



The Nebraska State Flag & Seal

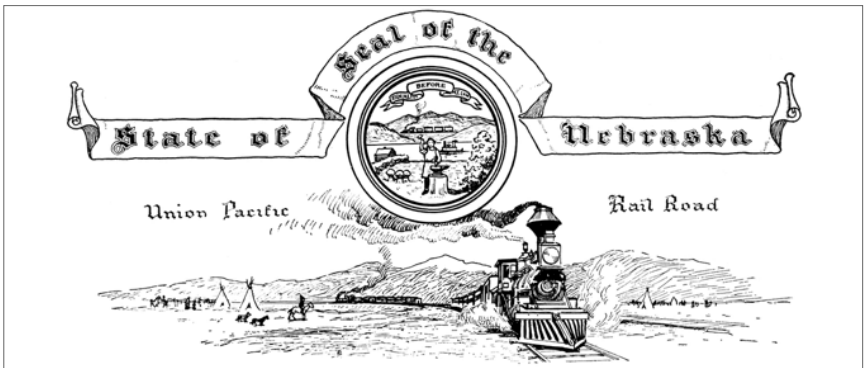
Nebraska’s state flag was designated by legislative action in 1925. It consists of a reproduction of the state seal, charged on the center in gold and silver on a field of national blue. State law says no part of the state flag is to be used as a business advertisement or trademark, and insulting the flag is forbidden. State law also requires the flag to be displayed under or to the left of the U.S. flag on or near the State Capitol, the governor’s mansion, all courthouses, city halls, schoolhouses and other public administrative buildings.

The symbolism on the seal is explained on the back of the poster.

SIGNS, SEALS & SYMBOLS

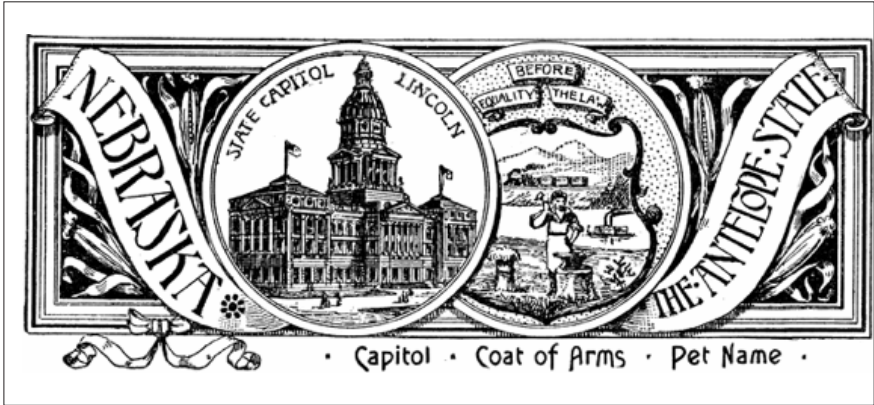
The Nebraska State Seal of 1913

This early flyer displays the 1913 design of the seal, which is extremely similar to the current version. A picture of Cottonwood trees, one of the largest North American hardwood trees, represents the logging industry. The other picture depicts Native American Indians talking to a frontiersman dressed in buckskin.



The United States Seal of Nebraska

Source: Edward S Ellis, Ellis’s History of the United States (Minneapolis: Wester Book Syndicate, 1899) IV:1374



