

Wyoming



On 10 July 1890, Wyoming was admitted to the union as the 44th state.

In 1916, Wyoming was one of the few states in the union that could not claim an official state flag. Dr. Grace Raymond Hebard, Professor of Political Economy at the University of Wyoming, was at that time state regent for the Daughters of the American Revolution (DAR). She suggested to the DAR that a flag should be designed for the state.

An open competition for the design of an official Wyoming state flag was announced. A prize of \$20.00 was offered for the flag design that was found most appropriate by the DAR at their state conference in Sheridan to be held in the late summer.

The competition, advertised throughout the state, was noticed by Wilbur Parke Keays and he suggested to his daughter Verna that she submit a design to the DAR. Verna had just graduated from the Art Institute of Chicago. She had studied "Design and Decoration" at the institute. Verna did not immediately jump to the task as a school friend from Ohio was visiting for the summer. But as summer began to wane, the deadline for submission approached and her father's suggestions became more insistent, Verna decided that she should get down to business.

One night Verna awakened from a sound sleep and a complete and perfect design for the state flag came to her. In her excitement, she attempted to arouse her friend to share her vision. Her friend mumbled and rolled over and back to sleep. In the morning Verna recreated the design that had come to her in the night finding great pleasure in the inspirational "... Source of all Creation."

Verna managed to complete her design and submit it for consideration. Several days after she submitted the design, Dr. Hebard called her from Sheridan to inform her that her design had been awarded first place from among the thirty-seven entries. Verna was invited to the conference to speak and accept her \$20.00 prize.

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With the assistance of Dr. Hebard, details of the design were perfected, a technical description was written and a bill was drafted for presentation to the Fourteenth State Legislature.

The state flag bill was introduced in the Senate by the Honorable W.W. Daley of Rawlins, Wyoming. Much humorous wrangling took place over whether the bison should be changed to a donkey, an elephant or a moose, representing the current political makeup of the state at that time. In the end, the bison remained and the bill was passed and the flag adopted on January 13, 1917. Governor Robert D. Carey signed the bill into law.

In February of 1917, the State Legislature voted to have folders printed depicting the new state flag with a written description. These folders were distributed to every school child in the state of Wyoming.

A bison, the Wyoming State mammal and often called the monarch of the plains, is centered on the flag. Branded on the bison is the Great Seal of Wyoming. In the original design approved by the State Legislature the bison is shown facing away from the staff. Verna had drawn the bison as facing away from the staff symbolizing the freedom with which the bison had once roamed over the Wyoming plains. Dr. Hebard had not agreed with this and suggested that better balance of design would be achieved if the bison faced the staff. This is the way that the first flags were manufactured and, though not "official" this is how the bison has been shown since 1917.

The colors of the State Flag are the same as those of the National Flag. The red border represents the Indians who knew and loved the country long before the settlers came.; also the blood of the pioneers who gave their lives reclaiming the soil. White is the emblem of purity and uprightness over Wyoming. Blue, the color of the sky and mountains, is symbolic of fidelity, justice and virility.

Wyoming gained statehood in 1890, and waited for its second Legislature to approve an official seal three years later. The most prominent feature of Wyoming's seal is the central figure of a woman standing before a banner which reads "Equal Rights". Wyoming bears the honorable distinction of being at the forefront of states advocating equal rights for men and women, well before the turn of the century. On either side of the female figure are two pillars, each with scrolls that proclaim Wyoming's major economic strengths: oil, mines, livestock, and grain. On each pillar are burning lamps, symbolizing the Light of Knowledge. In the foreground, a striped shield and star, topped by an eagle, represent Wyoming's sovereignty and dedication to the Union. The number 44 identifies Wyoming as the 44th state to enter the Union. On either side of the shield are the dates 1869 and 1890, which represent, respectively, the date that Wyoming organized as a Territory, and the date that Wyoming gained statehood. Flanking the pillars are figures representing the livestock and mining industries. The outer circle bears the words "Great Seal of the State of Wyoming"

Sources:

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

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