

# WILLIAM <sup>and</sup> MARY COLLEGE

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### THE SEAL OF VIRGINIA.

BY THE EDITOR.

As the changes in the seal of Virginia have never been fully traced, the following paper should be of interest:

Under the double-headed charter of April 6, 1606, granted by King James to Sir Thomas Gates and others, two colonies were provided for—the first to be begun at any place on the North American coast between 34 and 41 degrees north latitude, and to be called the “First Colony;” and the second to be begun at any place on the same coast between 38 and 45 degrees, and to be called the “Second Colony.” There was to be one supreme council in England for both, consisting of thirteen persons, to be called “Our Council of Virginia,” and to have a seal with the inscription about one side *Sigillum Regis Magnæ, Britannicæ, Francicæ and Hibernicæ*, enclosing the king’s portraiture; and about the other side the words *Pro Concilio Suo Virginicæ*, enclosing the king’s arms. Cuts of this seal may be seen in Neill’s *Virginia Vetusta*, Brown’s *Genesis of the United States*, Vol. I., p. 57, and *Narrative and Critical History of America*, Vol. IV., p. 140.

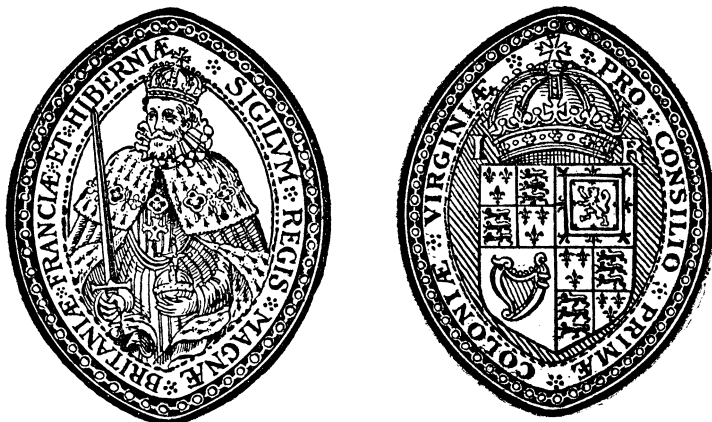
In addition to the Supreme Council in England, each colony was to have a local council, with seals exactly similar to the seal of the Supreme Council, except that the legend “*Pro concilio suo Virginicæ*,” was substituted, in the case of the first colony (at Jamestown), by the words “*Pro Concilio Primæ Colonice Virginicæ*,” and in the case of the second, by the words “*Pro Concilio Secundæ Colonice Virginicæ*.” The seal of the local council was the seal of the colony, as the council had the power to govern and order all matters, subject to the Supreme Council or the King. It appears that, despite the abolition of the charter in 1624, the seal

of the old council still continued to be the emblem of State in the colony till the surrender of Virginia, in 1652, to the commissioners of the Parliament. Several instances of the use of this venerable device have passed under my notice. The oldest instances occur in the case of two original patents in my possession, badly mutilated, granted by Sir John Harvey, Governor from 1629 to 1635, and from 1636 to 1639. One is a grant to Thomas Hawkins, "son of Thomas Hawkins, of Virginia, deceased," dated August 14, 1639, and bearing an assignment to Henry Heyward, witnessed by Samuel Snignell and Richard Nickson. The other is a grant, date torn off, to James Miller, of one hundred acres, "upon the great Otter dams, at the head of the New Poquoson, in York county, fifty acres due for his own personal adventure, and fifty acres for the adventure of his wife, Mary." On the back of the patent is an assignment of Robert Newman (mark) to Christopher Stoakes, dated January 1, 1640, witnessed by Humphrey Hanmer and John Watson (his mark); an assignment of Thomas Goddard (mark) to Christopher Stoakes, witnessed by Edward Mihill, and dated December 14, 1640; and an assignment, dated October 3, 1642, by Edward Mihill to John Howard. (The early spelling of Howard was Heyward, Hayward, Haward.)

The writing of the patents is very fine, but of wonderful art and beauty. The papers, which are double sheets, have red wax between the leaves in the right hand corner, and on the outside of each sheet appear, respectively, the obverse and reverse impressions of the seal as described in the charter. It is oval, and in size about two and a half inches by two inches. The example seen by Mr. R. A. Brock in the collections of the Virginia Historical Society, dated March 4, 1638, is undoubtedly the same impression, the slightly differing legend being accounted for by the wearing away of several letters.<sup>1</sup> I have seen in the same place a patent granted by Sir William Berkeley to Richard Kempe for 4,332 acres in James City county, called "Richneck," dated April 7, 1643, which certainly bears the same seal. In each of these instances the initial letters flanking the crown on the obverse are those of King James, "I." "R." The cut here presented was made at my suggestion by Bailey, Banks & Biddle, of Philadelphia, to whom I furnished a short account of the Virginia seal, and it is the first representation of the first seal of Virginia.

