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The Examination of Notary Seals

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ABSTRACT: Many legal documents go through the notarization process as normal procedure. This process is also used by the criminal element to add an appearance of legitimacy to fraudulent documents. Proper examination of questioned notary seals requires an understanding of defect significance, manner of manufacture, and state regulations of notarization. It is the purpose of this paper to supply this information.

KEYWORDS: questioned documents, notary seals, printing equipment, metal embossers, rubber stamps

The examination of document cases involving notary seals by this author revealed that information useful to document examiners concerning these seals was practically nonexistent. It is the intended purpose of this paper to fill this void. Research into this area has revealed information that should be helpful in the examination of a case involving notary seals. The types of examinations conducted on notary seals do not basically differ from those performed on impressions from other mechanical devices such as typewriters, checkwriters, and rubber stamps. As such, this author has decided to present this material in a "helpful tips" format, avoiding the unnecessary inclusion of "how to" information, along with a state-by-state listing of seal specifications.

History

The office of notary public and its commensurate duties has roots in Roman and English common law [1]. The *notary* is derived from the Latin word *nota*, which was a system of shorthand developed by M. Tullius Tiro, the clerk of the great orator Cicero, to record his master's speeches during the last century before Christ. *Notarii* were employed by the Roman government to draft agreements, conveyances, and other types of instruments using this form of shorthand. *Notarii* were also empowered within the Catholic Church to describe the acts of martyrs. With the rise of the Holy Roman Empire as a secular power, the powers of the "papal notaries" encompassed all of the aforementioned duties. The notary's acts were invested with public authority and a notary public was a semiofficial government position.

For various economic and political reasons, the duties and importance of notaries in English common law were never at the continental European level. With the American colonial adoption of English common law, the office of notary public was of lesser importance

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than it was in Europe. The following is a quote of the duties of notaries public in the United States as written in the early 1700s:

We call him a notary public, who confirms and attests the truth of any deeds or writings, in order to render the same more credible and authentic in any country whatever. And he is principally made use of in courts of judicature and in business relating to merchants. For a notary public is a certain kind of witness, and, therefore, ought to give evidence touching such matters as fall under the judgment of the understanding.

Powers and Authority in the United States

A notary public is a public official whose powers and authority are established by state statute. As such, some duties of notaries may vary slightly from state to state [2-6]. Major variations can be found in Louisiana, whose state laws reflect French, rather than British, influence. This section will deal briefly with the core of notarial powers and authority common to most, if not all, states. Specifically, these involve taking acknowledgements, affidavits, and depositions, along with administering oaths and affirmations.

The general public's most common encounter with notaries public surrounds major financial transactions, such as the purchase or selling of a home. In these instances, the notary public is taking an acknowledgement, which is a declaration by a person who has executed or signed a document that he, in fact, did execute or sign the document.

Affidavits, along with acknowledgments, make up the bulk of the notary's duties. An affidavit is a written sworn statement. Notaries attest, with their signature and seal, that the statements recorded are those made by the affiant. They do not, however, attest to the truth of the statements, for which the affiant is directly responsible.

Notaries also have the authority to administer oaths. An oath is a solemn pledge or promise made by a person with an appeal to God to attest to the truth of his words. An oath differs from an affidavit in that it is an oral statement. Affirmations may also be addressed as a separate power given to notaries. An affirmation is a form of oath administered without reference to God when conscientious scruples or religious practices conflict with such reference.

Depositions can also be taken by notaries. A deposition is similar to an affidavit in that it is a written sworn statement. However, depositions are ordinarily related to legal conflicts and an attorney for the adverse party can be present and can actually cross-examine the person giving the deposition and have the substance of that testimony written into the record of the deposition.

The Seal

Certain official acts of a notary public must be authenticated by his official seal. However, some state statutes do provide for the authentication of some official acts without the seal. Some states, such as Michigan, do not require a seal for *any* official notarial act, though custom often dictates the use of a seal.

Depending on the state involved, the seal can be embossed onto the paper by a metal embossing instrument or rubber-stamped. More states appear to be moving toward the use of rubber stamps as either a required format or an optional alternative to the more commonly recognized embosser because of their superior photographic reproduction capabilities.

Many states provide no definite specifications concerning size, shape, or content of the seal. There does, however, appear to be a traditional style that is commonly used and may correspond to unwritten specifications, many of which appear to be regularly adhered to. Figure 1 contains a common format of notary seals that was used for illustration purposes within reference material for many states.

