

There is a reference book at the library that I use occasionally called The California Blue Book that lists state government officials from 1849 to the year it was published. One day recently while looking up a name in the index, I turned to the back of the book, but ended up some pages before the index began. The chapter here was titled "State Insignia." Curious, I began looking through it. The first item was the California State Great Seal, starring the Goddess Minerva. According to the old myths, Minerva had sprung full-grown from the head of Zeus. She could be compared to California, which became a state without first becoming a territory. She came to represent wisdom and reason. She is seated in front of a scene which includes water on which ships are sailing, and the Sierra is pictured in the background with snowy peaks. On the land around her are a grizzly bear and a miner. This design was produced in 1849 but was not officially the state seal until 1966.

Our state flag is the bear flag, which closely follows the design on the flag raised in Sonoma on June 14, 1846 to declare California's independence from Mexico; it was taken down about a month later when the U.S. declared war against Mexico. It features a red star in the upper left hand

## Do You Remember?

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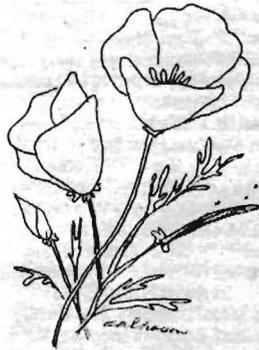


### California State Insignia

corner, a grizzly bear on a patch of green, a wide red stripe at the bottom. Above the red stripe are the words "California Republic." This became the official flag of California in 1911.

The state colors are Yale blue (a deep purplish blue) and golden yellow. These were chosen by Rebecca Bragg of the University of California class of 1876. Since about 1911, they have been used in ribbons on official state documents. They became officially the state colors in 1951. The state flower is, of course, the golden poppy (*Eschscholzia californica*), in 1903 the oldest of state insignia. April 6 is recognized as "Poppy Day." The flower is found wild throughout California, and hardly anywhere else until recent shipping of seeds. Its Latin name was in honor of the surgeon on a Russian ship that came to San Francisco Bay in 1816 on a scientific expedition. Despite the drought the poppies are blooming brightly on our hills now.

The California Valley Quail is also widely distributed throughout the state and became the official bird in 1931. They gather together in coveys of up to about 30 birds. However, in the spring they separate into couples to raise their chicks. At our house, we love to see the large groups. In April we worry about the chicks under the bushes outside our dining room window. The plump quail are beautifully colored and have a distinguishing mark—their



#### Drawing of Poppies by Tillie Calhoun

topknot. Our state tree is the redwood, which was officially chosen in 1937. However, in 1953 a special law was passed to ensure that both species of redwood, the coastal redwood and the Sierra big tree, are included in the designation. They are named after the great Cherokee chief, Sequoyah, who invented a system of syllable characters so that the tribe could read and write in its own language. Although once common in the Northern Hemisphere, redwoods are now confined almost entirely to California.

The state insignia I have written about so far, I'm sure are not new to the reader, but there are many more. The Pasadena Playhouse was declared as the state theater in 1937. It is the first stage in the U.S. to produce all 37 of Shakespeare's plays. Its cornerstone was laid in 1924. Many early actors and actresses studied and worked there. It closed in 1969, but was restored by the City of Pasadena and reopened in 1986. Its main

stage seats 680 people. The state fish is the California golden trout, one of four native trout from the rugged upper Kern River area. A beautiful species, it became the official state fish in 1947, but by then was almost extinct. In 1978 federal legislation created the 303,000-acre Golden Trout Wilderness. Plans were made to restore and maintain the golden trout's habitat. Another fish, the garibaldi, became our official state marine fish in 1995. It is a lovely golden orange and common in the shallow waters and reefs of the southern California coast all the way up to and including Monterey Bay.

We have a state song, "I Love You, California" (1951), a state motto, Eureka! (1963), a state rock, serpentine (1965), a state mineral, gold—what else! (1965), a state gemstone, benitoite (1985), a state folk dance, the square dance (1988), a state dance, the West Coast Swing (1988), and even a state soil, San Joaquin soil (1997). The state animal is, of course, the grizzly bear. It was officially designated in 1953, even though the last grizzly in California was killed in Tulare County in 1922. It was the only species of bear found here in the Tri-Valley area. The state fossil is the saber tooth cat, the second most common mammal found in the Rancho La Brea tar pits in southern California. It was about a foot shorter than living lions, but nearly twice as heavy. It had a bobtail like the bobcat and roamed the state during the late Pleistocene Era, reaching extinction about 10,000 years ago. The teeth for which it was named were eight-inch long upper canines. It became the official fossil in 1973.

I will continue with the list in an upcoming column.

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