



Montana

State History

~ In a Nutshell ~

Written & designed by
Cyndi Kinney & Judy Trout



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Montana State History In a Nutshell
by Cyndi Kinney & Judy Trout
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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.

Montana State History Lapbook Journal Study Guide



The Great Seal of Montana

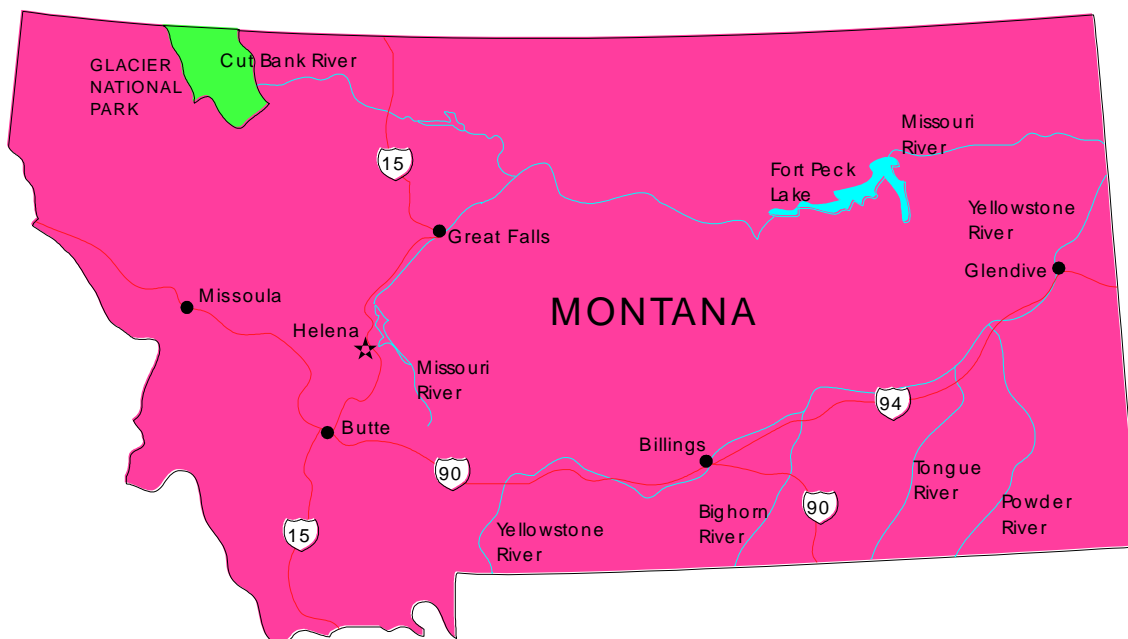
Welcome to Big Sky Country. This is Montana. Vast plains stretch across the eastern part of this state, and when those plains go on for miles and miles and miles, so does the sky. Huge herds of cattle graze on the prairies. Montana has buffalo, too, and in the National Bison Range, on the Flathead Reservation, buffalo roam a 20,000-acre national wildlife refuge.

The western portion of this great state rises up in tall, rugged Rocky Mountain country. These mountains have provided Montana its name, and yielded a fortune of gold and silver since the first substantial deposits were discovered in the early 1860's.

Today, the mountains attract people for their natural splendor. Glacier National Park is a destination for many, with majestic peaks shaped by massive glacial ice. Rising cliffs and waterfalls offer spectacular beauty here. And Yellowstone National Park delights visitors with incredible scenery, waterfalls, and lakes. That's Montana!

Created out of the Idaho Territory in 1864, the name Montana comes from the Spanish word *Montaña* meaning "mountain" or more broadly, "mountainous country".

People who live in Montana or who come from Montana are called Montanans.



Map of Montana – Capital, Major Cities and Rivers

STATEHOOD

The United States acquired most of what is now Montana as part of the Louisiana Purchase of 1803. The northwestern section of the state was gained in a treaty with Britain in 1846. At various times, parts of Montana were parts of the territories of Louisiana, Missouri, Nebraska, Dakota, Oregon, Washington, and Idaho.

In 1862, prospectors found gold in Grasshopper Creek in the area now known as southwestern Montana. At the time, Montana was part of Idaho territory. Other gold strikes followed, and wild mining camps grew around the gold fields. These camps included Bannack, Diamond City, and Virginia City. During the boom years, gold dust was the most prominent form of money. Also, during this period, there was almost no effective law enforcement in the mining camps. Sidney Edgerton, a former U.S. Representative from Ohio, was appointed United States judge for the Territory of Idaho in 1863. He saw a need for better government of the wild mining camps.