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<sup>1</sup> See Mr. R. A. Brock's instructive note on the seal of Virginia, *Virginia Historical Collections*, Vol. VII., Part I., p. 152.



SEAL OF VIRGINIA 1606-1652 (OBVERSE AND REVERSE.)

The king's arms, which appear on the seal, are the arms common to the Stuart kings: Quarterly 1st and 4th, France and England, quarterly (three fleurs-de-lis for France, and three lions passant, guardant for England): 2d, or, a lion rampant, within a double tressure flory counterflory gu, for Scotland; 3rd, az. a harp, or, stringed, az., for Ireland. The arms of France first appeared on the royal shield in the time of Edward III., who assumed the title of king of France in supposed right of his mother, Isabel, daughter of Philip IV., who became that monarch's sole heiress, his three sons having died issueless.<sup>1</sup>

After the surrender of Virginia to the Parliament, 12th March, 1651-'52, the old seal, with its royal devices, was abandoned. Hitherto the patents for land were said by the governor to be "given under my hand and the seal of the colony," but under the Commonwealth the concluding words were "given under my hand," and the instrument was also attested by the Secretary of State, Col. William Clayborne or Thomas Ludwell. In March, 1655, the Grand Assembly, consisting of the Governor, Council and Burgesses, pardoned "Leift.-Coll. Thos. Swann, accused and impeached for the death of his servant, one Elizabeth Buck," the ordinary course by petition to the chancellor being impossible, as "this collony is not as yet settled with such officers as belong to passing such pardon, and noe publick seale being in the countrey."

The record of two patents in York county granted after the restoration of Charles II., the one dated 16th October, 1660, and the other 26th March, 1660-'61, shows that the custom of the Common-

<sup>1</sup> See Burke's *General Armory* for an account of royal armory. Hening Stats. i., 406.

wealth was kept up for some time after it had succumbed. However, it was only until time could be had for devising a new emblem.<sup>1</sup> There is a patent among the Ludwell MSS. in the Virginia Historical Society, dated 27th October, 1663, to which is attached a white wafer on which can be detected the impression of a shield surrounded in part by the words "Honi soit qui mal y pense," the whole surmounted by a crown, flanked by the letters "C." "R." All else is obliterated. Another patent by Sir William Berkeley for 345 acres to Thomas Bushrod in Westmoreland county., dated July 2, 1669, and hanging framed in the State Library, displays the Stuart arms and the words in the exergon *En dat Virginia Quintum*. I have personally two fine specimens of this seal, the one on a white wafer attached to a patent given by Gov. Herbert Jeffreys to Mr. Henry Heyward for 216 acres in the New Poquoson Parish, York county, on the southside of Cheesman's mill, dated 28th September, 1678; and the other authenticating a grant by Lord Effingham to Dr. John Toton for 100 acres in York county, dated February 1, 1686.<sup>2</sup>

Mrs. Charles M. Wallace, of Richmond, Va., has an old land grant, dated 1674, which has a perfect specimen of this seal. Another example of this year, though somewhat mutilated, is in the collections of the Historical Society; and Dr. William P. Palmer has described<sup>2</sup> one in the State archives attached to a document dated September 1, 1686.<sup>3</sup>



SEAL OF VIRGINIA AFTER THE RESTORATION OF CHARLES II.

William Lee says<sup>4</sup> that his ancestor, Richard Lee, visited Charles II. at Breda to know if he would undertake to protect the colony if they returned to their allegiance to him, but finding no support could be obtained, he returned to Virginia, and remained quiet until the death of Cromwell, when he, with the assistance of Sir William Berkeley, contrived to get Charles II. proclaimed there King of England, Scotland, France, Ireland, and Virginia two years before he

<sup>1</sup> A patent issued by Francis Moryson, who officiated as governor in the absence of Berkeley, reads, "given under my hand and seal of the colony." It is dated 13th January, 1661-'62. <sup>2</sup> Calendar of State Papers, vol. I., xxv.

