

1982

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### Recommended Citation

Waline, Peter (1982) "The Great Seals Deputed of British East Florida," *Florida Historical Quarterly*. Vol. 61 : No. 1 , Article 6.

Available at: <https://stars.library.ucf.edu/fhq/vol61/iss1/6>

## THE GREAT SEALS DEPUTED OF BRITISH EAST FLORIDA

by PETER WALNE

**T**HE cession of the Spanish province of Florida to the British crown by the Treaty of Paris in 1763, and the subsequent division of the territory into the two British provinces of East and West Florida, brought in its wake the introduction of new legal and administrative arrangements. One of these was the replacement of the Spanish seal for the province by two British royal seals, one for each new province.<sup>1</sup>

The two new provinces were legally constituted by royal proclamation of George III on October 7, 1763. Three days earlier, on October 4, the Board of Trade and Plantations in London agreed to present a representation to the Privy Council that new seals would be required for the provinces newly ceded to the British crown by the Treaty of Paris— Quebec in Canada, Grenada in the West Indies, and the two Floridas.<sup>2</sup> On October 5, having duly signed this representation, the Board transmitted it to the Privy Council, who on the same day issued an Order in Council to Christopher Seaton, chief engraver of His Majesty's

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1. Complementary to this article is one on the seal for West Florida. Robert R. Rea, "The Deputed Great Seal of British West -Florida," *Alabama Historical Quarterly*, XL (Fall-Winter 1978), 162-68. The term "Great Seal Deputed" is used in British seal nomenclature to denote those seals which, over the course of centuries, have taken the place of the one Great Seal of the realm for the authentication of documents, which at one time would have been authenticated by the Great Seal itself. As government became more complex and its ramifications more widespread, the use of the one Great Seal became impossible, and so other seals fulfilled its tasks, some of them specifically being called [Great] Seals Deputed for particular business. Of this category of seal, those for use in the British colonies show the widest divergence from the traditional pattern of Great Seals and are probably the most interesting of them all.
2. *Journal of the Commissioners of Trade and Plantations* (hereinafter cited as *JTP*), XI, 386.

Seals to prepare the necessary seal dies.<sup>3</sup> The order described the design of each seal, all of which were to be double sided. That for East Florida was to comprise: "On the one side a Fortified Town and Harbour with this Motto or Legend beneath *Moresque Viris et Moenia Ponet*<sup>4</sup> and this Inscription round the Circumference *Sigillum Provinciae Nostrae Floridae Orientalis* and on the Reverse His Majesty's Arms, Crown, Garter, Supporters and Motto with his Inscription round the Circumference *Georgius III Dei Gratia Magnae Britanniae Franciae et Hiberniae Rex Fidei Defensor Brunsvici et Luneburgi Dux Sacri Romani Imperii Archithesaurarius et Elector.*"<sup>5</sup>

Having received his instructions to prepare the dies, Seaton added them to the formidable total of Great Seals and Great Seals Deputed for home and colonial governments, privy seals, signets, judicial and departmental seals which it fell to the chief engraver and his workmen to prepare at the beginning of a new reign or, occasionally, at times such as this occasion, within a reign. In the colonial context, the four new provinces, including East Florida, received speedier attention than their fellow colonies. Being newly annexed their need for Great Seals Deputed was immediate and more urgent than that of the existing colonies, which by law were empowered to continue in use their seals for George II's reign until such time as new seals for George III should be sent to them.<sup>6</sup>

On December 21, 1763, the draft designs of the new seals for the Floridas, Quebec, and Grenada were submitted by Seaton to the Privy Council, which approved them and instructed Seaton to proceed to engrave the dies.<sup>7</sup> By April 11, 1764, the dies for West Florida, Quebec, and Grenada were ready and by April 25,

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3. *Ibid.*, 387.

4. Vergil, *Aeneid*, Book 1, verse 264: "He will set up customs and walls for his people." As Rea points out in his article (fn 19), the quotation is aptly applied in this case.

5. *Acts of the Privy Council. Colonial Series. Volume IV 1745-1766*, 573-4 (hereinafter cited as *APC*).

6. By the terms of the Act 6 Anne, cap 41 (the Act of Succession), public seals in use at the time of the death of the sovereign were to continue in use as the seal of the succeeding sovereign until orders to the contrary were given. Colonial governors were normally reminded of this by Order in Council under the Privy Seal and Royal signature. Thus the other North American colonies lawfully used their George II seals until they received those for George III as late as 1767.

7. *APC*, V, 574.

those for East Florida.<sup>8</sup> All were duly laid before the Privy Council that day, the work approved, and instructions given for letters of transmittal and warrants for use to be drawn up.<sup>9</sup> On April 30, the texts of these letters for each of the four colonies were approved by the Board of Trade and Plantations including those addressed to Colonel James Grant, newly-appointed governor of East Florida.<sup>10</sup> The warrant for the use of the seal was duly forwarded to the Earl of Halifax, secretary of state for the southern department, under whose jurisdiction colonial affairs came, so that it might be duly sealed under the Privy Seal and signed by the sovereign. On May 1, Halifax returned the warrant, duly signed and sealed, to the Board with instructions that it and the seal dies were to be delivered into Grant's hands prior to his departure to take up his appointment.<sup>11</sup> Upon his arrival in East Florida, one of Grant's first tasks, after presenting his own commission of appointment, would have been to lay the seal and the royal warrant for its use before the council and assembly for their information and approbation, after which the seal would immediately be brought into use.

