

THE GREAT SEAL OF THE STATE OF OKLAHOMA

Many seals were combined in making the Great Seal of the State of Oklahoma. Its story told here in *The Chronicles* in this Semi-centennial year of Statehood, 1957, covers one hundred years of Oklahoma history.

The Constitution of this State adopted by a vote of the people of Oklahoma and Indian territories on September 17, 1907, Article VI, Executive Department, provides:¹

SEAL OF THE STATE

Sec. 35. In the center shall be a five-pointed star, with one ray directed upward. The center of the star shall contain the central device of the seal of the Territory of Oklahoma, including the words, "Labor Omnia Vincit". The upper left hand ray shall contain the symbol of the ancient seal of the Cherokee Nation, namely: A seven-pointed star partially surrounded by a wreath of oak leaves. The ray directed upward shall contain the symbol of the ancient seal of the Chickasaw Nation, namely: An Indian warrior standing upright with bow and shield. The lower lefthand ray shall contain the symbol of the ancient seal of the Creek Nation, namely a sheaf of wheat and a plow. The upper right hand ray shall contain the symbol of the ancient seal of the Choctaw Nation, namely: A tomahawk, bow, and three crossed arrows. The right hand ray shall contain the symbol of the ancient seal of the Seminole Nation, namely: A village with houses and a factory beside a lake upon which an Indian is paddling a canoe. Surrounding the central star and grouped between its rays, shall be forty-five small stars, divided into five clusters of nine stars each, representing the forty-five states of the Union, to which the forty-sixth is now added. In a circular band surrounding the whole device shall be inscribed: "GREAT SEAL OF THE STATE OF OKLAHOMA, 1907."

¹ The first draft of the Great Seal of the State of Oklahoma was made by Japp E. Peddicord, a reporter for *The Daily Oklahoman*, the original pencil sketch of which is on exhibit in the Museum of the Oklahoma Historical Society.

During the fifty years since statehood, there have been many reproductions of the Great Seal of the State made for illustrative purposes, most of these showing errors in the designs from the different seals that make up the Oklahoma Seal, simply because the draughtsmen or artists failed to check the originals and the laws creating them. For instance; the Indian Warrior taken from the Chickasaw Indian seal, standing in the upper ray, has been shown with the shield in his left hand; the design from the Choctaw Indian seal has sometimes been shown with four arrows instead of three across the pipe, in the upper right hand ray. The reproduction on the front cover of this number of *The Chronicles* is one time, if not the first time, that the different seals are shown in detail correctly, actual photographs of the original drafts or paintings of each of the seals as described by law, having been made and incorporated in this reproduction.

The Grand Seal of the Territory of Oklahoma was provided by the Territorial Legislative Assembly in its second session that convened at Guthrie in January, 1893, by an Act effective March 10, 1893, quoted here:²

(5991) Sec. 1. The permanent official Grand Seal of the Territory of Oklahoma shall be as follows: Under the motto "Labor Omnia Vincit" shall be Columbia as the central figure representing Justice and Statehood. On her right is the American pioneer farmer; on her left is the aboriginal American Indian. These two representatives of the white and red races are shaking hands beneath the scales of Justice, symbolizing equal justice between the white and red races of Oklahoma, and the Federal Government. Beneath the trio group is the cornucopia of plenty and the olive branch of peace, and behind is the sun of progress and civilization—farmer plowing, rural home, railroad train, compress, mills, elevator, manufacturies, churches, schools, capitol and city. The two scenes are symbolic of the peaceful conquests of the Anglo-Saxon and the decadence of the red race. Under all shall be the words, "Grand Seal Territory of Oklahoma."

The design for the Great Seal of the State was suggested by the one that had been designed as an official seal for the proposed State of Sequoyah to be formed of the Indian Territory, the eastern part of what is now Oklahoma. Although the proposed state never materialized, the steps taken for its organization were an event in the history of Oklahoma's formation.³ Delegates to a convention called to frame a constitution for the proposed state convened at Muskogee in July, 1905. This is known as the Sequoyah Convention because the new state was to be named Sequoyah, honoring the famous Cherokee, Sequoyah, who invented the Cherokee alphabet used in writing the native language by 1822.

