About Tennessee

Tennessee Symbols and Honors

Official Seal of the State

Even before Tennessee achieved statehood, efforts were made by local governmental organizations to procure official seals. Reliable historians have assumed that as early as 1772 the Articles of the Agreement of the Watauga Association authorized the use of a seal. The Legislature of the state of Franklin, by an official act, provided "for procuring a Great Seal for this State," and there is also evidence that a seal was intended for the Territory South of the River Ohio. The secretary of that territory requested the assistance of Thomas Jefferson in March 1792 in "suggesting a proper device" for a seal. There is no direct evidence, however, that a seal was ever made for any of these predecessors of Tennessee.

When Tennessee became a state, the Constitution of 1796 made provision for the preparation of a seal. Each subsequent constitution made similar provisions and always in the same words as the first. This provision is (Constitution of 1796, Article II, Section 15; Constitution of 1835, Article III, Section 15; Constitution of 1870, Article III, Section 15) as follows:

> *There shall be a seal of this state, which shall be kept by the governor, and used by him officially, and shall be called "The Great Seal of the State of Tennessee."*

In spite of the provision of the Constitution of 1796, apparently no action was taken until September 25, 1801. On that date, committees made up of members from both the Senate and the House of Representatives were appointed. One of these committees was to "prepare a device and motto" for a seal, while the other was to contract with a suitable person to cut a seal and press for the use of the state.

Original State Seal

Official State Seal

The committee appointed to prepare a design for the state seal recommended that:

> *…the said seal shall be a circle, two inches and a quarter in diameter, that the circumference of the circle contain the words THE GREAT SEAL OF THE STATE OF TENNESSEE, that in the lower part of said circumference be inserted Feb. 6th, 1796, the date of the Constitution of this state; that in the inside of the upper part of said circle, be set in numerical letters XVI, the number of the state in chronological order; that under the base of the upper semicircle, there be the word AGRICULTURE; that above said base, there be the figure of a plough, sheaf of wheat and cotton plant; that in the lower part of the lower semicircle, there be the word COMMERCE, and said lower semicircle shall also contain the figure of a boat and boatman.*

The other committee reported that it had contracted with William and Matthew Atkinson to make the seal and press.

The seal and press were delivered to Governor Archibald Roane in April 1802 and were used for the first time on April 24, 1802, on a document ordering payment for them. Before this time, both John Sevier and Archibald Roane had used their personal seal on official documents. This seal continued in use under seven governors until 1829, with Governor William Hall being the last governor to use it. Then, during the second series of administrations of Governor William Carroll, a different seal came into use, though there is no record of its authorization. This second seal was only one and three-quarters inches wide and the date "Feb. 6th," was omitted. The boat, differing greatly in design from the original, was pointed in the opposite direction. The seal was at variance with the original in other respects, as well. It remained in use from 1829 until the administrations of William Brownlow from 1865 to 1869.

A close examination of official documents bearing the Great Seal, particularly those from between 1855 and 1875, indicates that the seal now being used was introduced during the administration of Governor William Brownlow. Only one document, dated 1865, was found containing the seal attributed to the Brownlow administration. Instead, examination of Brownlow documents of 1866 and 1867 revealed the use of two seals, evidently used simultaneously. One seal appears to be the same as that affixed to documents signed by Governors Brownlow, Senter, Porter, and Hawkins.

Evidently, the so-called "Brownlow Seal" was used only in 1865, after which it was replaced by two other seals that were only slightly different from each other. The seal now used was the larger of the two and appears to have been the only one used since the last year of Brownlow's administration. The current seal was officially adopted in 1987 by the 95th General Assembly, Public Chapter 402.

State Flags

Flag of the State of Tennessee

The state flag was designed by LeRoy Reeves of the Third Regiment, Tennessee Infantry, who made the following explanation of his design:

> *The three stars are of pure white, representing the three grand divisions of the state. They are bound together by the endless circle of the blue field, the symbol being three bound together in one—an indissoluble trinity. The large field is crimson. The final blue bar relieves the sameness of the crimson field and prevents the flag from showing too much crimson when hanging limp. The white edgings contrast more strongly the other colors.*

Flag of Tennessee
Artist's original sketch

This flag was adopted as the official flag of the state of Tennessee by an act of the General Assembly passed and approved April 17, 1905. The design of the flag was described by that act, Chapter 498 of the Public Acts of 1905, as follows:

> *An oblong flag or banner in length one and two thirds times its width, the large or principal field of same to be of color red, but said flag or banner ending at its free or outer end in a perpendicular bar of blue, of uniform width, running from side to side—that is to say from top to bottom of said flag or banner—and separated from the red field by a narrow margin or stripe of white of uniform width; the width of the white stripe to be one fifth that of the blue bar, and the total width of the bar and stripe together to be equal to one-eighth of the width of the flag. In the center of the red field shall be a smaller circular field of blue, separated by a circular margin or stripe of white of uniform width and of the same width as the straight margin or stripe first mentioned. The breadth or diameter of the circular blue field, exclusive of the white margin, shall be equal to one-half of the width of the flag.*
>
> *Inside the circular blue field shall be three five-pointed stars of white distributed at equal intervals around a point, the center of the blue field, and of such size and arrangement that one point of each star shall approach as closely as practicable without actually touching one point of each of the other two around the center point of the field; and the two outer points of each star shall approach as nearly as practicable without actually touching the periphery of the blue field. The arrangement of the three stars shall be such that the centers of no two stars shall be in a line parallel to either the side or end of the flag, but intermediate between same; and the highest star shall be the one nearest the upper confined corner of the flag.*

Flag of the General Assembly

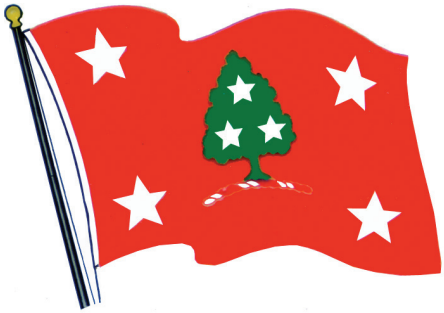
Flag of the General Assembly

The flag of the General Assembly was adopted by the 90th General Assembly in 1978 and by Public Chapter 497 of 1993. The banner was designed by art and design student Sheila Adkins, a student at Knoxville's Fulton High School. Her design was chosen from among those submitted by numerous students from across the state. The designer chose white for purity, blue to denote respect for Tennessee, red as the traditional color for America; stars to symbolize the state's three Grand Divisions; wheat for agricultural heritage; and the gavel for the power of the people vested in the state's legislative body.

Flag of the Governor

No act has been passed by the General Assembly establishing an official flag for the governor, but in 1939, at the request of the Adjutant General, one was designed by the U.S. War Department. The central design on the flag is the crest of the National Guard of Tennessee, which is described in a letter from the Secretary of War, dated May 28, 1923, as:

> *…on a wreath argent and gules, upon amount vert a hickory tree properly charged with three mullets one and two argent, the description of which is as follows:*



Flag of the Governor

The state of Andrew Jackson, or "Old Hickory," Tennessee was the sixteenth state admitted to the Union—the original thirteen colonies plus three states—and, consequently, the flag bears three white stars. The predominant original white population within the state was of English origin, and the twists of the wreath are accordingly white and red. This design was placed upon a red background, in each corner of which is placed a five-pointed star representing the fact that the governor of the state, by virtue of his office, automatically becomes commander in chief of the National Guard of that state.

The passage quoted above describes a wreath of silver (or white) and red under a green hill, upon which is a hickory tree bearing three five-pointed stars, each one separated from the other two, and all three silver (or white).

State Historian

The office of state historian was created in 1955 by the 79th General Assembly. Dr. Robert H. White, the first appointed state historian, served in that capacity from 1955 until his death in 1970. During his appointment, he compiled the eight-volume series *Messages of the Governors*, a record of Tennessee's governmental affairs from 1796–1907, which was published by the Tennessee Historical Commission. Dr. Dan H. Robison served as state historian from 1970 to 1972, Stanley F. Horn from 1972 until his death in 1980, Wilma Dykeman from 1981–2002, and Walter Durham from 2002–2013.

This position, an honorary one, is now held by Dr. Carroll Van West, appointed by Governor Bill Haslam in 2013. It is the responsibility of the state historian to prepare for publication and to disseminate Tennessee historical data, as well as to conduct negotiations for historical publications.

Dr. Carroll Van West
State Historian

Dr. Carroll Van West is the director of the Center for Historic Preservation at Middle Tennessee State University, where he is also a professor of history. In July 2013, Governor Bill Haslam appointed West to a four-year term as state historian. West is also the co-chair of the Tennessee Civil War Sesquicentennial Commission, director of the Tennessee Civil War National Heritage Area, and resident visiting professor for the annual Summer Institute in Southern Culture and Material Culture, administered by the Museum of Early Southern Decorative Arts (Old Salem, NC) and the University of Virginia. He served as the senior editor of the *Tennessee Historical Quarterly* from 1993–2010 and section editor for "Architecture" in the *Encyclopedia of Appalachia* (University of Tennessee Press). His research interests lie in 19th- and 20th-century southern and western history as well as architecture and material culture. He continues as the editor-in-chief of the Tennessee Encyclopedia of History and Culture website (University of Tennessee Press) and compiled the anthology *Tennessee and the Civil War* (Tennessee Historical Society, 2011). Some of his earlier books include *A History of Tennessee Arts: Creating Traditions and Expanding Horizons* (University of Tennessee Press, 2004); an edited anthology, *Trial and Triumph: Readings in Tennessee's African-American Past* (University of Tennessee Press, 2002), the first such textbook on Tennessee's African-American history in more than twenty years; and *Tennessee's New Deal Landscape* (University of Tennessee Press, 2001). West serves on the board of advisors for the National Trust for Historic Preservation, the Lewis and Clark Trust, and the Teaching with Primary Sources program of the Library of Congress. He has worked with museum/preservation projects in many states, most recently in Alabama and Montana, as well as hundreds of historic preservation projects across Tennessee. A native of Murfreesboro, West holds a B.A. from MTSU, a master's degree in history from the University of Tennessee, and a Ph.D. in history from the College of William & Mary. He is married to Mary Sara Hoffschwelle, and they have two children, Owen and Sara.

State Slogan

In 1965, the 84th General Assembly adopted as the state's official slogan, "Tennessee—America at Its Best." (Chapter 33, Section 1, Public Acts, 1965).

State Motto

The state of Tennessee's motto is "Agriculture and Commerce," taken from the wording used on the state seal. The motto was officially adopted in 1987 by Public Chapter 402 of the 95th General Assembly.

State Nicknames

Tennessee has had several nicknames, but the most popular is "The Volunteer State." The nickname originated during the War of 1812, when thousands of Tennesseans enlisted in response to Governor Willie Blount's call for volunteers.

Other nicknames include the "Big Bend State," which refers to the Indian name of the Tennessee River; "The River with the Big Bend"; the "Hog and Hominy State," now obsolete but formerly applied because "the corn and pork products of Tennessee were in such great proportions between 1830 and 1840"; and "The Mother of Southwestern Statesmen," because Tennessee furnished the United States three presidents and a number of other leaders who served with distinction in high government office.

Tennesseans are sometimes referred to as "Volunteers," "Big Benders," and "Butternuts." The first two are derived from the nicknames of the state, while the tag of "Butternuts" was first applied to Tennessee soldiers during the War Between the States because of the tan color of their uniforms. Later, it sometimes was applied to people across the entire state.

Legal Holidays of Tennessee

All days have been appointed by the Governor of this state, or by the President of the United States, as days of fasting or thanksgiving; when any of the days listed below falls on Sunday, then the following Monday shall be substituted, and when any of these days falls on Saturday, then the preceding Friday shall be substituted (Tenn. Code Ann. § 15-1-101).

Name	**Date**
New Year's Day	January 1
Martin Luther King, Jr. Day	Third Monday in January
Washington Day	Third Monday in February
Good Friday	Friday before Easter
Memorial or Decoration Day	Last Monday in May
Independence Day	July 4
Labor Day	First Monday in September
Columbus Day	Second Monday in October
Veterans' Day	November 11

Thanksgiving . . . . . Fourth Thursday in November
Christmas . . . . . December 25

Observed Days of Tennessee

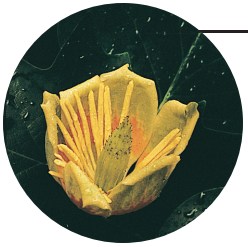
Pursuant to the provisions of Tenn. Code Ann. §§ 15-2-101 through 15-2-126, each year it shall be the duty of the Governor to proclaim the following as days of special observance:

Name	**Date**
Robert E. Lee Day	January 19
Franklin D. Roosevelt Day	January 30
Abraham Lincoln Day	February 12
Volunteer Firefighters Week	First full week in March
Tennessee National Guard Day	March 3
Harriet Tubman Day	March 10
Andrew Jackson Day	March 15
Vietnam Veterans Day	March 29
Patriots' Day	April 19
Workers' Memorial Day	April 28
Mothers' Day	Second Sunday in May
Police Memorial Day	May 11
Rescue Squad Week	Third full week in May
Bluegrass Day	Fourth Saturday in May
Statehood Day	June 1
Memorial or Confederate Decoration Day	June 3
Transverse Myelitis Awareness Day	June 6
Lymphedema Awareness Week	Third week of June
John Sevier Day	June 23
Wilma Rudolph Day	June 23
Scottish, Scots-Irish Heritage Day	June 24
Nathan Bedford Forrest Day	July 13
Emancipation Day	August 8
Family Day	Last Sunday in August
Tennessee and United States Constitutions Day	September 17
Tennessee P.O.W.–M.I.A. Recognition Week	Third Friday to following Thursday of September
Towing and Recovery Week	Week of the third Saturday in September
American Indian Day	Fourth Monday in September
Gold Star Mother's Day	Last Sunday in September
Firefighters' Memorial Day	October 9
Veterans' Day	November 11
Agriculture Literacy Week	Week of the third Thursday in November

State Flora and Fauna

The state has adopted, through various means, flora and fauna that are representative of Tennessee.

State Tree



The tulip poplar was designated the official state tree of Tennessee by Public Chapter 204 of the Acts of the 75th General Assembly in 1947. The tulip poplar was chosen "because it grows from one end of the state to the other" and "was extensively used by the pioneers of the state to construct houses, barns, and other necessary farm buildings."

The following description of the tulip poplar, the botanical name of which is *Liriodendron tulipifera*, is taken from *The Complete Guide to North American Trees:*

Perhaps the most stately tree of our range, it sometimes reaches a height of 200, feet with a stem as regular as though turned on a lathe, and frequently showing 50 to 100 feet of trunk without a branch. The twigs are smooth, brownish gray, becoming cracked into a regular network of shallow, firm ridges; an old trunk broken into deep, rough ridges. Its leaves are very smooth and shining with a broad notch at the tip, usually four-lobed, 2 to 8 inches long. Its flowers are tulip-like, green orange, 1 to 3 inches deep. The fruit is cone-like, hanging on through the year, and is 2 to 3 inches long.

State Evergreen Tree

The eastern red cedar was designated the official state evergreen tree by the 107th General Assembly in Public Chapter 567 of the Acts of 2012. The tree is indigenous to the entire state and is a sacred tree of the Cherokee people.

It was one of the first landscape trees used by early pioneers, including Andrew Jackson at the Hermitage. The tree, *Juniperus virginiana*, was central to one of the earliest forest industries in Tennessee, the cedar pencil industry. It is an integral part of an ecological niche called cedar glades. Interestingly, Cedar Knob was the original name of the land upon which the state Capitol was built in Nashville. Cedar Street was also the name of the street at the foot of the state Capitol when it was constructed. That street is now Charlotte Avenue.

State Wildflowers

In 1919, the General Assembly, by Senate Joint Resolution 13, provided that a state flower be chosen by the schoolchildren of Tennessee. Accordingly, a vote was taken, and the passion flower, *Passiflora incarnata*, was chosen. In 1933, however, the Legislature adopted Senate Joint Resolution 53 designating the iris as the "State Flower of Tennessee," but failed to formally rescind the designation of the passion flower as the state flower. To eliminate this confusion, in 1973, the 88th General Assembly, by Public Chapter 16, designated the passion flower the state wildflower and the iris the state cultivated flower. In 2012, the 107th General Assembly added Tennessee Echinacea, *Echinacea tennesseensis*, as an official state wildflower (Public Chapter 829).

Passion Flower

The passion flower grows wild in the southern part of the United States and in South America. It is also commonly known as the maypop, the wild apricot, and the ocoee. The last is the Indian name given to the flower, a name that has also been applied to the Ocoee River and valley. The Indians prized the ocoee as the most abundant and beautiful of all their flowers. The passion flower is so named because of the early Christian missionaries to South America who saw in the various parts of the curiously constructed flower symbols of the Crucifixion—the three crosses, the crown of thorns, nails, and cords.

Tennessee Echinacea

Tennessee Echinacea, also known as the Tennessee coneflower or Tennessee purple coneflower, is one of the few plants that thrive only in the limestone and cedar glades of Middle Tennessee. It was thought to be extinct until it was rediscovered in the late 1960s. Due to conservancy efforts, land was purchased to protect the flower, and the species recovered. The flower features a daisy-like coneflower with rose-purple petals and a spiny copper-colored center and generally blooms from mid-spring until mid-autumn.

State Cultivated Flower

The iris, family *Iridaceae*, was designated the official state cultivated flower in 1973 by the 88th General Assembly (Public Chapter 16). The iris is an herbacious perennial of which there are about 170 species, the most common of which is the Blue Flag. While there are several different colors among the iris, the act naming the iris as the state flower did not name a particular color. By common acceptance, the purple iris is considered the state cultivated flower.

State Botanical Garden

In 2013, the 108th General Assembly designated the University of Tennessee's botanical gardens the state's official botanical garden (Public Chapter 152). In addition to their beauty, the gardens also offer research, educational, and outreach programs. Yearly, more than 100,000 visitors and hundreds of school groups view thousands of native and cultivated plants, including trees, shrubs, roses, wildflowers, annuals, perennials, herbs, ornamental grasses, groundcovers, vines, aquatic plants, and turf. The garden was created in 1983 on ten acres of land that is part of the Institute of Agriculture campus. Additional satellite gardens have been established in Jackson and Crossville, with another planned for Spring Hill. The gardens serve as an interdisciplinary resource center for faculty, students, researchers, and industry professionals in horticulture, natural sciences, landscape design and architecture, communications, and the arts.

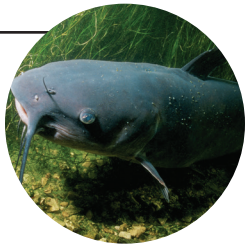
State Sport Fish

Tennessee's official sport fish is the smallmouth bass, as designated in 2005 by Public Chapter 277 of the Acts of the 104th General Assembly.

The smallmouth bass replaced the largemouth bass as the official sport fish in 2005, due to its popularity and the fact that the three largest smallmouth bass in the world came from Tennessee.

The smallmouth bass, *Micropterus dolomieu*, often referred to as "bronzeback," will fight ounce for ounce harder than any other species of sport fish in Tennessee. The current state record, which is also the world record of 11 pounds, 15 ounces, was caught by D.L. Hayes at Dale Hollow Lake on July 9, 1955. The smallmouth bass may be found in most streams and lakes in the state, with the exception of West Tennessee.

State Commercial Fish



The state commercial fish is the channel catfish, *Ictalurus lacustris*, which was designated in 1988 by Public Chapter 489 as enacted by the 95th General Assembly. The channel catfish, sometimes known as "spotted cat" or "fiddler," is widely stocked and reared in farm ponds. It may be found in most Tennessee streams and many lakes. The channel catfish is a bottom feeder and current feeder, generally taken by still fishing.

State Bird

According to the *Nashville Banner* of April 16, 1933, the mockingbird, *Mimus polyglottos*, was selected on April 11, 1933 as the state bird of Tennessee in an election conducted by the Tennessee Ornithological Society. The choice was confirmed by Senate Joint Resolution 51, adopted by the 68th General Assembly in 1933.

The mockingbird is akin to the brown thrasher and the catbird. It is ashen gray above, with darker, white-edged wings and whitish underside; its length, inclusive of the long tail, is about ten inches. One of the finest singers among North American birds, it possesses a melodious song of its own and is especially noted for its skill in mimicking the songs of other birds.

State Game Bird

The bobwhite quail, *Colinus virginianus*, was designated the official state game bird in 1988 by Public Chapter 775 of the Acts of the 95th General Assembly. The bobwhite, also known as the partridge, is considered one of the finest game birds in the world. It is a short-tailed, chunky brown bird, usually eight to ten inches long. The male has a white throat and a white stripe above the eye, while the female has a buffy throat and eye stripe. In spring, the male's clearly whistled "bob white" is answered by the female's four-syllable whistle. This game bird lays from ten to twenty pure white eggs, more than almost any other bird.

State Wild Animal

By House Joint Resolution 156, the 87th General Assembly adopted the raccoon as Tennessee's wild animal in 1971. The raccoon, *Procynn lotor*, is a furry animal that has a bushy, ringed tail and a band of black hair around its eyes that looks like a mask. Raccoons, often called coons, eat fish and frogs that they catch in rivers and streams. Raccoons living in Tennessee measure from thirty to thirty-eight inches long, including their tails. They weigh from twelve to twenty-five pounds. Most males are larger than females. Raccoons walk like bears, with all four feet on the ground, and are good swimmers.

State Horse

The Tennessee Walking Horse was named the official state horse by Public Chapter 596 of the 101st General Assembly in 2000.

The Tennessee Walking Horse is bred mainly from Standardbred, Morgan, Thoroughbred, and American Saddlebred stock. The three, easy riding gaits of this breed—the flat-foot walk, the running walk, and the canter—are all natural, inherited characteristics, making this breed one of the smoothest riding horses in the world.

This breed was a practical utility horse in the beginning and evolved into a pleasure horse due to its gentle ride. Tennessee Walking Horses generally range from 14.3 to 17 hands and weigh 900 to 1,200 pounds.

State Insects

The official state insects were designated by Public Chapter 292 of the Acts of the 89th General Assembly in 1975. They are the well-known firefly and the lady beetle.

Firefly

The firefly, or lightning bug beetle, is the popular name of the luminescent insects of the *Lampyridae* family. In Tennessee, *Photinus pyralls* is the most familiar species. Their extraordinary light is generated in special organs; this light is most often white, yellow, orange, greenish blue, or reddish.

Rather small, fireflies are blackish, brown, yellow, or reddish in color. In certain species, the females remain in the larvae state and are called glowworms.

Most fireflies produce short rhythmic flashes that provide a signaling system to bring the sexes together, as well as a protective mechanism to repel predators.

Ladybug

The ladybird beetle, more commonly known as the ladybug, was dedicated to the Virgin Mary and called "Beetle of Our Lady." They are around four-tenths of an inch long, brightly colored, and round, with the popular ladybug having four black spots on each wing.

Ladybugs are sold to farmers to control insect pests because they are important aphid predators. The life cycle is about four weeks, as the ladybug larvae passes through four growth stages, feeding on insects and insect eggs.

In folk medicine, ladybug beetles were used to cure various diseases, including colic and the measles.

State Agricultural Insect

The official state agricultural insect is the honeybee, designated by Public Chapter 725 of the Acts of the 96th General Assembly in 1990.

The honeybee, *Apis mellifera*, is a social, honey-producing insect that plays a fundamental role in the production of all crops. It is also very popular for its production of honey and beeswax.

The honeybee plays a vital economic role in Tennessee through its pollination of various crops, trees, and grasses. The honeybee is the only insect that is moved for the express purpose of pollination.

State Butterfly

The Zebra Swallowtail, *Eurytides marcellus*, was designated Tennessee's official butterfly by Public Chapter 896 of the 99th General Assembly in 1995. This beautiful, winged insect has black and white stripes that run the length of its body and red and blue spots on its lower back. The swallowtail grows from a tiny egg into a caterpillar that eventually molts into its pupal stage and is transformed into this striking butterfly, which can be found throughout most of the United States.

State Amphibian

The Tennessee Cave Salamander, *Gyrinophilus palleucus*, was named the official state amphibian by Public Chapter 367 of the 99th General Assembly in 1995. This large, cave-dwelling salamander has three red external gills, a broad, flat head with small eyes, and a tail fin. It is most often found in limestone caves that contain streams in central and southeast Tennessee.

State Reptile

The Eastern Box Turtle, *Terrapene carolina*, was designated the official state reptile by Public Chapter 367 of the 99th General Assembly in 1995. This peaceful creature usually reaches a length of fewer than six inches and has a shell of black or brown with spots of yellow, orange, and red. This reptile usually lives between thirty to sixty years and never ventures far from its place of birth.

State Arts and Crafts

Songwriting

Senate Joint Resolution 121, adopted in 2003 by the 103rd General Assembly, designated songwriting as one of Tennessee's official art forms and applauded individuals who are or who have been skillful masters of this art form.

State Songs

My Homeland, Tennessee

In 1925, House Joint Resolution 36 of the 64th General Assembly designated "My Homeland, Tennessee" as an official state song. The words of this song were written by Nell Grayson Taylor and the music by Roy Lamont Smith.

First Verse
O Tennessee, that gave us birth,
To thee our hearts bow down.
For thee our love and loyalty
Shall weave a fadeless crown.
Thy purple hills our cradle was;
Thy fields our mother breast
Beneath thy sunny bended skies,
Our childhood days were blessed.

Second Verse
'Twas long ago our fathers came,
A free and noble band,
Across the mountain's frowning heights
To seek a promised land.
And here before their raptured eyes;
In beauteous majesty:
Outspread the smiling valleys
Of the winding Tennessee.

Third Verse
Could we forget our heritage
Of heroes strong and brave?
Could we do aught but cherish it,
Unsullied to the grave?
Ah no! the State where Jackson sleeps,
Shall ever peerless be.
We glory in thy majesty;
Our homeland, Tennessee.

Chorus
O Tennessee: Fair Tennessee:
Our love for thee can never die:
Dear homeland, Tennessee.

When It's Iris Time In Tennessee

In 1935, "When It's Iris Time in Tennessee" by Willa Waid Newman also became an official state song. This song was adopted by the 69th General Assembly in Chapter 154 of the Public Acts.

First Verse
Sweetness of Spring memories bring
Of a place I long to be.
Land of Sunshine calls this old heart of mine,
Come back to Tennessee.

Chorus

Second Verse
Rocks and the rills deep tinted hills,
There's no spot so dear to me.
Where'er I roam
Still it's my Home Sweet Home,
My own, my Tennessee.

When it's Iris time down in Tennessee,
I'll be coming back to stay
Where the mockingbird sings
At the break of day
A lilting love song gay.
Where the Iris grows,
Where the Harpeth flows,
That is where I long to be.
There's a picture there that lives in memory
When it's Iris time in Tennessee.

My Tennessee

"My Tennessee" by Frances Hannah Tranum was adopted as the official public school song in 1955. It was adopted by Senate Joint Resolution 35 of the 79th General Assembly.

First Verse
Beloved state, oh state of mine,
In all the world I could not find,
Where God has strewn with lavish hand,
More natural beauty o'er the land.
From ev'ry stream and valley green
His wond'rous art is ever seen.
Ah, let my heart beat true to thee,
And swell with pride for Tennessee.

Second Verse
Thy rocks and rills, and wooded hills,
My mem'ry keeps the childhood thrills
You gave to me, that I might know
The joys supreme, you could bestow.
The song of birds, the whisp'ring trees,
The low of herds, the hum of bees,
It all comes back so dear to me,
My childhood home in Tennessee.

Third Verse
Your battles fought, and vict'ries won,
Your freedom bought and duty done,
With daughters fair, and sons so brave,
To do and dare, their deeds they gave.
Courageously, without a fear,
And won the name of volunteer.
In sacred trust, let those who will,
By being just, preserve it still.

Chorus
Oh, Tennessee, My Tennessee,
Thy hills and vales are fair to see,
With mountains grand, and fertile lands
There is no state more dear to me.
Thro' other climes tho I may roam,
There will be times I'll long for home,
In Tennessee, Fair Tennessee,
The land of my nativity.

Tennessee Waltz

In 1965, "Tennessee Waltz" by Redd Stewart and Pee Wee King became an official song of the state. It was adopted by Senate Joint Resolution 9 of the 84th General Assembly.

I was waltzing with my darlin' to the Tennessee Waltz
When an old friend I happened to see
Introduced him to my loved one and while they were waltzing
My friend stole my sweetheart from me.

I remember the night and the Tennessee Waltz
Now I know just how much I have lost
Yes I lost my little darlin' the night they were playing
The beautiful Tennessee Waltz.

Rocky Top

"Rocky Top," by Boudleaux and Felice Bryant, was adopted as an official song of Tennessee by Chapter 545 of the Public Acts of the 92nd General Assembly in 1982.

First Verse
Wish that I was on ol' Rocky Top,
Down in the Tennessee hills;
Ain't no smoggy smoke on Rocky Top;
Ain't no telephone bills;
Once I had a girl on Rocky Top;
Half bear, other half cat;
Wild as a mink, but sweet as soda pop,
I still dream about that;

Second Verse
Once two strangers climbed ol' Rocky Top,
Lookin' for a moonshine still;
Strangers ain't come down from Rocky Top;
Reckon they never will;
Corn won't grow at all on Rocky Top;
Dirt's too rocky by far;
That's why all the folks on Rocky Top
Get their corn from a jar;

Third Verse
I've had years of cramped-up city life
Trapped like a duck in a pen;
All I know is it's a pity life
Can't be simple again.

Chorus
Rocky Top, you'll always be
Home sweet home to me;
Good ol' Rocky Top;
Rocky Top, Tennessee;
Rocky Top, Tennessee.

Tennessee

"Tennessee" by Vivian Rorie was adopted as an official song of Tennessee in 1992. It was adopted by House Joint Resolution 744 of the 97th General Assembly.

I do not know of another state
Where I had rather be
Than this great state I'm living in
And that is Tennessee.

I love the stars dearly
And there are surely three
That show the Grand Division
Of my home-land, Tennessee.

Where could you find a meadow
With grass so vividly green?
Where could you find the mountains
With such majestic scene?

You will never find so bright a moon
To shine down from above
You will also see the robin
The wren, and the turtle dove.

And don't forget the rivers
Where visitors long to stay.
And many have voice in parting,
'I'm sure glad I passed this way.'

You will see the cattle grazing
Beside a cotton field;
And there's the Grand Ole Opry
And a feeling it's all God's will.

I have lived here all my life
It's where I'm going to be
Although I've traveled quite a bit,
I'll still take Tennessee!

Oh, I sure love the state I'm in:
The great state of Tennessee!

Smoky Mountain Rain

"Smoky Mountain Rain," by Nashville songwriters Kye Fleming and Dennis Morgan and performed by Ronnie Milsap, was adopted as an official song of Tennessee in 2010. It was adopted by Senate Joint Resolution 966 of the 106th General Assembly.

First Verse
I thumbed my way from L.A. back to Knoxville
I found out those bright lights
Aint where I belong
From a phone booth in the rain
I called to tell her
I've had a change of dreams I'm comin' home
But tears filled my eyes
When I found out she was gone

Second Verse
I waved a diesel down outside a café
He said that he was goin' as far as Gatlinburg
I climbed up in the cab
All wet and cold and lonely
I wiped my eyes and told him about her
I've got to find her!
Can you make these big wheels burn?

Third Verse
I can't blame her for lettin' go
A woman needs someone warm to hold
I feel the rain runnin' down my face
I'll find her no matter what it takes!

Chorus
Smoky Mountain rain keeps on fallin'
I keep callin' her name
Smoky Mountain rain I'll keep searchin'
I can't go on hurtin' this way
She's somewhere in the Smoky Mountain rain

Tennessee

"Tennessee," written by John R. Bean of Knoxville, was adopted as an official song of Tennessee in 2011. It was adopted by Public Chapter 242 of the 107th General Assembly.

Oh Tennessee, I long to come back home.
I guess your dew has settled on my soul,
Every day I stayed away,
You called my heart back, home to stay.
Oh Tennessee, I long to come back home.

Oh Tennessee, I'm missing you too soon.
Silver skies and lazy afternoons…
Silver clouds and golden moon,
You're Mother Nature's Tender Womb…
Oh Tennessee, I'm missing you too soon.

Your days, have such gentle ways,
Aimless thoughts and windblown rhymes,
Your nights sing such peaceful songs
To a tired and weary mind.

Oh Tennessee, I've spent more than I've earned,
But I'm much richer now for what I've learned…
Money won't buy peace of mind,
And peace of mind is what I'll find…
Oh Tennessee, you treated me so kind.

Welcome home,
Welcome home.

The Pride of Tennessee

"The Pride of Tennessee," by Fred Congdon, Thomas Vaughn, and Carol Elliot, was adopted as an official song of Tennessee in 1996. It was adopted by House Joint Resolution 221 of the 99th General Assembly.

From the Smokie Mountain Mornings to the Mississippi shores
Let's take time to remember those who went before
Whose lives made a difference in the world for you and me
Their courage, faith, and vision are the Pride of Tennessee
Sequoyah was a Cherokee, the chief of all his tribe
His people learned to read and write with the alphabet he scribed
When Tennessee became a State its Governor was clear
There was no better leader than the gallant John Sevier
From the backwoods to the Congress to his stand at the Alamo
Davy Crockett gave his life for the country he loved so

Three Presidents from Tennessee made impressions on this land
Jackson, Polk, and Johnson were men who took a stand
Ida Wells Barnett fought bravely for the rights of men
When they were killed by prejudice for the color of their skin
He was drafted in the first world war though he did not want to go
His shooting skills made Alvin York a national hero

When women of Tennessee believed they had the right to vote
Ann Dallas Dudley led the fight and gave them hope
Cordell Hull had a vision for peace around the world
The United Nations where all countries' flags unfurl
From Beale Street down in Memphis to New York front page news
W.C. Handy's music made him father of the blues

Yes Courage, Faith, and Vision are the Pride of Tennessee

State Poet Laureate of Christian Country Music in Tennessee

Colonel Hugh X. Lewis of Nashville was designated as the Poet Laureate of Christian Country Music in Tennessee by the 104th General Assembly. Senate Joint Resolution 527, adopted May 8, 2006, describes Colonel Lewis as "an inspirational poet and one of the most distinguished singer-songwriters in the nation." A BMI award-winning country music songwriter and exciting performer, Lewis has penned more than 250 country and Christian country songs that have been recorded by such artists as Grand Ole Opry stars Charlie Pride, Little Jimmy Dickens, Del Reeves, Jim Ed Brown, Stonewall Jackson, Carl Smith, and Kitty Wells. He has enjoyed an accomplished and prosperous career in the country music and Christian country music recording industries for fifty years.

State Poet Laureate

Margaret "Maggi" Britton Vaughn was first designated Tennessee's Poet Laureate in 1995 by House Joint Resolution 133 of the 99th General Assembly. This has been renewed through various acts over the years, and in 2015, she was once again designated Tennessee's Poet Laureate for the next five years by Senate Joint Resolution 241 of the 109th General Assembly. Vaughn, a native of Murfreesboro, had her first critically acclaimed book, *Fifty Years of Saturday Nights*, published in 1975. Some of Vaughn's other works include *Grand Ole Saturday Night*, *The Light in the Kitchen Window*, and the play, *I Wonder If Eleanor Roosevelt Ever Made a Quilt*.

State Poem

The poem titled "Oh Tennessee, My Tennessee" by Naval Vice Admiral William Lawrence was designated and adopted as the official state poem in 1973 by Public Chapter 111 of the 88th General Assembly. Lawrence composed this poem while enduring a period of sixty days of solitary confinement in a North Vietnamese prisoner of war camp. Lawrence, who spent six years as a POW during the Vietnam War, was a Nashville native.

Oh Tennessee, My Tennessee
What Love and Pride I Feel for Thee.
You Proud Ole State, the Volunteer,
Your Proud Traditions I Hold Dear.

I Revere Your Heroes
Who Bravely Fought our Country's Foes.
Renowned Statesmen, so Wise and Strong,
Who Served our Country Well and Long.

I Thrill at Thought of Mountains Grand;
Rolling Green Hills and Fertile Farm Land;
Earth Rich with Stone, Mineral and Ore;
Forests Dense and Wild Flowers Galore;
Powerful Rivers that Bring us Light;
Deep Lakes with Fish and Fowl in Flight;
Thriving Cities and Industries;
Fine Schools and Universities;
Strong Folks of Pioneer Descent,
Simple, Honest, and Reverent.

Beauty and Hospitality
Are the Hallmarks of Tennessee.

And O'er the World as I May Roam,
No Place Exceeds my Boyhood Home.
And Oh How Much I Long to See
My Native Land, My Tennessee.

Tennessee's State Veterans Poem

Jasper N. Bailey's poignant "Home to Stay" was designated Tennessee's state veterans poem by House Joint Resolution 641 of the 108th General Assembly in 2014. Bailey, a native of Cookeville, was a highly decorated veteran of World War II, having served valiantly in the European and the China-Burma-India theaters.

0 Tennessee, my Tennessee, the fairest land of all.
Throughout the years, I've journeyed far
but ever heard your call,
To come back to the place I love
and never more to roam,
and settle in that promised land,
the state I call my home,
So now I'm back and here to stay
with no more wars to fight.
These peaceful hills will usher in
a season of delight.
For God has blessed me, this I know
but why I cannot say.
Unless His grace has kept me safe
to celebrate this day.

And He will call me sometime soon
to place me where I'll be.
I hope it's like the fair, fair, land
in sunny Tennessee.

State Declamation

In 1987, House Joint Resolution 171 of the 95th General Assembly included a commendation of Major Hooper Penuel for writing the declamation "I Am Tennessee," which was read at the inauguration of Governor Ned R. McWherter. The Assembly concluded their commendation by stating, "Whereas, this General Assembly is pleased to honor and recognize Major Penuel, a lifelong resident of Middle-Tennessee, a man who serves his state every day in every way, who was able to express so touchingly what most of us can only feel; now, therefore, be it resolved by the House of Representatives of the 95th General Assembly of the State of Tennessee, the Senate concurring, that the following text, which is 'I Am Tennessee' by Major Hooper Penuel, is hereby designated as the official state declamation of Tennessee, to wit:"

I Am Tennessee

My name came from Tanasi, the name of an Indian Cherokee village in the region. Early explorers once passed over and through my mountains and forests. Europeans fought to decide who should own me.

I Am Tennessee

Pioneers from the east crossed my mountains to settle in the wilderness. They formed their own governments in my region before any other independent governments existed in North America.

I Am Tennessee

Those pioneers brought with them the spirit of independence and daring that has become part of my history. I gained statehood on June 1, 1796. President George Washington signed the bill that made me the sixteenth state of the union. John Sevier was my first Governor. My first United States Senators were William Blount and William Cocke. At this time my only seat in the House of Representatives was held by Andrew Jackson.

I Am Tennessee

My boundaries range from the mountains of North Carolina to Arkansas in the west. I link the north with the south. I was the last state to leave the union, and the first to return. I touch eight states, more than any other state in the union.

I Am Tennessee

Tennesseans like John Sevier in the Revolutionary War, Andrew Jackson in the War of 1812, and Alvin C. York in World War I established a military tradition of honor and bravery that continues to this day.

I Am Tennessee

I felt more battles on my soil than any other state except Virginia, my neighbor to the east. I have produced three Presidents: Andrew Jackson, James K. Polk, and Andrew Johnson. All distinguished themselves in the true Tennessee tradition.

I Am Tennessee

Two of my early residents–Davy Crockett and Sam Houston–became heroes of the Texas Revolution. Each carried the true Tennessee Volunteer spirit. I'm known worldwide as the

Volunteer State. John Sevier called for 100 good men. 200 answered the call. For this I will always be grateful.

I Am Tennessee

Today, we have 19,000 Guard men and women serving as volunteers in the Tennessee National Guard, once known as the Militia. Each one is ready to answer the call of the Governor or the President to defend this great land.

I Am Tennessee

My land is rich with mountains and thick forests in the eastern and central region. It produces excellent recreation for hunters, campers, and sightseers. The majestic beauty of the Great Smoky Mountains attracts 6 million visitors every year. My lakes and rivers provide excellent boating and fishing or just for relaxing.

I Am Tennessee

My fertile soil, thick forests, temperate climate, water supply, and an abundance in minerals makes my state rich in natural resources. Manufacturing, agriculture, and mining are all important parts of my makeup. TVA generates my electricity. Early in my history, between 1800 and 1860, private companies built turnpikes and collected tolls to keep them up. In 1913 my leaders passed legislation to construct major highways. Today I have over 8,000 miles of highways and roads. I have about 125 airports, almost 6,000 miles of track for trains, and barges float my major rivers, The Cumberland, The Mississippi, and The Tennessee.

I Am Tennessee

My music is heard around the world. Blues, soul and rock and roll from the Memphis Delta, Country from Nashville, and the unique sound of the dulcimer from Appalachia. Yes, my history is a proud one. From my early beginnings as an unsettled territory until today as a leader and a state that looks toward the future.

I Am Tennessee

Memphis, Chattanooga, Knoxville, and the Capital City of Nashville are my largest cities, but I couldn't survive without the 3,000 communities and the 95 counties in-between. From the delta river banks of Memphis to Bristol, and from Frog Mountain near Copperhill to the Reelfoot Lake near Tiptonville, 4.6 million residents keep me going.

I Am Tennessee

For almost two centuries I have held my own. My future looks bright. I am a great place to live. I am a Volunteer.

I Am Tennessee

State Artists

Burton Callicott was designated Tennessee's official state artist by Senate Joint Resolution 118 of the 97th General Assembly in 1991. The resolution recognized Mr. Callicott for his many contributions to the art community in Memphis and the state of Tennessee.

H. R. Lovell was designated Tennessee's official artist-in-residence by House Joint Resolution 435 of the 101st General Assembly in 2000. The resolution stated that the official artist-in-residence will express the spirit and assets of Tennessee through his works.

State Paintings

The paintings *Tennessee Treasures* and *Tennessee Treasures Too*, by Tennessee artist Michael Sloan, were designated as official paintings of Tennessee by Senate Joint Resolution 57 of the 100th General Assembly in 1997 and by Senate Joint Resolution 82 of the 105th General Assembly in 2007, respectively.

Tennessee Treasures

Tennessee Treasures Too

Tennessee Treasures features Tennessee's ten most recognizable symbols—raccoon, mockingbird, iris, passion flower, tulip poplar, Tennessee River pearl, ladybug, zebra swallowtail, largemouth bass, and limestone—as well as images of the state flag, the actual geographic layout of the state, a gold-embossed seal of the state, and the signature of Tennessee's first governor, John Sevier. *Tennessee Treasures Too*, a follow-up work, also contains imagery of the tulip poplar, passion flower, and iris; however, in addition, it depicts the yellowwood tree (the Tennessee Bicentennial Tree), honeybee, firefly, bobwhite quail, agate, box turtle, and channel catfish.

Official State Theatre

The historic and opulent Tennessee Theatre in Knoxville is the official state theatre of Tennessee, as designated by the 101st General Assembly in 1999 (Public Chapter 166). When the Tennessee Theatre opened its doors in 1928, its Spanish-Moorish interior and cosmopolitan features (from

French and Italian to Asian influences) persuaded patrons to deem it the "South's most beautiful theatre."

State Outdoor Drama

Liberty! was designated Tennessee's official outdoor drama by House Joint Resolution 286 of the 106th General Assembly in 2009. The resolution stated that *Liberty!* was the longest-running drama of any kind in the state. *Liberty!* tells the story of Tennessee's frontier beginnings, as well as that of the westward expansion.

Official State Fife and Drum Corps

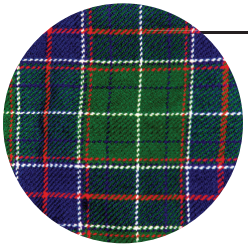
In 2014, Public Chapter 549 of the 108th General Assembly designated the Watauga Valley Fife and Drum Corps as the official state fife and drum corps. The Corps is a Revolutionary War–era reenactment group based in East Tennessee. This living-history organization is committed to education and public outreach, striving to further public awareness of the culture and music of the settlers and natives living in the Watauga Valley during the eighteenth century.

State Folk Dance

Public Chapter 829 of the Acts of the 91st General Assembly designated the square dance as the official state folk dance stating, "Among the traditions (of our ancestors) that have survived intact is the Square Dance, a uniquely attractive art form that remains a vibrant and entertaining part of Tennessee folklore."

State Jamboree and Crafts Festival

The Smithville Fiddlers' Jamboree and Crafts Festival was adopted in 1997 by House Joint Resolution 24 of the 100th General Assembly as the official jamboree and crafts festival.



State Tartan

Scottish ancestry is widely celebrated throughout the Volunteer State. One of the most salient images of Scottish culture is the tartan, a traditional cloth pattern of stripes in different colors and widths that cross each other to form squares. In acknowledgment of Tennessee's Scottish heritage, Chapter 82 of the Public Acts of the 101st General Assembly in 1999 designated the state of Tennessee's official state tartan as the design adopted by the Heart of Tennessee Scottish Celebration in conjunction with all the other Scottish Societies in Tennessee. The design is a symmetrical tartan set, using the following colors: natural white, dark green, purple, red, and dark blue.

Other State Facts

Official Salutes to the Tennessee Flag

There are two official salutes to the Tennessee flag, both of which were adopted by Public Chapter 841 of the 104th General Assembly in 2006. The first salute, written by Lucy Steele Harrison, is as follows:

Three white stars on a field of blue
God keep them strong and ever true
It is with pride and love that we
Salute the Flag of Tennessee.

The second salute to the state flag was written by Miss John Bostick, to wit:

Flag of Tennessee, I salute thee
To thee I pledge my allegiance with
My affection, my service and my life.

State Distinguished Service Medal

The "Tennessee Distinguished Service Medal" was created in May 1979 by House Joint Resolution 239 of the 91st General Assembly. The medal was presented in a special ceremony at Arlington National Cemetery and placed on display in the Memorial Amphitheater. The display case is framed with wood from the tulip poplar, Tennessee's state tree. The following citation appears on the display:

"This medal is hereby posthumously dedicated to the memory of all veterans of Tennessee who have given their lives in the defense of our nation and the Volunteer State."

State Symbol of Remembrance to Honor Fallen Military Service Members

The Honor and Remember Flag

The Honor and Remember Flag was adopted as the official state symbol of remembrance to honor fallen military service members in 2014 by the 108th General Assembly (Public Chapter 539). This flag was so designated to evince "of our state's concern and commitment to honoring and remembering the lives of all members of the United States armed forces who have lost their lives while serving, or as a result of service, and their families."

The flag's field of red represents the blood of those brave servicemen who sacrificed their lives for freedom, while the white banner found at the bottom of the flag represents the purity of that sacrifice. The gold star at the center of the flag symbolizes the warriors who did not return home from war, and the star's blue border is meant to represent active duty service in military conflict

dating back to WWI. The folded flag just beneath the star invokes the final tribute paid to the fallen. To symbolize the eternal spirit of the departed, a flame appears at the center of this same gold star.

State Aviation Hall of Fame

The Tennessee Aviation Hall of Fame, located at the Gatlinburg-Pigeon Forge Airport in Sevier County, was designated the official state aviation hall of fame by Chapter 78 of the Public Acts of the 102nd General Assembly in 2001. The Hall of Fame was founded for the purpose of honoring aviation pioneers and leaders in Tennessee.

Additionally, in 2003, Public Chapter 158 of the 103rd General Assembly designated the Tennessee Aviation Hall of Fame and affiliated Tennessee Museum of Aviation as the official state repository and archive for aviation history.

Official State Railroad Museums

A testament to the importance of the railroad in the state of Tennessee, there are two official state railroad museums. The first, located in Hamilton County, is the Tennessee Valley Railroad Museum, designated an official state railroad museum by the 90th General Assembly in 1978 (Public Chapter 547). The second official state railroad museum is the Cowan Railroad Museum, located in Franklin County, designated by the 105th General Assembly in 2007 (Public Chapter 193).

Official State Railroad Library

The A.C. Kalmbach Memorial Library, located in Chattanooga, is an official railroad library of the state of Tennessee. Designated as such in 2004 by the 103rd General Assembly (Public Chapter 628), the A.C. Kalmbach Memorial Library is one of the finest institutions of its kind in the country and is the research library of the National Model Railroad Association.

Official State Pet

In 2014, the 108th General Assembly designated any dog or cat adopted from a Tennessee animal shelter or rescue the official state pet (Public Chapter 821). According to the Humane Society of the United States, sixty-five percent of U.S. households have a pet; the majority of these pets were acquired from animal shelters or rescues, and the percentage of families who adopt pets from shelters or rescues has been on the rise. Even so, with six to eight million cats and dogs entering shelters and rescues each year, there is still a great need for loving families to give these animals a home.

State Beverage

Milk was designated the official state beverage of Tennessee by Public Chapter 31 of the Acts of the 106th General Assembly in 2009. The act stated that milk is an essential component to building strong muscles and bones in children, as well as mending injured muscles and bones in adults. Other benefits cited include milk's role in building strong and healthy teeth, hair, skin, and nails. Tennessee's dairy industry produced nearly 100 million pounds of milk in 2007, with cash receipts for milk and milk products totaling nearly $202 million.

State Fruit

The tomato, scientifically known as *Lycopersicon lycopersicum*, was designated Tennessee's official state fruit in 2003 by the 103rd General Assembly (Public Chapter 154). While commonly considered, and commonly functioning as, a vegetable, the tomato is, botanically speaking, a fruit. In the culinary world, fruits are sweet and usually served as a dessert or snack, while vegetables are less sweet and often served with a main dish. However, the scientific distinction between fruit and vegetable is based on the part of the plant where the food happens to be. A fruit develops from the fertilized ovary of a flower and contains seeds, while a vegetable is any edible part of the plant other than the fruit (i.e. leaf, root, bulb, stem, and flower).

State Gem

The pearl, taken from mussels in the freshwater rivers of the state, is the official state gem, as designated by Public Chapter 192 of the 91st General Assembly in 1979. Between the years 1882 and 1914, beautiful pearls were taken from many of the state's streams and rivers, from the Pigeon and Holston in the east to the Forked Deer and Obion in the west. The Caney Fork in Middle Tennessee was noted for its pearl-bearing mussels, and "pearling" was a favorite sport for young people on Sunday afternoons at the turn of the century.

Tennessee river pearls are of all colors and they are "natural," as the mussel made them—all pearl, all the way through. They have been found in various shapes—spherical, pear-shaped, and baroque or irregular.

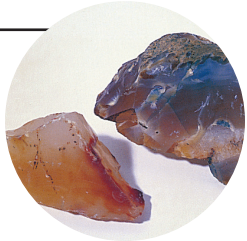
After World War I, dams were built on many of the rivers, and the mussels lost their swift and shallow shoals. Also, the waters became more toxic, and pearling became unprofitable. Today, pearling exists as a by-product of shell harvests, which supply the cultivated pearl industry of Japan.

Tennessee river pearls are among the most beautiful and durable in the world. At Camden in West Tennessee, these river pearls are collected and crafted into rings, cufflinks, stick pins, and other jewelry. The historic Tennessee River Freshwater Pearl Farm and Museum located in Camden, Benton County, is the official site of freshwater pearl culturing in the state, as designated by Public Chapter 506 of the 103rd General Assembly in 2004.

State Rock

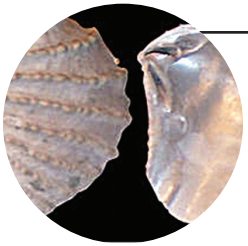
Limestone, a sedimentary rock found throughout Tennessee, was designated the official state rock by the 91st General Assembly with Public Chapter 42 in 1979. Particularly abundant in the middle section of the state, limestone Tennessee marble, as the metamorphic version of limestone is known, is widely used in public and private buildings. Tennessee limestone may appear off-white, pink, or dark red in color.

State Mineral



Agate is the official state mineral, as designated by Public Chapter 30 of the 106th General Assembly in 2009. Agate, a semiprecious gemstone, is a waxy, cryptocrystalline variety of mineral quartz in which the colors are present in bands, clouds, or distinct groups. On March 5, 1969, the 86th General Assembly, in adopting House Joint Resolution 42, declared agate the official state rock. However, the designation was changed by the General Assembly in 2009 to state mineral because stone, rock, and mineral were used interchangeably in the original resolution, and the Legislature wanted to correct this discrepancy.

State Fossil



Pterotrigonia (Scabrotrigonia) thoracica is the official state fossil, as designated by House Joint Resolution 552 of the 100th General Assembly in 1998. Tennessee was the thirty-eighth state to designate a state fossil.

Pterotrigonia (Scabrotrigonia) thoracica (nicknamed Ptero) was a Cretaceous bivalve found in the Coon Creek Formation of West Tennessee. It was a wedge-shaped, shallow-burrowing suspension feeder that inhabited the marine clayey-sand ocean floor that was West Tennessee seventy million years ago. Shells of Ptero are preserved unaltered in great abundance and are easily recognized by collectors. The associated ocean floor inhabitants were diverse and included other bivalves, snails, squid-like animals, worms, sponges, corals, crustaceans, sharks, fish, turtles, and marine reptiles. Ptero is now extinct. In fact, the extinction event that was responsible for the demise of the dinosaurs sixty-five million years ago may have contributed to the demise of Ptero. Only the genus *Neotrigonia*, with five species, has survived to the present and is found only in the Pacific Ocean, most commonly near New Zealand.

State Artifact

"Sandy," the ancient stone statue discovered in 1939 on Sellars Farm in Wilson County, was designated the official state artifact by the 108th General Assembly (Public Chapter 571, 2014). This prehistoric Native American statue is made of sandstone and depicts a kneeling male figure. It is a "prime example of the Tennessee-Cumberland Style of Mississippian stone statuary crafted and used during the Mississippian Period, A.D. 800–1500."