STATE FOSSIL: COLUMBIAN MAMMOTH
Following a four-year effort by students from Windsor Elementary School near Cheney to have this behemoth designated as our state fossil, the Legislature recognized in 1998 that the large, hairy prehistoric elephants of the extinct genus *Mammuthus* roamed the North American continent, including the Pacific Northwest, during the Pleistocene epoch (ice ages).

The first North American mammoths migrated across the Bering Strait from Asia down through Alaska about two million years ago. Nearly all mammoths died out about 10,000 years ago. From studies based on deposits in the Columbia Mountains it is clear that grasses featured prominently in their diets. The maximum life expectancy of the mammoth would have been 60 to 65 years. The males grew to the size of modern adult elephants; females were about half that size. Several years ago, fossils of the Columbian mammoth were found on the Olympic Peninsula.

STATE GEM: PETRIFIED WOOD
The geological history of our state has encompassed many great changes, one of them being the many lava flows from volcanic fissures. Centuries ago, the interior of Washington was swampy and mild with many trees such as cypress, oak, elm and gingko growing in wet areas. Layers of logs were preserved with each new lava flow, and as the layers grew deeper, many of the logs became waterlogged and lay protected in deep water. Over time, water continued to seep through the lava and permeate the wood with silica. Eventually, the wood fiber was completely replaced and a petrified wood log was formed. The petrified wood is perfect in form and detail to the original wood. In 1975, petrified wood was adopted as the state gem. The best place to see petrified wood is the Gingko Petrified Forest State Park in Vantage.

STATE SEAL
In 1889, jeweler Charles Talcott designed our first state seal using an ink bottle, silver dollar and a postage stamp. Talcott’s brother, L. Grant Talcott, lettered the words, “The Seal of the State of Washington, 1889,” and another brother, G.N. Talcott, cut the printing die. More information can be found at the Secretary of State site on the State Seal.

STATE SEAL

Photo by Rick Horn

The legislature designated the Lady Washington as the official ship of the state of Washington in 2007. The Lady Washington was built over a two-year period and launched on March 7, 1899. The ship was designed by the late Ray Wallace and built in Aberdeen by the Grays Harbor Historical Seaport Authority. Master shipwrights from all over the Pacific Northwest constructed her near the confluence of the Wishkah and Chehalis rivers.

The Lady Washington is a reproduction sailing ship of the original Washington/Lady Washington that sailed from approximately 1750-1798. Her vessel type is a “brig,” indicating the configuration of the sails. The Lady Washington is owned and operated by the Grays Harbor Historical Seaport Authority, a 501(c)(3) nonprofit Public Development Authority based in Aberdeen. The Secretary of State holds a mortgage on the vessel to secure the investment of the people of Washington.

STATE FLOWER: COAST RHODODENDRON
In 1892, before they had the right to vote, Washington women selected the coast rhododendron as the state flower. They wanted an official flower to enter in a floral exhibit at the 1893 World’s Fair in Chicago. Six flowers were considered, but the final decision was narrowed to clover and the “rhodie,” and voting booths were set up for ladies throughout the state. When the ballots were counted, the rhododendron had been chosen as the Washington state flower. In 1959, the Legislature designated the native species Rhododendron macrophyllum as the official flower of the state of Washington.

STATE FRUIT: APPLE
Washington is the nation’s top apple-producing state, so it is appropriate that the apple was named a state symbol in 1899, the centennial year. A favorite fruit around the world, the apple comes in many different colors, sizes and varieties. From the beautiful blossoms of spring, to the heavily laden branches in autumn, the apple trees of eastern Washington represent one of the largest industries in the state. The silhouette of the apple is certainly one of the most recognized symbols of the state worldwide.

STATE LANDMARK: PALOUSE FALLS

The tourism industry is a vital part of the state’s economy. Palouse Falls has visitors numbering averaging over eighty thousand to one hundred thousand per year. The falls drop one hundred ninety-eight feet identifying them as the last remaining year-round waterfalls left by the ice age floods. Palouse Falls was named sixth on the top ten best United States waterfalls list, tenth on the list of the world’s most amazing waterfalls, and the site of the world record breaking kayak drop. Palouse Falls surrounding area is the location for the oldest documented remains found in the western hemisphere; home of the Palouse Native American culture; birthplace of the Appaloosa horse; and documented in Lewis and Clark’s journals. The Palouse Falls was designated as a state symbol in 2014.
Kirkland Junior high school. The measure was a class project for a seventh-grade honors social studies class. The Sweet Onion Festival every July is mid-June through September and, since 1984, Walla Walla has celebrated the festival. Careful hand selection, the sweet onion developed greater sweetness, size, and shape. Today, there are approximately 40 growers producing Walla Walla Sweet onions on 1,200 acres of farmland in the Walla Walla Valley. Sweet onion season is mid-June through September and, since 1984, Walla Walla has celebrated the Sweet Onion Festival every July. The measure was a class project for a seventh-grade honors social studies class.

Considered for the title. In 1928, legislators let school children select the state bird. In 1951, children voted for the goldfinch and the Legislature made it unanimous. Today, there are approximately 40 growers producing Walla Walla Sweet onions on 1,200 acres of farmland in the Walla Walla Valley. Sweet onion season is mid-June through September and, since 1984, Walla Walla has celebrated the Sweet Onion Festival every July. The measure was a class project for a seventh-grade honors social studies class.

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