



# Colorado State History ~ In a Nutshell ~

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Colorado State History In a Nutshell  
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### **What is the "In a Nutshell" series?**

This is a series of concise, easy to understand information on many popular topics. You will find that many of products in this series can also be found as part of larger publications and/or curriculum on the publisher's website. At the end of each book, you will find a list of questions that may be used to help you review the material.

# Colorado State History Lapbook Journal Study Guide



The Great Seal of Colorado

Colorado has become known as a skier's paradise, perhaps destined after words from President Theodore Roosevelt,

*"Passing through your wonderful mountains and canyons I realize that this state is going to be more and more the playground for the whole republic... You will see this the real Switzerland of America."*

Colorado is the highest state and has more mountains reaching 14,000 feet than any other state. "Grand Mesa", the world's largest flat-top plateau is also found in Colorado. Her mountain scenery is some of the most beautiful and dramatic in the United States and Colorado is a center for vacationers taking advantage of the pleasant summer climate and the ample supplies of powdered snow in the winter.

The Rocky Mountain State is a leader in manufacturing of scientific and medical instruments and is also a major agricultural and mining state. Its gold and silver mining boom days are well known.

Soon after gold was discovered near Denver, the region around Pikes Peak became the Colorado Territory. Other names, such as Colona, Jefferson, Osage and even Idaho, were suggested and discarded in favor of Colorado, Spanish for "red" in reference to the color of the water of the Colorado River.

People who live in or come from Colorado are referred to as Coloradans.



Map of Colorado – Capitol, Major Cities and Rivers

## STATEHOOD

In 1803, the United States purchased a large tract of land from France, the Louisiana Purchase. The eastern part of what was to become Colorado was included in this purchase. In 1806, President Jefferson sent Lieutenant Zebulon Pike to explore part of the new land acquisition. It was on this trip that the Pike expedition reported a 14,110-foot peak that would later be used to draw people to Colorado by the thousands. Today, that mountain is called Pikes Peak. Over the next 50 years, Colorado was visited by explorers, adventurers, trappers, hunters, and traders.

The first major settlements by U.S. citizens in the area began when gold was discovered at the mouth of Dry Creek (Englewood). It's estimated that this discovery led to the migration of around 50,000 people to Colorado between 1858 and 1859 represented by the slogan, "Pikes Peak or Bust!" The United States Congress passed a bill to create the Colorado Territory in 1861.

Over the years, many attempts were made by Coloradans to attain statehood. Finally, 14 years after achieving territory status and after two vetoes of the 1864 State Enabling Act by President Andrew Johnson, House Bill 435 passed through the U.S. Congress and was signed by President Grant on March 3, 1875.

Later that year, in October, the citizens of Colorado elected a Constitutional Convention. The convention was held on December 20, 1875 at the Odd Fellow Hall in Denver. It took 87 days to draft a final version of the Colorado Constitution. On March 14, 1876, it was completed and signed. On July 1, 1876, the Constitution was approved in a statewide vote (15,443 to 4,072) by the people of Colorado. On July 25, 1876, the official Colorado Constitution was taken to Washington D.C. Colorado was inducted into the Union on August 1, 1876 by proclamation of President Ulysses S. Grant.

## STATE CONSTITUTION

The Colorado Constitution is the governing document of the state of Colorado. It was drafted in March of 1876 and ratified by the state's voters on July 1, 1876, taking effect a month later on August 1, 1876 when Colorado became a state.

**PREAMBLE:** *We, the people of Colorado, with profound reverence for the Supreme Ruler of the Universe, in order to form a more independent and perfect government; establish justice; insure tranquility; provide for the common defense; promote the general welfare and secure the blessings of liberty to ourselves and our posterity, do ordain and establish this constitution for the "State of Colorado.*

## STATE GOVERNMENT

As in the case of the federal government, Colorado's state government is organized into three branches - legislative, executive, and judicial.

The governor heads the Executive Branch. The governor is elected by a statewide vote for a four-year term. He acts as chief administrator responsible for carrying out state laws and administering the executive budget. The citizens of Colorado elect four other positions in the

executive branch as well. They are the lieutenant governor, the secretary of state, the state treasurer and the attorney general. The lieutenant governor acts as chief executive when the governor is absent.

Colorado's Legislative Branch, the Colorado General Assembly is composed of two bodies like the United States Congress, the House of Representatives and the Senate. The General Assembly is responsible for making the laws in Colorado and for raising and distributing the money necessary to run the state government.

