

Poison

Utah in the US of A proposes to honour John Browning, a famous son of that state, by making his famous design, the Colt M1911 semi-automatic .45 calibre pistol, the Official State Firearm. This is a first as far as I know. But perhaps not for the Beehive State. They already boast an Official State Historic Vegetable (the sugar beet), so why not a gun?

State nicknames, flowers, trees, animals and fruit I have heard of. My partner comes from the Blueberry State which is good because I really like blueberries. As it happens, there are actually two American states that celebrate the blueberry: New Jersey and North Carolina. This is not as confusing as it sounds because while in the Garden State the blueberry is the Official State Fruit, in the Tar Heel State it is designated the Official State Blue Berry (not to be confused with the Official State Red Berry which is the strawberry).

Utah's selection of a forty-five for a state symbol made me wonder what instruments of death other states could legitimately display. The electric chair was first used in the Empire State so let's make Old Sparky the Official State Historic Execution Method of New York. And, since the electrocution technology was first developed at Thomas Edison's laboratory in West Orange, NJ, the Blueberry State can also claim some credit. Perhaps as the Official State Lethal Invention.

Bragging rights for the oh-so-humane lethal injection can be shared between Oklahoma (the first state to place the method on the statute books) and Texas, which was the first state to carry out such an execution. Here I suggest a new category: the Official State This-won't-hurt-a-bit Death Penalty.

Nevada is very lucky since it was in this state that the first execution by cyanide gas was carried out. Having an Official State Poison surely trumps a mere historic vegetable.