<sup>3</sup> These impressions are, as stated, on wafers in the right hand corner of the first page of the documents. <sup>4</sup> Meade's "Old Churches," etc., II., 137.

was restored in England, and Sir William Berkeley was reinstated as his Governor; and that in consequence of this step the motto of the Virginia arms always till after the union was *En dat Virginia quintum*; but since the Union it was changed to *En dat Virginia quartam*—that is, King of Great Britain, France, Ireland, and Virginia. The true history seems to be that the Virginians, including Lee, were loyal till the surrender, in 1652, when they all became good Commonwealth men. Lee, who, in 1655, is specially represented as friendly to the Parliament in a contemporary document, may have, like the rest, wanted the King restored in latter years, and the restoration of Berkeley to the governorship is a good indication of the general sentiment. But Berkeley took office subject to the will of the people of Virginia, and, as a matter of fact, he did not proclaim Charles as King till September 20, 1660, several months after it had been done at London. I believe I was the first to discover his proclamation in the York records.<sup>1</sup> It is very probable, however, that the motto *En dat Virginia quintum*, though not new, was incorporated in the new seal, in part as a recognition of Virginia's qualified loyalty.<sup>2</sup>

The first connection of the sentiment with Virginia was an early one. Spencer dedicated his "Fairy Queen" to Elizabeth, "Queen of England, France, Ireland, and Virginia." In the inscription accompanying an admirably engraved portrait of the "Virgin Queen," by *Henricus Hondius Hague Consil; Cum privilegio Illust. D. D. Ord. Generalium*, 1632, belonging to the Virginia Historical Society, she is entitled, *Serenissima ac Potentissima Princeps Elizabet D. G. Angliæ, Franciæ, Hiberniæ et Virginie Regina Fidei Christianæ Propugnatrix Acerrima*. After James of Scotland succeeded to the throne, Virginia could be, in compliment, called a fifth kingdom.—(*Quintum regnum*.)

In 1619 the London company, which had hitherto had no seal, adopted a "cote," which has been often confounded with the proper seal of the colony itself. As it appears in *Smith's History*, editions of 1624 and 1632, the escutcheon is quartered with the arms of the Stuarts, crested by a maiden queen with flowing hair and eastern crown, having as supporters two men in armor, beavers open, helmets ornamented with three ostrich feathers, each holding a lance; and in the exergon the words *En dat Virginia quintum*.

<sup>1</sup> *Richmond Times*, 1891; *Quarterly*, Vol. I.

<sup>2</sup> Francis Page, a leading magistrate of York county, Va., issued several warrants in 1688, in which the King is named as King of England, Scotland, France, Ireland, and Virginia.—*York Co. Records*.

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*Temporall Government.***Merchants of Virginia.**

**T**He Company of Merchants, called *Merchants of Virginia*, *Bermudas*, or *Summer-Lands*, for (as I heare) all these additions are given them. I know not the time of their incorporating, neither by whom their Armes, Supporters, and Crest were granted, and therefore am compelled to leaue them abruptly.

**THE**

A PAGE FROM STOW'S "SURVEY OF LONDON," 1633. SHOWING THE ARMS OF THE LONDON COMPANY.

NOTE.—"Summer-Lands" in the engraving should be "Summer-Ilands"—a mistake of the engraver.

In the edition of Stow's *Survey of London*, published in 1633, the coat-of-arms appears with the motto *En dat Virginia quintam*, which is evidently a mere error of the engraver, although "quintam" is correct as qualifying "coronam." The editor of the *Survey* appears not to have investigated the subject, as he writes: "The company of merchants, called Merchants of Virginia, Bermuda or Summer-Ilands (for, as I heare, all these additions are given them). I know not the time of their incorporating, neither by whom their arms, supporters and crest were granted."

This seal of the old London Company appears as the frontispiece of all the printed acts and official proceedings of the colonial government, of Beverley's *History of Virginia*, and the several Virginia Gazettes, the only difference being the substitution in proper years of the arms of the Georges for the Stuarts, and, after the union of England and Scotland, in 1707, of *quartam* for *quintum* in the motto.



THE ARMS OF THE LONDON COMPANY, AS  
HEAD-PIECE OF THE "VIRGINIA GA-  
ZETTE," 1775.

But the seal of the colony itself, as affixed to the official papers, was distinct from this sentimental use of the seal of the old defunct London Company. After the adoption of the new seal, already described, no change ensued until the time of William III., and the change then was not radical.<sup>2</sup> In 1701 a colonial seal is found upon a warrant issued by Governor Francis Nicholson. The impression is the same, except that the characters "W." "R." take the place of "C." "R.,"

flanking the crown; and upon the centre of the Stuart arms there

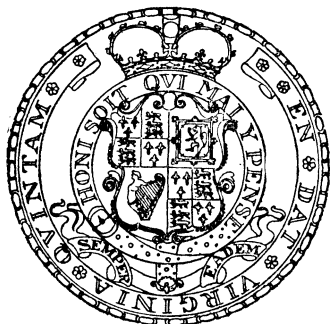
<sup>1</sup> Dixon & Hunter's Gazette. The Gazette for the year 1775, by Alexander Purdie, has the Stuart arms.

<sup>2</sup> In the Richmond *Dispatch* of 15th October, 1882, appeared a communication from Mr. R. A. Brock, including one from him to Charles Deane, LL. D., Cambridge, Mass., giving a proclamation from James II., dated 21st December, 1687, appointing a new seal for Virginia, as follows: "Engraven with our Royal Effigies, sitting in our Royal Robes enthroned, having on each side a Landskip, and upon the Canopy, which is supported by two Angels and a Cherubim overhead, this motto: *In [En] dat Virginia Quintum*, with our Royal Title in the circumference, and on the other side our Royal Coat-of-arms, with the Garter, Crown, Supporters and Motto, with this inscription in the circumference: *Sigillum Domini Nostr: Virgin. America.*" This seal, which

is an escutcheon of pretence, bearing the arms of Nassau.<sup>1</sup> The motto, *En dat Virginia Quintum*, appears in the circumference as before.

Shortly after the accession of Queen Anne, who ascended the throne in the year 1702, a decided change took place in the seal. From an elliptical form it assumed a circular. In the exergon the word "quintum" gives place to "quintam," and below the shield, with the royal arms and garter, is a scroll with Queen Anne's motto, *Semper Eadem*. The royal initials flanking the crown are wanting. This seal,<sup>2</sup> which is also on wafer, without a reverse, continued to be used for several years. I have an original grant

by Alexander Spotswood, 19th December, 1711, for 100 acres in York county, confirming a deed of March 5, 1666-'67, from Samuel Snignell ("who intermarried with the heiress of Capt. William Hay") and an order of the General Court of the 16th April, 1707. It bears a remarkably clear impression of the seal of State in the form last mentioned.



SEAL OF VIRGINIA FROM 1702 TO 1714.

In 1714 it appears from Spotswood's *Letters* that a warrant had issued some time before for a new seal, and the old was now broken in council. This new seal seems to have been authorized by Queen Anne, by proclamation dated October 6, 1712,<sup>3</sup> which document is published, with engraving of the accompanying original waxen seal, in the *American Historical Record*, B. J. Lossing, LL. D., editor, Vol. V., No. 4, April, 1872, pp. 160-162, and is thus described: "Engraved on

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was brought by the first Col. William Byrd from England, where he went on a visit, to Virginia, it appears was never used. It resembled the great seal of Queen Anne, hereafter described. Its use was doubtless prevented by the Revolution which shortly after drove James II. from the throne. See Richmond *Dispatch* of October 20, 1882; *New England Historical and Gen. Register*, Vol. XXXVII., p. 86; Ancient Records.

<sup>1</sup> When a man marries an heiress, he bears her shield in the centre of his own, as an escutcheon of pretence. But William placed his shield, as Prince of Orange, on the centre of his wife's, the daughter of James II.

<sup>2</sup> It appears on a document dated October 22, 1705.—*Calendar of State Papers*, vol. I., xxvii.

<sup>3</sup> Spotswood, in his letter of July 21, 1714, says that "it had come to hand but the beginning of last month."



the one side with our effigy and an Indian on his knee presenting tobacco to us, this inscription ‘*En dat Virginia quartam,*’ being under the effigy, and around the circumference, ‘*Virginia in America Sigillum Provinciae.*’ On the other side of the said seal is engraven our arms,<sup>1</sup> garter, crown, supporters, and motto, with this inscription around the circumference, ‘*Anne Dei Gratia Magnæ Britannicæ, Franciæ et Hiberniæ Regina Fidei Defensor,*’ for use to affix the said seal to all patents and grants of land, and to all public acts and instruments of government which shall be passed and made in our name within our said colony.”

Spotswood at once found fault with this device. Parchment was seldom used in the colony, and the seal was so heavy that it ran the danger of tearing off from the paper, in short order. Then, many papers needed authentication, for which the fees appointed by law scarcely exceeded the value of the wax. He proposed “a lesser seal,” or “signet,” to be used for matters of small consequence.<sup>2</sup>

In their letter of the 11th of October, 1717, the Lords of Trade enclosed to Spotswood the warrant for a new seal, “and the old was broke in council.”<sup>3</sup> But a land grant issued shortly after, in 1719, hanging in the Virginia Historical Society, has a small white wax crown pendent from the paper by a piece of tape or ribbon.