The jurisdiction of a notary public is usually countywide or statewide. Over the past few

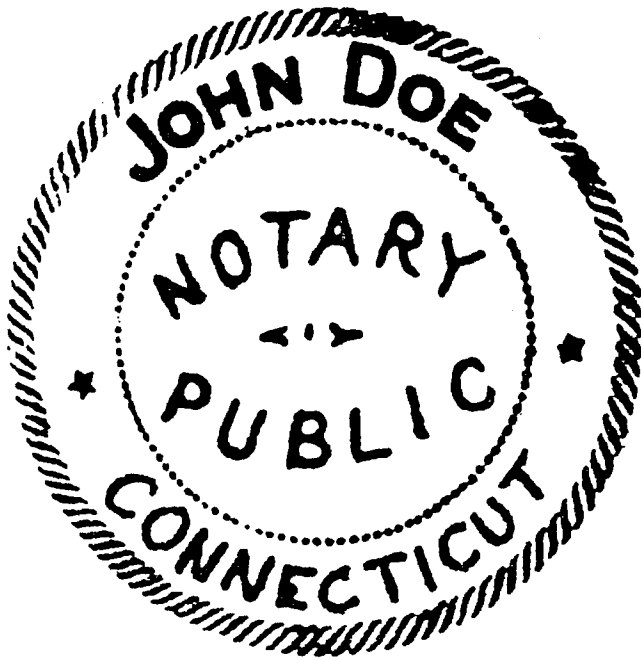


FIG. 1—A facsimile notary seal utilizing a common format. The seal is round with the term "NOTARY PUBLIC" in the center and the name of the notary and the state of commission on the upper and lower circumference, respectively.

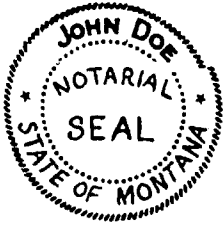
years, many states have expanded the jurisdiction of notaries from countywide to statewide. New seals are required to contain the words "State of _____" or similar words to that effect. Notaries that were initially commissioned while countywide jurisdiction was in effect can still retain their seal with the name of the county of commission. Therefore, variation from current requirements concerning this aspect is not only possible, but apparently also common. In some states both countywide and statewide jurisdictions are available, depending on which a notary public chooses to apply for.

Specifications, or the lack of them, for notary seals are dictated by state statute and can be divided into four categories, as follows:

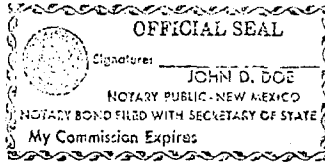
1. Mode of impression (embosser or rubber stamp).
2. General shape and size of seal.
3. Contents of seal
4. Jurisdiction.

Many states have little or no notary seal specifications. This allows for the possibility of extreme variation not only from state to state, as shown in Fig. 2, but also within a state. The appendix lists, by state, existing specifications pertaining to notary seals. As a word of caution, much of this information is subject to change at any time. Any specific information used from this appendix should be confirmed.

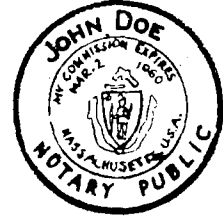
The secretary of state of each state may exercise the right to require each notary to supply the official with an impression of his or her notary seal and signature to be kept on file. Adherence to this procedure varies from state to state. Additionally, notaries in many states are required by law to maintain a log of their notarial transactions.



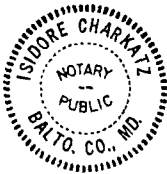
Montana



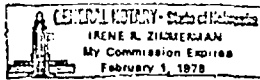
New Mexico



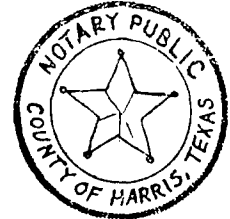
Massachusetts



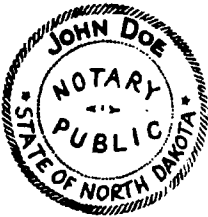
Maryland



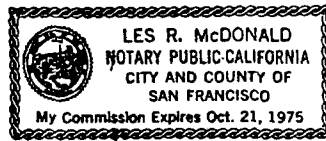
Nebraska



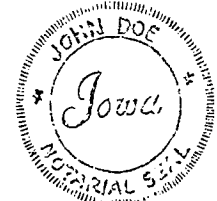
Texas



North Dakota



California



Iowa

FIG. 2—Actual and facsimile notary seals from various states [7] demonstrating the diversity of shape, size, and content.

