



History of the Great Seal of the State of New Mexico

The first Great Seal was designed shortly after the organization of the Territory of New Mexico in 1851. The original has long since disappeared. According to early imprints, it consisted of the American Bald Eagle, as portrayed on the Great Seal of the United States, shielding the smaller Mexican Eagle within its outstretched wings, thus symbolizing the change of sovereignty from Mexico to the United States in 1846.

The American Bald Eagle, which has always represented bravery, skill, and strength, clasped three arrows in its talons. The smaller, Mexican Brown (or happy) Eagle, grasped a snake in its beak and cactus in its talons. This portion of the Seal is still the official symbol of the Mexican Republic and portrays the ancient Aztec myth that the gods had ordered the Aztec Indians to settle the site which they saw an eagle poised upon a cactus devouring a serpent. The scroll below the eagle contained the phrase, *Crescit Eundo*, which translated from the Latin is, "It grows as it goes."

In 1882, Territory Secretary W.G. Ritch, embellished the original design with the addition of background figures depicting industry and agriculture and used his design for territorial documents. In 1887, the original seal was officially adopted by act of the Territorial Legislature with the addition of the 1850 date at the bottom.

When New Mexico became a state in 1912, the second session of the First Legislature named a commission for the propose of adopting a state seal. After the commission had filed a certificate of its choice of design with the Secretary of State, that official was authorized to procure a seal in accordance with the certificate. Until such time as the new seal was accepted, the Secretary of State was directed to use the territorial seal with the word, STATE substituted for the word, TERRITORY. The certificate of the commission's choice does not appear to have been actually filed however, but its decision must have been to continue to use the territorial seal with the changing of the territory to state and with the substituting of the 1912 date of statehood for the 1850 at the bottom of the seal.

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Secretary of State – 1999 - Present