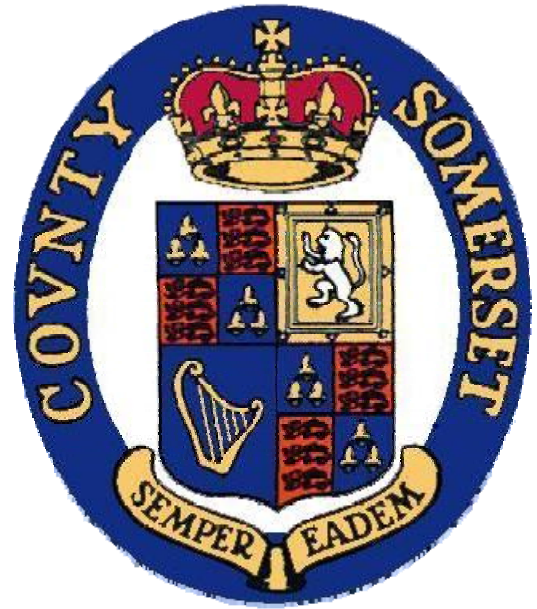


Great Seal of Somerset County

The Great Seal of Somerset County was first used in documents in 1666, when the county was founded, until about 1707. After the year 1707, the seal was not used for two hundred fifty-one years. Through the efforts of the Board of County Commissioners and members of the Olde Princess Anne Days Committee, the seal was again put to use in 1958. At this time it was only permissible to use the seal in black and white. Following this, the Board of County Commissioners requested the original colors of the seal and, through a legislative act, today the seal, including its original colors, is in use.



The seal is described as an oval band with the words, "Covnty Somerset," (County being spelled the Old English way.) Within the oval is a shield bearing a very slightly modified version of the Stuart royal arms. Above the shield the Royal "Semper Eadem," is written. Translated it means, "always the same." Below this is written 1666, the year the county was founded. Several of the early county seals, including the present one, are based on the Stuart royal arms. The alterations in the Somerset County Seal are a reversal of the position of the fleur-de-lys (the royal arms has two above and one below), an absence of the flower design in the inside of the border around the rampant lion, and a simpler drawing of the harp. Also, the Garter encircling the royal arms has been reduced to a simple band.

A technical heraldry definition of terms and the establishment of colors used in the Somerset County Seal are:

England: In 1198 his arms (Richard I) were Gules, three lion passant, guardant in pale or. This coat is referred to as England.

France Modern: England was borne alone until 1340. when Edward III, adopting the new practice of quartering, took the arms of France, Azure, seme-de-lis, (Azure and or means, "Blue and Gold"), termend France Ancient, and bore Quarterly France Ancient and England. These arms expressed his claim to the French throne. These continued as the Royal Arms until about 1405. Subsequent to this, Henry IV, following the example of the French King, reduced the number of fleurs-de-lis to three, that is France Modern. The Royal Arms then became Quarterly France Modern and England.

Scotland: The Royal Arms of Scotland are Or, a lion rampant within a double tressure flory counter-flory gules.

Ireland: The arms of Ireland are Azure, a harp or, stringed argent.

The Oval Band: The Garter has encircled the royal shield since the reign of Edward III. A colored illustration of the Order of the Garter and of the Royal Arms show the Garter to be blue, bordered with gold. It seemed logical, then, for the oval band on the Somerset County Seal to be colored in this way.