



State ____: Mountain State Has Many More Official Symbols

Staff reports

June 15, 2013

State flag: Civil War origins The West Virginia flag has undergone several revisions since statehood 150 years ago. In January 1864, the Legislature approved a flag as a way to recognize the contributions of the Fourth Regiment West Virginia Volunteers during the Civil War. The battles the regiment fought in were listed on the flag: Charleston, Vicksburg, Jackson and Mission Ridge. Meanwhile, other units used their own flags. It wasn't until the 1904 Louisiana Purchase Exposition in St. Louis that state officials realized a standard flag was needed.

That design, however, had to be tweaked for the Jamestown Exposition three years later because the colors on the white field of cloth showed through to the other side. The details of the current flag were spelled out very specifically in a legislative resolution passed on March 7, 1929 -- it had to have the same proportions as the U.S. ensign, a coat of arms and a wreath of rhododendron. *Source: West Virginia Heritage Encyclopedia*

State bird: Cardinal is a popular choice No originality here. West Virginia, along with six other states, adopted the northern cardinal as its state bird, no doubt because the male's red plumage looks so pretty in the snow -- to which many a photographer can attest. Those schoolchildren who voted on the bird in 1949 weren't thinking of the drab-shaded but prolific female (a she-cardinal usually lays two, sometimes three sets of eggs during one breeding season). Still, the handsome male, with his jaunty head crest and black mask, is a good father, taking care of the brood once they leave the nest. Cardinal couples are monogamous. Their courtship ritual begins with the male offering the female a morsel of food and they may sing a courtship duet, as both genders have beautiful voices. The cardinal can be found in every state from the Mississippi River east to the Atlantic Ocean. The northern cardinal does not migrate. They prefer the woods but can be attracted to backyard

feeders with black oil sunflower or safflower seed. *Source: Hammond's Nature Atlas of America, About.com and The West Virginia Encyclopedia*

State tree: Sugar maple prized for sap, colors

In 1949, schoolchildren in West Virginia voted for the sugar maple to be the state tree of West Virginia. Three other states -- New York, Vermont and Wisconsin -- also selected the sugar maple, *Acer saccharum*, as their state tree. The leaf of the tree is best recognized as it appears on the Canadian flag. The tree thrives at elevations of 2,500 feet and higher and can reach heights of 80 to 90 feet and 2 to 3 feet in diameter. "They grow from southeast Canada through New England and the Midwestern United States, south to Tennessee and Virginia. They are found typically in deep, rich, well-drained soils. Often planted as ornamental and shade trees, they are prized for their fall colors of brilliant yellow, orange and sometimes red. The hard wood is used to make furniture, veneer, cabinets and many other items," according to the U.S. National Arboretum website. The tree is the principal source of maple sugar. In 2007 in West Virginia, 2,773 gallons of maple syrup was produced. Each year, the Pickens Maple Syrup Festival takes place on the third full weekend of March.

State fruit: Golden Delicious is world famous

In 1972, the generic apple was the state fruit. But years later, the Legislature picked *the* apple -- the Golden Delicious developed in a Clay County orchard. In 1995, Sen. Lloyd Jackson sponsored a resolution to make the Golden Delicious the state apple. It was not a shoo-in. "A group of delegates voted against it, and Delegate Roy Givens, D-Brooke, told the House they couldn't vote for the Golden Delicious apple knowing that the Grimes Golden apple was the first apple found in West Virginia," The Charleston Gazette reported at the time. Grimes Golden was discovered in Givens' district (Wellsburg) about 1805, supposedly from a seed dropped by Johnny Appleseed. The tree producing Golden Delicious was found in 1912 in Clay County. "The tree was purchased by Stark Brothers Nursery, which built a cage around the tree and protected it for many years while propagating the Golden Delicious worldwide," wrote Bob Schwarz, a former Gazette reporter, in 2006. By then, the Golden Delicious was the second most popular apple in the country.

