



West Virginia State History ~ In a Nutshell ~

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West Virginia 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.

West Virginia State History Lapbook Journal Study Guide



The Great Seal of West Virginia

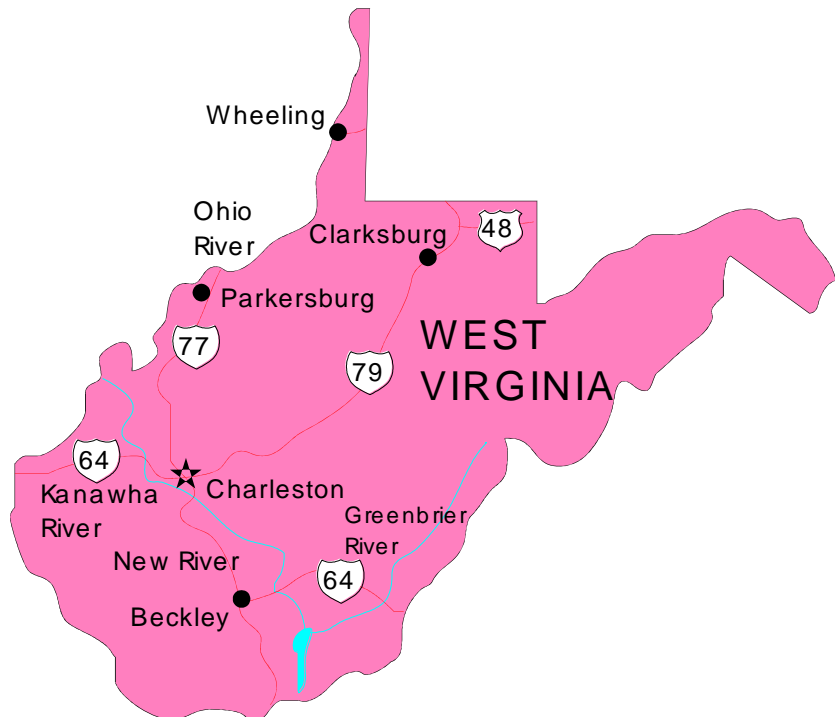
Welcome to West Virginia, land of rugged mountains. The "Mountain State," with the highest mean altitude east of the Mississippi River, is also the state with the largest single natural scenic and outdoor recreational area in the eastern United States; the Appalachian Mountain system. Eighty percent of the state is forested with over 110,000 square miles of hardwood forest, wind-swept mountains and photo-perfect valley landscapes. All of this can be found within a day's drive of 20 major eastern cities.

Venture into West Virginia, experience the beauty of its unmatched mountain scenery, and learn why the state motto rings so true: *Montani Semper Liberi* --Mountaineers Always Free!

STATE NAME AND STATE CITIZENS

Until 1861 West Virginia was part of Virginia. Virginia was named to honor Queen Elizabeth of England, often referred to as the "Virgin Queen."

People who live in West Virginia or who come from West Virginia are called West Virginians.



Map of West Virginia – Capital, Major Cities and Rivers

STATEHOOD

Prior to gaining statehood, the area that is now West Virginia formed the western part of Virginia. Settlers in the western part of the "Old Dominion" began their efforts to join the federal Union when Virginia announced its secession in 1861.

In the western part of the State, the Restored Government of Virginia in Wheeling drafted a state constitution in 1862. The new state called West Virginia applied to Congress for admission into the Union. Congress approved the request with one condition, that the new state abolish slavery. President Lincoln signed the West Virginia statehood bill and on June 20, 1863, West Virginia officially became the 35th state to be admitted into the Union.

STATE CONSTITUTION

West Virginia's first constitution was ratified in 1862, a year before the state joined the Union. West Virginia is currently governed under its second constitution, the Constitution of 1872. It is the governing document for the state of West Virginia. It describes the structure and function of the state's government. A Preamble was added to the 1872 constitution.

PREAMBLE: *Since through Divine Providence we enjoy the blessings of civil, political and religious liberty, we, the people of West Virginia, in and through the provisions of this Constitution, reaffirm our faith in and constant reliance upon God and seek diligently to promote, preserve and perpetuate good government in the state of West Virginia for the common welfare, freedom and security of ourselves and our posterity.*

STATE GOVERNMENT

West Virginia's government is divided into three branches -- The Executive, The Legislative and the Judicial -- which make up the Checks and Balances system. The Checks and Balances allows for each branch to maintain an amount of power but not be exceeded by the other two branches.

The first branch is the Executive branch. Its primary function is to carry out or execute the laws made by the Legislature or the Constitution. It also must administer the daily affairs of the state. To help carry out its duties, West Virginia voters elect six key figures:

- The Governor
- The Secretary of State
- The State Auditor
- The Treasurer
- The Commissioner of Agriculture
- The Attorney General

The best known figure of these six officials is the Governor. The Governor is elected by the voters to a four year term with a maximum of two consecutive terms.

