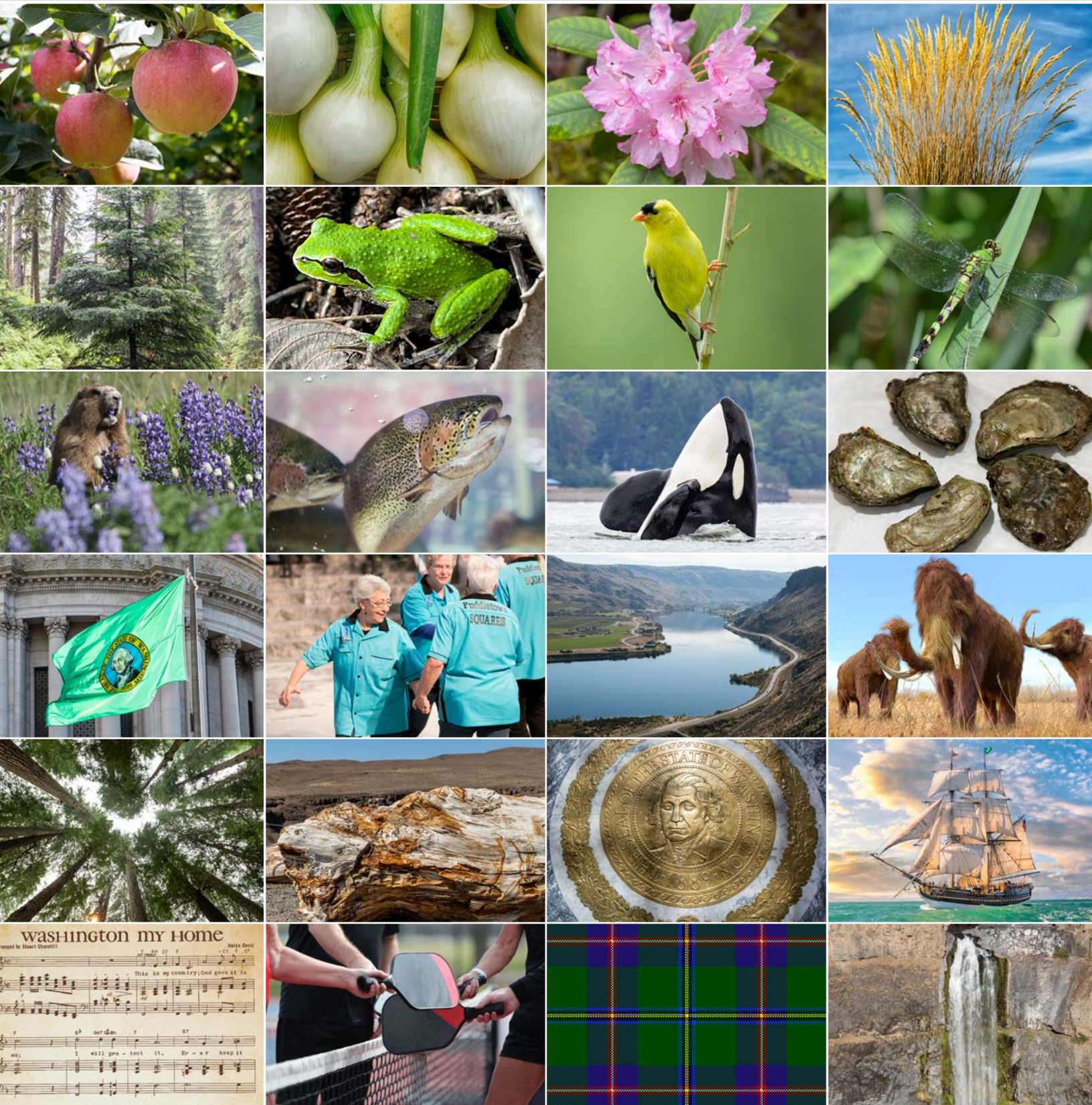


# Symbols of Washington

If citizens believe something is important enough to represent Washington, they can ask to make it a state symbol. State symbols are chosen by passing bills to adopt them.



## Fruit: Apple

Year designated: 1989

Washington is the nation's top apple-producing state, so it is appropriate that the apple was named a state symbol in 1989, 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 of autumn, the apple trees of eastern Washington represent one of the largest industries in the state. The Washington apple is certainly one of the most recognized symbols of the state worldwide.



## Vegetable: Walla Walla Sweet onion

Year designated: 2007



In 2007, the Walla Walla Sweet onion was designated as the official vegetable of the state of Washington. The Walla Walla Sweet is from Walla Walla and is only grown properly in the Walla Walla Valley.

The Walla Walla Sweet finds its origins on the island of Corsica. Over a century ago, a retired French soldier found a sweet onion seed there and brought it to the Walla Walla Valley. The sweet onion had impressive winter hardiness well-suited for the climate of southeastern Washington. Soon he and other immigrants in the area began harvesting the seed. After several generations of careful hand selection, the sweet onion developed greater sweetness, size, and shape. Today, there are many growers producing Walla Walla Sweet onions on farmland in the Walla Walla Valley. Sweet onion season is mid-June through September.

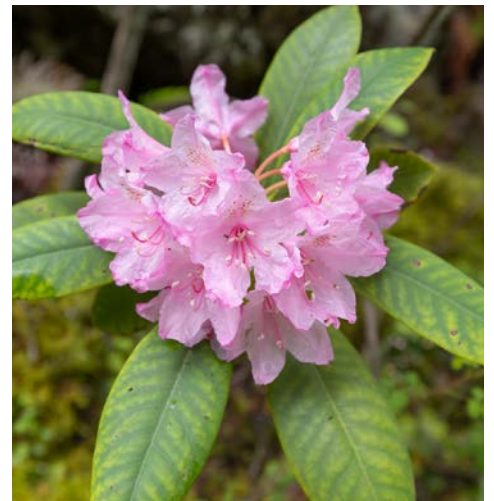
The measure was a class project for a seventh-grade honors social-studies class at Eatonville Middle School. In prior years, the bill had also been a project of a Kirkland Junior high school.

## Flower: Coast Rhododendron

Year designated: 1959

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.



## Grass: Bluebunch wheatgrass

Year designated: 1989



Although many state symbols are readily identifiable with the western part of the state, bluebunch wheatgrass is a state symbol that is unique to eastern Washington. Bluebunch wheatgrass was a blessing to Washington's pioneer farmers and continues to play a major role in our agriculture industry today. It was adopted by the 1989 Legislature as the official state grass. Its botanical name is *Pseudoroegneria spicata*.

## Tree: Western hemlock

Year designated: 1947



In 1946, an Oregon newspaper teased Washington for not having a state tree. The *Portland Oregonian* picked out the western hemlock, *Tsuga heterophylla* for us, but Washington newspapers decided to choose their own and selected the popular western red cedar. State Representative George Adams of Mason County pleaded with the Legislature to adopt the western hemlock. The hemlock, he said, would become “the backbone of this state’s forest industry.” Adams’ bill passed the Legislature and was signed into law in 1947.

## Amphibian: Pacific Chorus frog (*Pseudacris regilla*)

Year designated: 2007

In 2007, the Pacific Chorus frog was designated the official amphibian of the State of Washington.

Because Pacific Chorus frogs live in every county in the state and on both sides of the Cascades, they are an excellent choice as an emblem for the whole state. The Pacific Chorus frog is charming and makes beautiful sounds. Less than two inches long, they swell their throat sacs to three times the size of their heads to send their calls into the night. This native amphibian is useful because it eats insects, including mosquitoes. It is recognizable by the black stripe through the eye to the shoulder and can be brown, tan, grey, or green. It is preyed upon by bullfrogs, snakes, raccoons, shorebirds, hawks, and ducks.



A third-grade class at Boston Harbor Grade School in North Olympia demonstrated excellent knowledge about the political process in making this proposal to the Legislature, as the project involved science, research, art, and persuasive writing.

## Bird: Willow goldfinch

Year designated: 1951



Photo by  
Bruce Livingston

The goldfinch is a delicate little bird with a yellow body and black wings, and although it eventually became the official state bird, many other birds were considered for the title. In 1928, legislators let school children select the state bird and the meadowlark won hands-down. It was a nice choice but seven other states already had chosen the same bird. Another vote was taken in 1931 by the Washington Federation of Women’s Clubs. Many birds were nominated, but the goldfinch won handily over the tanager, song sparrow, junco, and pileated woodpecker. Now there were two state birds and the Legislature decided to leave the final choice to school children. In 1951, children voted for the goldfinch and the Legislature made it unanimous.

## Insect: Green darner dragonfly

Year designated: 1997

In 1997, the common green darner dragonfly, *anax junius*, became Washington’s official state insect after a group of students at Crestwood Elementary School in Kent brought the idea to the Legislature. Students from over 100 school districts statewide participated in selecting the common green darner dragonfly. Also known as the “mosquito hawk,” this insect can be found throughout Washington and is a beneficial contributor to the ecosystem because it consumes many insect pests. It is easily recognizable by its bright green head and thorax, it has a four to six-inch wingspan and can fly 25 to 35 miles per hour. There are over 400 different species of dragonflies. Dragonflies existed before the dinosaur age and some had up to a three-foot wing span. *Anax junius* was first sighted and recorded in 1773.



## Endemic mammal: *Marmota olympus*

Year designated: 2009



In 2009, the Olympic marmot, the only endemic mammal in Washington state, was designated as the state endemic mammal following a proposal from the 4th and 5th graders at Wedgwood School in Seattle. The Olympic marmot inhabits the Olympic Peninsula in the western section of Washington. Olympic marmots are highly social animals and may live in groups of over a dozen animals. Gregarious bonds are made between animals in a family. Olympic marmots identify each other by touching noses and smelling cheeks. Olympic marmots hibernate from September to May. During the morning and afternoon on summer days, they feed and spend their time sunbathing on rocks. In the evening, they return to their burrows. Olympic marmots are relatively easy to see during the summer months along Hurricane Ridge in the Olympic National Park.

## Fish: Steelhead trout

Year designated: 1969



The steelhead trout is an anadromous fish, meaning it returns to fresh water rivers to spawn. The scales of the steelhead shine flecks of silver with a gray spotted back from head to tail and an intensely white belly; the two colors separated by a hint of opalescent pink. Steelhead trout is one of the most popular fish for recreational fishing, a major industry in Washington State. The steelhead trout, *Oncorhynchus mykiss irideus*, was adopted by the Legislature as a state symbol in 1969.

## Marine mammal: Orca

Year designated: 2005

As a result of two years of research and persuasion by second graders from the Crescent Harbor Elementary School in Oak Harbor, the Legislature designated the orca, *Orcinus orca*, as the official marine mammal of the state of Washington in 2005. Many people visit Washington state to watch orcas; the orca is a significant symbol for the Native American culture; there are pods of orcas that migrate annually through Puget Sound; and the orca is easily recognizable because of its distinct markings. The designation is intended to promote orca awareness and to encourage protection of the natural marine habitat.



## Oyster: *Ostrea lurida*

Year designated: 2014



The *Ostrea lurida* was designated the official oyster of the state of Washington. The *Ostrea lurida* plays an important role in the history and culture that surrounds shellfish in Washington state and along the west coast of the United States. Also known as the Olympic oyster, it is the only oyster species native to the state of Washington.

## Flag: State flag

Year designated: 1923

The state flag and the state seal are similar. Passed in 1923, Washington law describes the flag as having dark green bunting with a state seal in the center. In the late 1890s, a blue and gold military state flag with George Washington's profile on it flew over many cities and towns throughout the state. But when it came to a final decision, the current flag was adopted by the Legislature. According to law, the flag of the United States and the flag of the state shall be prominently installed, displayed, and maintained in schools, court rooms, and state buildings. For further information about the state flag, check the Secretary of State's website.



## Dance: Square dance

Year designated: 1979



On April 17, 1979, the square dance became the official Washington state dance. When the pioneers came west, they brought with them a dance called the quadrille, which means square in French. The pioneers liked the simpler term and so the square dance was born. The dance is known for its series of figures and footwork. Dancers are directed by a caller. It is easy to learn, a good form of exercise, and fun.

## Folk song: "Roll On, Columbia, Roll On"

Year designated: 1987

In the early 1940s, the federal Bonneville Power Administration produced a movie encouraging rural residents in the Pacific Northwest to electrify their homes and farms with the power being generated by the newly-built Bonneville and Grand Coulee dams on the Columbia River. As part of the project, BPA hired folksinger Woody Guthrie at \$270 for 30 days to write songs for the movie. Guthrie wrote 26 songs, the most popular of which was "Roll On, Columbia, Roll On," an ode to the harnessing of Washington's mightiest river. It was approved as the official Washington state folk song by the Legislature in 1987.



## Fossil: Columbian mammoth

Year designated: 1998

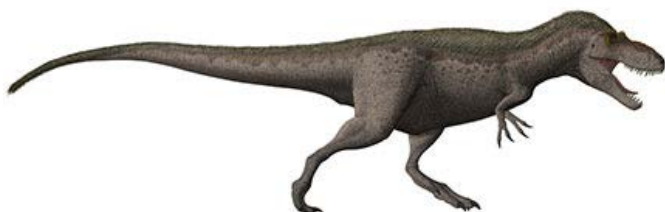
Following a four-year effort by students from Windsor Elementary School near Cheney to have this behemoth designated as our state fossil, the Legislature recognized in 1998 that the large, hairy prehistoric elephants of the extinct genus *Mammuthus* roamed the North American continent, including the Pacific Northwest, during the Pleistocene epoch (ice ages). Mammoth is the common name given to any member of an extinct genus *Mammuthus* of the elephant family. 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, it is clear that grasses featured prominently in the diet of *Mammuthus columbi*. 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.



## Dinosaur: *Suciasaurus rex*

Year designated: 2023

In May 2012, paleontologists discovered a portion of a left femur of a theropod dinosaur at Sucia Island state park in the San Juan Islands. Theropods are bipedal carnivorous dinosaurs that include *Tyrannosaurus* and *Velociraptor*.



While scientists are unsure exactly what type of theropod the fossil belongs to, evidence suggests it may be a species similar to *Daspletosaurus*. The dinosaur has been nicknamed *Suciasaurus rex*. Since this is the only dinosaur discovered in Washington state, it was designated as the state dinosaur.

## Gem: Petrified wood

Year designated: 1975



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 ginkgo 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 by silica, thus petrifying many logs. 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 Ginkgo Petrified Forest State Park in Vantage.

## Seal: State seal

Year designated: 1889

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.



## Ship: Lady Washington

Year designated: 2007



The legislature designated the *Lady Washington* as the official ship of the state of Washington in 2007.

Built over a two-year period and launched on March 7, 1989, the ship was 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 based in Aberdeen.

A reproduction sailing ship of the original *Washington/Lady Washington* that sailed during approximately 1750-1798, the vessel type is a "brig," indicating the configuration of the sails. The Office of the Secretary of State for the state of Washington holds a mortgage on the vessel to secure the investment of the people of Washington.

## Song: "Washington, My Home"

Year designated: 1959

The state song, "Washington, My Home," was written by Helen Davis, arranged by Stuart Churchill, and became the official state song in 1959. But, like the goldfinch, it had some stiff competition from another popular song.

Back in 1909, "Washington Beloved" was adopted, sort of, by the Legislature. Professor of botany and history Edmond Meany, wrote the words and Reginald de Koven, who also wrote "O Promise Me" and other operettas, wrote the music. But the official designation for the song was never formally introduced as a bill and so was not part of the state's code of law. When a state senator from South Bend introduced a bill in 1959 to make "Washington, My Home" our state song, it was approved unanimously.



## Sport: Pickleball

Year designated: 1959

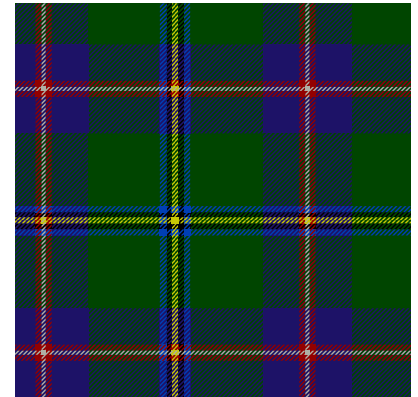


The legislature recognizes that the sport of pickleball was created in 1965 on Bainbridge Island by Bill Bell, Barney McCallum, and Joel McFee Pritchard, who notably served as a state legislator, lieutenant governor, and representative in the U.S. House of Representatives. These men created the game at Pritchard's summer cabin after arranging a game of badminton with their children, only to discover that there was no badminton equipment to be found. Instead, these fathers did some brainstorming and created a new game using ping-pong paddles, a net, and a neighbor's plastic wiffle ball. The rules that they created for the new game, which they named pickleball, are still used today by the USA Pickleball Association.

## Tartan: State tartan

Year designated: 1991

A tartan is a design for the weaving of cloth consisting of perpendicular bands of contrasting colors on a solid background. The Washington State tartan was designed in 1988 by country dancer Margaret McLeod van Nus and Dr. Frank Cannonito of Vancouver to commemorate the Washington State Centennial celebration. It is identified by the background color green, which represents the rich forests of Washington, the "Evergreen State." The perpendicular bands of contrasting colors represent the following features: blue for the lakes, rivers, and ocean; white for the snow-capped mountains; red for the apple and cherry crops; yellow for the wheat and grain crops; and black for the eruption of Mount St. Helens. The bill designating the state tartan was signed into law in 1991. The Council of the Scottish Tartans Society also affixed its seal to the official Certificate of Accreditation in 1991.



## Waterfall: Palouse Falls

Year designated: 2014

The tourist industry is a vital part of the state's economy. Visitors to Palouse Falls, on average, number between 80 and 100 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.

The area surrounding Paulouse Falls 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 was first documented by Lewis and Clark.

## Territorial motto: "Al-ki" or "Alki"

Unofficial

Al-ki or Alki is the Chinook term meaning "bye and bye." This motto first appeared on the territorial seal designed by Lt. J.K. Duncan of Gov. Stevens' surveying expedition. On one side it pictures a log cabin and an immigrant wagon with a fir forest in the background; on the other side, a sheet of water being traversed by a steamer and sailing vessel; a city in perspective; the Goddess of Hope and an anchor is in the center. The figure points at the significant word "Alki." Before adopting the name Seattle, early settlers at Alki Point named it Alki Point, New York; later, it was known as New York-Alki, and finally, as Alki Point, Seattle.



## Nickname: "The Evergreen State"

Unofficial



On November 11, 1889, Washington became the 42nd state to enter the Union. It is the only state in the Union that is named for a president. Washington was nicknamed "The Evergreen State" by C.T. Conover, pioneer Seattle realtor and historian, for its abundant evergreen forests. The nickname has never been officially adopted.

## Capitol building: State Capitol Building

Unofficial

The present state capitol building in Olympia, Washington, was first occupied by the Legislature in March 1927. The design is reminiscent of the Acropolis in Athens, Greece. It is also close in design to the U.S. Capitol in Washington, D.C. Although not an official state symbol, the image of this architectural structure truly represents our state government and beautiful capitol city.

