

# WEST VIRGINIA FACTS

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# Floating Capitol

When West Virginia became a state in 1863, the Capitol was at the Linsly Institute in Wheeling. In 1870, the state Legislature designated Charleston as the capital, and all state records and property were transported down the Ohio River and up the Kanawha River to their new home.

In 1875, the Legislature voted to make Wheeling the capital. This was appealed by the citizens of Charleston and finally settled by the West Virginia Supreme Court of Appeals on Sept. 13 in favor of Wheeling. However, state officials had boarded the steamers Emma Graham and Chesapeake on May 21 to start their trip to Wheeling. State archives and records did not arrive in Wheeling until late September aboard the Iron Valley steamer, bringing state government to a standstill for four months. On Dec. 14, 1876, the city of Wheeling presented West Virginia with a new stone structure costing \$120,000.

In 1877, the Legislature ordered an August election for the citizens of West Virginia to select a permanent location for the capital in Charleston, Martinsburg or Clarksburg. Thirty days after the election, Governor Henry M. Mathews proclaimed that after eight years, Charleston would be the government's permanent seat. State officials again boarded the Chesapeake in May 1885 to move from Wheeling to Charleston. The steam towboat, Belle Prince, towed the barge, Nick Crewley, with its cargo of state records, papers and library.

The new capitol opened May 1, 1885, and served for 36 years until its destruction by fire on Jan. 3, 1921. Ammunition, bought by the West Virginia State Police two years prior was stored on the top floor of the building. The ammunition had been purchased for use in the coal field disputes, which had threatened to erupt into civil war. Supposedly several machine guns and rifles also were stored in the capitol, so when the heat from the fire set off the ammunition, the smoke could be seen for miles.

A cry went out again to change the capital, with Clarksburg, Parkersburg and Huntington expressing interest. State officials authorized the building of a temporary capitol in Charleston one week after the fire. This building was constructed in 42 working days and lasted six years. The "Pasteboard Capitol," as it was known due to its construction of clapboard and wallboard, was destroyed by a fire of unknown origin on March 2, 1927.

Luckily, the Legislature had authorized the construction of the present Capitol on the north bank of the Kanawha River in 1921. This building was completed in 1932 at a cost of almost \$10 million.



The exterior of the Capitol is buff Indiana limestone. More than 700 train carloads of limestone and 4,640 tons of steel were used in its construction. A special spur rail line was laid on the grounds to ship needed materials to the construction site.

The magnificent 293-foot gold dome that tops the structure is five feet higher than the dome of the U.S. Capitol.

The architect's original plans called for gilding the dome's ribs, tower, lantern, staff and eagle with gold leaf and painting the flat panels between the ribs. From 1988 to 1991, the entire dome was gilded in 23 ½ karat gold leaf applied to the copper and lead roof in tiny 3 3/8-inch squares.

The dome recently underwent restoration. The citizens of the state voted to return the dome back to its original design.

