

1.

Spring is when thoughts of a young man's fancy turn to graduation and getting on with his life! As *you* should already know, the promotion of framing educational memorabilia and that beloved diploma should be one of this summer's projects. Ads and promotionals on certificate framing may not only put cash in your pocket, but certificate framing also helps instill that feeling of pride and accomplishment in the new graduates who may become your next generation of loyal customers.

In the article *Vellum and Sheepskin* (June '92, PFM) I discussed the mounting do's and don'ts of delicate animal skin documents. Another area of serious consideration, prior to mounting any certificate or document, must be the ribbons, blind embossed designs or logos, and metallic notary seals of gold or silver (see opening photos 1 & 2).

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Embossed Gold Seals

by Chris A. Paschke, CPF

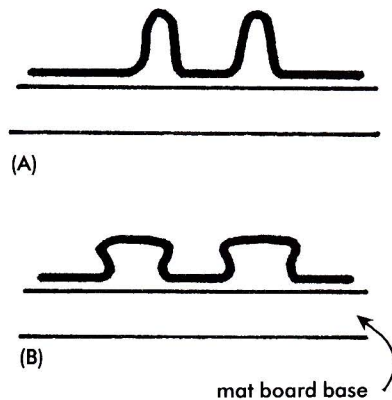
When framing certificates or documents, always consider the use of ribbons, blind embossed designs or logos, and metallic notary seals.



2.



Diagram 1



Gold seal on mat board prior to (A) and squared up after (B) mounting, without overlay foam as a buffer. Paper, blind embossed, will slightly flatten or square off the tops.

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Common sense should tell you that any time there is an embossed hollow surface on the item to be mounted, care should be taken in the mounting process chosen. Pressure was initially applied to the stationery or seal with some type of embossing tool essentially recontouring the material into the lettering design or pattern on the tool. Thus, if pressure is reapplied to the seal (this time, by mounting in a mechanical or hot vacuum press) the risk of pressing the notary seal flat is very possible.

Essentially, any type of mounting system will work effectively and safely when used with proper control. Wet, spray, pressure-sensitive or hinging are all acceptable and effective solutions to dealing with the fear of flattening a notary seal!

Dry mounting, however, is the concentration of this article and, after testing an assortment of substrates, adhesives, and element ratios in both mechanical and vacuum systems, it is safe to say *fear not*. Dominant control over the time, temperature, pressure and moisture factors is imperative when using any dry mounting system.

Variables

Mounting for 3 to 5 minutes at 180°F is the most generally accepted time/temperature ratio, and works well for this project. Successful notary seal mountings are contingent

upon a number of variables. Regardless of whether the seal is gold or silver, if the seal is poorly embossed or somewhat flat to begin with, it may not withstand the 10 psi of a vacuum press very well and you should consider an alternative mounting process. It also matters whether the embossing is done directly into the paper, as in a blind embossed logo (i.e. white on white) on company letterhead stationery, or on a metallic gold seal, independently positioned on a document.

Generally, a machine-made blind embossed design (one directly into the paper) is well seated and has a great deal of detail and dimension. Tests show that even when left in the presses for long periods (i.e. 10 minutes) at 10-12 psi they still remain quite detailed. The physical structure of the paper has essentially been reconstructed during the initial embossing, and although the letters may slightly flatten, they actually seem to square up rather than flatten out (diagram 1). Since paper once reshaped does not have a memory, it can never truly regain its initial flat shape.

Substrates

Seals are generally hand embossed and are a little less stable. When

mounting onto foam board it has been noted that the board will often begin to contour subtly to the negative spaces within the seal (diagram 2). The longer the document remains in the press, the more the background will be pressed forward around the existing lettering or design to the point of almost riding on the same plane as the farthest embossed point of the seal. It remains a very legible embossed design, but almost looks a little bloated.