The legislative branch of government is responsible for making and maintaining laws within their jurisdiction. United States representatives and senators, federal legislators, are responsible for laws at the national level and state legislators are responsible for laws at the state level. A law begins as an idea that is introduced in the Colorado General Assembly as a bill by one or more legislators. The bill then goes through the legislative process to become a law. During this process the bill may be changed. Not all bills become law.

Representatives in Colorado each represent people in a specific area of the state. These areas are called house districts. There are currently 65 men and women representing 65 house districts in the Colorado House of Representatives. Each representative serves for a period of two years in the House of Representatives, after which he or she must run for re-election.

Senators in Colorado each represent people in a specific area of the state. These areas are called senate districts. There are currently 35 men and women representing 35 senate districts in the Colorado Senate. Each senator serves for a period of four years in the Senate, after which he or she must run for re-election. Elections are staggered so that approximately one-half of the Senate is elected every two years.

The Judicial Branch of Colorado state government interprets and administers the law. Courts make up the Judicial Branch. Courts conduct and review trials in both civil and criminal cases. There are four primary courts in Colorado: County Courts, District Courts, the Court of Appeals, and the Supreme Court.

County Courts hear cases involving limited dollars in civil cases and criminal misdemeanor cases. The District Court is the trial court of unlimited jurisdiction. It handles felony criminal cases, large civil cases, probate and domestic matters, cases for and against the government itself, and other matters of importance. The Court of Appeals hears cases when either a plaintiff or a defendant believes a trial court made errors in the conduct of the trial. The Court of Appeals decides if errors were made and tells lower courts how to correct errors. The Supreme Court also hears appeals, but only when it considers the cases to have great significance. The Supreme Court may also answer legal questions from the legislature regarding proposed laws.

## **TRIBAL GOVERNMENT**

Tribal Government operates separately from Colorado State Government. For more information, visit: <http://www.doi.gov/governments/tribalgovernments.cfm>

## U.S. CONGRESSIONAL DELEGATION

The legislative branch of the United States government makes laws for our nation and raises and distributes money to run the United States government. The most evident part of the legislative branch is the United States Congress. Congress is divided into two parts, called houses. The two parts are the Senate and the House of Representatives. Congress is referred to as a bicameral body because it is made up of two houses. The Latin roots of the word bicameral, "bi" and "cameral," mean two chambers or rooms.

Members of the Senate are called Senators and members of the House of Representatives are called Representatives. Senators and representatives serving in these two bodies are sometimes referred to as congressmen, or women, and sometimes as legislators because their business is to legislate or make laws. The role of the legislative branch is defined in the United States Constitution.

Each state elects people to represent them in the United States Congress in Washington, DC. The citizens of each state elect two senators to represent them in the Senate. They also elect representatives to represent them in the House of Representatives. The number of representatives each state sends to the House of Representatives is not a specific number like the Senate, but is based on the population of the state. The people, that are elected to represent the state's citizens in the United States Congress, are referred to as the Congressional Delegation.

There are 100 senators in the U.S. Senate. Each is elected to a term, in the Senate, of six years. There are 435 representatives in the U.S. House of Representatives. Each is elected to a term, in the "House," of two years.

The citizens of Colorado elect two people, like every other state, to represent them in the Senate and seven people, based on Colorado's current population in the most recent federal census, to represent them in the House of Representatives.

## STATE SEAL

The circular Seal of the State of Colorado is an adaptation of the Territorial Seal which was adopted by the First Territorial Assembly on November 6, 1861. The only changes made in the Territorial Seal design being the substitution of the words, "State of Colorado" and the figures "1876" for the corresponding inscriptions on the territorial seal.

The first General Assembly of the State of Colorado approved the adoption of the state seal on March 15, 1877. The Colorado Secretary of State alone is authorized to affix the Great Seal of Colorado to any document whatsoever.



By statute, the seal of the State is two and one-half inches in diameter with the following devices inscribed thereon:

At the top is the eye of God within a triangle, from which golden rays radiate on two sides.

Below the eye is a scroll, the Roman fasces, a bundle of birch or elm rods with a battle axe bound together by red thongs and bearing on a band of red, white and blue, the word, "Union and Constitution." The Roman fasces is the insignia of a republican form of government. The bundle of rods bound together symbolizes strength which is lacking in the single rod. The axe symbolizes authority and leadership.

Below the scroll is the heraldic shield bearing across the top on a red ground three snow-capped mountains with clouds above them.

The lower half of the shield has two miner's tools, the pick and sledge hammer, crossed on a golden ground.

