



Massachusetts State History ~ In a Nutshell ~

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Alaska 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.

Massachusetts State History Lapbook Journal Study Guide



The Great Seal of Massachusetts

Massachusetts has been at the forefront of American history for well over 250 years. The Pilgrims arrived and came ashore in 1620, and Massachusetts became the site of the first Thanksgiving in the fall of 1621.

In the 1700's, as the economy of the area benefited from abundant fishing, trading, and shipbuilding, the residents became increasingly rebellious against Britain's persistent taxation. In 1773, history was made when Bostonians had their famous Tea Party, boarding a British tea ship, and tossing the tea into Boston Harbor in protest of unfair taxation. As skirmishes with the British became earnest battles of the Revolution, the spirit of the patriots swept the countryside, and when the British were forced out of Boston in 1776, the Americans knew the tides were turning in their favor.

Massachusetts gained statehood in 1788, and has sent four of her own and one adopted son to become President of the United States: John F. Kennedy, John Adams, John Quincy Adams and George Herbert Walker Bush. Though born in Vermont, Calvin Coolidge served as Governor of Massachusetts from 1919-1921 and went on to be elected President of the United States in 1924.

In the 19th century, it developed into a major manufacturing state, noted for textiles and footwear; in the mid-20th century, electronic components and other high-technology items became leading manufactures. Massachusetts is famous for its summer resorts, such as the sand beaches of Cape Cod.

Massachusetts has become an important intellectual center, known for Harvard University and other cultural institutions of Boston. Presidents John Adams, John Quincy Adams, and John F. Kennedy were born in Massachusetts. President Calvin Coolidge spent most of his life there.

This state was named after the Massachusetts Indians that lived in the Massachusetts Bay Region. Massachusetts means "large hill place."

People who live in Massachusetts or who come from Massachusetts are called Bay Staters after one of the state's nicknames. This designation was made *Official* by the legislature December 18, 1990.

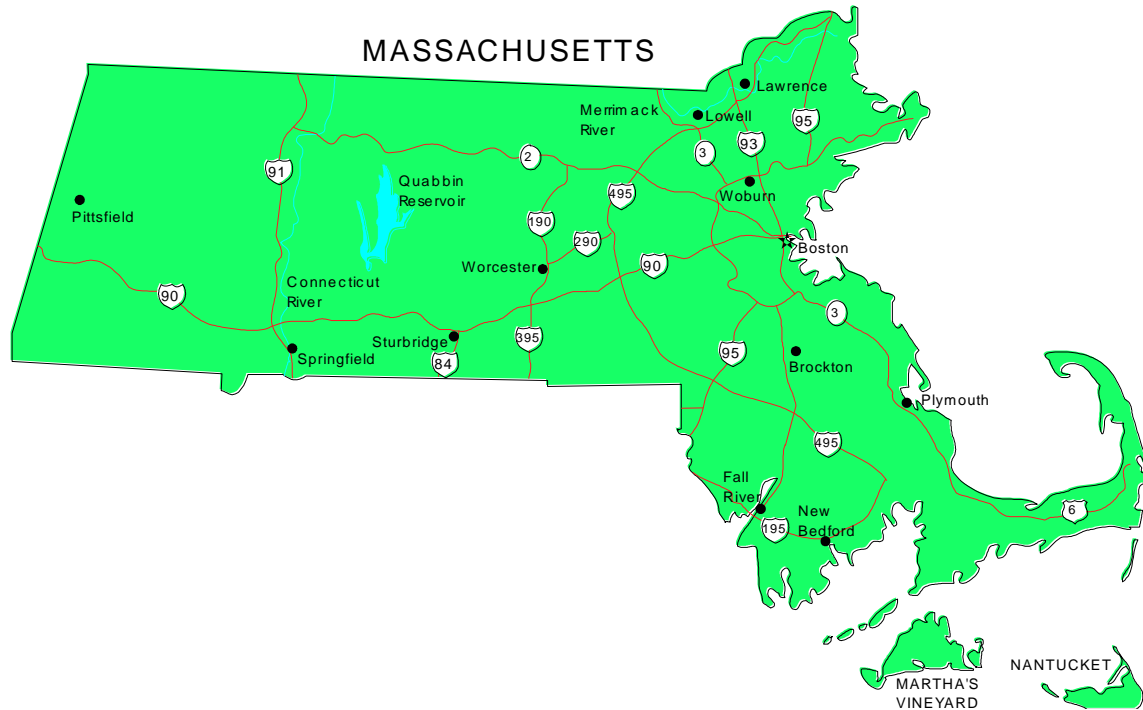
COMMONWEALTH OF MASSACHUSETTS

You will often hear Massachusetts called the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. This doesn't mean Massachusetts has a different form of government than any other state." Commonwealth" is defined by Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary as a political unit or government

(1) "founded on law and united by compact or tacit agreement of the people for the common good," or

(2) "one in which supreme authority is vested in the people."