One of the many privileges granted to the Governor is the right to address the Legislature in the annual State of the State address. The address conveys the Governor's priorities for the state, as well as the agenda for the Legislature. The governor also delivers to the Legislature the proposed budget for the state. The budget is the expected expenditures for the state.

In addition to delivering the State of the State Address, the governor is also given the veto privilege. The governor may use the veto if a piece of legislation does not conform with the administration's philosophy and cannot be modified to complement the long range plans of the governor. The governor may also extend legislative sessions and call for special sessions if the need arises.

The governor also plays a part in the judicial system as well. He or she can remit fines and penalties and grant reprieves and pardons persons convicted of certain crimes. The governor is the only state official who is vested with these powers.

The executive branch also oversees state agencies such as the Departments of Transportation, Tax and Revenue, Health and Human Resources, Administration and Education and all their divisions that fall under them.

The Legislative branch is the branch of government that makes the laws. West Virginia's Legislature is a bicameral legislature, meaning there are two houses of the legislature. The Legislature is divided into a Senate, with 34 members, and House of Delegates, with 100 members.

Senatorial and House Districts are arranged according to population. Two senators are elected from each district, with each up for election in alternating years. The number of delegates from each district is dependent upon the population from that district. All 100 members of the House of Delegates are up for election every two years.

Each of the two houses has presiding officers: The President of the Senate and The Speaker of the House. Each presiding officer is elected by the majority party of that house.

Also within each house, there are other officers who play key roles in the legislative process. Once the President and Speaker are elected, those leaders select members for certain roles. The Majority Leader and the Majority Whip promote the majority party's agenda, with the majority leader playing a more visible role. If the President or Speaker is unable to chair the floor session, a substitute, known as the Speaker/President Pro Tempore, will act as the presiding officer.

Along with presiding over the floor session, the President and Speaker also selects committee chairs as well as the majority party members of those committees.

The Minority Party also elects officers to promote their party's agenda. The Minority Leader is elected by the minority party. The Minority Leader also selects a Minority Whip. The Minority Leader also selects the minority party's membership to the committees.

According to the West Virginia Constitution, the Legislature meets annually for 60 consecutive days commencing on the second Wednesday in January. However, this changes when it is an inaugural year. The year a new governor is inaugurated, the session begins on the second Wednesday in February. It is during these 60 days that proposals or ideas can become law.

The third branch of government is the Judicial branch. The Judiciary is made up of courts -- Supreme, Circuit, the magistrate (local) and municipal (city) courts. The Judicial branch interprets the laws.

The state judges are elected by the citizens rather than being appointed. They also run for their office as members of a political party.

The duties of the judicial branch include:

- Interpreting state laws;
- Settling legal disputes;
- Punishing violators of the law;
- Hearing civil cases;
- Protecting individual rights granted by the state constitution;
- Determining the guilt or innocence of those accused of violating the criminal laws of the state;
- Acting as a check upon the legislative and executive branches of state government.

The Supreme Court of Appeals is the highest court in West Virginia and supervises the lower courts. It is comprised of five judges who are elected for twelve year terms by the voters. The Supreme Court is required to meet twice a year, in January and in September, and may hold special terms when necessary. The Supreme Court has the authority to determine if state laws and actions of state officials, including the Governor, are constitutional. Laws and executive orders cannot be enforced if they violate the state constitution.

Most cases brought before the Supreme Court are appeals that have been tried in the circuit or magistrate courts. Once a decision has been made by the Supreme Court, the decision is final, with the exception of conflicts between state and federal laws, which may be appealed to the United States Supreme Court.

Of the five Supreme Court justices, one is selected to be the Chief Justice. The selection process is a rotation between the five justices, each who serve as the chief justice for one year. The Chief Justice's duties include submitting a budget to the Legislature, and according to the state constitution, the Supreme Court will be appropriated for whatever amount it requests. The Chief Justice also assigns justices to write opinions and decisions of the Court.

Source: http://www.legis.state.wv.us/Educational/Kids_Page/9.html

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

STATE SEAL

Adopted in 1863, the West Virginia state seal features a large boulder inscribed with "June 20, 1863" (the year West Virginia became a state).

Two crossed rifles and a Liberty cap in front of the boulder represent the importance of fighting for liberty.

The farmer on the left with ax, plow and cornstalk is a symbol of agriculture.

On the right stands a miner with pickax, anvil, and sledge hammer (a symbol of industry).

In the outer ring, the text "State of West Virginia" sits above the state motto: "*Montani Semper Liberi*" (Latin for Mountaineers are Always Free). West Virginia is also nicknamed *The Mountain State*.

There is also a reverse of the West Virginia great seal, used as the official seal of the Governor.



Reverse Side of Seal

STATE CAPITAL (Charleston)

The capital city of West Virginia is Charleston. Charleston is the largest city in West Virginia. It is located at the confluence of the Elk and Kanawha Rivers in Kanawha County. As of the 2010 Census, it had a population of 51,400, while its metropolitan area had a population of 304,214. The state capitol buildings are located in the capital city of Charleston.



