

# Wyoming

# State History

~ In a Nutshell ~

Written & designed by  
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Wyoming 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.

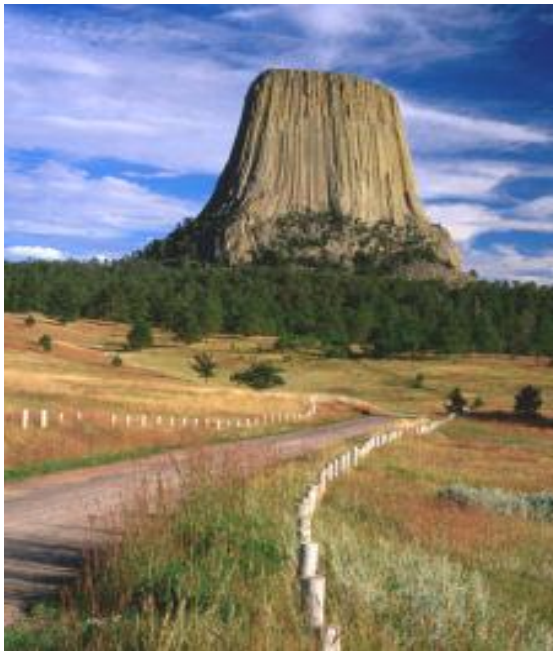
# Wyoming State History Lapbook Journal Study Guide



The Great Seal of Wyoming

Majestic mountains, wide-open grasslands, pristine lakes, and extraordinary wildlife, from Grand Teton to Yellowstone National Park, from the Shoshone National Forest to the Eastern Great Plains - Wyoming is beautiful and breathtaking.

Natural wonders that have inspired everyone -- Native Americans, gold-rush bound 49'ers, and even occasional extra-terrestrials



Wyoming's Devil's Tower is that awesome backdrop for the landing in the 1977 science fiction film *Close Encounters of the Third Kind*.

Legh Freeman, publisher of *The Frontier Index* in Kearny, Nebraska, claimed that it was he who first suggested Wyoming as the name for this portion of the Dakota Territory.

The name Wyoming was adopted from two Delaware Indian words, MECHEWEAMI-ING. To the Indians it meant "at the big plains," or "on the great plain," certainly appropriate for Wyoming.

People who live in Wyoming or who come from Wyoming are called Wyomingites

**Welcome to America in all its breathtaking natural majesty. Welcome to Wyoming!**



Map of Wyoming – Capital, Major Cities and Rivers

## STATEHOOD

Talk of statehood for Wyoming began as early as 1869 after the organization of Wyoming Territory in that year. The road to statehood, however, did not begin until 1888 when the Territorial Assembly sent Congress a petition for admission into the Union. Bills were introduced in both houses of Congress, but did not pass.

Though no legislation passed Congress enabling Wyoming to follow the steps that lead to statehood, Governor Francis E. Warren and others decided to continue as if an "enabling act" had passed. On July 8, 1889, Wyoming Territory held an election of delegates to Wyoming's one and only Constitutional Convention. Forty-nine men gathered in Cheyenne during September, 1889, and wrote the constitution. The voters approved the document November 5, 1889, by a vote of 6,272 to 1,923.

Bills for Wyoming statehood were introduced in both the U.S. Senate and House in December, 1889. The House passed the bill March 27, 1890. President Benjamin Harrison signed Wyoming's statehood bill on July 10, 1890, making Wyoming the 44th state.

## STATE CONSTITUTION

The Wyoming State Constitution is the fundamental governing document for the state of Wyoming. It was approved by the voters in November 1889 and accepted by Congress in 1890. Wyoming still operates under its first constitution, as amended. Constitutional amendments

require a two-thirds vote of the legislature and ratification by the voters at the next general election.

