adopted (p. 24), it is evident that the intention was to have two mottoes—"annuit cœptis," meaning "it (the Eye of Providence) is favorable to our undertakings," and "*novus ordo seclorum*," meaning simply "a new order of centuries."

The words were probably adapted from two passages in Virgil—"Audacibus annue cœptis" (favor my daring undertaking) and "*Magnus ab integro seclorum nascitur ordo*" (the great



CHARLES TOMSON'S DEVICE.
[Traced from the original design.]



series of ages begins anew). The former is found in the *Æneid*, book 9, verse 625 (also in the *Georgics*, 1, 40), and the latter in the fourth eclogue, fifth verse. Although the form "seclorum" was adopted, the more approved form is "sæclorum;" and the word is spelled with the "æ" in all, or nearly all, the best modern editions of Latin authors.*

The next report is endorsed "Mr. Barton's improvement on the Secretary's device," and describes a device almost identical with the one finally agreed upon:

Device for an Armorial Atchievement for the United States of North America, blazoned agreeably to the Laws of Heraldry—proposed by Wm. Barton, A. M.

ARMS.

Paleways † of thirteen pièces, Argent and Gules; a Chief Azure:—The Escutcheon placed on the Breast of an American (the bald-headed) Eagle, displayed, proper, holding in his Beak a Scroll, inscribed with this motto, viz.,

"E PLURIBUS UNUM"—

* Note by Mr. Henry L. Thomas, Translator, Department of State.

† Note by Barton: "As the pales or pallets consist of an uneven Number, they ought, in strictness, to be blazoned—argt. 6 Pallets gules: but as the 13 pieces allude to the thirteen States, they are blazoned according to the number of *pieces paleways*."

And in his dexter Talon a Palm or an Olive Branch—in the other a bundle of 13 Arrows; all proper.

FOR THE CREST

Over the Head of the Eagle, which appears above the Escutcheon, a Glory, Or; breaking through a cloud, proper, and surrounding thirteen Stars forming a Constellation, Argent, on an Azure Field.

In the Exergue of the Great Seal—

“JUL. IV. MDCCLXXVI”—

In the margin of the same—

“SIGIL. MAG. REIPUB.

“CONFED. AMERIC.”

Remarks

The Escutcheon is composed of the Chief & Pale, the two most honourable ordinaries: the latter represent the several States; all joined in one solid, compact Entire, supporting a Chief, which unites the whole and represents Congress.—The Motto alludes to this Union.—The Colours or Tinctures of the Pales are those used in the Flag of the United States—White signifies Purity and Innocence; Red, Hardiness and Valour. The Chief denotes Congress—Blue is the Ground of the American uniform, and this Colour signifies Vigilance, Perseverance and Justice.

The meaning of the Crest is obvious, as is likewise that of the Olive Branch and Arrows.

The Escutcheon being placed on the Breast of the Eagle displayed is a very antient mode of bearing, and is truly imperial. The Eagle *displayed* is an Heraldical figure; and, being borne in the manner here described, supplies the place of supporters and Crest. The American States need no supporters but their own Virtue, and the Preservation of their Union through Congress. The Pales in the Arms are kept closely united by the Chief, which last likewise depends on that Union and the strength resulting from it, for its own support—The Inference is plain.

June 19th, 1782.

W. B.

The legend as proposed by Barton was left out finally.

On June 20, 1782, the seal was finally decided upon.

On report of the Secretary,* to whom were referred the several reports on the device for a great seal, to take order :

The device for an armorial achievement and reverse of the great seal for the United States in Congress assembled, is as follows :

ARMS. Paleways of thirteen pieces, argent and gules; a chief, azure; the escutcheon on the breast of the American eagle displayed proper, holding in his dexter talon an olive branch, and in his sinister a bundle of thirteen ar-

* Journals of Congress, vol. 4, p. 39.

rows, all proper, and in his beak a scroll, inscribed with this motto, "E pluribus Unum."