Questioned Document Considerations

Case examination and research of notary seals revealed information that may prove helpful in certain examinations involving notary seals.

Population

When an analysis of individual characteristics is made with regard to uniqueness, one of the considerations that must be taken into account is population. Population, with regard to notary seals, is unique. The name of the notary public is often an integral part of the seal. Though not always the case, notary seals with an individual's name on it have a total population of one, making them, therefore, unique. This is not to say that uniqueness should be determined solely on the content of the seal's impression, as exact population is often impossible to establish definitely. However, a restricted population should be a major consideration when applying the theory of probability to the repetitive individual characteristics found within the questioned and known impressions.

Accessibility of Genuine Seals for Fraudulent Use

Accessibility of notary seals for illegitimate purposes is a definite weak link in the process of notarization. Notary seals, as with checkwriter impressions, seem to give an air of credibility to the most illicit of documents. For a single time or occasional use, one can obtain legitimate notarization from a notary by producing identification. This author has been able to obtain notarization of a signature that was not produced in the presence of the notary. Big-time users or those who desire to do everything themselves may have a notary seal complete with embosser prepared for them for about twenty dollars by simply ordering one at a local rubber stamp or engraving shop that makes them for commissioned notaries. No proof of commission is requested at the time of purchase nor is any verification required from these shops. This author is acquainted with one instance where a notary seal was purchased at a yard sale.

Class Versus Individual Characteristics

A proper understanding of class and individual characteristics requires knowledge about the manufacturing of notary seals. As seen in Fig. 3, the seal itself is composed of two parts, the lower plate containing the raised seal design and the upper plate containing the corresponding indented seal design. During the manufacturing of these seals, the upper plate is prepared first. It is usually made of brass. The basic design, words such as "notary public," any special design such as the state seal, and sometimes the name of the state are stamped into the new plate from a master mold. The letters composing the name of the notary and sometimes the state or county of commission, or both, are then individually hand-stamped onto the plate. As such, features of the name and, when applicable, the state or county, such

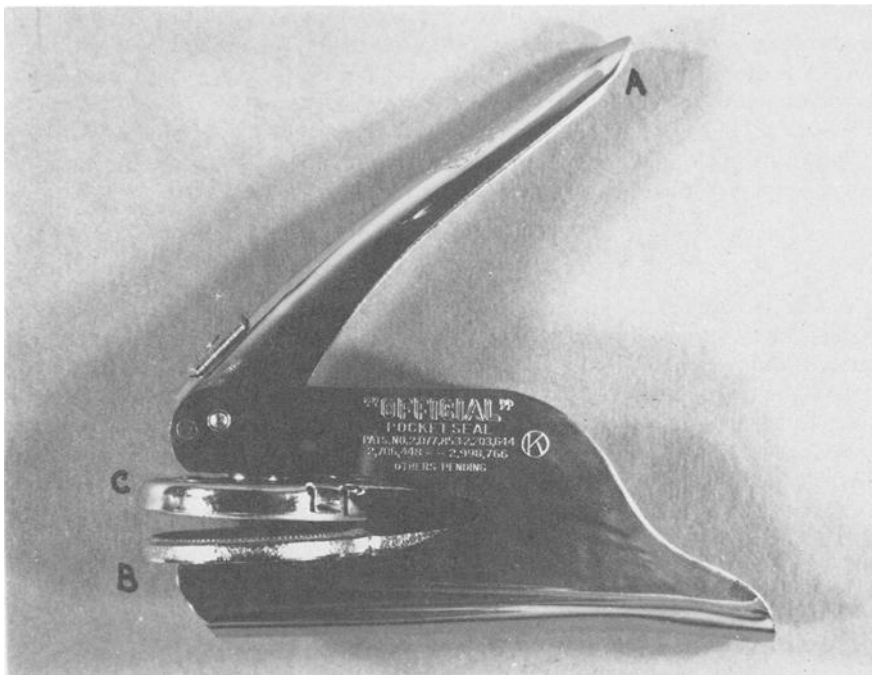


FIG. 3—A metal embossing instrument. When lever (A) is pressed downward, the bottom plate (B) containing the raised seal design and the top plate (C) containing the corresponding indented seal design are forced together under pressure, resulting in an embossed impression on inserted documents.

as baseline, letter spacing, and alignment in relation to other portions of the seal, are unique to that individual seal.