## Capitol Facts

**Architect** - Cass Gilbert

**Completed** - February 1932

**Cost** - \$9,491,180.03

**Ground Covered** - 16 acres

**Floor Space** - 535,000 square feet

**Outside Walls** - over 700 carloads of Buff Indiana limestone

**Main Unit** - Imperial Danby Vermont Marble

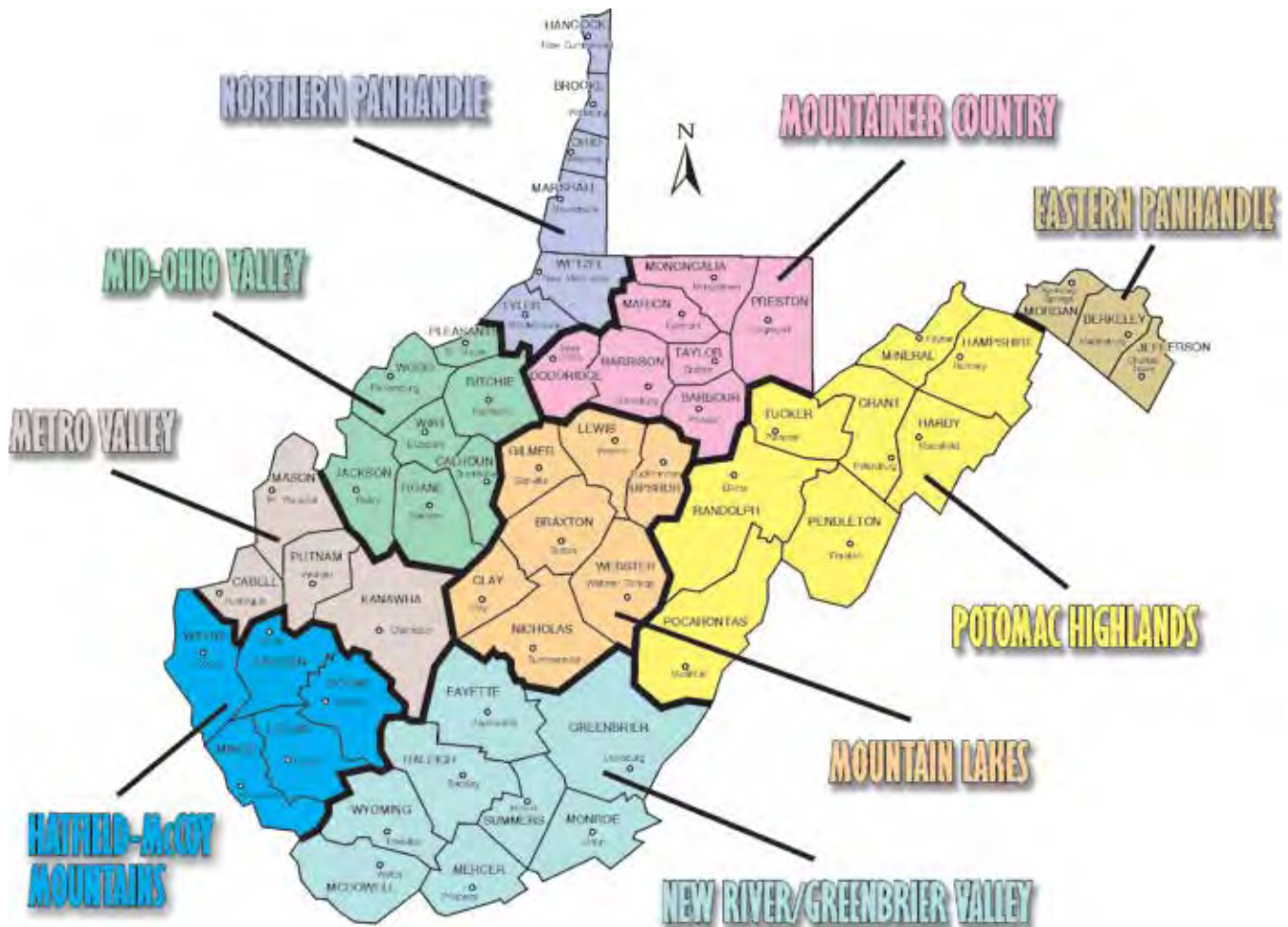
**Wings** - Tennessee Marble

**Floors** - White Vermont Marble and Italian travertine

**Dome** - Chandelier is Czechoslovakian crystal weighing two tons; 15,000 candle power; 179 feet, 9 inches from the floor; 54 foot-long gold chain lowered by a hand winch at a set speed, requiring 3½ hours to lower and 4½ hours to return to stationary position. The chandelier is lowered for cleaning every four years upon the inauguration of a new governor or re-election of an incumbent.

# West Virginia Travel Regions

## Counties & County Seats





# Unusual Facts about the Mountain State



The longest single-span steel-arch bridge in the western hemisphere is the New River Gorge Bridge, stretching 3,030 feet across the gorge. At 876 feet above the New River, the bridge is also the second-highest in the United States.

- The border of West Virginia is 1,365 miles flat (as the crow flies).
- West Virginia's Memorial Tunnel was the first in the nation to be monitored by television. It opened November 8, 1954.
- The first rural free mail delivery was started in Charles Town on October 6, 1896, and then spread throughout the United States.
- West Virginia was the first state to impose a sales tax. It became effective July 1, 1921.
- The first steamboat was launched by James

Rumsey in the Potomac River at New Mecklenburg (now Shepherdstown) on December 3, 1787.

- Bailey Brown, the first Union soldier killed in the Civil War, died on May 22, 1861, at Fetterman in Taylor County.
- A variety of the yellow apple, the Golden Delicious, originated in Clay County. The original Grimes Golden Apple tree was discovered in 1775 near Wellsburg.
- West Virginia has a mean altitude of 1,500 feet, making it the highest state east of the Mississippi.
- The first iron furnace west of the Alleghenies was built by Peter Tarr on Kings Creek in 1794.
- One of the first suspension bridges in the world was completed in Wheeling in November 1849.



The Tug Valley Chamber of Commerce in Williamson is located in a shiny, black building made of coal blocks.

- Outdoor advertising had its origin in Wheeling about 1908 when the Block Brothers Tobacco Company painted bridges and barns with the phrase, "Treat Yourself to the Best, Chew Mail Pouch."
- Moundsville is the site of the continent's largest cone-shaped prehistoric burial mound. It is 69 feet high and 900 feet in circumference at the base and was opened to tourists in 1938.
- The first electric railroad in the world, built as a commercial enterprise, was constructed between Huntington and Guyandotte.
- "Paw-Paw," nicknamed the "West Virginia banana," originated in the state and took its name from Paw Paw, in Morgan County.
- The 1500 block of Virginia Street in Charleston is the longest city block in the world.
- West Virginia is the only state formed by presidential proclamation.
- William Tompkins used natural gas to evaporate salt brine in 1841, thus becoming the first person in the United States to use natural gas for industrial purposes.

- The first glass plant in West Virginia was in Wellsburg in 1815. The first pottery plant was in Morgantown in 1785.

- In May 1860, the first crude oil-producing well in the state was drilled at Burning Springs.

- West Virginia contributed stone quarried near Hinton for the Washington Monument. The stone arrived in Washington in February 1885.

- A statue of John Henry stands atop Big Bend Mountain at John Henry Park in Talcott to honor the legend of America's "Steel Drivin' Man."

- The first memorial building to honor World War I veterans was dedicated on May 30, 1923, in Welch.

- The first post office in West Virginia was established on June 30, 1792, in Martinsburg.

- The first public spa opened at Berkeley Springs, West Virginia, in 1756 (then Bath, Virginia).

- The first free school for African-Americans in the South opened in Parkersburg in 1862.

- Mrs. Minnie Buckingham Harper, a member of the House of Delegates by appointment in 1928, was the first African-American woman to become a member of a legislative body in the United States.

- Chester Merriman of Romney was the youngest soldier of World War I, enlisting at age 14.

- White Sulphur Springs, Greenbrier County, was the first "summer White House."



Organ Cave, near Ronceverte, is the second-largest cave in the Eastern United States and the largest in the state.

- The National Radio Astronomy Observatory in Green Bank is home to the largest fully steerable satellite dish in the world.



Mother's Day was first observed at Andrews Church in Grafton on May 10, 1908.

- The first brick street in the world was laid in Charleston, West Virginia, in the early 1870s, on Summers Street, between Kanawha and Virginia streets.

- America's first organized golf club, Oakhurst Links, was established in 1884 at White Sulphur Springs, West Virginia.

# Famous West Virginians

*A sampling of the many famous West Virginians*

**Pearl S. Buck** - Pulitzer Prize- and Nobel Prize-winning author, born in Hillsboro, Pocahontas County.

**Hal Greer** - Member of the Basketball Hall of Fame, raised in Huntington, Cabell County.

**Homer H. Hickam, Jr.** - Author of *Rocket Boys: A Memoir*, the story of his life in the little town of Coalwood, WV, that inspired the #1 bestseller and award-winning movie *October Sky*.

**Thomas “Stonewall” Jackson** - Confederate General’s boyhood home became the first state 4-H Club Camp in the United States. Born in Clarksburg, Harrison County.

**Don Knotts** - Actor best known for his role as “Barney Fife” from “The Andy Griffith Show.” Born and raised in Morgantown, Monongalia County.

**Kathy Mattea** - World-renowned country music artist was born and raised in Cross Lanes, Kanawha County.

**John Forbes Nash Jr.** - 1994 Nobel Prize winning mathematician who was the subject of the 1998 biography and 2002 film “A Beautiful Mind.” Born and raised in Bluefield, Mercer County.

**Brad Paisley** - Popular country music artist and member of the Grand Ol’ Opry, born in Glen Dale, West Virginia.

**Mary Lou Retton** - 1984 Olympic Gold Medal winner in gymnastics, from Fairmont, Marion County.

**Alex Schoenbaum** - Founder of the Shoney’s Restaurant chain, one of the largest businesses to originate in West Virginia.

**Rev. Dr. Leon Sullivan** - A native of West Virginia, was a preacher, social activist and educator who founded the Sullivan Principles of Equal Opportunity, which became a blueprint for ending apartheid and an international standard for human rights.

**Cyrus R. Vance** - Secretary of State from 1977 to 1980 during the administration of President Jimmy Carter, born in Clarksburg, Harrison County.

**Booker T. Washington** - Black educational leader and the first president of Tuskegee Institute, raised in Malden, Kanawha County.

**Jerry West** - Former professional basketball star of the Los Angeles Lakers and Basketball Hall of Fame member, born in Cabin Creek, Kanawha County.

**Carter G. Woodson** - Educator, author and the father of Black History Month, raised in Huntington, Cabell County.

**Brigadier General Charles Yeager, U.S.A.F Retired** - First person to fly faster than the speed of sound, born in Myra, Lincoln County.



# Official Facts of West Virginia

## State Animal Black Bear



The Black Bear, or *Ursus americanus*, is actually deeply tinted with brown. The black bear roams freely throughout 36 states and Canada, while its West Virginia habitat primarily is in the eastern mountain region of the state. One or two cubs, rarely three, are born at a time, weighing about eight ounces each. The adult reaches an average maximum weight of 250 pounds. Selected in 1954-55 and adopted by the Legislature as the official state animal on March 23, 1973.

## State Fruit Golden Delicious Apple



The Golden Delicious Apple was designated as the official state fruit by the Legislature on February 20, 1995. Anderson Mullins discovered this apple variety in Clay County in 1905. The plain apple had been previously designated as the official state fruit on March 7, 1972.

## State Bird Cardinal

The Cardinal, or *Cardinalis cardinalis*, became West Virginia's official bird in 1949 by the Legislature authorizing a vote by pupils of public schools and civic organizations. The male cardinal is a rich scarlet color with a mask and shading of black, while the young and females are a less-brilliant color. The cardinal measures approximately eight inches long and is found from New York to the Gulf of Mexico and as far west as Oklahoma.



## State Fish Brook Trout

The Brook Trout, a West Virginia native fish, is perhaps the most-sought-after trout by anglers, as it puts up an excellent fight for its size. It thrives in small, cold, spring-fed streams and is unable to withstand warmer temperatures. The brook trout is olive with lighter sides and a reddish belly (in males) and is easily identified by the light-colored edges of the lower fins. Adopted as the State Fish March 23, 1973, during regular session following a poll of sportsmen.



## State Flower Rhododendron



The *Rhododendron maximum*, or "big laurel," is the state flower of West Virginia. It was adopted by the Legislature on January 23, 1903 following a recommendation by the Governor and a vote by the pupils of public schools. It is a shrub of the heath family and may be recognized by its large, dark evergreen leaves and delicate pale pink or white bloom, with either red or yellow flecks.



The Monarch Butterfly was designated West Virginia's official state butterfly on March 1, 1995, by the Legislature. The orange and black insect dines on milkweed as a caterpillar, sips nectar from flowers as a butterfly and, at summer's end, migrates south to Mexico. The butterflies you see in the spring are the great grandchildren of the ones that lived in Mexico during the winter.

## State Butterfly Monarch Butterfly

The Sugar Maple, *Acer saccharum*, became West Virginia's official tree by a resolution of the 1949 Legislature. Its wood is excellent for furniture, and it produces maple syrup. A single tree is 70-120 feet high and produces two to three pounds of sap sugar. It has a five-lobed leaf and a small wing-shaped seed pod and, in the fall, the leaves turn brilliant colors.



## State Tree Sugar Maple

The Honeybee became West Virginia's official state insect on March 7, 2002, by the Legislature. In addition to its flavorful honey, the honeybee pollinates many of the state's most important crops including fruits, vegetables and grasses. Its activity produces more benefit to the state's economy than any other insect. The honeybee has six legs, four wings and its coloring ranges from dark yellow to gold with three dark bands on its abdomen.



## State Insect Honeybee

## State Seal

Joseph H. Diss Debar, an artist from Doddridge County, was chosen by a committee of the Legislature to prepare drawings for an official seal for the State of West Virginia. The artist submitted his drawings with an explanation of each detail and from these was adopted, by the Legislature, a seal that has remained without change, the Official Seal of West Virginia. The seal contains the Latin motto, *Montani Semper Liberi*, which means "Mountaineers Are Always Free." A large stone in the center of the seal stands for strength. On the stone is the date the state was admitted to the Union, June 20, 1863. The farmer with his ax represents agriculture, and the miner holding his pick represents industry. In front of the rock are two rifles, crossed and surmounted at the place of contact by the Phrygian cap, or cap of liberty, indicating the fight for freedom and liberty. While the seal was designed and adopted with two sides, only the front side is in common use.

The reverse side of laurel and oak leaves, log house, hills, factories and boats is the Governor's Official Seal. The Constitution of West Virginia provides that: "The present seal of the state, with its motto 'Montani Semper Liberi,' shall be the great seal of the State of West Virginia, and shall be kept by the secretary of state, to be used by him, officially as directed by law."



## State Flag

By Senate Joint Resolution and approved by the Legislature March 7, 1929, West Virginia adopted the present State Flag. The resolution in part is as follows: "That the Legislature of West Virginia hereby adopts a state flag of the following design and proportions:

The proportions of the flag of the State of West Virginia is the same as those of the United States ensign; centered on a field of pure white is the coat-of-arms of the State of West Virginia and the date of the admission of the State into the Union, with the motto, 'Montani Semper Liberi' (Mountaineers Are Always Free). Above the coat-of-arms is a ribbon lettered, 'State of West Virginia,' and arranged around the lower part of the coat-of-arms is a wreath of *Rhododendron maximum* in proper colors. The field of pure white is bordered by a strip of blue on four sides. The flag, when used for parade purposes, shall be trimmed with gold-colored fringe on three sides and, when used on ceremonial occasions with the United States ensign, is trimmed and mounted in similar fashion to the United States flag as regards to fringe, cord, tassels, and mounting.



## Other Official State Facts:

### State Nickname

"The Mountain State"

### State Songs

Although many people consider John Denver's "Country Roads" the state's unofficial anthem, the Legislature adopted the following three official state songs on February 28, 1963: *The West Virginia Hills*, words and music by Ellen King and H.E. Engle; *This is My West Virginia*, by Iris Bell; and *West Virginia, My Home Sweet Home*, by Julian G. Hearne, Jr.

### State Day

June 20. West Virginia was proclaimed a state in 1863. "West Virginia Day" became a legal holiday in 1927.

### State Gem

The State Gem is technically not a gemstone, but rather the silicified Mississippian Fossil Coral, *Lithostrotionella*, preserved as the siliceous mineral chalcedony. Designated by House Concurrent Resolution March 10, 1990. It is found in Hillsdale Limestone in portions of Greenbrier and Pocahontas counties and is often cut and polished for jewelry and display.

### State Soil

The state soil is Monongahela Silt Loam, adopted on April 2, 1997, making West Virginia the 12th state to have an official state soil.

### Official Colors

Old Gold and Blue were designated as official state colors adopted by the Legislature on March 8, 1963.

For more information on West Virginia visit our web site

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of most of the eastern United States.**



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