State butterfly: The monarch reigns In 1995, teacher Anita Conn told the Gazette that a group of former Andrews Heights Elementary School pupils -- then seniors at St. Albans High School -- deserved credit for the monarch becoming West Virginia's state butterfly. She said that in 1986, the pupils wrote to all 55 county

school systems, asking youngsters to vote for an official bug. Forty counties replied, overwhelmingly choosing the monarch. Afterward, the Andrews Heights pupils -- including one dressed as a butterfly -- visited the Legislature for four years to lobby, and finally gained success. In the fall, the orange and black monarch migrates south to warmer weather, sometimes as far as Mexico and South America. The following spring, the butterflies return north; along the way, they lay eggs on milkwood plants and die. *Source: Hammond's Nature Atlas of America*

State rock: What else? Coal Bituminous coal became West Virginia's official state rock in 2009 when Gov. Joe Manchin signed a House of Delegates resolution. The designation was based primarily on coal's contribution to the state's economy and history. West Virginia is the nation's No. 2 coal producer. The resolution notes that explorer John Peter Salley found coal near Racine in 1742 and named the Coal River as a result. George Washington observed a Mason County coal fire in 1770, and Conrad Cotts opened the state's first commercial coal mine near Wheeling in 1810, according to the resolution. In 1950, 127,000 coal miners were employed in the industry. Coal production reached its peak in 1997 at 180 million tons of coal mined.

State soil: Monongahela silt loam is productive "There's always been plenty of dirt in state government. On Monday, Gov. Cecil Underwood made it official," Gazette reporter Phil Kabler wrote in 1997. The day before, on Nov. 10, the governor accepted the new official seal for the official state soil, Monongahela silt loam. In passing the concurrent resolution, legislators made West Virginia the 12th state to have an official soil. "The state has a number of symbols that represent its natural resources, and soil is one of the most important natural resources," said Rob Pate, president of the West Virginia Association of Professional Soil Scientists. "People are a lot farther removed from the soil these days," Pate said. By having to learn about the official state soil, students will get the opportunity to study soil conservation, he said. Monongahela silt loam was selected as the state soil because it is highly productive and covers more than 100,000 acres in 45 of the 55 counties. The seal for the state soil was painted by Bill Dawson of Huntington and features a pastoral scene with a barn and a hillside cross-sectioned to reveal the layers that make up Monongahela silt loam.

State firearm: Not just any flintlock, but the 1819 Hall Model The newest official state symbol is the firearm -- specifically the Hall Model 1819 flintlock rifle. Senate Majority Leader John Unger sponsored the measure, which the Senate passed in mid-March. The Berkeley County Democrat has said it was the first such

rifle adopted by the U.S. Army. John Hall developed the rifle and had it manufactured at the National Armory in Harpers Ferry. The early 1800s weapon was one of the first breach-loading military rifles. "The flintlock was the first entirely machine-made weapon ever devised," West Virginia Public Broadcasting reported in March. "The weapon was first to be able to be loaded by removing a block from the barrel near the operator instead of pouring powder and ramming the bullet into the muzzle. "The WVPB report said the Army first commissioned Hall to make 100 rifles, then 1,000 more in 1819. It is thought to be one of the guns laying at the feet of the miner and farmer on the Great Seal of West Virginia. The resolution cleared the House of Delegates on April 4.

State colors: Old gold and blue For the West Virginia centennial celebration in 1963, a concurrent resolution of the Senate and House of Delegates made official what many people already assumed was official: that West Virginia's colors were those of West Virginia University -- gold and blue. "The colors, according to the widely used Pantone color matching system, are PMS 286 (blue) and PMS 124 (gold)," noted an article in the West Virginia Encyclopedia, published by the West Virginia Humanities Council.

State tartan: West Virginia shawl *Reprinted from Today in the Legislature, a blog of the West Virginia Legislature, on March 13, 2008:* On March 6, the Legislature adopted House Concurrent Resolution 29, designating an adaptation of the "West Virginia Shawl" as the official state tartan. Many Americans can claim Celtic roots, and, as a result, more than 20 other states have adopted official state tartans. According to the resolution, a majority of West Virginia's earliest settlers were of Celtic descent. The pattern for the tartan is based on a previously undiscovered "West Virginia Shawl" found at the Daughters of the American Revolution Museum in Barboursville. The official state tartan is based on this design and contains the following colors, each one representing a different aspect of the state:

- Scarlet for the state bird, the cardinal
- Yellow for the fall colors
- Blue for the rivers and lakes
- Black for the official state animal, the black bear, and the state's oil and coal resources
- Green for the state flower, the rhododendron, and the state's meadows
- Azure for the sky
- White in order to include all the colors of the United States