How Seaton visually rendered the verbal descriptions of the two dies for the East Florida seal is shown in the two accompanying illustrations.<sup>12</sup> The first (Plate 1) shows the obverse of the seal clearly intended to represent the fortified town and harbor of St. Augustine with the Vergilian motto in the exergue beneath the main design. Around the whole, within the border, runs the identifying legend *SIGILLUM•PROVINCIAE•NOSTRAE•FLORIDAE•ORIENTALIS•* (The Seal of Our Province of East

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8. Ibid.

9. Ibid.

10. *JTP*, XII, 42.

11. Ibid., 45.

12. The illustrations are from the author's own photographs of the proof impressions submitted by the chief engraver of HM Seals to the officers of the Royal Mint in support of his bill for payment. This practice began in Anne's reign and carried on through George III's but such is the frailty of these impressions that the surviving series is far from complete. At some time the obverse impression of the East Florida seal has been stored on top of the reverse, probably under pressure and near heat, so that the obverse impression is badly distorted but is still reasonably visible. The reverse has suffered less. The impressions are both approximately four and one-half inches in diameter. The impressions of the West Florida seals, which survive in this series, have suffered a similar although worse fate and both impressions are now too distorted to be clearly recognizable for what they are.

Florida). The whole is surrounded by an outer rim of formalized acanthus leaves.

The second illustration (Plate 2) shows the reverse of the seal with the shield bearing the royal arms of the Hanoverian sovereigns as they existed from 1715 to 1801.<sup>13</sup> Around the arms is the ribbon of the Order of the Garter upon which is inscribed the motto of the Order *HONI•SOIT•QUI•MAL•Y•PENSE•* (Evil be to he who evil thinks). The encircled shield is surmounted by the St. Edward's crown. To the left of the shield of arms is the crowned lion supporter, and to the right, the unicorn with a coronet around its throat and a chain hanging therefrom across the body and between its hind legs, upon which, like the lion, the beast stands. Beneath the shield of arms and Garter ribbon, on a scroll with elaborate tracery work upon which the two supporters stand, is the royal motto *DIEU•ET•MON•DROIT* (God and my Right). Surrounding the whole design, within two plain lines, run the sonorous royal titles of George III, suitably abbreviated by Seaton as he had discretion to do in order to fit them into the available space.<sup>14</sup> The outer rim, as on the obverse, is of formalized acanthus leaves.

For the engraving of the two silver dies, Seaton charged £60 together with the cost of the silver and duty payable thereon, which came to £14.8.11, the dies weighing together rather more than fifty-three ounces and the silver costing 5/5d an ounce. To this was added the sum of £1.5.0 for a shagreen case with silver

13. The arms are described as: Quarterly; 1, England (three lions passant guardant) impaling Scotland (a lion within a double tressure flory counter-flory); 2, France Modern (three fleurs de lis); 3, Ireland (a stringed harp); 4, tierced per pale and per chevron: (i), two lions passant guardant (Brunswick); (ii), a background powdered with hearts, a lion rampant (Luneberg); (iii), a running horse (Westphalia): over all three, the arms of the arch-treasure of the Holy Roman Empire (the crown of Charlemagne) on an inescutcheon surmounted by an electoral bonnet (all this quarter for Hanover).

14. The full titles, extended, read in Latin with the extensions in brackets *GEORGIVS•III•D[EI]•G[RATIA]•MAG[NAE]•BRI[TANNIAE]•FR[ANCIAE]•ET•HIB[ERNIAE]•REX•F[IDEI]•D[EFENSOR]•BRUN[SVIC]•ET•LUN[EBURG]•DUX•S[ACRI]•R[OMANI]•I[MPERII]•AR[CHI]•THES[AURARIUS]•ET•PR[INCEPS]•EL[ECTOR]•* i.e. George III by the Grace of God of Great Britain France and Ireland King Defender of the Faith Duke of Brunswick and Luneberg of the Holy Roman Empire Arch-Treasurer and Prince Elector. The titles as engraved by Seaton show one variation from the titles as cited in the Order in Council of October 5, 1763, set out in the main text. That is the addition quite properly of *Princeps* before *Elector* as the Hanoverians were princely electors of the Holy Roman Empire.



PLATE 1. Obverse of George III's is Great Seal Deputed for East Florida.



PLATE 2. Reverse of George III's is Great Seal Deputed for East Florida.

clips and velvet-covered inlay in which the dies were to be kept when not in use and for their safer and surer transit in Governor Grant's hands across the seas.<sup>15</sup> Though not mentioned in Seaton's account, a seal-press would also be supplied to Grant since this would be essential to allow the two dies to be impressed (almost certainly, if usual colonial usage with double-sided seals was followed, through a paper covering) upon the cake of wax to form an impression. Seaton's charges rendered to the Treasury were approved by the officers of the Royal Mint, to whom, as was customary, they were referred, as being reasonable and proper and his workmanship of a quality equal to that of his predecessors. Upon this certification received, the Treasury approved payment of the account on January 28, 1765.<sup>16</sup>

When the provinces of East and West Florida were ceded back to Spain by the Treaty of Versailles in 1783, the Great Seals Deputed of George III ceased to have legal validity. The new Spanish administration replaced them by their own seal. What happened to the two heavy silver dies of the East Florida seal is not known. Whether, as ought to have been the case, the outgoing British governor took them back to England to be laid before the Privy Council for formal defacement and eventual melting down or whether some other fate befell them remains a mystery.

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15. Royal Mint Record Books, Vol XII, 29 (now in Public Record Office under reference MINT 1/12).

16. *Ibid.*, 31.