

TENNESSEE

STATE

SYMBOLS

**Tennessee State Symbols
Mineral--Agate (commonly called Tennessee
Paint Rock Agate)**



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 the 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 as the official state rock. However, the designation was changed by the General Assembly in 2009 to the state mineral because stone, rock, and mineral were used interchangeably in the original resolution, and the Legislature wanted to correct this discrepancy.

Tennessee State Symbols Rock--Limestone



Limestone, a sedimentary rock found throughout Tennessee, was designated the state rock by the 91st General Assembly with Public Chapter 42 in 1979. Limestone is composed of calcium carbonate. It will 'bubble' when an acid such as vinegar is dropped on it. It comes in colors from various shades of gray to black. It may also be white, off white, or pink. A coarse crystalline variety from east Tennessee is sold as Tennessee 'chocolate' or 'pink' marble. It is used in public and private buildings. The TTU entrance signs off Dixie Avenue, Peachtree Street, and Willow Avenue are Tennessee 'marble'. Formed under shallow marine conditions. May contain fossils.

Tennessee State Symbols

Fossil--*Pterotrignonia (Scabrotrignonia) thoracica*



Pterotrignonia (Scabrotrignonia) 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.

Pterotrignonia (Scabrotrignonia) 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 *Neotrignonia*, with five species, has survived to the present and is found only in the Pacific Ocean, most commonly near New Zealand.

Tennessee State Symbols Gemstone--Pearl



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.

Just for the fun of it, can you name the following Tennessee State Symbols?

Amphibian

Reptile

Insects

Birds

Wild Animal

Fish

Flowers

Fruit

Tree

Beverage—not JD as you would expect

Artifact