Besides Massachusetts, three other states - Kentucky, Pennsylvania and Virginia - use the term common-wealth as part of their official names.



Map of Massachusetts – Capitol, Major Cities, Lakes and Rivers

STATEHOOD

In 1620, the Pilgrims, seeking religious freedom, set sail from England on the Mayflower and established a colony in Plymouth. After them came the Puritans along with a royal charter allowing the Massachusetts Bay Company to promote settlement of the territory from "sea to sea" and to govern its colonies. This charter became the foundation of government for the Massachusetts Bay Colony. The growth of Massachusetts spread along the coast and then to the west.

The colony seemed to be getting along fine on its own while England was preoccupied with their war with France from 1688 to 1760. In 1764, however, the Company's charter was revoked and the colony was placed under the Dominion of England and the administration of Sir Edmond Andros. England attempted to reassert her power over the colony and conflict between the colony and England increased. Massachusetts rebelled and eventually armed conflict broke out. The so-called "Boston Massacre" of March 5, 1770 occurred when British soldiers fired into a crowd of taunting colonials. In response to the Tea Act of 1773, Boston citizens, organized by Sam Adams, disguised themselves as Indians and dumped the cargo of East India Company ships into Boston Harbor in protest. On April 19, 1775, colonials engaged the British at

Lexington and Concord and touched off "the shot heard round the world." The Revolutionary War began.

The story of Massachusetts' statehood is the story of the birth of the United States. One of the original 13 states, Massachusetts joined the Union when it became the sixth state to ratify the new constitution on February 6, 1788. However, Massachusetts ratified the Constitution only on the condition that certain amendments concerning individual rights be added. These conditions, entered under the "Bill of Rights," went into effect on December 15, 1791.

STATE CONSTITUTION

A constitution sets out the rules by which we play the game of government. Like the rules for any other game, it limits the moves available to players. It describes how the various players interact with each other, and who has more power in various situations.

The Massachusetts Constitution was ratified in 1780 while the Revolutionary War was still in progress, nine years before the United States Constitution was adopted. It is the oldest written Constitution now in use in the world. Massachusetts, like Pennsylvania, Virginia, and Kentucky, is called a "Commonwealth". Commonwealths are states, but the reverse is not true. Legally, Massachusetts is a commonwealth because the term is contained in the Constitution.

PREAMBLE: *The end of the institution, maintenance, and administration of government, is to secure the existence of the body politic, to protect it, and to furnish the individuals who compose it with the power of enjoying in safety and tranquility their natural rights, and the blessings of life: and whenever these great objects are not obtained, the people have a right to alter the government, and to take measures necessary for their safety, prosperity and happiness.*

The body politic is formed by a voluntary association of individuals: it is a social compact, by which the whole people covenants with each citizen, and each citizen with the whole people, that all shall be governed by certain laws for the common good. It is the duty of the people, therefore, in framing a constitution of government, to provide for an equitable mode of making laws, as well as for an impartial interpretation, and a faithful execution of them; that every man may, at all times, find his security in them.

We, therefore, the people of Massachusetts, acknowledging, with grateful hearts, the goodness of the great Legislator of the universe, in affording us, in the course of His providence, an opportunity, deliberately and peaceably, without fraud, violence or surprise, of entering into an original, explicit, and solemn compact with each other; and of forming a new constitution of civil government, for ourselves and posterity; and devoutly imploring His direction in so interesting a design, do agree upon, ordain and establish the following Declaration of Rights, and Frame of Government, as the Constitution of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts.

STATE GOVERNMENT

As in the case of the federal government, Massachusetts' government is organized into three branches, as specified in its constitution, legislative, executive, and judicial. The state government is a product of three documents: the United States Constitution, the Massachusetts Constitution, and laws of the state.

The Governor is head of the Executive Branch and serves as chief administrative officer of the state and as commander-in-chief of the Massachusetts' military forces. His or her responsibilities include preparation of the annual budget, nomination of all judicial officers, the granting of pardons (with the approval of the governor's Council), appointments of the heads of most major state departments, and the acceptance or veto of each bill passed by the Legislature.

The Governor may recommend new policies for Massachusetts, new legislation, and changes in the administration of departments that conduct the government from day to day. He or she has the power to order out the National Guard to meet domestic emergencies and is Massachusetts' chief spokesman with the federal government.