During the session of the Sequoyah Constitutional Convention at Muskogee, in 1905, the Reverend A. Grant Evans, who was then President of Henry Kendall College, was asked to suggest a design for a seal for the proposed State of Sequoyah. He designed and had drawn a five-pointed star, in the angles of which were placed the official seals of the governments of the Five Civilized Tribes, then known as the

² A brief history of this Act is given in "Grand Seal of the Territory of Oklahoma," *The Chronicles of Oklahoma*, Vol. XXXV, No. 2 (Summer, 1957), pp. 126, the front cover of which shows a reproduction of the Territorial Seal in colors.

³ Amos Maxwell, "The Sequoyah Convention," *The Chronicles of Oklahoma*, Vol. XXVIII, Nos. 2 (Summer, 1950) and 3 (Autumn, 1950).

Indian nations in the Indian Territory—Cherokee, Chickasaw, Choctaw, Creek and Seminole.⁴ Above the star in Dr. Evans' design and between the upper points was a half-length figure of Sequoyah, holding a tablet upon which were the words, "We are Brothers," in the Cherokee letters. In the other spaces between the points of the star were placed forty-five small stars, emblematic of the constellation to which a forty-sixth star was to be added.

Early in the session of the Oklahoma Constitutional Convention meeting at Guthrie from November 20, 1906 to April 19, 1907, members of the Committee named to design a great seal for the new state included Gabe E. Parker, a Choctaw Indian, graduate of Spencer Academy (an old Choctaw school for boys, established in 1841) and of Henry Kendall College.⁵ Mr. Parker wrote to Doctor Evans for suggestions. Dr. Evans replied calling attention to the design that had been made for the proposed State of Sequoyah and suggesting that the design might be appropriate in adopting a seal for the new state. His suggestion was followed in designing a great seal that combined that of the proposed state of Sequoyah with the Seal of the Territory of Oklahoma. The position of the large central star was changed so that one point stood vertically upward instead of one pointing vertically downward as it was in the Sequoyah Seal. The five seals of the Indian nations were placed in the angles of the large star as before, with the Seal of the Territory of Oklahoma in the center. This design admitted symmetrical

⁴ The official seals of all the Five Civilized Tribes have appeared on the front cover of *The Chronicles* in colors, beginning with the Winter (1955-56) number—Choctaw Seal (Vol. XXXIII, No. 4) through Winter (1956-57)—Chickasaw Seal (Vol. XXXIV, No. 4). For a history and description of the seals of the Indian nations see, Muriel H. Wright, "Official Seals of the Five Civilized Tribes," *The Chronicles of Oklahoma*, Vol. XVIII, No. 4 (December, 1940).

⁵ References that give an account of the creation of the Great Seal of Oklahoma and other events since statehood include: Joseph B. Thoburn and Muriel H. Wright, *Oklahoma: A History of the State and Its People*. (New York, 1929), 4 volumes; E. E. Dale and Morris L. Wardell, *History of Oklahoma* (New York, 1948); Grant Foreman, *A History of Oklahoma* (Norman, 1952); Edwin McReynolds, *Oklahoma: A History of the Sooner State* (Norman, 1954); Muriel H. Wright, *The Oklahoma History* (Guthrie, 1955); Gaston Litton, *History of Oklahoma* (New York, 1957), at the Golden Anniversary of Statehood, 4 volumes.

arrangement of the forty-five stars representing the Union, in five groups in the spaces between the points, with nine stars in each group.⁶ In the surrounding circle were placed the words, "Great Seal of the State of Oklahoma," and the date of Statehood, "1907."

Oklahoma was admitted to the Union as the Forty-sixth State on November 16, 1907. On the morning of that day, President Theodore Roosevelt at the White House in Washington, D.C., was handed an eagle quill pen, and signed his name with heavy strokes to the Proclamation that declared Oklahoma a State. During the half century since that time, its official papers have borne the impress of the Great Seal of the State of Oklahoma.

—*The Editor*

⁶ The Great Seal of Oklahoma reproduced on the front cover of this number of *The Chronicles* is shown in colors selected in the Editorial Department. These colors follow those given in the reproduction of the Oklahoma Seal in "Seals of Our Nation, States and Territories," *The National Geographic Magazine*, Vol. XC, No. 1 (July, 1946), the colors red and blue used there having been suggested by the Editor of *The Chronicles* (MHW) upon request of *The National Geographic*. The Oklahoma Legislature has never adopted special colors by law, to use in reproducing the Great Seal of the State for illustrative purposes. The red and blue used in a painting of the Great Seal made for public school activities at Dustin, Oklahoma, 1943, by the Editor, were suggested to *The National Geographic* in 1946.