Below the shield in a semicircle is the motto, "Nil Sine Numine", Latin words meaning "nothing without the Deity", and at the bottom the figures 1876, the year Colorado came into statehood.

The design for the Territorial Seal which served as a model for the State Seal or Great Seal of Colorado has been variously credited, but the individual primarily responsible was Lewis Ledyard Weld, the Territorial Secretary, appointed by President Lincoln in July of 1861. There is also evidence that Territorial Governor William Gilpin also was at least partially responsible for the design. Both Weld and Gilpin were knowledgeable in the art and symbolism of heraldry. Elements of design from both the Weld and Gilpin family coat-of-arms are incorporated in the Territorial Seal.

## **STATE CAPITAL (Denver)**



The capital city of Colorado is Denver, the largest city in Colorado.

The Colorado State Capitol building is located at 200 East Colfax Avenue and is the home of the Colorado General Assembly and the offices of the Governor and Lieutenant of Colorado.

The capitol building is part of Denver's Civic Center area. The distinctive gold dome consists of real gold plate, first added in 1908, commemorating the Colorado Gold Rush.

The capitol building was designed by Elijah E. Myers and modeled after the United States Capitol. It was constructed in the 1890s and opened for use in November 1894.

## Capitol Facts:

- The cornerstone for the building was set on July 4, 1890. The building was completed in 1908.
- The Cornerstone weighs twenty tons and it took twenty mules to haul it.
- The capitol building sits one mile (5,280 feet) above sea level.
- The materials used in construction of the building all came from Colorado except the brass and oak trimmings. Granite came from Gunnison. The wainscoting and pillar facings are of Colorado Onyx, a material unique only to the Colorado Capitol. When this rare stone's supply was exhausted the basement was finished in white marble. The foundations and walls are Fort Collins Sandstone.
- The Gold Dome was created using 200 ounces of pure gold leaf.
- The 122 columns are of cast iron and on average weigh 1.7 tons each.
- The Capitol used 5,482,114 bricks.

## **STATE MOTTO**

“Nil sine Numine”

"Nothing without the Deity – (English translation)

After the United States Congress passed a bill making Colorado a territory in 1861, it was important that a unique seal be designed to represent the territory on all official documents. Territorial Governor William Gilpin entrusted the design of the new seal to the Secretary of the Territory, L. C. Weld instructing Weld to return to him with a rough draft.

Governor Gilpin seems to have approved the design that Weld brought to him but thought that a suitable motto should also be incorporated. The story goes that Weld responded to Governor Gilpin, "Well, Governor, what would you suggest?"

Governor Gilpin is said to have paused in thought for a moment and then responded "Nil Sine Numine."

On November 6, 1861, by Joint Resolution, the Territorial Legislature adopted the Territorial seal and with it, the motto, *Nil Sine Numine*.

The Latin phrase, *Nil Sine Numine*, appears to be an adaption from Virgil's *Aeneid* where in Book II, line 777 the words ".....non haec sine numine devûm Eveniunt." are found. Though sometimes translated as "Nothing without providence" or "Nothing without God," the intended translation, "Nothing without the Deity," is found in a committee report regarding the Joint Resolution of November 6, 1861.



## STATE FLAG

The state flag was adopted on June 5, 1911 by an act of the General Assembly. The flag was adopted to be used on all occasions when the state is officially and publicly represented, with the privilege of use by all citizens upon such occasions as they deem fitting and appropriate. Laws pertaining to use of the National flag are also applicable to use of the State flag.



The flag consists of three alternate stripes of equal width and at right angles to the staff, the two outer stripes to be blue of the same color as in the blue field of the national flag and the middle stripe to be white, the proportion of the flag being a width of two-thirds of its length. At a distance from the staff end of the flag of one fifth of the total length of the flag there is a circular red C, of the same color as the red in the national flag of the United States. The diameter of the letter is two-thirds of the width of the flag. The inner line of the opening of the letter C is three-fourths of the width of its body or bar, and the outer line of the opening is double the length of the inner line thereof. Completely filling the open space inside the letter C is a golden disk, attached to the flag is a cord of gold and silver, intertwined, with tassels, one of gold and one of silver.

The flag was originally designed by Andrew Carlisle Johnson. Precise colors of red and blue were not designated in the 1911 legislation and some controversy arose over these colors. On February 28, 1929, the General Assembly stipulated the precise colors of red and blue as the same as the national flag. Controversy also arose over the size of the letter C and on March 31, 1964, the General Assembly further modified the 1911 legislation by revising the distance from the staff for the letter C and its diameter. Citations: Senate Bill 118, 1911; Senate Bill 152, 1929; Senate Bill, 1964.

### Flag Chronology

The geographical territory which comprises the present day State of Colorado has historically been under many flags.

- Coronado's expedition into the Southwest in 1540-42 gave substance to Spain's claim to the entire western interior region to the United States.
- In 1662, when LaSalle floated down the Mississippi River, he claimed for the French King the entire drainage area of the "Father of Waters", which included a substantial area of Colorado.
- During the 17th and 18th centuries, the British Colonies of New England and Virginia extended their theoretical boundaries all the way to the pacific Coast, overlapping the French and Spanish claims.
- Between 1763 and 1848, Colorado belonged in varying proportions to France, Spain, Mexico and the Republic of Texas.
- In 1803, when Napoleon withdrew his claims to the West and negotiated the Louisiana Purchase, a part of Colorado came under U.S. jurisdiction for the first time.

- Between 1803 and 1861, various flags of the District of Louisiana (part of Indiana Territory), Territory of Louisiana, Missouri Territory, the State of Deseret (predecessor to Utah), Utah Territory, New Mexico Territory, Nebraska Territory, Kansas Territory; and last, Colorado Territory.
- On February 28, 1861, when Colorado Territory was created, the present boundaries were established and have remained unchanged to the present time.
- On August 1, 1876, Colorado became the 38th State to enter the Union under the flag of the United States.

## **STATE NICKNAMES**

### *The Centennial State*

Colorado is nicknamed the Centennial State because it entered the union in 1876, 100 years after the signing of the Declaration of Independence.

### *The Silver State*

This nickname is a reference to the quantities of silver that have been mined in Colorado. Leadville became one of the world's greatest mining camps in 1878.

### *The Lead State*

This nickname came about because of the large quantities of lead that were mined in Colorado.

### *The Buffalo Plains State*

This old nickname referred to the large herds of bison that once roamed the Colorado plains.

### *Switzerland of America*

Colorado, along with other mountainous states, has been referred to as the Switzerland of America for its elevation, its majestic mountains and natural beauty.

### *The Highest State*

This nickname is similar in spirit to the one above and is in reference to Colorado as the state with the highest average elevation and its towering mountains.

## STATE BIRD



The migratory lark bunting (*Calamospiza melancorys Stejneger*) was designated the state bird of Colorado in 1931.

The male lark bunting performs a spectacular courtship flight while warbling and trilling a distinctive mating song. A breeding male is jet black with white wings but in winter changes to a gray brown color more like the smaller female bird (the lark bunting is the only sparrow that changes in winter to a drab plumage).

Though the lark bunting is still a common sparrow of the Great Plains, grassland bird species in North America have experienced large population declines in the past forty years. Lark buntings declined by 2.5% per year in Colorado between 1966 and 2003.

## STATE FLOWER

The Rocky Mountain Columbine was designated the official state flower of Colorado in 1899 after winning the vote of Colorado's school children.

Discovered in 1820 on Pike's Peak by mountain climber Edwin James, the Rocky Mountain columbine (*Columbine Aquilegia caerulea*) is a lovely flower with a rich aroma to attract bees, hummingbirds and butterflies to its nectar. The Latin word *aquila* means "Eagle" and refers to the claw-like spurs at the base of the flower.



Columbines bloom in pastel shades of blue, violet, red, yellow and white. There are 70 species of columbines in the world and about 1/3 are native to North America. Colorado specifies the white and lavender Rocky Mt. Columbine which has blue-violet petals and spurs, a white cup and yellow center. Blue is a symbol of the sky, white represents snow, and yellow symbolizes Colorado's gold mining history.

A law was enacted in 1925 to protect this rare & delicate flower. The Colorado General Assembly wisely made it illegal to uproot the flower on public lands and the gathering of

**Below, you will find 15 general questions to help review what you have learned. Use the following page(s) for documenting your answers. Older students may choose to write a State Report as well.**

**Review Questions:**

1. List the states and/or bodies of water that border this state.
2. What was the date of statehood?
3. What is the state capital?
4. What is the state motto?
5. Name at least one state nickname.
6. Describe the state flag.
7. What is the state bird?
8. What is the state flower?
9. List at least 5 other state symbols.
10. Describe this state's government.
11. Name the major imports and exports for this state.
12. Describe the weather and climate in this state.
13. List at least 5 famous people from this state.
14. Describe at least 5 significant events in this state's history.
15. What other interesting information have you learned about this state?

## **Answers to Review Questions:**

