

Ten things to know about W.Va. sesquicentennial

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CHARLESTON, W.Va. -- A look at facts and events surrounding West Virginia's 150th birthday celebration:

1. BORN OF DISCORD -- West Virginia is the only state to secede from a Confederate state. After Virginia voted to secede from the Union in 1861, West Virginia began a two-year process of seceding from Virginia and became the 35th state on June 20, 1863.

2. ALMOST HEAVEN, ALLEGHANY? -- Kanawha was the original name proposed for the state but it failed to gain enough votes during the First Constitutional Convention in December 1861. Other suggestions that also failed were Alleghany, Augusta, Columbia, New Virginia and Western Virginia.

3. BELL RINGING -- It isn't a sesquicentennial celebration until someone's bell gets rung. There will be a statewide bell-ringing ceremony at 1:50 p.m. Gov. Earl Ray Tomblin will participate at the Capitol.

4. A KENNEDY SPEAKS -- President John F. Kennedy gave a speech at the Capitol in Charleston for West Virginia's 100th birthday celebration in 1963. His nephew, Mark Kennedy Shriver, is scheduled to speak in Wheeling on tonight during a sesquicentennial event.

5. HONEST ABE -- President Abraham Lincoln signed a bill in December 1862 approving West Virginia's creation as a pro-Union state. A traveling exhibit "Lincoln: The Constitution and the Civil War," opens at West Virginia University's Erickson Alumni Center in Morgantown on Saturday.

6. GOOD TIMES, GOOD WEATHER -- The forecast is favorable for outdoor celebrations, and there are many. Little or no rain is expected through Saturday with highs statewide in the 80s.

7. WHO WANTS CAKE? -- From cupcakes at interstate welcome centers to an 8-foot long replica of the state Capitol that will serve 15,000 visitors to Charleston, there's cake for everyone at numerous venues across the state.

8. LEGAL HOLIDAY -- In 1927, the West Virginia Legislature recognized the state's birthday as a legal holiday. Before that, West Virginia Day was celebrated informally.

9. 3-D SHOW -- Monster Media of Orlando, Fla., is producing a three-dimensional light show that will be projected across the state Capitol facade today through Saturday nights.

10. FIREWORKS! -- The skies will light up with scheduled fireworks displays through Saturday night in Berkeley Springs, Bridgeport, Charleston, Fairlea, Summersville and Wheeling.