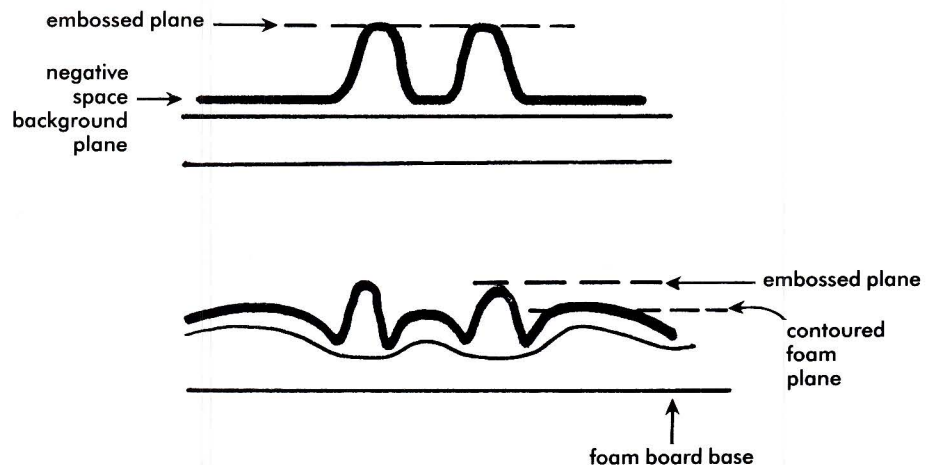
The better substrate to use would be mat board or any standard 4-ply equivalent mounting board. You may wish to consider the acid-free factor if mounting a diploma—it needs to last a long time! A stable mat board type of substrate will not squish or contour into the negative spaces as a foam product might. Then again, for the suggested 3-5 minutes at 180°F, either foam or paper core boards work equally well, especially when using the blue overlay foam.

Overlay Foam

A highly recommended additional step would be to layer a piece of blue overlay foam (the same product required for the laminating process) over the entire certificate being mounted. This will equalize the

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Diagram 2



Foam board has a tendency to contour to attempt to fit the shape of the seal or embossing. Thus, the negative spaces around the design will mold from the unmounted image (A) to the mounted image (B). This brings the background plane forward though the indented design will still remain.



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pressure against the paper as well as the highs and lows of the embossing in the seal itself. Remember to cover the entire project, so as not to initiate any variance in the pressure or create an edge across the project. A surface pressure ridge or edge could create a dent in the completed project due to uneven platen pressure (as in a mechanical press) or, if using foam board as a substrate, it is very susceptible to pressure differences and can easily dent.

Recap Of The Basics

1. In relation to dry mounting, mechanical blind embossings are generally very sound and almost oblivious to flattening (top of photo 3).

2. Foam substrates can collapse and/or contour the negative spaces up around the embossed design rather than flattening out the design or seal. Foam significantly reduces the extremes of heat and pressure since it acts as a cushion making it highly unlikely it will ever flatten the seal. However, the level of contrast between the initial plane of the embossed image and the background can be greatly lessened (bottom of photo 3).

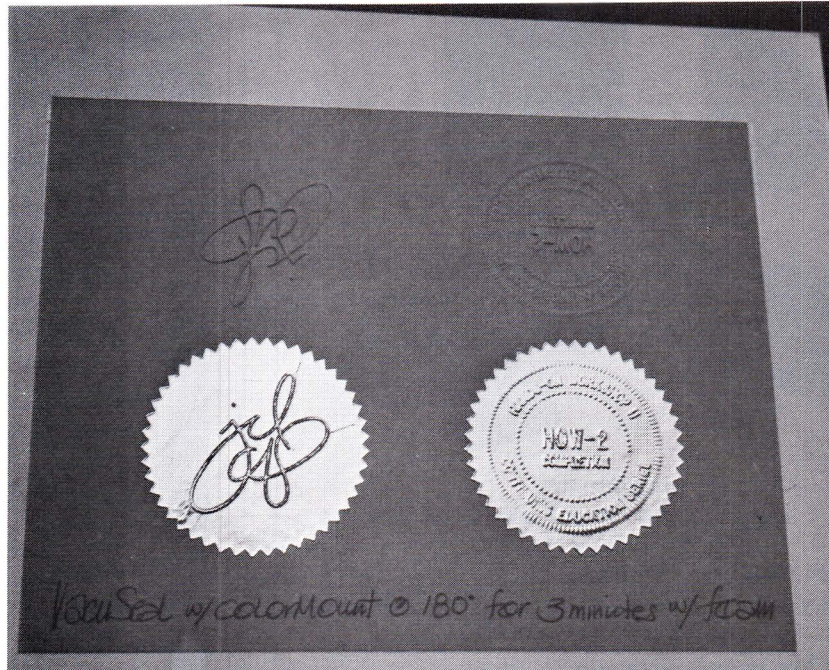
3. Though solid board substrates keep a nice, clean contrast between the plane of the background and foreground, they can somewhat press the image out of the seal with extremes of time, temperature and pressure (photo 4).