When completed, this upper plate with the indented seal design then becomes the mold for the lower plate. The lower plate contains the raised seal design and is usually made of lead or plastic. Because notary seals are made in this manner, each set of plates is characteristically unique. The upper and lower plate should normally contain the exact same class and individual characteristics, at the time of production, making the seal unique. Of course, after production, each plate is also susceptible to individual wear-and-tear defects from use or misuse.

Under high magnification, a properly embossed notary seal impression will reveal an extremely detailed definition of metal edges from the seal itself. If a defect is present, the question must then be asked as to whether it resulted from a defect in the master mold or individual letter stamps or whether it is an individual characteristic from use or abuse. The answer, of course, depends partly on where the defect occurs and what type of defect it is. For example, if the characteristic is within the name of the notary, the master mold can be ruled out. The problem arises for document examiners when extremely small letter defects are present. Determining the source of the defect can be the difference between discovering that the feature is a class or individual characteristic. It is strongly recommended that the embossing instrument be obtained to properly make these evaluations.

In general, class characteristics will be found on *both* the upper and lower plate, since one is the product of the other. Individual characteristics, conversely, will normally only be found on one plate.

This author has found that the use of side lighting from various directions produces the best results for observing the seal impression and discovering its class and individual characteristics.

During the course of this research, the most common individual feature observed was relative pressure variation within the impression. This variation can be seen in Fig. 4. This characteristic can be caused by numerous features such as warping or unusual wear through misuse. The overall pressure exerted during the embossing process, of course, is also variable and can result in a great difference in appearance of the impression. Overall pressure is commonly the product of the person using the seal rather than the seal itself. Examinations of impressions made using various overall pressures of embossing revealed that relative pressure variation within the impression is both repetitive and identifiable.

Sequence

The seal is required to be embossed near the signature or superimposed with the signature. In the normal course of business, the seal is impressed onto the paper after the notarial signature as the last act of notarization, though this is not a legal requirement. Questions, however, are properly raised when it is found that any handwriting or typewriting was made *after* the seal had embossed the paper. There are numerous characteristics to look for when determining the sequence of the seal and any handwriting or typewriting that intersect. These characteristics are a direct result of the existence of embossing on the paper by the notary seal. One feature to look for is the flattening of an embossment by the pen line or by the typewriter. Another common sequential feature is that writing lines often change directions slightly when the writing instrument strikes the edge of the embossment. Occasionally, a sequential characteristic has been found that could be called "pen skipping." When a pen approaches and comes in contact with an embossment, the pen will strike the near side of the rise in the paper, often gooping or indenting the embossment. The writing instrument there momentarily leaves the surface of the paper and returns at a point past the embossment, as seen in Fig. 5.

The pen skipping may not be as obvious as described above. It can also take the form of

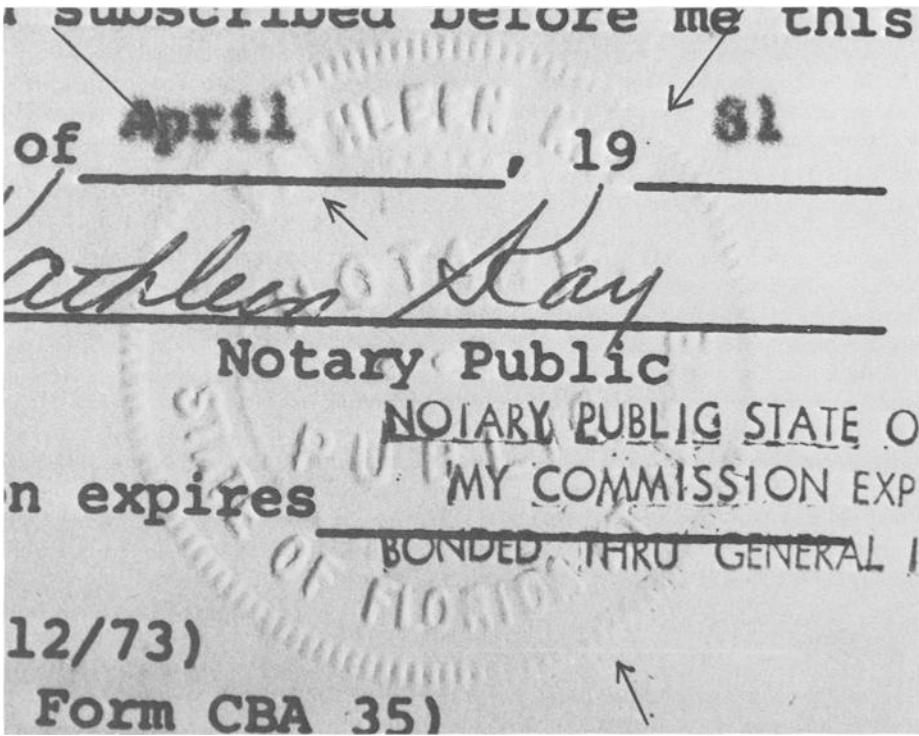


FIG. 4—A notary seal containing relative pressure variation that can be seen in regions of relatively light embossing, as marked by the arrows.

