

Delaware Facts & Symbols

Statehood:

Delaware declared its independence from Great Britain on June 15, 1776. It is known as the "First State" because on December 7, 1787, it became the first to ratify the U.S. Constitution.

State Capital: Dover

Counties:

New Castle (North)

Kent (center of Delaware)

Sussex County (South)

Government:

Delaware's government consists of the General Assembly, comprised of a Senate and House of Representatives, the Governor and the judiciary.

Highest Elevation:

447.85 feet above sea level near Ebright Road in New Castle County.

Lowest Elevation: Sea level along the coast.

Population:

2000 Population Estimate 783,600; 45th among the states; Density: 401 persons per square mile.

Chief Products:

Agriculture - broilers, soybeans, corn, milk.

Fishing Industry - crabs, clams.

Manufacturing - chemicals, food products, paper products, rubber and plastics products, primary printed materials.

Mining - sand and gravel, magnesium compounds.

State Seal:

The state seal was first adopted on January 17, 1777, and contains the coat of arms. It also bears the inscription around it "Great Seal of the State of Delaware" and the dates 1793, 1847, and 1907. Descriptions of the contents of the seal are

as follows:

The Wheat Sheaf - was adapted from the Sussex County seal and signifies the agricultural vitality of Delaware.

The Ship - is a symbol of New Castle County's ship building industry and Delaware's extensive coastal commerce.

The Corn - is taken from the Kent County seal and also symbolizes the agricultural basis of Delaware's economy.

The Farmer - with the hoe represents the central role of farming to the state.

The Militiaman - with his musket recognizes the crucial role of the citizen-soldier to the maintenance of American liberties.

The Ox - represents the importance of animal husbandry to the state economy.

The Water - (above the Ox) stands for the Delaware River, the main stay of the state's commerce and transportation.

The Motto - was derived from the Order of Cincinnati, and approved in 1847.

The Dates - mark major changes to the state seal. 1793: the farmer and militiaman were omitted. 1847: the two human figures were reinstated, and the motto adopted. 1907: a modernized version of the 1777 seal, with the words "State of Delaware" added.

State Flag:

Adopted on July 24, 1913, the state flag has a background of colonial blue surrounding a diamond of buff color in which the coat of arms of the state of Delaware is placed. Below the diamond are the words "December 7, 1787," indicating the day on which Delaware was the first state to ratify the federal Constitution. Because of this action, Delaware became the first state in the Union, and is, therefore, accorded the first position in such national events as presidential inaugurations. According to members of the original commission established to design the flag, the shades of buff and colonial blue represent those of the uniform of General George Washington as shown on a specific plate from an official U.S. Army publication.

State Colors: Colonial blue and buff

State Flower: Peach Blossom - Passage of the act to adopt the Peach Blossom on May 9, 1895, was prompted by Delaware's reputation as the "Peach State," since her orchards contained more than 800,000 peach trees yielding a crop worth thousands of dollars at that time.

State Bird: Blue Hen - Adopted on April 14, 1939, the Blue Hen chicken had long been used as a motif in numerous political campaigns and in many publications. During the Revolutionary War, the men of Captain Jonathan Caldwell's company, recruited in Kent County, took with them game chickens that were said to be of the brood of a famous Blue Hen and were noted for their fighting ability. When not fighting the enemy, the officers and men amused themselves by pitting their Blue Hen chickens in cockfights. The fame of these cockfights spread throughout the army and when in battle, the Delaware men fought so valiantly that they were compared to these fighting cocks.

State Tree: Adopted May 1, 1939, the American Holly (*Ilex opaca* Aiton) is regarded as one of Delaware's most important forest trees. Often called Christmas holly or evergreen holly, the tree has dark, thorny-leaved foliage and red berries. In Delaware, the tree can reach a maximum of 60 feet in height and a trunk diameter of 20 inches.

State Bug: Adopted April 25, 1974, the Lady Bug was chosen by the Legislature after an intensive effort on the insect's behalf by Mrs. Mollie Brown-Rust and her 2nd grade students of the Lulu M. Ross Elementary School in Milford, Delaware.

State Fish: In recognition of sport fishing's overall recreational and economic contributions to the state of Delaware and of the specific values of the weakfish (*Cynoscion* genus) as a game and food fish, the state Legislature adopted the weakfish as Delaware's State fish in 1981. This fish is also known as sea trout, gray trout, yellow mouth, yellow fin trout, squeteague, and tiderunner.

State Beverage: Milk was made the official State beverage on June 3, 1983.

State Mineral: Sillimanite

State Herb: Sweet Golden Rod

State Butterfly: Tiger Swallowtail

State Star: On June 30, 2000, the Delaware Diamond, located in the constellation of Ursa Major (Great Bear), with coordinates of right ascension 9h40m44s and declination 48°14'2", was designated as Delaware's State star. It is a star of the 12th magnitude and is the first star on the International Star Registry ever to be registered to an American State. It can be seen with binoculars or a telescope. Twelve-year-old Amy Nerlinger of Wilmington named the star through a contest sponsored by the Delaware Museum of Natural History in the summer of 1999.

State Marine Animal: Horseshoe Crab - Recognizing its great importance and value, the horseshoe crab was designated as Delaware's official

marine animal on June 25, 2002. These crabs contain a compound, limulus ameocyte lysate (LAL) that is used to detect bacterial poisons in certain medications, vaccines and medical devices. Chitin, a natural polymer found in the horseshoe crab's shell, is used to make bandages. The crab is used in vision studies because their complex eye structure is similar to the human eye. It is the principal food source for over a million shore birds. Delaware Bay is the home to more horseshoe crabs than any other place in the world.