

Peter Jay's Seal

1722

Ebony, Silver

JJ.2006.34



This letter seal belonged to John Jay's father Peter (1704-1782). Designed to be pressed into hot wax to seal letters, the image on the bottom is the Jay coat of arms. Having a unique symbol would allow the recipient to know who the letter was from before it was opened. The handle of the seal is made from ebony, with the image on the bottom carved into silver. Scratched into the collar is "Peter Jay 1722".

The Jay coat of arms has a shield in the middle. The shield has a shining sun at top center, above a chevron pointing upward with a star on either side of it, and a standing bird beneath the chevron. Above the shield is a pair of overlapped hearts, with foliate scrollwork flanking the hearts and shield.

This is the original Jay family crest. The crest was changed, likely sometime in the 1740s. The hearts were replaced with a cross above four steps. The hearts are a symbol associated with the Huguenots; specifically, with protestant reformer John Calvin. The change to the cross is likely to reflect the family's affiliation with the Episcopal church in America.