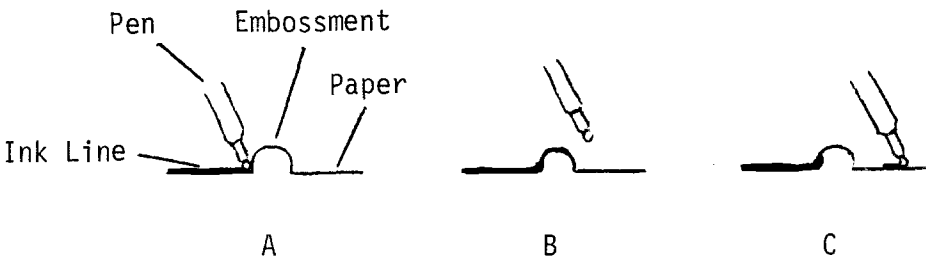


FIG. 5—Pen skipping. (A) The pen contacts the embossment. (B) The pen leaves the surface of the paper momentarily. (C) It returns to the paper at a point beyond the embossment.

pen pressure variation on either side of the embossment. Heavier pressure and sometimes gooping can often be observed on the side that the writing instrument is coming from and lighter pressure can often be found on the other side. Frequently, in situations involving the use of a ball-point pen, gooping can be observed on that side of an embossment from where the pen is coming. The presence of gooping can be a sequential characteristic independent of any other characteristics of pen skipping. If liquid ink was used, excess ink may be deposited on the side of the embossment that the pen came from.

When the seal has been embossed over handwriting or typewriting, the embossment will be level and consistent with areas of no intersection. There might, however, appear to be a

slight warping of the writing line or the typewriter impression at the intersection, but this is actually an illusion caused by the embossment and should be recognizable as such.

It should be cautioned that regardless of the sequence involved, some handwriting made with reasonably light pressure and normal speed will not display definitive sequential characteristics.

Dating

Genuine notary seals will be accompanied by a date of notarization that can often be verified by the notary's record of notarial transactions, if one is kept. However, the need may also arise for dating a document with only a questioned notary seal embossed on it. It is still possible for the document examiner to glean important dating information from the seal. The date that the notary, whose name appears on the seal, was commissioned can be established through information available from the office of the secretary of state. The specifications of the seal may also be compared with respect to changes in state laws, in an effort to determine the time frame in which the specifications of the questioned seal were in effect.

If a separate hand-stamped or typewritten section is present as part of the notarization to a document, a date of commission expiration should be included. This date, when compared with the length of commission of the state involved, may also assist in time-bracketing the date of the questioned document.

Remarks

Although this paper deals specifically with the notary seal, document examiners should not overlook other accompanying notarial information of value such as the signature and date entries.

The statutes concerning notaries public and the seals change frequently. This paper reflects, as best as possible, those statutes in effect at the end of 1981. Use of this paper on specific case examinations should be tempered with updated information that can be gained from either the office of the secretary of state of the specific state involved or by the American Society of Notaries, 810 18th Street, N.W., Washington, DC 20006.

Acknowledgments

The author wishes to acknowledge the assistance of the American Society of Notaries in Washington, DC, the Marking Device Association in Evanston, IL, and the numerous secretary of state offices in various states. The accuracy of many portions of this paper is a reflection of their cooperation, although any errors are the sole responsibility of the author.

APPENDIX²

Alabama—The notary seal must be embossed onto the paper. Though no specifications are made as to shape or size, the impression must contain the name of the notary, the words "Notary Public," the state, and, if applicable, the county of jurisdiction. Jurisdiction can be either countywide or statewide.

Alaska—The notary seal can either be embossed or stamped onto the paper. The seal may either be found with a diameter of not more than 51 mm (2 in.) or a rectangular form not more than 25 by 63 mm (1 by 2½ in.). The words "State of Alaska" and "Notary Public," along with the name of the notary, must appear on the seal. Jurisdiction is statewide.

²All state laws that specify dimensions use inch-pound units.

