

Maine Facts

In this section:

- History
- Capitol
- State Flower
- State Bird
- State Animal
- State Motto
- State Tree
- State Fossil
- State Insect
- State Song
- State Nickname

History

Maine was molded geographically during the Ice Age. Its rugged coast and thousands of islands were formed by a receding glacier. Of the many American Indian tribes that once lived in Maine, only four remain today - the Passamaquoddies, Penobscots, Micmacs, and Maliseets. The first European explorer to arrive in Maine is believed to have been the Viking Leif Erickson in the first millennia. However, the first confirmed European attempts at colonizing Maine came in 1604 when a French colony was established on the St. Croix River, and in 1607 when England's Plymouth Company set up the Popham Colony near the mouth of the Kennebec River.

These colonies were short lived, as the Maine winter proved too rugged for many of the European colonists. As late as the 18th century, only a few settlements existed in Maine, and the territory consisted mostly of large tracts of wilderness claimed by Massachusetts. The Paris Treaty, concluding the French and Indian Wars, ended French claims to Maine, and offers of free 100-acre lots to whomever would

settle the province increased its population in the mid-1700s. Maine settlers joined their patriotic Massachusetts brethren in shaking off British rule, yet the War of 1812 caused a rift between the Maine settlers and the state government in Massachusetts. Maine's vulnerability to British sea raids increased support for the separatist movement, and in 1820, Maine was established as a separate free state in the Missouri Compromise. In 1832, Augusta was designated Maine's capital

During the 1800s, Maine became a major center of America's lumber industry, with its rivers providing a link between the boundless forests of northern Maine and the trading hub of Boston. As the Industrial Revolution spread, Maine's rivers became increasingly valuable for their water power, as mills for everything from paper to textiles sprung up along Maine's primary rivers. Maine today is known primarily for its shipbuilding, large contribution to America's supply of forest products, maple syrup, blueberries, and lobsters, as well as an increasing high-tech and biotechnology presence. In addition, its beautiful wilderness and stunning coastline give it a well deserved reputation as "Vacationland".

[Return to top](#)

Capitol

The City of Augusta was designated Maine's Capitol in 1832. The architect Charles Bulfinch, who designed the Massachusetts State House, was assigned to create Maine's new Capitol building. When finished, the Capitol was one hundred and fifty feet in length, and consisted of two wings centered by columns and a cupola. The Capitol underwent major renovations from 1909-1910. The majority of the original building was demolished, although much of the original design was kept. The building was doubled in length to three hundred feet, and a dome was built to replace the cupola. The dome is topped by a gold coated statue of Wisdom, and is one hundred and eighty-five feet tall. Currently, the House of Representatives occupies the third and fourth floors of the North Wing, and the Senate occupies the third and fourth floors of the South Wing. The Executive Department is housed on the second floor, while the State Library, State Museum, and State Archives are all in a separate building on the south side of the grounds.

[Return to top](#)

State Flower

Maine's state flower, the white pine cone and tassel, is not really a flower at all. The symbol was adopted by the Legislature in 1895. Considered to be the largest conifer in the northeast, white pines produce cones that are 4-8 inches in length and often have a fragrant gummy resin.

[Return to top](#)

State Bird

Maine's state bird is the Black-capped Chickadee. Also the state bird of Massachusetts, the Chickadee was adopted as the state's bird in 1927. A common sight throughout the state, the Chickadee is a small bird, averaging five inches in length.

[Return to top](#)

State Animal

Often the first creature associated with Maine, it was no surprise when the moose was officially named Maine's state animal in 1979. Growing to heights of more than six feet, sometimes weighing over 1400 pounds, and adorned with antlers which can have a wingspan of five feet, moose are hard to miss.

[Return to top](#)

State Motto

Maine's state motto is "Dirigo", meaning "I lead".

[Return to top](#)

State Tree

In 1945, the Legislature adopted the Eastern White Pine as Maine's state tree. Capable of growing from 75 to 150 feet in height, the pine is the backbone of Maine's lumbering industry.

[Return to top](#)

State Fossil

In 1985, the Maine Legislature named "Pertica quadrifaria" the Maine state fossil. Pertica quadrifaria is the scientific name of a plant which lived 390 million years ago. Remains of the plant were first discovered in Maine's Baxter State Park in 1968, and today Maine is still one of only three places in the world where the fossil has been found.

[Return to top](#)

State Insect

In 1975, the honeybee was designated as Maine's state insect. Also the state insect of thirteen

other states, the honeybee was chosen because of its vital role in the state's agricultural economy.

[Return to top](#)

State Song

"State of Maine Song" written by Roger Vinton Snow was made Maine's official state song in 1937. Snow's ballad was selected from 116 songs submitted during a contest run by the Maine Publicity Bureau to find an official state song. [Click here to hear a MIDI file of the "State of Maine Song"](#)

In addition, a popular Maine song that schoolchildren throughout Maine learn each year is the "Maine County Song" or "Sixteen Counties in Our State." [Click here to link to an audio file of the "Maine County Song"](#)

[Return to top](#)

State Nickname

Maine is commonly known as the "Pine Tree State", mainly because 90% of it is covered by forests. The state owes a great deal to its pine trees. Originally coveted as masts for sailing ships, with the industrial revolution, Maine's enormous lumber resources were tapped to produce paper, an industry that remains one of the largest in Maine today.

[Return to top](#)