For the CREST. Over the head of the Eagle, which appears above the escutcheon, a glory, or, breaking through a cloud, proper, and surrounding thirteen stars, forming a constellation, argent, on an azure field.

REVERSE. A pyramid unfinished.

In the zenith, an eye in a triangle, surrounded with a glory proper. Over the eye these words, "*Annuit cœptis.*" On the base of the pyramid the numerican letters MDCCLXXVI. And underneath the following motto, "*Novus Ordo Seclorum.*"

Accompanying the report, and adopted by Congress, was the following:

REMARKS AND EXPLANATION

The Escutcheon is composed of the chief and pale, the two most honourable ordinaries. The pieces, paly, represent the several States all joined in one solid compact entire, supporting a Chief, which unites the whole and represents Congress. The Motto alludes to this union. The pales in the arms are kept closely united by the chief and the chief depends on that Union and the strength resulting from it for its support, to denote the Confederacy of the United States of America and the preservation of their Union through Congress. The colours of the pales are those used in the flag of the United States of America ; White signifies purity and innocence, Red, hardiness and





valour, and Blue, the colour of the Chief signifies vigilance perseverance & justice. The Olive branch and arrows denote the power of peace and war which is exclusively vested in Congress. The Constellation denotes a new State taking its place and rank among other sovereign powers. The Escutcheon is born on the breast of an American Eagle without any other supporters, to denote that the United States ought to rely on their own Virtue.

Reverse. The pyramid signifies Strength and Duration: The Eye over it and the motto allude to the many signal interpositions of providence in favour of the American cause. The date underneath is that of the Declaration of Independence and the words under it signify the beginning of the new American Æra, which commences from that date.

Passed June 20, 1782.

The new seal was cut in brass soon after it had been decided upon, and it is found on a commission dated September 16, 1782, granting full power and authority to General Washington to arrange with the British for exchange of prisoners of war.* The commission is signed by John Hanson, President of Congress, and countersigned by Charles Tomson, Secretary, the seal being impressed upon the parchment

* Department of State MS. Washington papers.

over a white wafer fastened by red wax in the upper left-hand corner, instead of the lower left-hand corner, as is now the custom.

This seal continued in use for fifty-nine years. The present seal differs from it only in details of execution. The first seal, being contemporaneous with its adoption, was, in all probability, cut in Philadelphia, and, it may be presumed, under the immediate supervision of the authors of the device.*

The reverse of the seal was not cut then, nor has it ever been cut since. As it can not conveniently be used, it has been allowed to go unnoticed officially to the present day.

The second seal was cut in 1841, Daniel Webster being Secretary of State. It will be observed that this seal, which continued in use up to 1885, contained but six arrows, and its dimensions were smaller than the present seal.

The seal now in use was cut in 1885, Frederick T. Frelinghuysen being the Secretary of State, after the design had been submitted by

* By whom this seal was cut, it is impossible to say. In the accounts of the Continental Congress, now in the custody of the Register of the Treasury, no entry appears giving any clue, nor is there any information on the subject in the Department of State.



THE FIRST SEAL (1782).



THE SECOND SEAL (1841).



the Department to several historical scholars and authorities on heraldry and had been approved by them.

In many countries, at the present day, the authenticity of a treaty with another power is attested by a large pendant wax seal, the cords which run through the paper of the treaty being carried through the wax. As the wax would otherwise be quite certain to break and the cords become detached, a metal box—usually of gold or silver—is used to contain the wax impression. Our own seal was thus attached to treaties up to 1869, when the practice was finally abandoned; and the impression upon the paper itself, with a thin white wafer, is used upon treaties, as well as upon all other documents to which the seal is affixed.

When the Federal Government of the United States was formed under the Constitution, Congress passed a law on September 15, 1789, creating the Department of State. Sections 3 and 4 of the act read (1 Stat., 68):

SEC. 3. * * * That the seal heretofore used by the United States in Congress assembled shall, and hereby is declared to be, the Seal of the United States.