Arizona—The notary seal can either be embossed or stamped onto the paper. Though no specifications are made as to shape or size, the impression must contain the name of the notary, the words “Notary Public,” and the name of the county where the notary is commissioned. Jurisdiction is statewide.

Arkansas—The notary seal can either be embossed or stamped onto the paper. The latter method was legalized on 17 June 1981. Though no specifications are made as to shape or size, the impression must contain the name of the notary, his county of commission, and the words “Notary Public.” Jurisdiction is statewide.

California—The notary seal must be stamped onto the paper. The seal may either be circular, not over 51 mm (2 in.) in diameter, or rectangular with dimensions not to exceed 25 by 63 mm (1 by 2½ in.) with a serrated or milled-edged border. The impression must contain the state seal, the name of the notary, the county of residence or principal business, the words “Notary Public,” and the date of commission expiration. Jurisdiction is statewide.

Colorado—The notary seal can either be embossed or stamped onto the paper. Though no specifications are made as to shape or size, the impression must contain the name of the notary and the words “Notary Public” and “State of Colorado.” Jurisdiction is statewide.

Connecticut—There are no statutes governing specifications for notary seals. Jurisdiction is statewide.

Delaware—The notary seal must be embossed onto the paper. Though no specifications are made as to shape or size, the impression must contain the name of the notary, the words “Notary Public,” and the date of appointment. Jurisdiction is statewide.

District of Columbia—The notary seal must be embossed onto the paper. No specifications are made as to shape, size, or contents of the seal. Jurisdiction is districtwide.

Florida—The notary seal can either be embossed or stamped onto the paper. The seal must be round and contain the name of the notary and the words “Notary Public” and “State of Florida.” Jurisdiction is statewide.

Georgia—The notary seal must be embossed onto the paper. Though no specifications are made as to size or shape, the name of the notary is required. It is optional whether the state or the county of commission is included. The words “Notary Public” or “State at Large” may also be impressed. Jurisdiction is statewide.

Hawaii—The notary seal must be embossed onto the paper. Though no specifications are made as to shape or size, the impression must contain the name of the notary and the words “Notary Public” and “State of Hawaii.” Jurisdiction is statewide.

Idaho—The notary seal can either be embossed or stamped onto the paper. Though no specifications are made as to size or shape, the impression must contain the name of the notary and the words “Notary Public” and “State of Idaho.” Jurisdiction is statewide.

Illinois—The notary seal must be embossed onto the paper. Though no specifications are made as to size or shape, the impression must contain the name of the notary, his county of residence, and words descriptive of his office. Jurisdiction is statewide.

Indiana—The notary seal can either be embossed or stamped onto the paper. No specifications are made as to shape or size. The state literature says that the impressions must contain “words or letters sufficiently indicating his official characters, to which may be added such other device as he may choose.” Commonly this is interpreted to include the words “Notary Public” and “Indiana,” and to a lesser degree, the name of the notary. Jurisdiction is statewide.

Iowa—The notary seal can either be embossed or stamped onto the paper. Though no specifications are made as to size and shape of the seal, these aspects must be approved by the secretary of state. The name of the notary and the words “Notarial Seal” and “Iowa” must be used. The seal may also include the expiration date of the notary’s commission. Jurisdiction is statewide.

Kansas—The notary seal can either be embossed or stamped onto the paper. Though no specifications are made as to size and shape, the impression must contain the name of the notary and the words “State of Kansas.” Jurisdiction is statewide.

Kentucky—There are no specifications as to the size, shape, or type of seal used in Kentucky. When a seal is used the impression usually contains the name of the notary and the name of the county where commissioned or the state. Jurisdiction can either be statewide or countywide.

Louisiana—There are no statutes governing specifications for notary seals. Jurisdiction is parishwide.

Maine—The notary seal must be embossed onto the paper. Though no specifications are made as to shape or size, the impression must contain the name of the notary and the words "Notary Public" and either "Maine" or "ME." The state coat of arms may also be engraved in the center of the seal. Jurisdiction is statewide.

Maryland—The notary seal can either be embossed or stamped onto the paper. Though no specifications are made as to shape or size, the impression must contain the name of the notary, his county of commission or "City of Baltimore" if the commission is there, and reference to the office of notary (that is, "Notary Public" or words to that effect). Jurisdiction is statewide.

Massachusetts—There are no statutes governing specifications for notary seals. Jurisdiction is statewide.

Michigan—There are no specifications as to the size, shape, or type of seal used in Michigan. In fact, notary seals are not required by law. When seals are used, the impression usually contains the name of the notary, the name of the county of residence, and the commission expiration date. Jurisdiction is statewide.

