



# Jesse White

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## SECRETARY OF STATE

# NEWS

### ILLINOIS SECRETARY OF STATE

### FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

- **August 26, 2002**
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### Oldest Copy of State Seal Found

**SPRINGFIELD** — Secretary of State Jesse White today announced that staff at the Illinois State Archives have found the oldest known impression of the original Great Seal of the State of Illinois.

"As Secretary of State and State Archivist, one of my constitutionally mandated duties is to 'keep the Great Seal of the State of Illinois' and use it to certify copies of official state documents," said White. "There are very few impressions of the original seal and none are as good as this newly discovered version."

On February 19, 1819, two months after Illinois became a state, the General Assembly passed a law requiring the Secretary to procure a permanent State seal. That fall gunsmith Philip Creamer was paid \$85.00 for producing a device that allowed two engraved pieces of metal to affix a paper seal to any document.

While processing old court records, Archives' staff discovered a document dated November 18, 1819 containing the

impression of the state seal. Prior to this discovery, the oldest known imprint of the seal was found on a September 4, 1820 Governor's Proclamation that ordered the state be divided into three electoral districts.

White made the announcement of the discovery of the state seal today, on the 184th anniversary of the adoption of the state Constitution on August 26, 1818. That is the date used on the state seal, even though President James Monroe did not sign the Congressional Resolution to make Illinois a state until December 3, 1818.

Currently, the Illinois Blue Book contains an artist's rendition of the original state seal. White said this recent discovery means that the rendition will be updated to reflect previously unknown details visible on the new find.

According to White, Illinois has had three different state seal designs. The second seal was created in 1836, but the first extant example is found on an 1839 Proclamation. The third, and current state seal design has been used since October 26, 1868. While all three designs are slightly different from each other, they all contain an eagle, a banner with the state motto, "*State Sovereignty - National Union*," and the date "Aug. 26th, 1818."

Archives' employees identified the seal while processing early 19th Century court records from Madison County. The Circuit Court had fined Joshua Atwater for "keeping a disorderly house" in which drinking and card playing had created a public nuisance. On the recommendation for mercy by "many respectable & worthy citizens" of the county, Illinois' first Governor, Shadrach Bond, reduced Atwater's fine from \$100 to eight dollars and then caused the seal of state to be affixed to it.