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SEC. 4. * * * That the said Secretary [of State] shall keep the said seal, and shall make out and record, and shall affix the said seal to all civil commissions, to officers of the United States, to be appointed by the President by and with the advice and consent of the Senate, or by the President alone, *Provided*, That the said seal shall not be affixed to any commission, before the same shall have been signed by the President of the United States, nor to any other instrument or act, without the special warrant of the President therefor.

The Secretary of State, therefore, is the custodian of the seal, but has no power to affix it to any paper that does not bear the President's signature.

In 1803 Chief Justice Marshall, in delivering an opinion of the Supreme Court, used the following language relative to the seal. It may be considered applicable to all instruments to which the seal is affixed, except that the President's signature is considered a warrant in itself for affixing it to commissions and exequaturs. All other legal instruments require a separate warrant, signed by the President, authorizing the seal to be used.

The signature [of the President] is a warrant for affixing the great seal to the commission, and the great seal is only

to be affixed to an instrument which is complete. It attests, by an act supposed to be of public notoriety, the verity of the presidential signature.

It is never to be affixed till the commission is signed, because the signature which gives force and effect to the commission, is conclusive evidence that the appointment is made.

The commission being signed, the subsequent duty of the Secretary of State is prescribed by law, and not to be guided by the will of the President. He is to affix the seal of the United States to the Commission, and is to record it. (1 U. S. Reports, 374.)

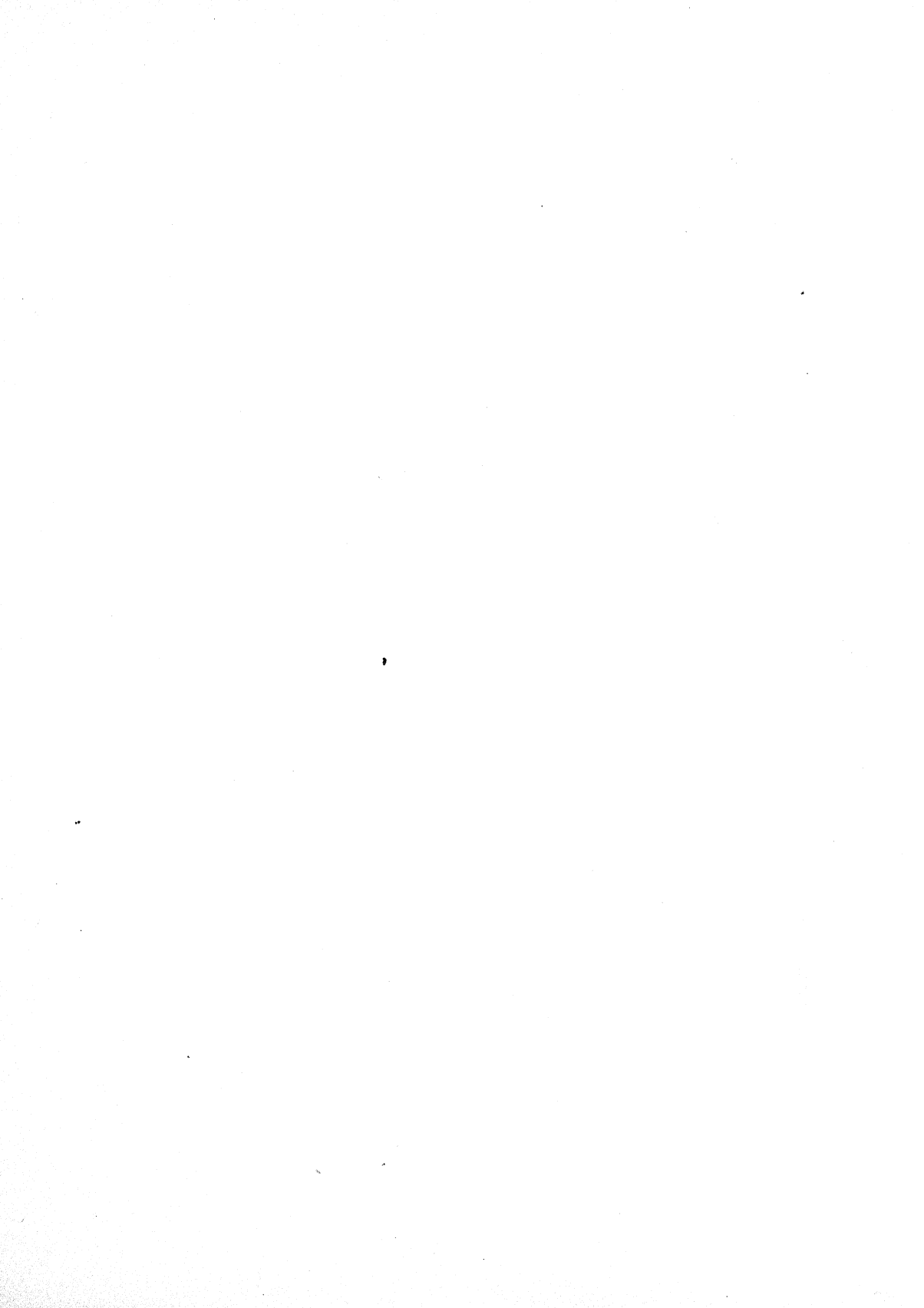
As the duties of the Government have expanded, the impracticability of having the seal of the United States attached by the Department of State to the commissions of officers who are under some other Department has been recognized by Congress. By the Act of March 18, 1874, the commissions of postmasters were directed to be made out under the seal of the Post-Office Department; the Act of March 3, 1875, placed the commissions of officers of the Interior Department under that Department; and by Act of August 8, 1888, all judicial officers, marshals, and United States attorneys were ordered to be appointed under the seal

