

THE AMERICAN FLAG

Prior to the revolutionary war the British flag stood as the national emblem of the American colonies. During the period in which separation from the mother country was being agitated various emblems—one of the most notable bearing an inscription "Join or die" and another displaying a rattlesnake, with the words "Don't tread on me"—were widely used by the colonists.

The stars and stripes were originated in 1777. Congress resolved that "the flag of the United States be 13 stripes, alternate red and white, and that the union be 13 white stars on a blue field." In 1794 the number of stripes and stars was increased to 15 to include the two states of Vermont and Kentucky.

After several new states had thus been admitted it was seen that this plan of increasing the stripes with the addition of new states would in time cause the national emblem to appear cumbersome and unlovely. So in April, 1818—100 years ago—congress restored the 13 stripes to represent the 13 original states and make the stars to stand for the states. At that time there were 20 states in the Union.

No definite arrangement of the stars had been provided for and until 1912, when President Taft ordered that they should be arranged in six horizontal rows of eight stars each, many different styles were used.

As now established the stars representing each state appears in the order of the state's ratification, beginning at the upper lefthand corner and reading the rows from left to right, the following list shows the position of each state's star:

First row—No. 1, Del.; 2, Pa.; 3, N. J.; 4, Ga.; 5, Conn.; 6, Mass.; 7, Md.; 8, S. C.

Second row—No. 9, N. H.; 10, Va.; 11, N. Y.; 12, N. C.; 13, R. I.; 14, Vt.; 15, Ky.; 16, Tenn.

Third row—No. 17, O.; 18, La.; 19, Ind.; 20, Miss.; 21, Ill.; 22, Ala.; 23, Me.; 24, Mo.

Fourth row—No. 25, Ark.; 26, Mich.; 27, Fla.; 28, Tex.; 29, Ia.; 30, Wis.; 31, Calif.; 32, Minn.

Fifth row—No. 33, Ore.; 34, Kans.; 35, W. Va.; 36, Nev.; 37, Nebr.; 38, Col.; 39, N. Dak.; 40, S. Dak.

Sixth row—No. 41, Mont.; 42, Wash.; 43, Ida.; 44, Wyo.; 45, Utah; 46, Okla.; 47, N. Mex.; 48, Ariz.

It will be seen that the first star in row 5 is Oregon's.

THE MUSKRAT

Should you chance to be sauntering at dusk on a bank of the river or the creek at the edge of town when the noises of the day are gone you may see gracefully moving in the stream the brown body of the fiber zibethicus, remarks the Indianapolis News. You will perhaps know this little swimmer somewhat better under his familiar name of muskrat, and he is

also called musk beaver, and by the Indians named musquash.

He is a native, found all over North America, from the Atlantic to the Pacific. The body is ratlike, 13 to 15 inches long, and the tail is nine or 10 inches long. The color is ruddy brown above, darker on the back and grayish below. The under fur is fine, close and silky. Once it was much used for hats, but now it is chiefly used for women's furs.

The muskrat lives near lakes, ponds and sluggish streams, in the banks of which it makes its burrows, with the entrance under water. These animals are nocturnal by habit. The galleries that form the entrances to their nests sometimes extend 20 to 30 feet from the water.

The muskrat is a clean feeder, though rather omnivorous in his taste, as he eats roots, grasses, vegetables, fruits, mussels, fish and even flesh, when he can get it. At times muskrats do much damage by undermining the embankments of streams. They are prolific, as they bring forth young as often as three times a year, with from four to six at a birth.

Some of the earlier residents of Indianapolis proclaimed that the muskrat was a choice article of food, having a high gamey flavor that excelled the flesh of any other animal. It is said that even today the muskrat is sold in the Baltimore and Detroit markets where it finds ready and appreciative buyers.

UNUSUAL SNAKE STORIES

W. H. Willis, of Dover, Del., recently shot and killed a seven-foot blacksnake as it was creeping toward a bird's nest in the top of a tree. The man's attention was attracted by the excited twittering of some birds.

Some time ago Mrs. Delmus Young, of Lincoln county, Ky., missed a china egg from her henhouse. Recently a snake appeared near her house and was killed by a party of men. A large protuberance in its body aroused their curiosity; when they cut it open they found the missing egg.

Stephen Saunderer, a laborer, was walking through the fields when he stumbled onto the reptile which he says chased him for a considerable distance. People living in the outskirts of the city have been annoyed by losing cream from bottles on their porches; they believe that the snake is responsible for the thefts.

A small snake crawled into a switchbox on a railroad near Lafayette, Ind., a few days ago and cut off the electric current by which the switch is operated. The Hoosier limited coming along a few minutes after was brought to a stop in obedience to the contrary signal. When taken out the snake was alive though paralyzed by the shock.