The West Virginia State Capitol is the seat of government for West Virginia. It houses the office of the governor and the West Virginia Legislature.

The West Virginia State Capitol along with the West Virginia Executive Mansion is part of the West Virginia Capitol Complex, a historic district listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

Capitol Facts and History: For several years, the capital of West Virginia intermittently traveled between Wheeling and Charleston. In 1877, however, the state's citizens voted on the final location of their capital. Charleston was chosen and, eight years later, the first capitol building was opened. After a fire in 1921, a hastily-built structure was opened but it too burned down in 1927.

A Capitol Building Commission, created by the Legislature in 1921, authorized construction of the present capitol. Architect Cass Gilbert designed the buff limestone structure that was to have a final cost of just under \$10 million. After the three stages of construction were completed, Governor William G. Conley dedicated the capitol on June 20, 1932.

The front of the building faces the Kanawha River, and the entire capitol plaza is bordered by Kanawha Boulevard East (also known as U.S. Route 60 and the Midland Trail), Greenbrier Street (also a part of Route 60 and West Virginia Route 114, where the latter terminates), California Avenue and Piedmont Road. Formerly, Washington Street passed through the plaza, but was closed off for pedestrian use. Besides the main capitol, there are two wings which lie perpendicular to the east and west ends of the building, forming an open-ended quadrangle centered on a fountain, one of three in the plaza. The two wings are connected by low causeways on the basement level. The Governor's mansion and buildings housing a cultural center as well as several state departments and a parking garage, all occupy the area of the plaza, with several other state departments lying east of California Avenue.

The grounds include several statues, including Abraham Lincoln on the front plaza and Stonewall Jackson, a native of the state, near the southeast corner of the plaza. The Lincoln statue depicts the President, who was in office at the time of the state's incorporation, walking at midnight, head bowed, wearing a robe over his clothes, and is located in front of the main entrance of the building, facing the river. There are also three large fountains on the grounds, in the quadrangle just behind the rear entrance of the main building; one across the pedestrian walkway from the west wing surrounded by three of the other state office buildings; and one to

the northwest, between the cultural center and the Department of Motor Vehicles building, just east of the Washington Street entrance to the plaza. Also at the complex are the historic Holly Grove Mansion and the West Virginia Governor's Mansion.

Source: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/West_Virginia_State_Capitol

STATE MOTTO

“Mountaineers Are Always Free”

Montani Semper Liberi (Latin)

West Virginia's state motto was adopted as an element of its official seal

STATE FLAG

Prior to the official adoption of the present State Flag by the Legislature on March 7, 1929, by Senate Joint Resolution No. 18, West Virginia had been represented by several flags.

Prominently displayed on the pure white field of today's flag is a Coat of Arms, the lower half wreathed by Rhododendron, the State flower.

Lettered across the top on a ribbon, is the constitutional designation -- "State of West Virginia". The white field is bordered on four sides by a strip of blue.



STATE NICKNAMES

The Mountain State

This nickname refers to the rugged terrain of the scenic Allegheny Mountains that cross the state.

Switzerland of America

This is another nickname given because of the mountainous terrain of West Virginia. Early settlers tended to compare mountainous areas of the new land to the mountains of Switzerland and, so, many states, including Colorado, Maine, New Hampshire, and New Jersey have, at one time or another, been labeled the "Switzerland of America."

The Panhandle State

This nickname indirectly references the physical features of the state. The borders of West Virginia tend to follow the contours of the land, winding between mountains, along mountain

ridges, and along river beds. Two long, slender extensions of the state give West Virginia the nickname, "The Panhandle State." The land that extends eastward between Maryland and Virginia is referred to as the Eastern Panhandle. The strip of land that extends north between Ohio and Pennsylvania is referred to as the Northern Panhandle.

STATE BIRD

West Virginia designated the northern cardinal (*Cardinalis cardinalis*) as its official state bird in 1949.

One of America's favorite backyard birds, cardinals are distinctive in appearance and song - known for their "cheer cheer cheer," "whit-chew whit-chew" and "purty purty purty" whistles.

Male cardinals are a brilliant scarlet red, females a buff brown with reddish wings - both have a jet-black mask, pronounced crest, and heavy bill. The cardinal sings nearly year-round, and the male aggressively defends his 4-acre territory (male cardinals have been seen attacking small red objects mistaken as other males).



Northern cardinals breed 2-3 times each season. The female builds the nest and tends the hatchlings for about 10 days while the male brings food. The male then takes over the care of this first brood while the female moves on to a new nest and lays a second clutch of eggs.

The cardinal is the state bird of 6 other states: Illinois, Indiana, Kentucky, North Carolina, Ohio, and Virginia.

STATE FLOWER



The big laurel (*Rhododendron maximum*) was adopted as the official state flower of West Virginia in 1903 (with the recommendation of the Governor and a vote by the public and school pupils).

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:

