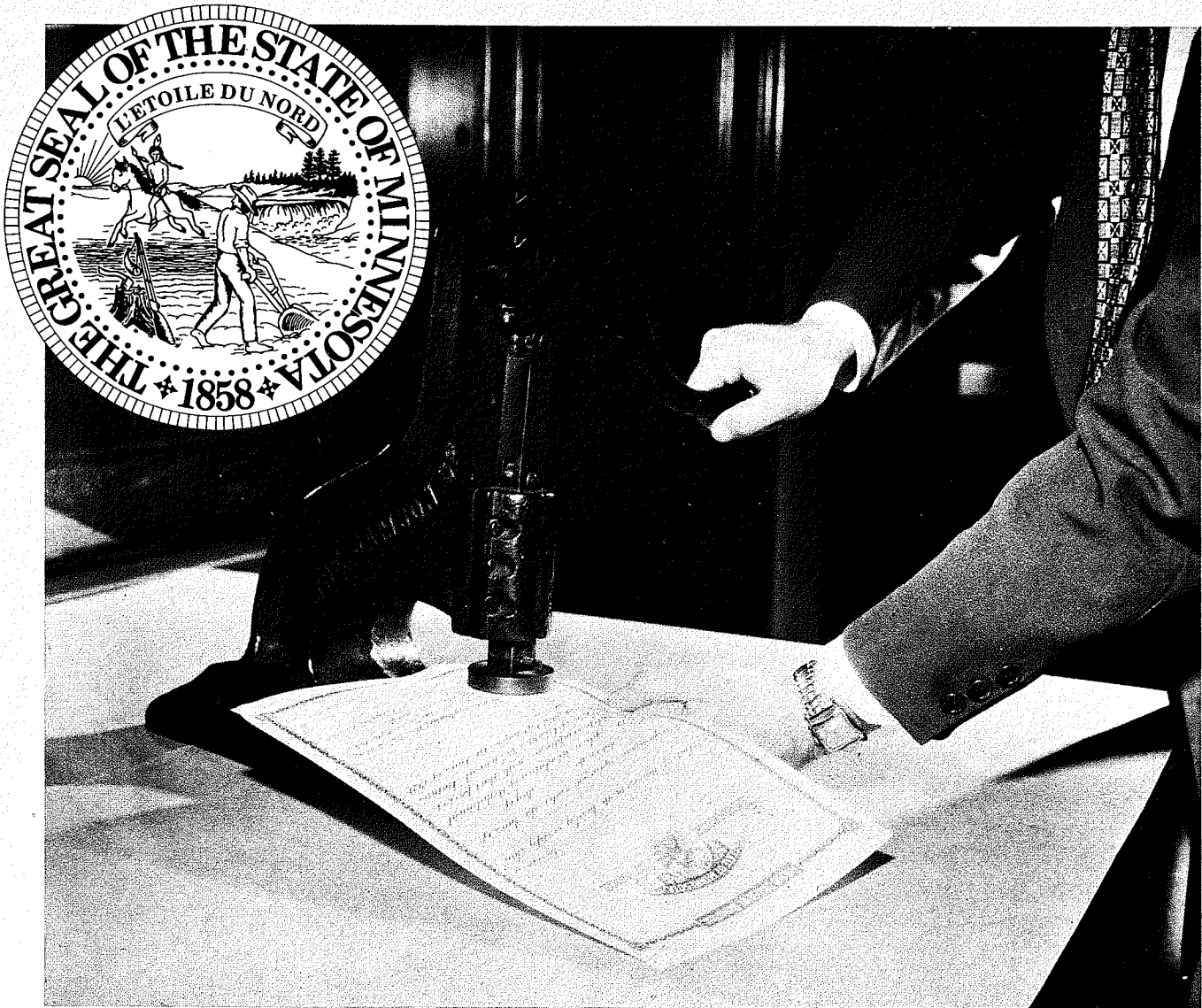


## State Seal

When people write an official document, they always put their signatures on it. The State of Minnesota does the same thing. Its signature is the state seal. The seal is a metal disc about two inches wide with words and a picture pressed into its surface. It is kept in a special stamping machine in the secretary of state's office in St. Paul. To place the seal on a document, a government official slips the paper into the stamping machine and pulls down on a handle. This presses the seal's design into the paper.

Minnesota has had four seals, one for the territory and three for the state. When Minnesota became a territory in 1849, its lawmakers picked a committee to design a territorial seal. The committee chose a design that showed an Indian family offering a peace pipe to a white settler. But the territorial legislature did not approve this design. Many of the lawmakers believed that there would never be peace in Minnesota until all the Indians had moved westward out of the territory.



*The state seal is stamped on all official government documents.*



*Territorial seal, 1849–1858*

Since the legislators could not agree on a design, they left the decision to Governor Alexander Ramsey and Henry H. Sibley, Minnesota's delegate to Congress. Sibley suggested using a picture drawn by Captain Seth Eastman, an artist and commanding officer at Fort Snelling. This design was accepted by the legislature and became the seal of Minnesota Territory.

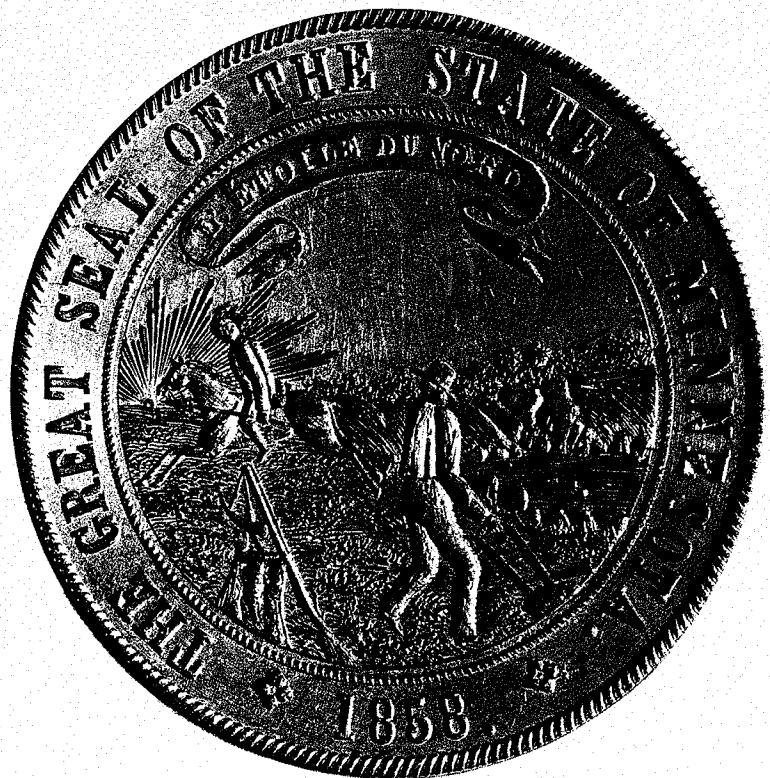
Eastman's picture shows a white settler plowing a field beside the Mississippi River near the Falls of St. Anthony. His ax and gun rest on a tree stump in the foreground. In the background an Indian on horseback, spear in hand, gallops away into the sunset. At the top of the picture is the Latin motto "Quo sursum velo videre." This means "I want to see what lies beyond," a phrase chosen to stand for the pioneering spirit of white settlers in Minnesota. Around the edge of the seal are the words "The Great Seal of Minnesota 1849."

After the seal was cast in metal, people found several errors in it. The Latin motto contained two spelling mistakes. Even more embarrassing,

the picture had come out backwards. Instead of showing the Indian leaving Minnesota for unsettled lands in the west, it showed him traveling east toward Wisconsin.

Despite these mistakes, the seal remained in use until 1858. That year Minnesota became a state and needed a new seal. Once again the legislature picked a committee to design a seal. And once again the lawmakers could not agree. But the legislature did pass a law allowing the state's governor, then Henry Sibley, to pay for a new seal. He decided that the law also allowed him to choose the design.

Sibley thought that, with a few changes, the territorial seal would make a good state seal. Around the edge of the new seal he placed the words "The Great Seal of the State of Minnesota 1858." Then he reversed the picture so that the sun was setting in the west. He also replaced the Latin words with a French motto, "L'Etoile du Nord," which means "the star of the north."



*State seal, 1858–1971*

Sibley used this motto to honor the French explorers who visited the Minnesota area in the 17th century. The phrase gave Minnesota the nickname North Star State.

The first state seal stayed in use for over 100 years. Then, during the 1960s, some people began to question whether it was a good state symbol. Citizens are supposed to be proud of their state's symbols. But how could Minnesota Indians be proud of a seal that seemed to say they were not wanted in their own state?

There were two problems with the new seal. First, it was not any fairer to Minnesota Indians than the old seal. Second, it was never officially approved by the state's lawmakers. In 1983 the Minnesota Legislature decided to solve both problems. It passed a law describing the design of Minnesota's third state seal.

This seal was similar to the others, but it made two important changes. It added some Norway pines (the state tree) above the Falls of St. Anthony to serve as symbols of Minnesota's northern forests. And it put the Indian back in the picture. Instead of galloping away to the west, the Indian is trotting south toward the farmer. As the law explains, "The Indian on horseback represents the great Indian heritage of Minnesota."



State seal, 1971-1983

In 1968 the Minnesota Human Rights Commission asked the state government to design a new seal that *all* Minnesotans could be proud of. The secretary of state approved a new design in 1971. This second state seal removed the Indian completely and replaced him with a white settler riding westward.



State seal, 1983-