The Massachusetts Legislature, called the "Great and General Court," is responsible for making the laws in Massachusetts and for raising and distributing the money necessary to run the state government.

Judicial Branch: The Supreme Judicial Court is the highest court in the Commonwealth; it is empowered to advise the Governor and the Legislature on questions of law. All trials are held in departments and divisions of a Trial Court. A Trial Court hears civil and criminal cases. Cases may be appealed to the Supreme Judicial Court or the Appeals Court for review of law. The Superior Court is the highest department of the Trial Court. Other departments are the District, Housing, Juvenile, Land, and Probate Courts.

Legislative Branch: The Massachusetts Legislature, officially referred to as the "Great and General Court," is composed of two bodies, called houses, like the United States Congress. The two parts are the Senate and the House of Representatives. The Legislature 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.

The General Court, elected every two years, is made up of a Senate of 40 members and a House of Representatives of 160 members. Each branch elects its own leader from its membership. The Senate elects a President and the House elects a Speaker.

Representatives in Massachusetts each represent people in a specific area of the state. These areas are called house districts. There are currently 160 men and women representing 160 house districts in the Massachusetts House of Representatives. One representative is an Independent. 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 Massachusetts each represent people in a specific area of the state. These areas are called senate districts. There are currently 40 men and women representing 40 senate districts in the Massachusetts Senate. Each senator serves for a period of two years in the Senate, after which he or she must run for re-election.

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 Massachusetts General Court as a bill by one or more legislators. Any citizen of Massachusetts may file a bill through a state legislator. The bill is assigned to a committee, given a public hearing, and reported by the committee to the appropriate chamber with a recommendation to pass or defeat. 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.

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

STATE SEAL

The STATE SEAL, adopted by Governor John Hancock and the Council on December 13, 1780 and made official by the General Court on June 4, 1885.

It is circular and bears a representation of the arms of the Commonwealth encircled with the words, "Sigillum Reipublicae Massachusettensis" (Seal of the Republic of Massachusetts).



The final form of the seal was determined by a statewide contest.

Description of arms by legislature:

"a shield having a blue field or surface with an Indian thereon, dressed in a shirt and moccasins, holding in his right hand a bow, and in his left hand an arrow, point downward, all of gold; and, in the upper corner of the field, above his right arm, a silver star with five points. The crest is a wreath of blue and gold, on which in gold is a right arm, bent at the elbow, clothed and ruffled, with the hand grasping a broadsword".

The star represents Massachusetts as one of the original thirteen states. The Algonquin Indian holds a native bow and arrow pointing downward to indicate peacefulness.

The state motto is written in gold on a blue ribbon: "Ense petit placidam sub libertate quietem" (By the sword we seek peace, but peace only under liberty).

STATE CAPITAL (Boston)

Boston is the capital city of the state of Massachusetts. It is also the largest city in Massachusetts and one of the oldest cities in the United States. Boston is regarded as the unofficial "Capital of New England" for its economic and cultural impact on the entire New England region.



The Massachusetts State House, also known as the "New" State House, is the state capitol building and house of government for Massachusetts.

It is located in the Beacon Hill neighborhood of Boston and houses the Massachusetts General Court (state legislature) and the offices of the Governor of Massachusetts.

Facts about the Massachusetts State House:

- The capitol is referred to as the State House.
- Boston architect Peter Bullfinch spent months studying Greek and Roman temples. Then he adapted their forms for this new State House, designed rows of columns, and, most daring of all, planned a large dome. At the very top he placed a gilt pinecone as a symbol of the forests that made it possible for the early settlers to survive.
- Governor Samuel Adams, assisted by Paul Revere, laid the cornerstone of the new State House on July 4, 1795.
- Building was placed on a hill in John Hancock's cow pasture -- Beacon Hill.
- Dome was made of wood and covered in copper by Paul Revere.
- The dome was first gilded in gold in 1861.
- Two marble wings, on either side, were added in 1917.
- During World War II, the dome was painted gray to disguise it as a landmark.
- The dome has been gilded with 23.5-karat gold leaf twice since 1948.

STATE MOTTO

“By the sword we seek peace, but peace only under liberty”

The motto of Massachusetts is attributed to Algernon Sidney, an English soldier and politician. The words were written in the second of two lines he wrote in *The Book of Mottoes* in the King's Library at Copenhagen, Denmark around 1659.

Algernon Sidney's *Discourses Concerning Government*, originally published in 1698, had some influence on political thinking at the time and may have been particularly favored by some in the American Colonies. His words, written in *The Book of Mottoes*, were adopted in 1775 as an element of Massachusetts' first colonial seal as the fledgling state began to break ties with England.

