

HeraldicAmerica

THE SEAL OF QUEBEC CITY

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The Seal of Quebec City

The seal of Quebec City is one of the finest examples of Canadian municipal sigillography in the 19th century. This rare imprint was affixed to the official Address of the Council to Commander de Belvèze sent to Canada in 1855 by Emperor Napoleon III (National Archives of Canada, MG 24, F 42, Diam. 43mm. Photo C130753).

It depicts the Goddess of work and activity seated beside a beehive and corn cobs, and showing with the left hand Cap-Diamant and the port of Quebec City. On the right side of the ground, a beaver, emblem of Canada, completes the scene.

The arms displayed on the oval shield held by the feminine figure with her right hand, were assumed by Quebec City from 24 May 1833 to 17 May 1949. They are blazoned as *Gules a lion*

passant guardant holding in the dexter paw a key erect Or.
These arms are very similar to the lower part of those granted to the Anglican Diocese of Quebec by King George III in 1793.

The symbolism is obvious: the English lion holds Quebec City, the key to Canada. On the edge of the seal, starting on the upper left, the municipal motto reads *Natura Fortis Industria Crescit* (Strong nature prospers by work). Beneath the scene, in the exergue, is the legend *Conditā Quebecens A.D. MDCVIII Civitatis Regimine Donata MDCCCXIII* (Quebec founded in 1608 -- Municipal Government instituted in 1833). This neoclassical design was done by Joseph Légaré (1795-1855), a well-known artist and a member of the first Council of Quebec City 1833-36.

After 1949, Quebec City assumed new arms which, after some minor alterations, were granted by the Chief Herald of Canada on 20 September 1988. The City now bears *Azure on a base barry wavy argent and azure an ancient ship under full sail Or, on a chief gules fimbriated Or two keys in saltire Or surmounted by a maple leaf Vert.*

This historical grant was the first to be made to a municipality by the new Canadian Heraldic Authority.

(Reference: *Heraldry in Canada/L'héraldique au Canada*, Vol. XXIII, NO.5, December 1989)