**PREAMBLE:** *We, the people of the State of Wyoming, grateful to God for our civil, political and religious liberties, and desiring to secure them to ourselves and perpetuate them to our posterity, do ordain and establish this Constitution.*

## **STATE GOVERNMENT**

Wyoming's Constitution outlines the structure and function of state government. Wyoming's government is organized into three branches: Legislative Branch (the lawmakers), Executive Branch (the Governor and State departments), and the Judicial Branch (the courts and the judges).

The Wyoming State Legislature is the legislative branch of Wyoming state government. It is bicameral and consists of a 60 member Wyoming House of Representatives, and a 30 member Wyoming Senate. The legislature meets at the Wyoming State Capitol in Cheyenne. There are no term limits for either chamber. Representatives are elected every two years and serve two-year terms. Senators are elected every four years to staggered four-year terms.

Legislators must be US citizens, citizens and residents of Wyoming, and residents of their districts for at least one year prior to election. The minimum age for senators is 25 and the minimum age for representatives is 21. Regular sessions begin in January or February and are limited to 40 legislative days in odd-numbered years and 20 legislative days in even-numbered years. The legislature may not call special sessions.

Heading the executive branch are five elected officials: the governor, secretary of state, auditor, treasurer, and superintendent of public instruction. Each serves a four-year term and, under Wyoming's cabinet form of government, is also a member of seven state boards and commissions. The governor is limited to serving two consecutive terms. His successor is the secretary of the senate, as there is no lieutenant governor. A governor must be at least 30 years old, a US citizen, a qualified voter, and at least a five-year resident of the state.

A bill passed by the legislature becomes law if signed by the governor, if left unsigned by the governor for three days while the legislature is in session (or 15 days after it has adjourned), or if passed over the governor's veto by two-thirds of the elected members of each house.

Voters must be US citizens, at least 18 years old and bona fide residents of Wyoming. Convicted felons and those adjudicated as mentally incompetent may not vote.

Wyoming's highest court is the Supreme Court of Wyoming, with five justices presiding over appeals from the state's lower courts. Wyoming is unusual in that it does not have an intermediate appellate court, like most states. This is largely attributable to the state's size and correspondingly lower caseload. Appeals from the state district courts go directly to the Wyoming Supreme Court. Wyoming also has state circuit courts (formerly county courts), of limited jurisdiction, which handle certain types of cases, such as civil claims with lower dollar amounts, misdemeanor criminal offenses, and felony arraignments. Circuit court judges also commonly hear small claims cases as well. All state court judges in Wyoming are nominated by

the Judicial Nominating Commission and appointed by the Governor. They are then subject to a retention vote by the electorate.

## **TRIBAL GOVERNMENT**

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

### **Federally Recognized Tribes in Wyoming**

- Arapahoe Tribe of the Wind River Reservation
- Shoshone Tribe of the Wind River Reservation

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



## STATE SEAL

Wyoming's great seal was adopted in 1893 and revised in 1921. There are two dates on the seal: 1869 commemorates the organization of the Territorial government and 1890 is the year Wyoming was admitted to the Union (the Roman numerals for the number 44 on the five-pointed star signifies that Wyoming was the 44th state admitted to the Union). The draped Liberty-style figure in the center holds a staff from which a banner flows bearing the words "Equal Rights" (a symbol of the equal political status women have always enjoyed in Wyoming).



The two male figures represent the livestock and mining industries of the state. The lamps burning on top of the pillars are a symbol for the *Light of Knowledge*. The scrolls wrapping the two pillars bear the words "Oil, Mines, Livestock, and Grain" (four of Wyoming's major industries).

## STATE CAPITAL (Cheyenne)

Cheyenne is the capital city of the state of Wyoming. It is the most populous city of Wyoming and the county seat of Laramie County. Cheyenne is situated on Crow Creek and Dry Creek.



The Wyoming State Capitol is the state capitol and seat of government of Wyoming. Built between 1886 and 1890, the capitol is located in Cheyenne and contains the chambers of the Wyoming State Legislature and well as the office of the Governor of Wyoming. It was designated a U.S. National Historic Landmark during 1987.