From this time, the distinction between the great and the crown-shaped seal was maintained.<sup>4</sup> Other and later instances of the crown-



THE SEAL OF VIRGINIA (QUEEN ANNE),  
1714 (OBVERSE).

<sup>1</sup> Queen Anne, on her accession, bore the same arms as William III., without the escutcheon of pretence for Nassau, viz., first and fourth, France and England quarterly; second, Scotland; third, Ireland; but after the union with Scotland, in 1707, her Majesty bore first and fourth England, impaling Scotland; second, France; third, Ireland.

<sup>2</sup> Spotswood's *Letters*, II., 71, 131, 163.     <sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 261. Council Journal MSS.

<sup>4</sup> In August, 1734, the Legislature authorized the Governor to issue one commission or more, under the “great seal” of the colony, “to twelve persons,” to take depositions, to set up the records of Nansemond county, destroyed by fire at the house of the clerk, Christopher Jackson.—*Hening's Stats.* The term “broad seal,” which I find used in the Acts (see Act of Naturalization, in 1705). appears to have been only an emphatic reference to the seal of State, without further significance.

shaped seal, attached to land grants, are in the State Library and the Virginia Historical Society. Mr. Brock says he has met with many instances of the crown-shaped seal and the great seal. Of the latter there is an excellent example in the Virginia Historical Society's show-case, belonging to the reign of George III. It is of wax, papered, and measures five inches in diameter and one-fourth of an inch in thickness. It is here represented.



GREAT SEAL OF VIRGINIA. REIGN OF GEORGE III.

The engraving is very similar to Queen Anne's, except that the Indian kneels to a king instead of to a queen in the obverse, and the arms<sup>1</sup> of George III., which were also those of George I. and George II., are substituted for those of Queen Anne in the reverse. I have also in my possession a specimen of the great seal of the Island of Barbadoes, during the reign of George III., which is very similar; and Mr. Brock, who has also examples, says that the use of the great seal appears to have been common to all the colonies from the time of Queen Anne.

The Revolution was, in Virginia,<sup>2</sup> a revolution not only in govern-

<sup>1</sup> The arms of George III. were: quarterly, 1st, England impaling Scotland; 2nd, France; 3rd, Ireland; 4th, gu. two lions pass. guard. in pale or, for Brunswick; impaling or, semée of hearts gu. a lion ramp. az. for Lunenburg; on a point in point gu. a horse courant az., for Saxony; on the centre of the fourth quarter an escutcheon gu. charged with the crown of Charlemagne, as the Arch Treasurer of the Holy Roman Empire. — *Burke*.

<sup>2</sup> The independent life of the Virginians—of even the poorest—made every one equal. It can be demonstrated that the Republicanism of Virginia, even in early Colonial days, was perhaps greater than that prevailing in any other colony. Aristocracy was a mere skim. It is only in this way that one can explain the absence of Tories, and why Virginia became the seat of the Jeffersonian Republican party. After the Revolution, most of the other colonies still clung to the old ways of thought, and even the seal of the United States was established on old heraldic principles. See "Seal of United States," by Gaillard Hunt, 1892.

ment, but in church, education, and<sup>1</sup> sentiment generally. Monarchy in every guise became odious. The Roman Republic presented at that time the highest exemplars of virtue and heroism known to history, and Virginia, who had fewer Tories in her borders than any other of the thirteen States, modelled herself upon the mistress of the classic world. Heraldry, the history of pedigrees, fell into utter disrepute, and individual merit was the solitary test. The adoption of a seal for the Commonwealth was the last act of the Convention of 1776. The committee appointed to prepare a seal consisted of Richard Henry Lee, who was, however, not in the Convention, George Mason, Robert Carter Nicholas, and George Wythe. In Girardin's continuation of Burk's "*History of Virginia*," it is said that Wythe proposed the device adopted by the Convention; and, as Girardin wrote under the supervision of Mr. Jefferson, who was keenly alive to all such matters, there can be no reason to doubt the fact. George Wythe and John Page were appointed to superintend the engraving of the seal. In the absence of Lee, Mason, as next on the committee, had reported the seal to the Convention, but Wythe was entrusted with its execution, and must have penned the words that describe the seal, which have been admired for clearness and precision.<sup>1</sup> "Virtus, the genius of the Commonwealth, dressed like an *Amazon*, resting on a spear with one hand, and holding a sword in the other, and treading on Tyranny, represented by a man prostrate, a crown fallen from his head, a broken chain in his left hand, and a scourge in his right. In the exergon the word VIRGINIA over the head of Virtus, and underneath, the words *Sic Semper Tyrannis*. On the reverse a group, LIBERTAS, with her wand and *pileus*, on one side of her CERES, with the cornucopia in one hand, and an ear of wheat in the other. On the other side ÆTERNITAS, with the globe and phoenix. In the exergon these words: *Deus Nobis Haec Otia Fecit*."

In October, 1776, the General Assembly authorized the Governor, with advice of council, to issue commissions, under his signature, until the seal of the Commonwealth should be provided.<sup>2</sup>

On April 9, 1778, William Lee was appointed<sup>3</sup> Virginia's agent in France to borrow 2,000,000 livres, and a seal hastily prepared, according to the resolutions of the Convention of 1776, was used

<sup>1</sup> Journal of Convention, 1776. Rowland's "George Mason," Vol. I., pp. 264, 266.

<sup>2</sup> Hening's Stats., Vol. IX., p. 211. <sup>3</sup> Council Journal, MS.

to authenticate his credentials. In October, 1779, the General Assembly named this inartistic seal "the lesser seal" of the Commonwealth, to be affixed to all grants for land, and to all commissions, civil and military.<sup>1</sup> At the same time they authorized the Governor, with advice of council, "to provide, at the public charge, a great seal for the Commonwealth, and to procure the same to be engraved, either in America or Europe, with the same device as was directed by resolution of convention in the year one thousand seven hundred and seventy-six"; save only that the motto on the reverse be changed to the word *Perseverando*. The great seal thus authorized was prepared with the highest artistic skill in Paris, under the supervision of William and Dr. Arthur Lee, and was delivered to Dr. Lee on or before September 4, 1779.<sup>2</sup>

According to the preamble of the act approved March 27, 1873, both the original dies of the great and lesser seals were in existence down to the evacuation of Richmond in 1865,<sup>3</sup> but were then "stolen or mislaid." Governor Pierpont, in 1866, caused a new seal to be engraved, similar in every respect to the old, except that it contained the words, "Liberty and Union," which said words were added to the seal without any authority of law. In 1866 an old seal<sup>4</sup> was returned to the custody of the Secretary of

<sup>1</sup> Hening's Stats., Vol. X. The figure of Virtus, which, according to classic thought, is significant of majesty in repose, is curiously distorted in the impressions I have seen of this seal. Her head is bent downward, her arm half-way extended, and her right hand grasps the sword as if about to strike the tyrant writhing below.

<sup>2</sup> Sherwin McRae's Report. In the "Letters of William Lee," by Worthington C. Ford, William Lee writes to his brother, Dr. Arthur Lee, that he had consulted in Frankfort about the seal Mr. Sauvage, orfèvre à l'ainean blanc, quai des orfèvres, pont neuf.

<sup>3</sup> Col. Sherwin McRae states, however, that George Wythe Munford, so long and so favorably known as Secretary of the Commonwealth, testified that the original great seal was in use until the year 1856, when, being worn out, it was substituted by a new seal, exactly similar. But I have found no act of the Legislature making a new seal at this time.

<sup>4</sup> The following letter, which enclosed an impression in wax of the lesser seal of the Commonwealth, shows that the seal returned in 1866 was the old great seal:

"1720 CONNECTICUT AVENUE,

"WASHINGTON, VA., February 26, 1892.

"His Excellency the Governor of Virginia.

"DEAR SIR: At the time of occupation of the United States Army of Richmond, Va., I had the honor to be an aid on the staff of Major-General Godfrey Weitzel, and, serving as such, became possessed of the seal of your State,

the Commonwealth, as keeper of the seals, and the Legislature having in a subsequent act enacted that "the great seal and lesser seal shall continue to be the seals of the Commonwealth," some doubt arose as to which seal that body intended to legalize. The act of March 27, 1873, directed the Governor to have new seals to be prepared, and defined their size and use. Governor James L. Kemper obeyed the order, but the new seals proved to be incorrect and unsatisfactory, and therefore were never used. Governor William E. Cameron requested Col. Sherwin McRae, the State Librarian, to superintend the construction of new seals, and at length, in 1884, he reported that the metallic dies, obverse and reverse, had arrived; and in a long and somewhat confused statement, he explained the history of the seals from the time of the Convention of 1776 down. He explained that the greatest care had been taken to conform the various figures on the reverse and obverse to the most exact classic standard.<sup>1</sup>

By the law of 1873 the great and lesser seals have the same devices and inscriptions. The one is two and three-quarter inches in diameter, having an ornamental border one-quarter of an inch wide. The other is one and nine-sixteenth inches in diameter. The great seal is affixed to documents to be used before tribunals or for purposes outside the jurisdiction of the State.

which I desire to turn over to you at such time and manner as you may see fit. Although originally in my hands, it has only lately been in my power to place it at the disposal of your State.

"I have the honor to be your obedient servant,

(Signed)

"JOHNSTON L. DE PEYSTER."

[*A slip enclosed with an impression on wax :*]

*Impression of  
Lesser Seal.*

[This is the first impression and the only one made since 1865.]

"This is an impression of the seal I took from the room of the Governor of Virginia the week of April 4th, 1865.

(Signed)

"JOHNSTON L. DE PEYSTER,  
"Brevet Lieut.-Col. U. S. Vols.,  
"Aid to Maj.-Gen. Weitzel."

"The above is a correct copy of the letter (and enclosure) now in the Governor's Office, written to the Governor of Virginia, of February 26, 1892, by Johnston L. de Peyster.

"S. BRANCH MCKINNEY, JR.,

"Acting Secretary to Governor O'Ferrall."

The Governor (P. W. McKinney) replied, expressing his pleasure to have the seal, but the seal has not been received.

<sup>1</sup> Report of Col. Sherwin McRae on State seal, House Journal, 1883-84. Doc. No. 11.

The lesser seal is affixed to all grants for land, and writs of election issued by the governor; to all letters of pardon and reprieve; to all commissions, civil and military, signed by the governor; and to all other papers requiring seal, authorized to be issued by the governor for the purpose of carrying the laws into effect within this Commonwealth; and also, when deemed necessary by the Secretary of the Commonwealth, may be used by him as an authentication of his official signature.

The large pendent wax seal has seldom been used in the Commonwealth since the Revolution, but the impression is made upon a red wax wafer attached by mucilage to the document.



SEAL OF THE COMMONWEALTH, 1776-1894.

It is claimed by Col. Sherwin McRae that no other American State has a seal equal to that of Virginia in classic beauty and appropriateness. "The seal of a State," he observes, "is not a bauble, but an important and necessary element of government; indeed, the Convention of 1776 was so impressed with this truth that the seal was made a specific constitutional provision."

The following entries are from official sources:

February 15, 1684.—King James 2d signifies his accession to the throne, and orders the old seal to be used until further orders. *Ancient Records, Virginia Historical Society.*

April 25, 1684.—The Council desires the King to accept of the Lives and fortunes of his Subjects here, for the inestimable Honour of a Glorious Seal sent hither. *Ibid.*

February 27, 1688.—They order the Old Seal, which was Small, to be used until Parchment and wax can be provided for the new one. *Ibid.*

King William, by his letter dated 21 February, 1688, commands the old seal to be made use of till he should order another. *Ibid.*

June 16, 1714.—Her Majesty having sent in a new seal for the colony, together with her Royal warrant for using the same, the former seal was, pursuant to her Majesties order, broke in council. *Council Journal, Va., MSS.*

October 8, 1717. — The King's warrant to Alexander Spotswood, his Maj. Lieut. Gov. of Virginia, authorizing him to affix the (new) seal to all Patents and Grants of Land, and all public Acts and Instruments of Government made and passed in his Maj. name, which seal is engraven on the one side with our Royal Effigies and an Indian on his knees presenting tobacco unto us, this inscription being under our said effigies, *En dat Virginia quartam*, and this other inscription round the circumference, *Sigillum Provinciæ de Virginia in America*; on the other side of said seal Our arms, garter, Crown, supporters and Motto, with our titles round the circumference. — *Sainsbury MSS.*

January 9, 1717. — His Majesty having been pleased to send in a new seal for this Colony, together with a warrant for the Governor's using the same, the said warrant is ordered to be entered in the Council office, and pursuant to his Majesties command the old seal was this day broke in Council. — *Council Journal Va. MSS.*

August 26, 1729. Whitehall. Journal of the Board of Trade and Plant<sup>s</sup>. An order of Council of 18th inst. was read, requiring this Board to prepare Draughts of Warrants to be sent with the new seals for Barbadoes, Jamaica, Virginia and Carolina, for empowering the Governors or Commanders in Chief of those Colonies to use the said seals, and directions given for preparing the Draughts of Warrants accordingly. — *Sainsbury MSS.*

A warrant under his Majesties Royal Sign Manual, bearing date the 6th of October, 1729, was read at the Board, empowering the Governor to use a new seal, sent him by his Majesty for this Colony, and directing that the old seal be returned, in order to be defeated in his Majesties p'sence in his privy Council, and thereupon the Govern<sup>r</sup> del'd the new Seal to be kept as usual in the Secretaries Office & the old seal was delivered up to the Governor in Order to be returned pursuant to his Majesties pleasure. — *Council Journal of Va., MSS., 15th April, 1730.*

[It is proper to say that I have not been able to find any direct authority for the use of the crown-shaped seal. It seems to have been suggested by Spotswood; and there are abundant instances of its use.]

#### SOURCES FROM WHICH THE ABOVE PAPER WAS COMPILED.

Original MSS. in my possession; Hening's Statutes; York County Records, Yorktown, Va.; Burke's General Armory; Virginia Historical Collections, Vol. VII., Part I., 152; Brown's Genesis of the United States; Narrative and Critical History of America; Neill's Virginia Vetusta; Neill's London Company; Land Office Records, Richmond, Va.; Ludwell MSS., Virginia Historical Society; MSS. framed in the Virginia Historical Society; MSS. framed in the State Library; MSS. in the possession of Mrs. Charles M. Wallace (*née* Clopton), Richmond, Va.; Meade's "Old Churches," etc., II. 147; William and Mary College Quarterly, Vol. I.; Smith's History of Virginia, editions of 1624 and 1632; Beverley's History of Virginia (frontispiece); Stow's Survey of London, 1633; Spencer's Fairy Queen; Calendar of State Papers, 1652-1781, arranged and edited by William P. Palmer, M. D.; Virginia Gazette, 1775, etc., by Alexander Purdie; Virginia Gazette, by Dixon & Hunter; Spotswood's Letters; Burk's History of Virginia, Vol. IV., Appendix; Journal of the Convention of 1776; Rowland's "Life of George Mason," Vol. I., 264-266; Letters of William Lee, by Worthington C. Ford; Report of Colonel

Sherwin McRae on State Seal, House Journal and Documents, 1883-'84, Document No. 11; The Seal of the United States, by Gaillard Hunt; Richmond Dispatch; New England Historical and Gen. Register, Vol. XXXVII., p. 86; American Historical Record, Vol. V., No. 4; Sainsbury's MSS.; Council Journal MSS.; Ancient Records in Virginia Historical Society.

## GRACE SHERWOOD, THE VIRGINIA WITCH.

COMMUNICATED BY EDWARD W. JAMES.

“Know all men by these p'sents that I John Whitt of the parish of Linhaven and In The county of Lower norfolk Carpenter,<sup>1</sup> Doe by these give unto James Sherwood<sup>2</sup> fifty acres of Land, Lieing and Being in the County of Lower norfolk in the parish of Linhaven the said land lieng upon the South Side of a Creeack the said Creek Commondly called by the name of Basnetts Creeck: and it lies along the Creck Sides from a Branch that there is hard by the sd: John Whits cleare ground now know yee that I the said John White doe by these p'sents give the said Land unto James Sharwood and unto his heires Executo<sup>r</sup>; and Admirist's for Ever with out any hinderance or fraud in any wise as witness my hand this foure and twentieth day of may 1680

Test: Richard Bonny—Acknowledged in Court John White  
John Gisborne—15 octob<sup>r</sup> 1680

Test. Wm. PORTEN Cl Cur.”

“In the name of god amen I John White being sick in body” butt of p fect memory blessed be god doe apoint this to bee my last will and testam<sup>t</sup> Imp<sup>f</sup> I give my Soule to Almighty god and to Jesus Christ by whoes death and passion I hoope to have Remission of all my sines, my worldly Estate as followeth, Item I give unto my Loving Sone In Law James Sherwood all my Land. Item I give unto Jn<sup>o</sup>. Sevell one Cow and Calve, and a hayfer of 2 years old, and one Iron pott, Item I give unto mary Sevell one

<sup>1</sup> A great many fanciful things have been written about Grace Sherwood's origin and position in life by ingenious authors, who, instead of searching the records for facts, have tortured their imaginations for theories. One writer thought that she was a member of the despised free negro class, while she was, in fact, the daughter of a substantial mechanic and small land owner.

<sup>2</sup> At a court held for Lower Norfolk county, on the 16th of August, 1678, “an order” was “granted James Sherwood ag<sup>t</sup> the Sherfe for the non-appearance of Wm. Basnett, Seg<sup>r</sup>,” and on March 15th, 1688 $\frac{7}{8}$  he was reported by “M<sup>r</sup>. James dauge for nott” helping to clear “the highways and” make “a bridge over a Cypress Swamp.”