of the Department of Justice. At the present time the seal of the United States is affixed to the commissions of all Cabinet officers and diplomatic and consular officers who are nominated by the President and confirmed by the Senate; all ceremonious communications from the President to the heads of foreign governments; all treaties, conventions, and formal agreements of the President with foreign powers; all pardons or commutations of sentence by the President to offenders who have been convicted before the courts of the United States; all proclamations by the President; all exequaturs to foreign consular officers in the United States who are appointed by the heads of the governments which they represent; to warrants by the President to receive persons surrendered by foreign governments under extradition treaties; and to all miscellaneous commissions of civil officers appointed by the President, by and with the advice and consent of the Senate, whose appointments are not now especially directed by law to be signed under a different seal.

GLOSSARY OF HERALDIC TERMS.

- Argent—silver, represented in engraving by plain white surface.
- Azure—blue, represented in engraving by horizontal lines.
- Barry—divided into bars.
- Canton—a part of the chief cut off on the left or right hand corner.
- Charged—bearing a charge or figure upon the escutcheon.
- Chevrons—bars, as the rafters of a roof, leaning against one another.
- Chief—upper part of escutcheon.
- Counter-flory—flowers divided and separated by the whole width of the bearing.
- Coupé—cut off evenly.
- Crest—the part of the achievement outside of and above the escutcheon.
- Damasked—decorated with an ornamental pattern.
- Displayed—with expanded wings.
- Escutcheon—the shield.
- Fess-point—the central point of the escutcheon.
- Flory or fleury—decorated with fleur-de-lis.
- Gules—red, represented in engraving by close vertical lines.

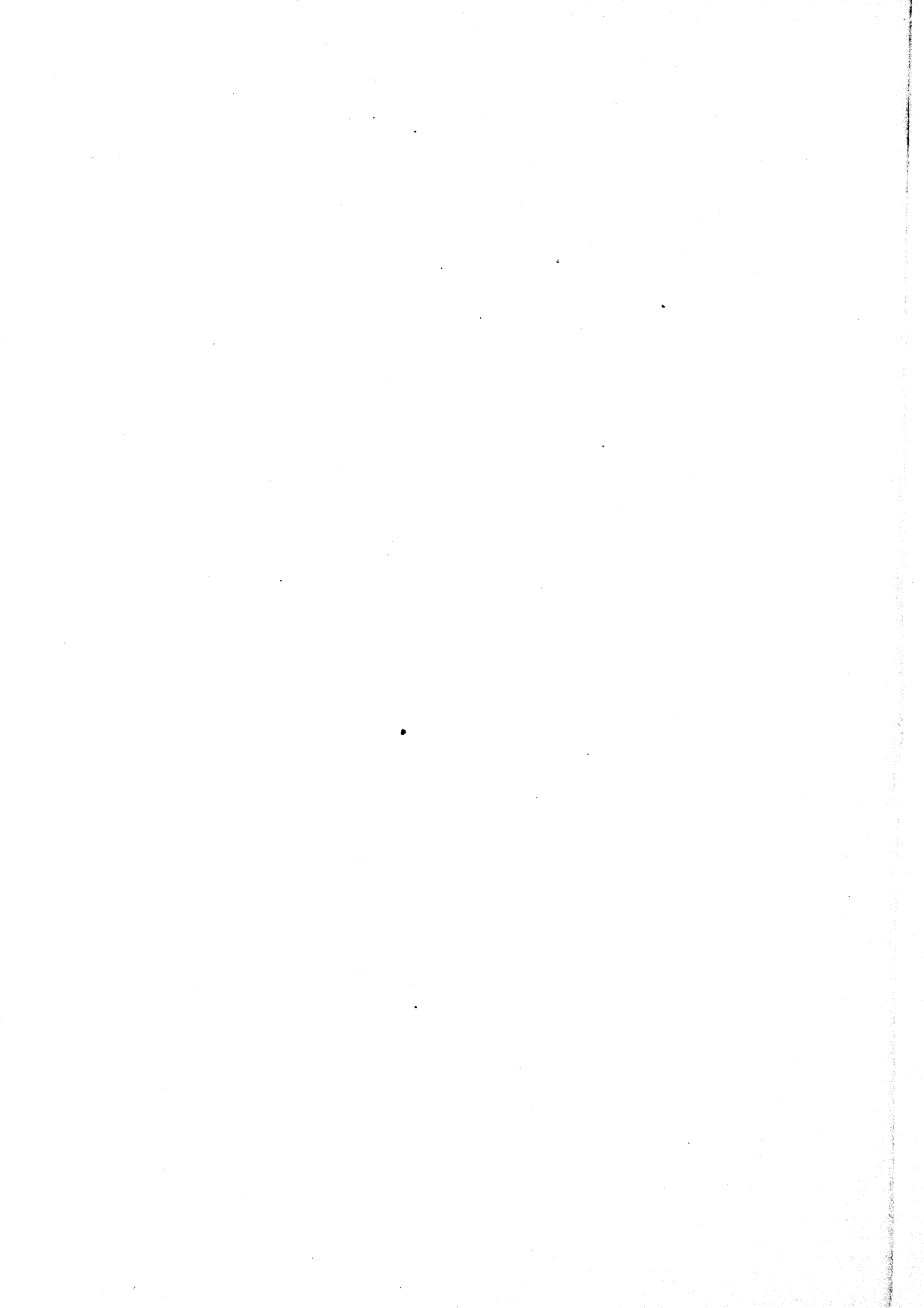
- Or—gold or yellow, represented in engraving by dots upon a white ground.
- Pale—a perpendicular stripe on the escutcheon.
- Paleways, palewise, or paly—divided into equal parts by perpendicular lines.
- Proper—of natural color or colors.
- Quarters—the various smaller escutcheons within the larger escutcheon.
- Sable—black, represented in engraving by a network of vertical and perpendicular lines.
- Saltier—in the shape of a St. Andrew's cross.
- Sanguinated—blood stained, or blood color.
- Scutcheon—escutcheon.
- Semé—covered with small bearings.
- Tenants—supporters.
- Tinctures—the metals or colors.
- Tressure—a double border within the escutcheon, and not reaching the edge.
- Vert—green, represented in engraving by diagonal lines.