The construction of the capitol began prior to Wyoming gaining statehood. The settlement of Cheyenne was in the path of the transcontinental railroad as the Union Pacific crews arrived to lay the tracks westward in 1867. Cheyenne soon laid claim to a higher status than older Wyoming settlements such as those at Fort Laramie, Fort Bridger, and the mining town of South Pass City, changing Cheyenne from a village to a city in a matter of months. The seat of the new Territorial government was established in Cheyenne in 1869.

In 1886, the Ninth Territorial Legislative Assembly authorized construction of the State Capitol. A five member commission, appointed by Governor Francis E. Warren, was charged with the selection and purchase of the site, selection of an architect and accepting the lowest bids for

construction of the building. The commission chose the firm of David W. Gibbs & Company, Architects, to draw plans and specifications. These were accepted in July 1886 and the contract was awarded to the lowest bidder, Adam Feick & Brothers, who broke ground on September 9, 1886.

The Tenth Territorial Legislative Assembly convened in the unfinished building. The two small wings on the east and west were completed in 1890. Crowded conditions persisted with the growth of the state and in 1915 the Thirteenth legislature approved the construction of the House and Senate Chambers, which were completed in March 1917.

The 42nd Legislature in 1974 appropriated funds for the first phase of renovation of the capitol and the project was completed in 1980. Work included stripping and staining all woodwork, painting walls in the original designs and colors, replacing wooden floor beams with steel, concrete and modernizing the wiring, heating, plumbing and air conditioning.

Source: [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wyoming\\_State\\_Capitol](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wyoming_State_Capitol)

## STATE MOTTO

“Equal Rights”

## STATE FLAG

Wyoming was one of the last states to ratify an official state flag. In 1916 an open competition was held by Wyoming's DAR (Daughters of the American Revolution) for the design of an official Wyoming flag. Verna Keays won the \$20 first-place prize (from amidst thirty-seven entries) with her design of a bison (Wyoming's state animal) with the state seal branded at its center. Her design was made official by legislature in 1917.



In Verna's original design, the bison faced away from the staff as a symbol of the freedom with which the bison had once roamed over the Wyoming plains. Dr. Grace Raymond Hebard (state regent for the DAR at the time), felt the design would be more balanced with the bison facing the staff. The first flags were printed this way, and though Wyoming legislation has not officially recognized this change, Wyoming flags have been printed with the bison facing the staff since 1917.

The red, white, and blue colors of the state flag are the same as those of the national flag. The red on the border is a symbol of the Indians who inhabited Wyoming long before settlers came, and also represents the blood of pioneers who gave their lives to claim the soil. White is a symbol for the purity and uprightness of Wyoming. Blue is for Wyoming's sky and mountains, and is also a symbol of fidelity, justice and virility.



## STATE NICKNAMES

### *The Equality State*

Wyoming was the first state to grant women the right to vote in 1869. This action led to the nickname "The Suffrage State" and later to "The Equality State."

### *The Suffrage State*

This was the precursor to "The Equality State" nickname. It came about when Wyoming granted the right to vote to women in 1869.

### *The Sagebrush State*

This term was given to Wyoming because of the wild sage that is prevalent in some sections of the state.

### *The Cowboy State*

Wyoming has officially adopted a cowboy on a bucking horse as a symbol of the state. This has led some to refer to Wyoming as "The Cowboy State."

### *Big Wyoming*

This name references the size of the state of Wyoming; 10th largest state in total area (land and water area combined).

### *Big Wyoming*

This promotional commentary pays homage to the rugged natural beauty of Wyoming, a state where the Great Plains meets the Rocky Mountains.

## STATE BIRD

Wyoming designated the western meadowlark (*Sturnella neglecta*) as official state bird in 1927. The western meadowlark is a familiar songbird of open country across the western two-thirds of the continent.

In the same family as blackbirds and orioles, adults are 8-11 inches long and have a black and white striped head; a long, pointed bill; yellow cheeks; bright yellow throat; and a distinctive black "V" on breast. 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).



**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:**

