

West Virginia



On 20 June 1863, West Virginia became the 35th state.

The citizens of the mountainous western parts of Virginia had long thought themselves neglected by the Virginia State Government and pushed the issue in the initial days of the Civil War. When Virginia decided to secede from the Union, representatives from the western counties saw an opening and stormed out of the Virginia Convention of 1861.

A few months later, the residents of the western counties voted for statehood.

West Virginia was admitted to the Union as a Free State with the agreement that current conditions of slavery would be phased out. President Lincoln approved the statehood bill for West Virginia on January 1, 1863. On April 20, 1863, West Virginia was proclaimed a State, effective 60 days later on June 20, 1863.

In the midst of the Civil War, turmoil was everywhere and it wasn't until September that West Virginia adopted its [official State seal](#), its coat of arms the most prominent component of the State flag.

Another prominent component of the State flag is West Virginia's [State flower](#), big laurel (*Rhododendron maximum*), adopted in 1903.

The following year, 1904, St. Louis, Missouri staged an exposition, "The Louisiana Purchase Exposition," also known as the Saint Louis World's Fair.

West Virginia needed to send a flag to the exposition to represent itself. A white flag with blue borders that featured the State flower on the obverse side (front) and the West Virginia coat of arms on the reverse side (back) was created. This flag was not an official representative of the State of West Virginia when it appeared at the exposition, but on February 24, 1905, the West Virginia Legislature made it so.

Evidently, this design sparked some discontent and, two years later on February 25, 1907, changes were officially approved. The coat of arms was moved to the obverse side (front) of the flag and the big laurel was moved to the reverse side (back) of the flag. Additionally, a red ribbon, reading "State of West Virginia" was added below the coat of arms.

Of course, it was found that producing a flag with a difference between the obverse side and the reverse side was not practical. It was expensive. To remedy the situation, big laurel, the coat of arms, and the red ribbon were combined to create a suitable display to appear on both sides of the flag.

The West Virginia Legislature approved Senate Joint Resolution No. 18 on March 7, 1929. Resolution No. 18 described the West Virginia State flag that flies over the Capitol today.

The official seal of the state of West Virginia has remained unchanged since it was first adopted in 1863. Soon after West Virginia gained statehood, the state's first Legislature authorized artist Joseph H. Diss Debar's design for its official seal. The design captures the essence of West Virginia's natural resources and the resolve of its people. A large boulder sits in the center of the seal, symbolizing strength, steadfastness, and stability. Etched in the stone is the date of West Virginia's entrance into the Union, June 20, 1863. Two rifles lie crossed in front of the boulder, and are draped with the Liberty Cap, signifying the state's willingness to defend itself in the name of Liberty. On one side of the boulder is a representation of Agriculture, as a farmer stands with his ax and plow before a cornstalk. On the other side, Industry is symbolized by a miner shouldering his pickax, and behind him an anvil and sledge hammer. These images are surrounded by the words "State of West Virginia", and the state's motto "Montani Semper Liberi", or "Mountaineers Always Free".

Sources:

http://www.netstate.com/states/symb/flags/wv_flag.htm

http://www.netstate.com/states/symb/seals/wv_seal.htm