4. Use overlay foam for that extra insurance policy which neutralizes platen pressure.

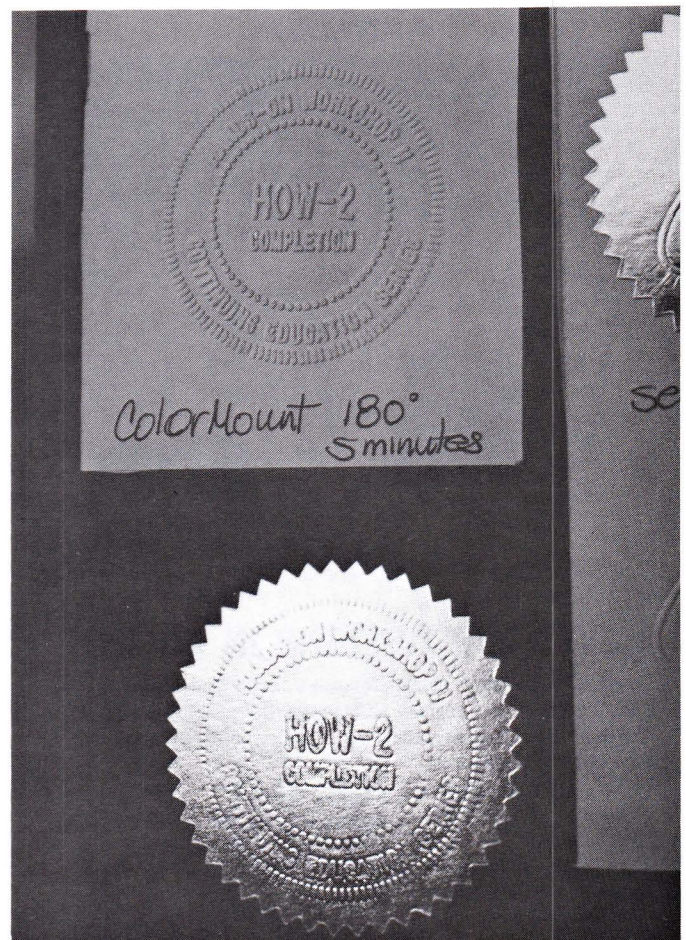
Fear not the embossed seal; it may be heated, pressed, and it will stand the test of time. Extremely shallow designs are "iffy". You may wish to use an alternative to dry mounting. If the seal is nicely detailed and the certificate is crying for dry mounting, why not bring in the extra dollars?

PFM

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3. Light weight stationery paper with blind embossing on the top of the photo and embossed seals at the bottom. Mounted on foam board at 180°F for 3 minutes with a foam overlay creates an acceptable and clean contrast. From from away, and at a glance, the lost plane differentiation is almost visually meaningless.



4. The upper blind embossed seal is slightly flattened (squared off) when mounted on firm mat board (as seen in Diagram 1). The lower notary seal is fairly flattened due to the lack of an overlay foam buffer and increased time in the mechanical press.