In 1864, he was persuaded to return to Washington, D.C. to lobby Congress to create a Montana Territory separate from Idaho. Edgerton had friends on Capitol Hill from his days as an Ohio Congressman and he agreed to the task. Of course he took about \$2,000 in Montana gold nuggets with him to Washington to impress his friends with the mineral wealth in the new territory. On May 26, 1864, President Abraham Lincoln signed an act creating the Montana Territory. Sidney Edgerton was appointed as the first Territorial Governor.

In order to become a state, Montana had to prepare and its citizens had to approve a written constitution that would have to be accepted by the U.S. Congress. The constitution would contain the basic laws of the state, the responsibilities of its elected officials, and the rights of citizens of Montana. Three constitutions were prepared, from 1866-1889, by Montana officials before statehood was achieved.

Finally, in 1889, the U.S. Congress passed the Enabling Act that allowed Washington, Montana, North Dakota, and South Dakota to become states. On November 8, 1889, President Benjamin Harrison issued a proclamation announcing admission of Montana into Union as the 41st state.

STATE CONSTITUTION

In 1866, Acting Territorial Governor Thomas Francis Meagher, called Montana's first constitutional convention. Beginning in the cold of December, in a dark dirt-roofed cabin in Bannack City, legislators spent 60 days putting together Montana's first constitution. The story goes that this document was lost on the way to the printer in St. Louis....

It wasn't until 1884 that another attempt was made. This time, the convention was held in Helena. From January 14 through February 9, lawmakers hammered out a new constitution. Voters approved it on November 4, 1884. Unfortunately, the U.S. Congress, immersed in political conflict and worried about the balance of power in the legislature, virtually ignored Montana's new petitions for statehood.

The political atmosphere in Washington changed, however, and in 1889, Montana refurbished the 1884 constitution and put it to a vote. Montanans approved it by an overwhelming majority on October 1, 1889. This time, Congress passed an enabling act allowing Montana to become a state.

Recognizing that the 1889 constitution had not aged well, Montanans called for a Constitutional Convention in 1972. The 1972 constitution, in effect today, is one of the nation's most progressive documents. It advocates single-member legislative districts, open-meeting requirements, and the care and protection of the environment.

PREAMBLE: *We the people of Montana grateful to God for the quiet beauty of our state, the grandeur of our mountains, the vastness of our rolling plains, and desiring to improve the quality of life, equality of opportunity and to secure the blessings of liberty for this and future generations do ordain and establish this constitution.*

STATE GOVERNMENT

As in the case of the federal government, Montana's state government is organized into three branches - legislative, executive, and judicial. The state government is a product of three documents: the United States Constitution, the Montana State Constitution, and laws of the state. The state of Montana voted, in 1992, to impose term limits on their elected representatives. Proponents of the idea argued that term limits would take government out of the hands of "career politicians" and encourage more citizens to run for office. Montana term limits state that certain officials may not seek re-election if they have held an office for eight years in any 16-year period. An official can still be re-elected by write-in vote, even after serving 8 years in a 16-year period.

The Governor is the top official in the executive branch of Montana State government. The 1992 Constitutional initiative enforces term limits for the Governor, the Lieutenant Governor, the Secretary of State, the State Auditor, the Attorney General, and the Superintendent of Public Instruction.

The Montana Legislature is composed of a Senate and a House of Representatives. The 1992 Constitutional initiative enforces term limits for state representatives and state senators.

The highest court of appeals in Montana is the state Supreme Court, which consists of one chief justice and six associate justices--each elected to eight-year terms. The trial courts for major civil and criminal cases are the state's 20 district courts. These jurisdictions are presided over from one to four judges, each elected to a six-year term. Municipal courts, police courts, and justice-of-the-peace courts handle less serious cases.

The Montana Legislature is composed of two parts, 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 Legislature is responsible for making the laws in Montana and for raising and distributing the money necessary to run the state government. As established by the 1972 Montana Constitution, sessions take place every odd-numbered year and last for a maximum of 90 legislative days.

LEGISLATIVE PROCESS: 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 Montana Legislature 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.

STATE REPRESENTATIVES: Representatives in Montana each represent people in a specific area of the state. These areas are called house districts. There are currently 100 men and women representing 100 house districts in the Montana 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. Representatives may not run for re-election if they have served for eight years in any 16-year period. Representative may exceed these limits if elected by write-in vote.

STATE SENATORS: Senators in Montana each represent people in a specific area of the state. These areas are called senate districts. There are currently 50 men and women representing 50 senate districts in the Montana Senate. Each senator serves for a period of four years in the Senate, after which he or she must run for re-election. Senators may not run for re-election if they have served for eight years in any 16-year period. Senators may exceed these limits if elected by write-in vote. Half of the Senate membership comes up for re-election every two years.

