



Kansas

State History

~ In a Nutshell ~

Written & designed by
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Kansas State History In a Nutshell
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What is the "In a Nutshell" series?

This is a series of concise, easy to understand information on many popular topics. You will find that many of products in this series can also be found as part of larger publications and/or curriculum on the publisher's website. At the end of each book, you will find a list of questions that may be used to help you review the material.

Kansas State History Lapbook Journal Study Guide



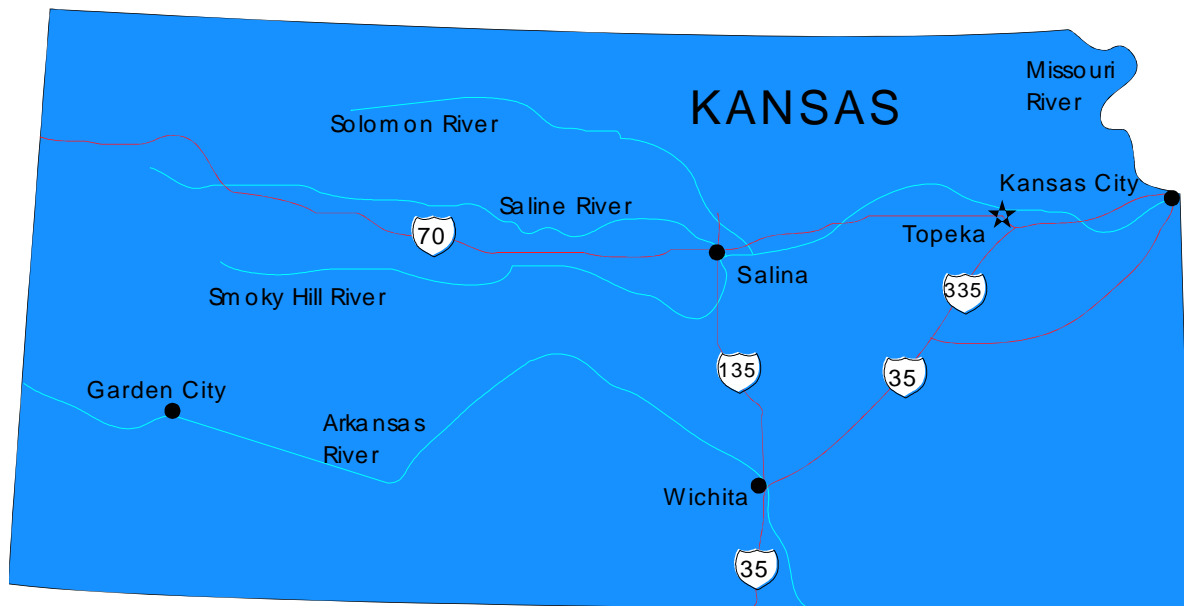
The Great Seal of Kansas

Welcome to Kansas, nicknamed the Sunflower State, but also known as the Jayhawk State, the Midway State, and the Wheat State. This region of plains and prairie is the breadbasket of the country, growing more wheat than any other state in the union.

In 1822, the Santa Fe Trail brought hundreds and hundreds of wagons through Kansas. Cattle drives and railroads continued to change the face of the state, and Dodge City became home to the largest cattle market in the world, gaining notoriety in the process as the rough and tumbling home to the likes of Wyatt Earp, Wild Bill Hickok, and Bat Masterson. Today, cattle, wheat, corn, and soybeans form the base for the agricultural economy.

The Kansas River was named by the French after the Kansas, Omaha, Kaw, Osage and Dakota Sioux Indian word "KaNze" meaning, in the Kansas language "south wind."

People who live in or come from Kansas are called Kansans.



Map of Kansas – Capitol, Major Cities and Rivers

STATEHOOD

In 1803, the United States purchased a large tract of land from France, the Louisiana Purchase. Most of present-day Kansas came to the United States as part of this tract. Between 1825 and

1842, fur trappers, merchants, and settlers established the Santa Fe and Oregon trails, major east-west passages, through the area. By the mid-1800's, Midwesterners were clamoring to officially open new territories for settlement and railroad construction. A bill to do this was introduced by Senator Stephen A. Douglas of Illinois.