Minnesota—The notary seal must be stamped onto the paper. The seal must be rectangular, of not more than 19 by 63 mm ($\frac{3}{4}$ by $2\frac{1}{2}$ in.), with a serrated or milled-edged border. The seal must contain the state seal, the name of the notary, the words "Notary Public," the name of the county of appointment, and the words "My commission expires _____." Jurisdiction is statewide.

Mississippi—The notary seal must be embossed onto the paper. It is indicated that the seal is to be round but no size specifications are given. The name of the notary along with the name of the country and the state abbreviation must be located along the outer margin of the seal. The words "Notary Public" must be in the central area. Jurisdiction is countywide but can also extend to adjacent counties by a 1981 statute.

Missouri—The notary seal must be embossed onto the paper. Though no specifications are made as to shape and size, the impression must contain the name of the notary and the words "Notary Seal," "Notary Public," and "State of Missouri." An accompanying rubber stamp, typewriting, or printing is required that contains the name of the notary, the words "Notary Public," "State of Missouri," and "My commission expires _____," and the county from which the notary was commissioned. Jurisdiction is statewide.

Montana—The notary seal must be embossed onto the paper. Though no specifications are made as to shape and size, the impression must contain the name of the notary and the words "Notarial Seal" and "State of Montana." Jurisdiction is statewide.

Nebraska—The notary seal must be stamped onto the paper. Though no specifications are made as to shape and size, the impression must contain the name of notary and the words "State of Nebraska" and either "General Notarial" or "General Notary." Date of expiration of commission can optionally be part of the seal. Jurisdiction is statewide. An example of the state's seal is given in Fig. 3.

Nevada—The notary seal must be stamped onto the paper. The seal must be rectangular with dimensions not in excess of 19 by 70 mm ($\frac{3}{4}$ by $2\frac{3}{4}$ in.) and have a serrated or milled-edged border. The seal must contain the state seal, the name of the notary, the words "Notary Public" and "State of Nevada," and the commission expiration date. The county of commission, though not required, is commonly present. Jurisdiction is statewide.

New Hampshire—The notary seal must be embossed onto the paper. There are no statutes governing specifications of size, shape, or content. Jurisdiction is statewide.

New Jersey—The notary seal can either be embossed or stamped onto the paper. There are no statutes governing specifications of size, shape, or content. Jurisdiction is statewide.

New Mexico—The notary seal can either be embossed or stamped onto the paper. The seal is to be rectangular in shape with approximate dimensions of 25 by 65 mm (1 by 2½ in.). The state seal is to be in the upper left corner. The words “Official Seal” are to be found at the upper edge below which is the word “Signature”; a baseline for a signature must exist. Under the baseline is printed the name of the notary. Under the name are the words “Notary Public—New Mexico,” “Notary Bond Filed with Secretary of State,” and “My Commission expires _____.” Jurisdiction is statewide.

New York—There are no statutes governing specifications for notary seals except for the required use of the words “State of New York” and “Notary Public” along with the name of the notary that must be printed, typewritten, or stamped below the notary’s signature. There are also some qualified contents which must be added if applicable. If a notary has filed a certificate of official character, the words “Certificate filed _____ County” must appear. In New York City, notaries are assigned numbers that must appear along with the other information. Jurisdiction is statewide.

North Carolina—The notary seal can either be embossed or stamped onto the paper. Though no specifications are made as to shape or size, the seal must contain the name of the notary, the name of the county where commissioned, the word “Notary Public,” and the name or abbreviation of the state. Jurisdiction is statewide.

North Dakota—The notary seal can either be embossed or stamped onto the paper. The seal may either be round or rectangular. No specifications are made regarding content. Jurisdiction is statewide.

Ohio—The notary seal can either be embossed or stamped onto the paper. The seal must be round with a 25-mm (1-in.) diameter and contain the words “State of Ohio” and either “Notarial seal,” or words to that effect and contain the state seal. The name of the notary can either be part of the seal or it can be separately printed, typed, or stamped. Jurisdiction is statewide.

Oklahoma—The notary seal can either be embossed or stamped onto the paper. There are no statutes governing specifications concerning size, shape, or contents. Jurisdiction is statewide.