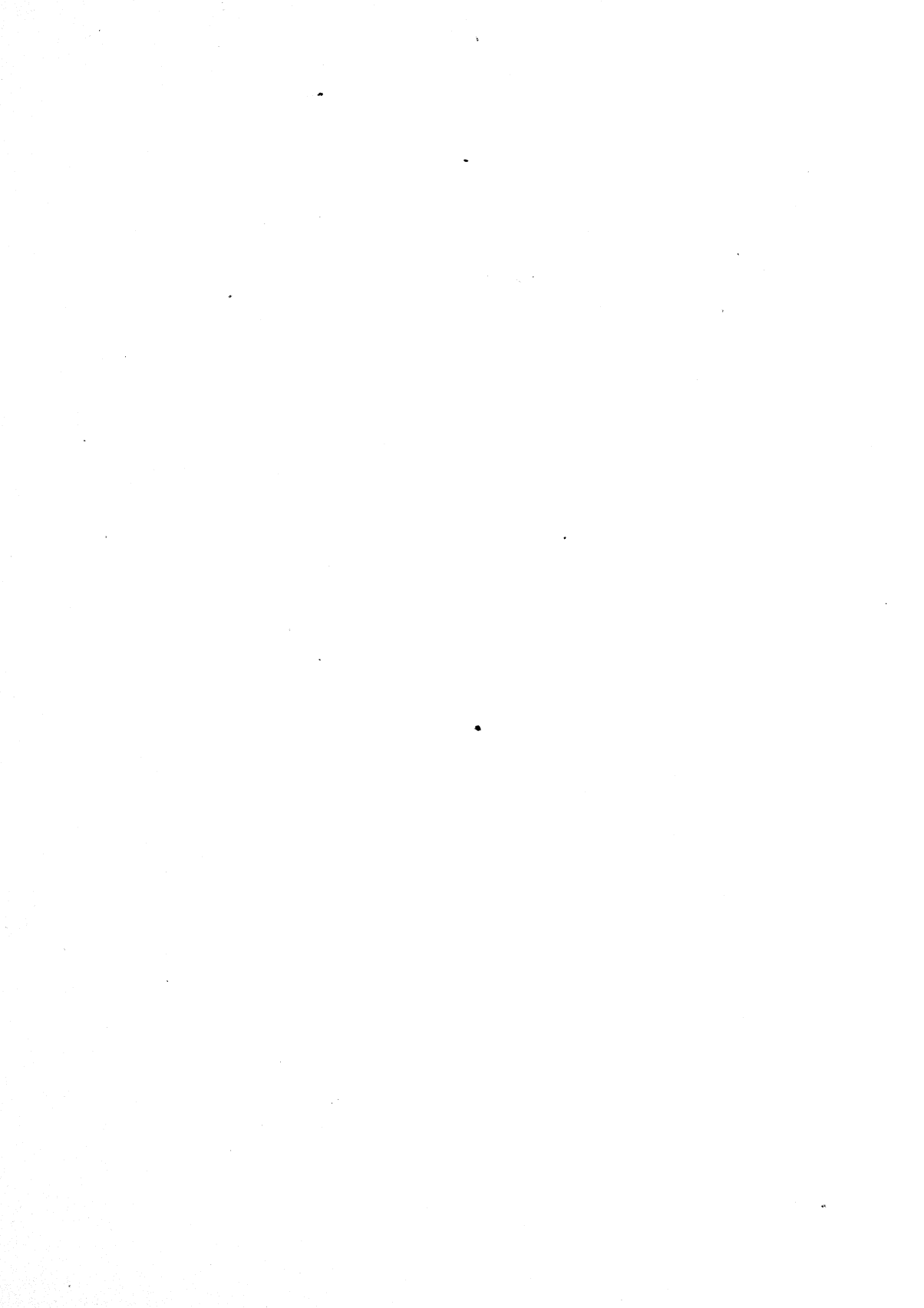












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