From the beginning, this bill was embroiled in arguments between pro-slavery citizens and anti-slavery citizens. The Missouri Compromise of 1820 declared that all land in the Louisiana Purchase north of 36° 30', except for Missouri, was to be admitted as free land. Based on the Missouri Compromise, Kansas should have been admitted as free territory. However, for political reasons, Senator Douglas' bill specified that the citizens of these new territories should decide the issue of slavery for themselves. Congress finally passed the bill, that contradicted the Missouri Compromise, and on May 30, 1854, Kansas became a territory of the United States.

Soon, settlers from the north and from the south were pouring into Kansas. Unfortunately, many of the migrations were aided by pro and anti-slavery groups trying to pack the state with sympathizers. In the 1855 elections, tainted by questionable voting practices, pro-slavery candidates won control of the legislature. As a result of the pro-slavery legislation that was approved, violence broke out in Kansas. This violence over the issue of slavery was reported in newspapers throughout the United States. "Bleeding Kansas" was on everyone's mind.

The pro-slavery group wrote a constitution favoring slavery, but Kansas voters rejected it. A shift in the legislature occurred and anti-slavery citizens took charge. Pro-slavery laws were repealed and a constitution forbidding slavery was written. Kansas voters approved this constitution and asked the United States Congress for statehood. Kansas was admitted to the Union, as the 34th state, on January 29, 1861.

STATE CONSTITUTION

Kansas is governed under its original Constitution, created in 1859. Of course, it has been amended many times. All amendments to the Constitution must be passed through the Legislature and offered for vote to the citizens of Kansas. To be approved, an amendment must receive 2/3 of the vote in each house of the Legislature and must receive a majority of votes from Kansas voters. A constitutional convention may be called with the approval of 2/3 of the legislative vote and a majority vote from Kansas voters. A statewide election must then be held to approve the actions of the convention.

PREAMBLE: *We, the people of Kansas, grateful to Almighty God for our civil and religious privileges, in order to insure the full enjoyment of our rights as American citizens, do ordain and establish this constitution of the state of Kansas, with the following boundaries, to wit: Beginning at a point on the western boundary of the state of Missouri, where the thirty-seventh parallel of north latitude crosses the same; thence running west on said parallel to the twenty-fifth meridian of longitude west from Washington; thence north on said meridian to the fortieth parallel of north latitude; thence east on said parallel to the western boundary of the state of Missouri; thence south with the western boundary of said state to the place of beginning.*

STATE GOVERNMENT

State Government: As in the case of the federal government, Kansas's state government is organized into three branches - legislative, executive, and judicial. The state government is a product of three documents: the United States Constitution, the Kansas State Constitution, and laws of the state.

The governor of the State of Kansas heads the Executive Branch, which includes the lieutenant governor, secretary of state, and attorney general. The governor is elected by a statewide vote for a four-year term. He, or she, acts as chief administrator responsible for carrying out state laws and administering the executive budget. The citizens of Kansas elect four other positions in the executive branch as well. They are the lieutenant governor, the secretary of state, the state treasurer and the attorney general. The lieutenant governor acts as chief executive when the governor is absent.

Legislative Branch: The Kansas Legislature is composed of two bodies like the United States Congress, the House of Representatives and the Senate. The Legislature is referred to as a bicameral body because it is made up of two houses. The Latin roots of the word bicameral, "bi" and "cameral," mean two chambers or rooms. The Legislature's most prominent responsibilities are making the laws in Kansas and for raising and distributing the money necessary to run the state government.

State Representatives: Representatives in Kansas each represent people in a specific area of the state. These areas are called house districts. There are currently 125 men and women representing 125 house districts in the Kansas House of Representatives. Each representative serves for a period of two years in the House of Representatives, after which he or she must run for re-election.

State Senators: Senators in Kansas each represent people in a specific area of the state. These areas are called senate districts. There are currently 40 men and women representing 40 senate districts in the Kansas Senate. Each senator serves for a period of four years in the Senate, after which he or she must run for re-election.

Legislative Process: The legislative branch of government is responsible for making and maintaining laws within their jurisdiction. United States representatives and senators, federal legislators, are responsible for laws at the national level and state legislators are responsible for laws at the state level. A law begins as an idea that is introduced in the Kansas Legislature as a bill by one or more legislators. The bill then goes through the legislative process to become a law. During this process the bill may be changed. Not all bills become law.