Oregon—The notary seal can either be embossed or stamped onto the paper. Specifications for embossed and stamped format are different and are prescribed as follows by state statute:

The seal of the imprint type, shall have the words “Notary Public” in the center, circumscribed by the name of the notary . . . and the words “State of Oregon.” The diameter not less than one and one-half inches [38 mm]. The stamp shall be one inch [25 mm] in height and two and one-half inches [63 mm] long, outlined by a single solid line. Beginning ⅜” [9.5 mm] from top, centered shall be: a) A single straight line two inches [51 mm] long . . . b) Name of notary c) Words: “Notary Public, Oregon” d) Words: “My commission expires _____.”

Jurisdiction is statewide.

Pennsylvania—The notary seal must be embossed onto the paper. Though no specifications are made as to size or shape, the impression must contain the name of the notary and the words “Notary Public” and “Commonwealth of Pennsylvania.” An accompanying rubber stamp is required containing the expiration of term and the name of the county of business and the notary’s political subdivision (city, township, or borough). Jurisdiction is statewide.

Rhode Island—There are no statutes governing specifications for notary seals. Jurisdiction is statewide.

South Carolina—The notary seal can either be embossed or stamped onto the paper. There are no statutes governing specifications concerning size, shape, or content. Jurisdiction is statewide.

South Dakota—The notary seal can either be embossed or stamped onto the paper. There are no statutes governing specifications concerning size, shape, or content. Jurisdiction is statewide.

Tennessee—The notary seal must be embossed onto the paper. Though no specifications are made regarding shape or size, the impression must contain the notary's name, the words "Notary Public," and either the county of commission or the words "Notary at Large." Jurisdiction is either statewide or countywide.

Texas—The notary seal can either be embossed or stamped onto the paper. Statute indicates, but does not expressly state, that the round form of seal is to be used. No size specifications are given. The seal must contain the words "Notary Public" and contain a five-point star in the center. After 1 Jan. 1981, the name of the county where commissioned was no longer required as a seal entry. Since then, the words "State of Texas" have been required. In addition, notaries are required to print or stamp their name and their commission expiration dates. Jurisdiction is statewide.

Utah—The notary seal can either be embossed or stamped onto the paper. Though no specifications are made as to size or shape, the impression must contain the name of the notary and the words "State of Utah" and either "Notary Public" or "Notarial Seal." Jurisdiction is statewide.

Vermont—There are no statutes governing specifications for notary seals. Jurisdiction is statewide.

Virginia—There are no statutes governing specifications for notary seals. As of 1 July 1979, all notaries have statewide jurisdiction. Until 1 July 1983, the name of the county or city of original commission may still be on the seal. Others will only contain the name of the state.

Washington—The notary seal can either be embossed or stamped onto the paper. If a rubber stamp is used, the size or the type must be a minimum of eight points and the stamp must be round with a diameter of at least 51 mm (2 in.). No specifications are provided for size or shape of an embossed seal. All seals must contain the name of the notary, the date of expiration of commission, and the words "Notary Public" and "State of Washington." Jurisdiction is statewide.

West Virginia—The notary seal can either be embossed or stamped onto the paper. There are no statutes governing specifications concerning size, shape, or contents, except for the words "State of West Virginia" for notaries who have statewide jurisdiction. Jurisdiction is either statewide or countywide.

Wisconsin—The notary seal can either be embossed or stamped onto the paper. Though no specifications are made as to shape or size, the impression must contain the name of the notary and the words "Notary Public, State of Wisconsin." Jurisdiction is statewide.

Wyoming—The notary seal can either be embossed or stamped onto the paper. The seal can either be circular with a diameter of not more than 51 mm (2 in.) or rectangular with dimensions not in excess of 19 by 63 mm ($\frac{3}{4}$ by $2\frac{1}{2}$ in.) and with serrated or milled-edged borders. The impression must contain the name of the notary, the county of commission, and the words "Notary Public" and "Wyoming." Jurisdiction is statewide.

References

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- [2] *Handbook for Notaries Public in Tennessee*, Notary Committee, County Court, Shelby County, Memphis, TN, 1976.
- [3] *Handbook for Mississippi Notaries Public*, Edwin Lloyd Pittman, Secretary of State, State of Mississippi, Jackson, 1981.
- [4] "An Act: Senate Bill No. 213," Many Estill Buchanan, Secretary of State, State of Colorado, Denver, 1981.
- [5] "Information on Application for Appointment as a Notary Public in and for the District of Columbia," Executive Office, Government of the District of Columbia, Washington, DC, 1973.

[6] *Manual for Notaries Public* and Chapter 42, 28 RCW, Division of Professional Licensing, State of Washington, Olympia, 1980.

[7] *A Manual of Official and Required Seals*, Marking Device Association, Evanston, IL, 1970.

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