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THE PUBLIC SEAL OF CONNECTICUT.

BY CHARLES J. HOADLY.

THERE are now no means of ascertaining either at what precise time a public seal for the Colony of Connecticut was adopted, or by whom it was devised. It is certain that there was one in use in 1656; for, March 26th of that year, the General Court ordered that there should be given to Capt. Cullick a copy of the agreement with Mr. Fenwick, relative to the purchase of Saybrook, *sealed with the seal of the Colony.*

After the receipt of the Charter, the first General Assembly, or Court of Election, held under it, at Hartford, October, 1662, ordered that the seal that formerly was used by the General Court should still remain and be used as the seal of this Colony, until the court saw cause to the contrary, and the secretary was to keep it and use it on necessary occasions for the colony.

This seal represents a vineyard, with fifteen vines, supported and bearing fruit; above, a hand, issuing from clouds, holds a label, on which is inscribed the motto SVSTINET QVI TRANSTVLIT. It is slightly oval in form, and has a beaded border. There remain, among the old colonial documents, but three impressions of it, all on wax: one, very poor, upon the commission of sundry persons appointed to treat with Governor Leete, about the union of New Haven with Connecticut, December 28, 1663; the second, also quite poor, attached to the Norwich patent, July, 1686; the third,

not quite perfect, affixed to a document dated April 1, 1687. The edition of the Laws of Connecticut, printed at Cambridge, 1673, had, by order of the General Court, an impression of the Colony seal upon the title-page, from which, compared with and corrected by the last of the three above mentioned, the cut which adorns the published Records of Connecticut was copied.

In October, 1662, the General Assembly laid claim to Westchester, as being within the chartered limits of Connecticut, and sent down a copy of their vote on the subject, certified under the Colony seal, which is thus curiously described by Mr. Richard Mills, who had the document in his custody. "The signal of the seal above is come to the inhabitants of Westchester, absolute, made in red wax; the motto I suppose to be the arborated craggy wilderness and the flying cloudes."*

When Sir Edmund Andros took the government of the Colony, in October, 1687, the public seal disappeared. Mr. Bulkeley, in "Will and Doom," says that "The secretary, who was well acquainted with all the transactions of the General Court, and very well understood their meaning and intent in all, delivered their common seal to Sir Edmund Andros." What became of it afterward, whether it was broken or lost, we know not; at all events, the seal used after the resumption of the charter government, in 1689, differs considerably from the first one,—it was not so well cut, is a trifle larger, the hand bends downward, and the motto is changed to SVSTINET QVI TRASTVLIT.

No further change was made till 1711, when, October 25th, at a meeting of the Governor and Council, it was agreed, ordered, and resolved that a new stamp should be made and cut of the seal of this Colony, suitable for sealing upon wafers, and that a press be provided, with the necessary appurtenances for that purpose, as soon as may be, at

* Bolton's History of Westchester County, ii., 164.

the cost and charge of the Colony, to be kept in the secretary's office.

This seal was considerably larger than its predecessors, measuring $2\frac{1}{8}$ inches in length by $1\frac{3}{4}$ in breadth; instead of fifteen vines, there are but three, and there is a hand pointing to them, about midway on the left; the motto, which is upon a scroll below the vines, is QVI TRANSTVLIT SVSTINET, and around the circumference is the legend SIGILLVM COLONIE CONNECTICVTENSIS.

Wax seems to have been the material generally used till after the Revolution; the few early impressions upon paper preserved among the colonial documents are all very poor.

From some imperfections in the engraving, which would not be likely to be reproduced, the seal ordered in 1711 seems to have continued in use up to 1784, in May of which year the General Assembly passed the following resolution:—

“Whereas, the circumscription of the seal of this State is improper and inapplicable to our present constitution, Resolved by this Assembly, that the Secretary be and he is hereby empowered and directed to get the same altered from the words as they now stand to the following inscription, namely, SIGILL. REIP. CONNECTICUTENSIS.”

The inscription was, however, cut without abbreviation, though in its shortened form it appears in engravings of that period; and, at the October session, 1784, the new seal was approved and ordered to be lodged with the secretary, to be used as the seal of this State, as the law directs. The size of this seal was $2\frac{2}{8}$ inches in length by $1\frac{7}{8}$ in breadth. It was engraved upon silver.

Article fourth, section eighteenth, of the constitution adopted in 1818, declares that the seal of the State shall not be altered; but it is singular that neither in that instrument, nor in any law, is the seal ascertained or described. In 1840 it was resolved “That the Secretary of State be

instructed to ascertain the proper seal and bearings of this State, and report to the next session of the General Assembly; and also whether any legislative enactment is required for a proper description of said seal." Mr. Hinman was at that time secretary; but, as there is little on record relative to the establishment of the seal, and the subject would have required considerable investigation, he made, as he informed the writer, no report at all.

The seal at present in use was procured in accordance with a resolution passed October, 1842, which directed that it should be similar to the one then in use. The resolution, as at first drawn up, provided that the new seal might be of smaller dimensions, and circular instead of oval; but these provisions were struck out in the House of Representatives, probably upon constitutional grounds, and the seal was made of similar form and size with the preceding one, except that it is a trifle broader,—the workmanship also is better; there are three clusters of grapes on each vine, the old one had four on each of the upper, and five on the lower one. It is engraved on brass.

The Colony of New Haven also had a public seal, ordered in May, 1655, the size and device of which was left to the judgment of Governor Eaton. In June, 1656, the governor announced its reception "a token of his love" from his son-in-law, Governor Hopkins. This seal is mentioned but once more in the records. It is not known that any impression of it now exists, and its device is probably one of the things lost on earth.

The armorial bearings of Connecticut, in heraldic language, would be blazoned thus:—Argent, three vines, supported and fructed proper. Without mentioning several fanciful interpretations, the most probable one is that the three vines symbolize the plantations of Hartford, Windsor, and Wethersfield, which composed the original colony of Connecticut. The number of vines upon the old seal was probably arbitrary, and it might be blazoned:—A field

argent, semé with vines, supported and fructed proper: in chief, a hand, issuing from clouds proper, holding a label inscribed with the motto, etc. With beautiful simplicity, the seal of Connecticut bears perpetual witness to the faith of our fathers in His sustaining power, who transplanted the vines from Egypt, who cast out the heathen and planted them, who made room for them, so that, when they had taken root, they filled the land, till the hills were covered with their shadow, and the boughs thereof were like the goodly cedars, till their branches stretched out to the sea and their boughs to the river.

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