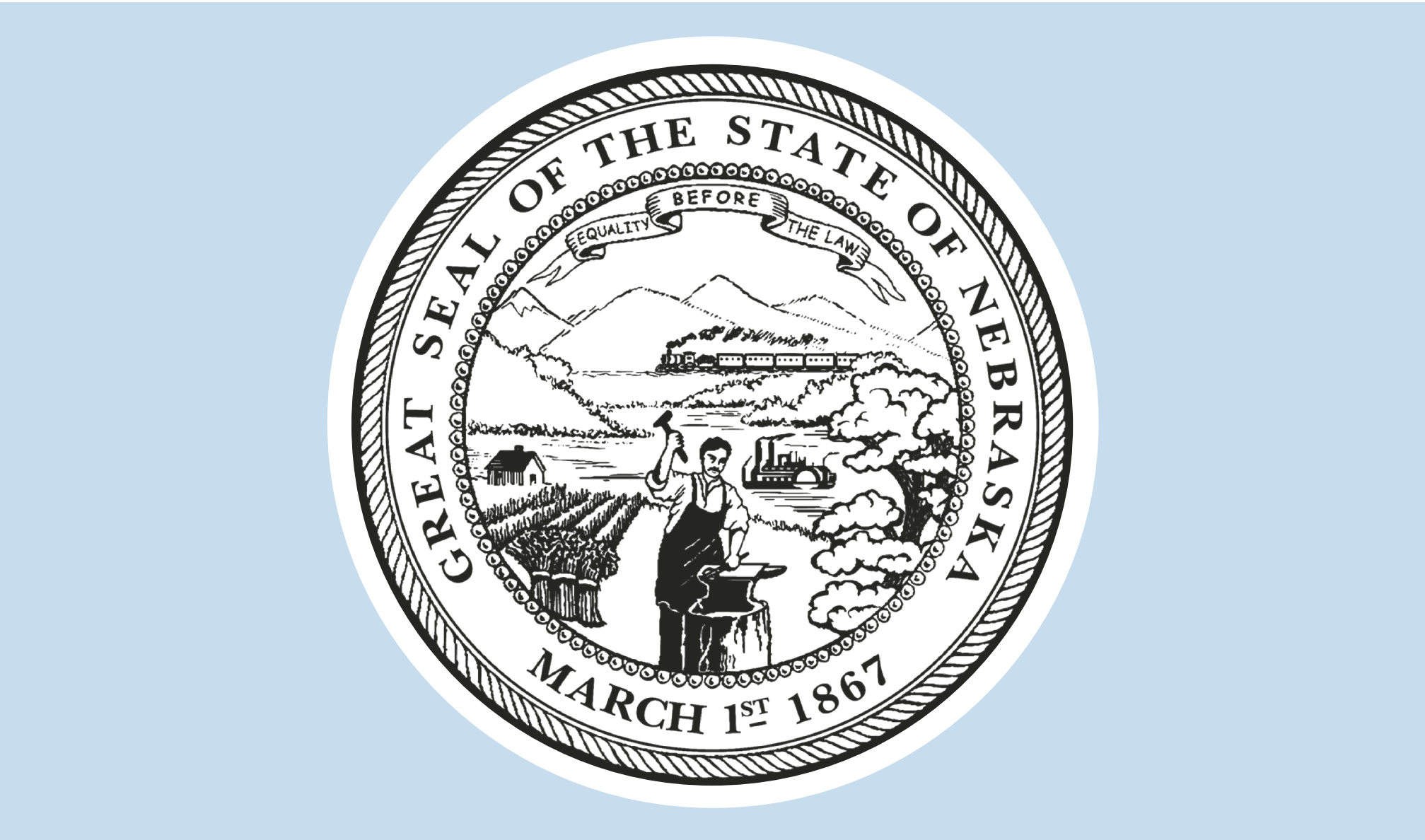
The State Banner of Nebraska, the Antelope State

Source: Matthews-Northup Adequate Travel-Atlas of the United States (Buffalo, NY: The Matthews-Northup Co., 1893)



The Nebraska State Seal of 1913

1913 Source: C.M. Stevans, ed. Standard Home and School Dictionary (New York: Leslie-Judge Co., 1913) 578



Symbols and Icons

Except where noted, sources for state symbol information are: Nebraska State Historical Society; Nebraska Game and Parks Commission; Conservation and Survey Division, University of Nebraska-Lincoln; Nebraska Secretary of State's Office; Nebraska Governor's Office.

The Great Seal of the State of Nebraska was adopted in 1867. At the top of the seal a wavy banner holds the motto “Equality Before the Law,” and around the outer ring of the seal contains the text “Great Seal of the State of Nebraska, March 1st, 1867.” The overall image portrays the Nebraska landscape, the transportation, industries, and the lifestyle of the early inhabitants of the state.

The Rocky Mountains

The mountains feature strongly at the top of the image with a steam train with carriages heading towards the Rockies emphasizing the importance of the railroad.

The Railroad

The first Transcontinental Railroad in the United States was built in the 1860s and a new railroad line began in Omaha, Nebraska.

The Steamboat

The steamboat, another extremely important mode of transportation in the early history of Nebraska, ascends the Missouri River. The invention of steam power made it much easier to travel along the rivers, replacing the flat boats.

Agriculture

The foreground agriculture is represented by a log cabin, sheaves of wheat and stalks of growing corn.

Trees

Flourishing trees represent the timber industry.

Wheat

The fields of grain symbolize that the harvest of one's hopes has been secured.

Blacksmith

The figure of a blacksmith with a hammer and anvil represents the products produced by the people.

Motto: Equality Before the Law



Shortly before his death on January 20, 1921, Isaac Wiles, a member of the Nebraska House of Representatives recalled the genesis of the state motto. He had proposed two alternative phrases, one being “Equality Before the Law” and the other “Equal Rights for All.” Before introducing the bill, he consulted with Elmer S. Dundy, later famous as the presiding judge in the Standing Bear trial. Dundy preferred the former phrase. Accordingly, “Equality Before the Law” was adopted as the motto that appears on the Great Seal, the state flag, and on the east and west pylons flanking the north entrance of the state capitol building...the motto did not refer to slavery or to granting equal rights to both black and white Nebraskans. Addison E. Sheldon of the Nebraska State Historical Society later wrote, “His impression was distinct that it originated from the early controversies over land locations in the Missouri River counties and was inspired by the frontier sentiment in favor of giving every man an equal change to secure a home on the public domain.”

Source: “Thoughts on the Origin of Nebraska’s State Motto” by James E. Potter
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