CURRENT LEGISLATION: When the legislature is meeting, it is said to be "in session." Legislative sessions occur every odd-numbered year, beginning at noon on the first Monday in January, with the exception that if the first Monday is January 1, the Legislature then begins on the first Wednesday of January. The length of a regular session is 90 legislative days. Sessions may be extended if required to complete the work of the Legislature. In addition, under unusual circumstances, the Legislature may be called into Special Session by the Governor to deal with a specific problem. The following link will allow you to look at bills that are currently going through the legislative process.

TRIBAL GOVERNMENT

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

Reservations	Tribes
Blackfeet Reservation	Home of the Blackfeet Nation headquartered in Browning, Montana
Flathead Reservation	Home of the Confederated Salish, Pend d'Oreille & Kootenai Tribes headquartered in Pablo, Montana
Fort Peck Reservation	Home of the Assiniboine & Sioux Tribes headquartered in Poplar, Montana
Northern Cheyenne Reservation	Home of the Northern Cheyenne Tribe headquartered in Lama Deer, Montana
Crow Reservation	Home of The Crow Nation headquartered in Crow Agency, Montana

Fort Belknap Reservation	Home of the Gros Ventre & Assiniboine Tribes headquartered in Fort Belknap Agency, Montana
Rocky Boy's Reservation	Home of the Chippewa & Cree Tribes headquartered In Rocky Boy Agency, Montana
	Little Shell Chippewa Tribe, State Recognized, headquartered in Great Falls, Montana

Source: <http://tribalnations.mt.gov/>

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

STATE CAPITAL (Helena)

Helena was founded after the discovery of gold (1864) in Last Chance Gulch (now Helena's main street). A general election held in 1875 ratified the choice of Helena to replace Virginia City as the capital of Montana Territory. Helena has been the capital city of the state of Montana since 1889.

The Montana State Capitol building is located in Helena and houses the Montana State Legislature. Other landmarks in Helena include the Original Governor's Mansion (1888), the Holter Museum of Art, the Museum of Gold, the Montana Historical Society Museum, and the Myrna Loy Center for the Performing and Media Arts. Helena is surrounded by scenic mountains and is the headquarters of Helena National Forest.

Montana State Capitol (Erected 1899 – 1902)



Montana State Capitol Facts:

Iowa architects, Charles E. Bell and John H. Kent relocated to Helena to meet the legislature's demand that the capitol architect be a state resident.

Faced with Montana sandstone, the Capitol was constructed in the Greek neoclassic style.

The dome, covered with copper, rises 165 feet and is topped with a bronze statue of Lady Liberty.

In 1912, two wings, faced with Montana granite, were added at a cost of \$500,000.

STATE SEAL

The state seal displays symbols of Montana's history and natural beauty. A sunrise shines over snowy mountains. Waterfalls, the Missouri River, mountains, hills, trees, and cliffs are shown behind three tools (a pick, a shovel, and a plow) which are symbols of Montana's mining and farming history. A ribbon with the state motto, *Oro y Plata* (Spanish for "gold and silver") is displayed at the bottom of the seal.



STATE MOTTO

"Gold and Silver (*Oro y Plata*)"

Montana's state motto is *Oro y Plata* (Spanish for "gold and silver"). The mountains of Montana have yielded fortunes in gold and silver since the first substantial deposits were discovered in the mid 1800's.

STATE FLAG

In 1898, Montana had no state flag. In 1905, the Ninth Legislative Assembly of Montana voted to adopt a rectangular banner depicting the pictorial content of the the Great Seal of the State of Montana on a blue field as the official state flag. Some states have sponsored contests to determine an appropriate design for an official state flag. Montana's design was born of the initiative of a Colonel Kessler, head of the First Montana Infantry.



During the Spring of 1898, the First Montana Infantry, volunteers from several Montana communities, prepared for the war against Spain at Fort William Henry Harrison. Under the guidance of Colonel Kessler, these volunteers where "whipped" into fighting shape. The ladies of Helena provided these men with a 45-star U.S. flag to carry to the conflict as their Regimental Colors.

Colonel Kessler felt that his group of fighting volunteers needed a special flag or banner to distinguish his men from other forces and on his own initiative, commissioned a unique flag for the First Montana Infantry. The flag that was constructed displayed an embroidered replica of the Montana state seal on a dark background. This hand-made silk flag displayed "1st Montana Infantry U.S.V." above the state seal.

This flag accompanied the First Montana Infantry to war in the fall of 1898 and served the unit well during its tour of duty.