Today, those words remain as the motto of the Commonwealth. The blue ribbon around the bottom of the shield on the coat of arms reads, *Ense petit placidam sub libertate quietem* (latin).

STATE FLAG

On March 6, 1915, Massachusetts adopted a State flag that was very similar to the flag that flies over the Commonwealth today.

The 1915 flag depicted the Commonwealth coat of arms on one side on a white field. On the other side was blue shield with a pine tree on it, a symbol of the value placed on wood by the settlers of Massachusetts.



Today, the design depicts the Massachusetts coat of arms on a white field on both sides of the flag, a design approved on June 2, 1971 to take effect on November 1, 1971.

The coat of arms of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts consists of a blue shield with an Algonquin Native American on it. The Indian is dressed in a shirt, leggings and moccasins. He holds a gold bow in one hand and a gold arrow in the other hand. The point of the arrow is pointed down. In the upper right hand corner of the shield is a silver five-pointed star. Above the shield on a gold wreath is a right arm, bent at the elbow and grasping a gold broadsword. The motto of the Commonwealth is printed in gold on the blue ribbon partially surrounding the blue shield.

The shield of blue represents the Blue Hills of Canton and Milton, Massachusetts. The Indian depicted on the shield, Massachusetts, is shown carrying the arrow with its tip pointed downward to indicate a friendly demeanor. The silver star of the coat of arms is designated as white (instead of silver) for the flag and represents Massachusetts as one of the thirteen original colonies of the United States.

The motto of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, *Ense petit placidam sub libertate quietem*, is printed in gold on a blue ribbon. It can be translated as "By the sword we seek peace, but peace only under liberty." This motto is supported by the ruffle sleeved arm grasping a sword that is depicted above the shield.

STATE NICKNAMES

The Bay State

Massachusetts is most commonly known as "The Bay State" or "The Old Bay State" in reference to the Cape Cod Bay where early settlements were made and to the Massachusetts Bay Company given a royal charter in 1629 to promote settlement of the new land "from sea to shining sea." The charter of the Massachusetts Bay Company was the foundation of a government for the Massachusetts Bay Colony.

The Baked Bean State

The Puritans served brown bread and baked beans on Sundays because they could be prepared on Saturday. From this practice came the nickname, "The Baked Bean State." Boston has become famous for its baked beans.

The Old Colony State

This nickname applied to the early settlements of the Plymouth Colony in the years 1620-1628, before the Massachusetts Bay Colony was established.

The Pilgrim State

This nickname references the settlement of the Pilgrims in Massachusetts and the establishment of the Plymouth Colony. The Pilgrims set up a government in Massachusetts with the "Mayflower Compact." In 1621, the first Thanksgiving was held.

The Puritan State

In another reference to early colonization, Massachusetts has been called "The Puritan State" because of the Puritan emigrants who arrived in Massachusetts looking for a place to practice their religion where they would not be subject to persecution.

STATE BIRD

The black-capped chickadee was designated the state bird of Massachusetts in 1941.

A minuscule, cheerfully sociable bird, the energetic (in fact, acrobatic) black-capped chickadee does not migrate - allowing us to enjoy them all year long. The black-capped chickadee (*Poecile atricapillus*) is a member of the titmouse family (also known as the *titmouse*, *tomtit*, and the *dickybird*).

The unique call of the chickadee is one of the most complex in the animal kingdom - very slight variations in the "*chick-a-dee*" can act as an alarm call, a contact call, or can be used to relay information when they recognize another flock.



A common backyard bird, black-capped chickadees inhabit the northern two thirds of the United States and much of Canada. They are found deep in the forests as well as suburban areas. The black-capped chickadee is omnivorous (eats both plants and animals). Caterpillars, spiders and other insects make up about half of their diet, with seeds and berries filling in the rest. The chickadee is known for "caching" food (they hide seeds and berries in crevices of tree bark and under leaves, and can remember where they have hidden their stored foods for up to a month)! The black-capped chickadee is monogamous and when a pair bonds, they remain together for life. The female builds their nest in abandoned woodpecker cavities or nesting boxes.

Sometimes, the female will fashion her own cavity in a rotten tree trunk, not an easy task for a bird with such a tiny bill. The male feeds the female during the nest building and during the time she is brooding her clutch of six to eight eggs. When the babies hatch, both parents share the job of feeding them.

STATE FLOWER



Massachusetts adopted the mayflower (*Epigaea regens*) as the official flower of the Commonwealth in 1918.

The fragrant, delicate mayflower has been on the endangered list since 1925. Also known as ground laurel or trailing arbutus, mayflowers prefer sandy or rocky soil, under or near evergreens.

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:

