

## WEST VIRGINIA

Hi there! My name is Hannah and I am a Fulbright Student living, working, and doing research here in Vienna. Today I'm going to tell you about my family's home state of West Virginia.

Nestled in the Appalachian Mountain range, West Virginia is very mountainous and has earned its nickname as *The Mountain State*. In and around West Virginia are the large rivers of the Ohio and Shenandoah which have been important to West Virginia's industry.

Before the arrival of the Europeans, the native people of West Virginia were mound builders. All over West Virginia, you can find large conical mounds that served a variety of purposes. For example, the largest mound, named Grave Creek Mound found in Moundsville was used for multiple burials and once had a moat surrounding it.

After the European arrival in America and until the Civil War, West Virginia was part of the state of Virginia. At the Virginia Secession Convention of 1861, the western delegates (of what is now West Virginia) voted to remain part of the Union and not secede as present day Virginia decided to. ON June 20, 1863, West Virginia became its own state abolishing slavery and establishing a public school system.

West Virginia has many natural resources and this is the source of most of West Virginia's industry. Salt mining had already started in West Virginia by the 18th century, but what really stimulated West Virginia's economy and aided the advancement of the industrial revolution was the discovery of coal. Previously, coal had only been mined by personal miners, but with the expansion of the railway systems through America, coal could be transported in large quantities and around the country!

With the demand for coal came the demand for more efficient tools for extracting the coal. A job that was previously done with picks and shovels evolved into a job done by electric coal cutters and hauling machines. In the early 1900s, hundreds of thousands of people were working as miners, in many cases, even children. By 1936 shuttle cars and conveyor belts were used to transport both miners and coal in and out of the mines. Since mines were often located out of previously settled town, coal companies would build their own towns near mines with houses, stores, and churches for the miners and their families. Since Wales, Scotland and England had already experienced a boom in coal mining, many immigrants were brought over from these countries and many West Virginians can trace their family lineage back one of these three countries.

West Virginia is home to many urban legends including the Mothman, an insect human hybrid that terrorized the town of Point Pleasant in the 1960s. Mothman is said to appear before catastrophe events just as the collapse of the Silver Bridge in 1967.

West Virginia has some of the most beautiful scenery anywhere in the US. With great

locations for outdoors sports, people can come to hike, camp, fish or go whitewater rafting. The classic John Denver song, *Take Me Home, Country Roads* celebrates the beauty of West Virginia's mountains, rivers and beautiful sky. And you won't find people more loyal to to their neighbor than in West Virginia! They're always polite, neighborly and fiercely proud to be *Mountaineers*