When the volunteers of the First Montana Infantry returned to Montana a year later, Colonel Kessler's flag had grown in stature and though not official, it was considered a fitting symbol of the state. In Helena, Colonel Kessler turned the flag over to the Governor and it was offered for display throughout the state.

Montana still had no official state flag and many people thought that the regimental flag of the First Montana Infantry should be honored with official recognition. In 1905, the Ninth Legislative Assembly proclaimed Colonel Kessler's flag to be the official flag of the state of Montana. Of course the words "1st Montana Infantry" were stricken.

Since 1905, changes have been made two times to the flag.

- 1981 - The Legislature passed a bill requiring that the word "MONTANA", in Roman letters, be positioned above the seal. This was to distinguish the Montana flag from the flags of other states at a distance. Secretary of State Jim Waltermire also defined colors for the state seal on the flag: from a gold sky with white clouds and white sunrays to blue and white waterfalls.

- 1985 - More specific definition of the letters spelling "MONTANA" was approved. "Helvetica bold" was specified to eliminate the wide variety of styles in use by manufacturers of the flag.

The state flag is blue with a gold fringe on the top and bottom edges. The pictorial content of The Great Seal of the State of Montana centered on the blue field depicts some of Montana's beautiful scenery and reflects the pioneering history of the state. A brilliant sun over snowy mountains, forests, cliffs and the Great Falls of the Missouri River serve as the background for a pick, a shovel and a plow. These tools represent Montana's mining and farming past and present. The state motto "ORO Y PLATA" (Spanish for Gold and Silver) is displayed on a ribbon at below the pick, shovel, and plow.

STATE NICKNAMES

The Treasure State

One of the more popular nicknames for Montana, "The Treasure State" or "Treasure State" legend was featured on standard license plates from 1950 to 1966. Montana is referred to as the "Treasure State because of its rich mineral reserves. Mining has been an economic cornerstone of the state and the state's motto "Oro y Plata," Spanish for gold and silver, refers to two of the minerals that gave rise to the nickname.

The Bonanza State

Like "The Treasure State," this nickname highlights Montana's mineral wealth. This name is said to have been given to the state by Judge John Wasson Eddy and is in direct reference to Montana's many "bonanza" mines.

Big Sky Country

A relatively recent nickname, "Big Sky Country" originated with a 1962 promotion of the Montana State Highway Department. It is a reference to the unobstructed skyline in the state that seems to overwhelm the landscape at times. The name came from a book by Alfred Bertram Guthrie Jr., *Big Sky*, recalled by a Highway Department employee. Mr. Guthrie gave the Highway Department permission to use the name and Montana has been "Big Sky Country" ever since. The legend "Big Sky Country" appeared on Montana license plates from 1967 to 1975. This was shortened to "Big Sky" on license plates stamped from 1976 to 2000.

Land of Shining Mountains

This is another reference to the mineral wealth of the state of Montana with a toast to its mountains in the west. Native American tribes were to also have referred to the mountains as "shining" because of the shiny reflections made by the glittery snow of mountain peaks.

The Mountain State

This nickname, of course, refers to the mountains of Montana.

The Stubtoe State

This nickname again refers to Montana's rugged, mountainous terrain and offers a human connection.

The Headwaters State

Montana is known as the headwaters state because much of the water which flows to the rest of the nation comes from the mountains of Montana. Two of the nation's major river systems, the Missouri and Columbia, are born high in the Rocky Mountains of Montana.

STATE BIRD



The western meadowlark (*Sturnella neglecta*) was designated the official state bird of Montana in 1931. Chosen (overwhelmingly) by Montana's school children to represent the state, the Western Meadowlark is a familiar songbird of open country across the western two-thirds of the continent.

The western meadowlark is in the same family as blackbirds and orioles. Adults have a black and white striped head, long, pointed bill, yellow cheeks, bright yellow throat and a distinctive black "V" on the breast.

Western meadowlarks forage on the ground and beneath the soil for insects, grain and weed seeds

(it's estimated that at least 65-70% of their diet consists of beetles, cutworms, caterpillars, grasshoppers, spiders, sow bugs, and snails).

They also nest on the ground - constructing a cup of dried grasses and bark woven into the surrounding vegetation. This nest may be open or have a partial or full grass roof, and sometimes a grass entry tunnel several feet long.

Western meadowlark predators include hawks, crows, skunks, coyotes, raccoons, and weasels. Western meadowlarks are still abundant but declining throughout their range; they are a protected non-game species. The western meadowlark is often seen perched on fence-posts in grasslands and agricultural areas singing its distinct 7-10 note melody (their flute-like song usually ends with 3 descending notes).

The western meadowlark is also the state bird for the states of Kansas, Nebraska, North Dakota, Oregon and Wyoming.

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:

