



The Great Seal of the United States

BY BILL KREH

BACK on June 20, 1782, Congress passed an act which authorized the establishment of the Great Seal of the United States. An engraver got to work, and in a few weeks, the first brass die was completed, and the official symbol of the newly-formed nation was put into use.

Today, that same Great Seal is affixed to approximately 3,000 documents a year, according to its custodian for the past ten years, Mrs. Clydia Mae Richardson of the State Department's Division of Protocol.

The press used to affix the seal to official documents can be found in use six days a week within a small office of the State

Department Building in Washington, D. C.

The use of the Seal on official documents as a symbol of dignity and authenticity is strictly defined by law. It is placed on such civil commissions as those of cabinet officers, ambassadors and ministers, and on individual warrants signed by the President. It also is affixed to such documents as instruments of ratification of treaties, full powers to negotiate a treaty or to exchange ratifications, and Presidential proclamations, and to the envelopes that contain letters of credence or other ceremonial communications to the heads of foreign governments.

The design of the Great Seal is used on medals, currency, official stationery and publications, military caps and uniform buttons, and as an architectural adornment.

In large size and full color, it is placed above the entrances to U. S. embassies, legations and consulates all over the world.

At the time it was first authorized, the Seal was affixed by attaching a paper wafer to the document with a thin layer of red wax and impressing the seal while the wax still was soft — a method which served to bring out in clear relief the design of the Seal, as well as to attach the wafer firmly to the document.

Later usage, however, has modi-

fied this method by substituting glue or paste for the wax, and this is the method in use at the present time.

Down through the years, new engravings of the Seal have had to be made to replace the old ones as they became worn out.

Two of the later dies cut — one in 1841 and another in 1877 — often are called the “illegal” seals, because they did not conform to the specifications of the 1782 law. Both of these dies depicted only six arrows in the eagle’s left talon, instead of the 13 which were specified by Congress. In 1855, a new die was cut to conform to the law.

THE DIE of the Great Seal in use today was engraved in 1903 by Max Zeiler of Philadelphia, and experts say it will be in use for quite a while yet, because it still is as sharp and clear as when it was new.

The reverse side of the Great Seal never has been cut and used as an official document seal. It does, however, appear on our currency.

The Great Seal is regarded by historians as the most artistic “hand mark” of the nations. It keeps alive the ideals of unity, security and peace which the founding fathers wished to emphasize both at home and abroad as the guiding motives of their new Republic.



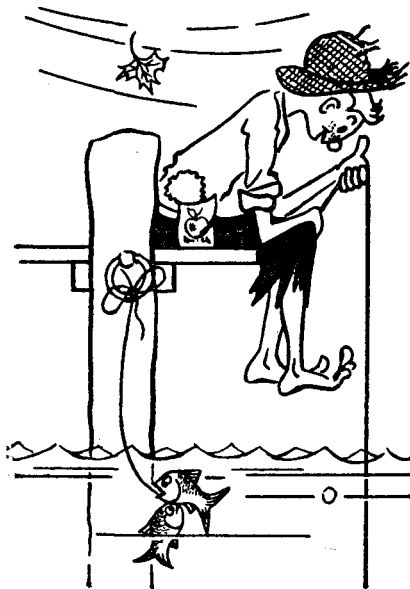


The Mark Twain

I REMEMBER

As told to **WALDO CARLTON WRIGHT**

IT WAS just before the turn of the century when I came to know Mark Twain. At the time, he was sixty-four and I was seven. For



the next eight years I spent many days with him, whenever he came home between lecture tours to be with his semi-invalid wife, Olivia Langdon, and his daughters, Clara and Susan, in Elmira, New York.

Samuel Clemens must have wanted a son badly, the way he welcomed me into his life that first Saturday morning. My father, an Elmira contractor, had taken me with him to Quarry Hill where he was making some alterations on the barn.

It was a pleasant spot overlooking the winding Chemung and the green valley, and I set out to explore an octagonal brick building I had noticed on the way up. It looked more like the bridge of a ship than a house. Peering through the windows, I saw a white-haired man at a desk. He was scratching away furiously, tossing the sheets aside on the floor.

He looked up and his intense black eyes scared me. He laid down