



Seal of the City of Wheeling

Wheeling was incorporated as a City on March 11, 1836. On May 18, 1836, the City Council met and decreed “that the Mayor procure for the city a seal with such devices thereon as he may judge appropriate, and that he be authorized to draw upon the treasurer for the amount required to defray the expense for so doing.”

According to Council meeting minutes, on July 6, 1836, the Council “ordered that the seal on impression as hereto subjoined, be adopted as the seal of the City of Wheeling.”



-Seal of the City of Wheeling, as found in the 1856 Wheeling City Directory (OCPL Archives)

There have been no records found as of yet to explain the design outside of this 1896 newspaper article about the USS gunboat “Wheeling:”

From the article “*The ‘Wheeling’ Christening Committee to Hold Its First Meeting Today,*” *Wheeling Daily Intelligencer*, Wednesday, December 30, 1896:

The navy department draftsmen have finished the plans for the ornamentation of the gangway of the new gunboat. The following is a description of the design:
"Wheeling is a manufacturing city and a port of entry, having an extended trade by water and rail, and is the largest and most important place on the Ohio river between Cincinnati and Pittsburgh. The hills of the city abound with coal. These facts have suggested the greater part of design and are explained as follows: **The center, surrounded on the outer edge with several coils of rope, is the seal of the city of Wheeling,**

representing a nude figure of Liberty with the scales of Justice held in her right hand, while her left hand supports a staff on which is a liberty cap. At her feet is the treasure chest of the city. In front are represented the city buildings. Around the seal are arranged it capstan, steering wheel, oars, capstan-bars and anchors, emblematic of the river trade, and below is a group, representing mechanics, mining and agriculture, backed by the two national flags. Below all is a semi wreath of holly and at the top of the design, enclosed in a wreath of laurel is a group of Indian implements, emblematic the Indian wars and struggles which harassed the early settlers of the city."

The more "modern" seal shows the old State Capitol/City-County Building. It is likely that the update occurred when the State Government left Wheeling in 1885 and the City and County moved into the State Capitol Building. However, no records have been found regarding when the updated seal was adopted, so the exact date of the change is unknown.



- This May 31, 1960 G. Kossuth photo shows Eleanor Steber receiving a key to the city from Mayor John J. Gast in the new City-County building, though the Seal of the City of Wheeling still includes the old City-County Building. (OCPL Archives, Eddie Martin/William O'Leary Collection)

The Seal of the City of Wheeling today still features Lady Liberty with the Scales of Justice, the staff, and “treasures of the City” at her feet, and the old City-County Building in the background, though much more stylized:



As explained in an email from Director of Operations for the City of Wheeling, Tim Birch, to Ohio County Public Library Archives Coordinator, Sean Duffy, on March 4, 2016:

“The seal was simplified a bit so we could reproduce it on our digital sign cutting machine a little over 20 years ago. We were placing the seal on doors and vehicles. Then they remodeled the council chambers and asked if we could do a large seal in the council room which we made up. It was never meant to replace the old seal. ...the old seals we saw had been a copy of what I assume was an original seal about 12 copies ago and was getting pretty rough. We tried to make it as exact as the seal we had but due to it being a copy it was hard to get all the details off so we did what we could to make it work for the digital cutter.”

- *Research on the Seal of the City of Wheeling collected for the Ohio County Public Library Archives by Erin Rothenbuehler, Margaret Brennan, and Sean Duffy, 2016.*