When the legislature is meeting, it is said to be "in session." The Kansas Legislature normally meets once a year, in January, for a period of 90 days.

Judicial Branch: The judicial system of Kansas is the branch of the Kansas state government that interprets the state's laws and constitution. Headed by the Supreme Court, the judiciary consists of two courts of last resort, courts of general jurisdiction, and courts of limited jurisdiction. Also, the Kansas judiciary contains two independent courts.

All judges and justices requiring appointment are appointed by the Governor. Candidates must first go through a nominating process through the Kansas Judicial Nominating Commission, which selects three candidates to submit to the Governor for a single selection to the office.

TRIBAL GOVERNMENT

Tribal Government operates separately from Kansas State Government. For more information, visit: <http://www.doi.gov/governments/tribalgovernments.cfm>

COUNTY GOVERNMENT

The United States Constitution does not define local government. Instead, this function is left up to the states. Counties are a local unit of government within a state. Counties are a local unit of government within a state. All but two of the states are divided into counties. Alaska is divided into boroughs and census districts and Louisiana is divided into parishes.

There are one hundred and five counties in the state of Kansas. Counties contain a number of towns and cities as well as all unincorporated land in the state. Every county has a county seat, often a populous or centrally located city or town, where the county government is headquartered.

In traditional midwest fashion, counties in Kansas possess a moderate scope of power. As extensions of the state government, counties are primarily administrative bodies which possess executive and limited judicial powers, but not legislative powers. Their primary responsibilities are related to managing, planning and governing all unincorporated land within their borders. These include overall planning, police service, as well as some legal services. The counties keep records of deaths, births, marriages, divorces, property ownership, and court activities within the county. The counties must also maintain a court system, law enforcement, road and bridge construction, and voter registration.

As extensions of the state government, the counties are responsible for six major services:

- Maintaining the peace and protecting life and property
- Assessing and collecting taxes to operate the county
- Compile, record, and preserve public records essential to maintaining individual property rights
- Building and maintain public roads, highways, and bridges
- Providing facilities for courts and the administration of justice through the District Court system
- Caring for the needy and indigent, orphaned children, and the aged

Each county government is composed of eight elected officials and a District Attorney. All county officials serve four year terms beginning on the first Monday in January following their election.

Source: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Government_of_Kansas

U.S. CONGRESSIONAL DELEGATION

The legislative branch of the United States government makes laws for our nation and raises and distributes money to run the United States government. The most evident part of the legislative branch is the United States Congress. Congress is divided into two parts, called houses. The two parts are the Senate and the House of Representatives. Congress is referred to as a bicameral body because it is made up of two houses. The Latin roots of the word bicameral, "bi" and "cameral," mean two chambers or rooms.

Members of the Senate are called Senators and members of the House of Representatives are called Representatives. Senators and representatives serving in these two bodies are sometimes referred to as congressmen, or women, and sometimes as legislators because their business is to legislate or make laws. The role of the legislative branch is defined in the United States Constitution.

Each state elects people to represent them in the United States Congress in Washington, DC. The citizens of each state elect two senators to represent them in the Senate. They also elect representatives to represent them in the House of Representatives. The number of representatives each state sends to the House of Representatives is not a specific number like the Senate, but is based on the population of the state. The people, that are elected to represent the state's citizens in the United States Congress, are referred to as the Congressional Delegation.

There are 100 senators in the U.S. Senate. Each is elected to a term, in the Senate, of six years. There are 435 representatives in the U.S. House of Representatives. Each is elected to a term, in the "House," of two years.

The citizens of Kansas elect two people, like every other state, to represent them in the Senate and four people, based on Kansas's current population, to represent them in the House of Representatives.

STATE SEAL

On May 25, 1861, the Kansas State Legislature adopted the state's seal. The symbols on the official state seal of Kansas were specified by the first Kansas legislature in 1861 (the year Kansas was admitted to the union).

The east is represented by a rising sun in the right-hand corner of the seal; to the left of it, commerce is represented by a river and a steamboat; in the foreground, agriculture is represented as the basis of the future prosperity of the state by a settler's cabin and a man plowing with a pair of horses; beyond this is a train of ox-wagons going west; in the background is a herd of buffalo, retreating, pursued by two Indians on horseback; around the top is the motto, "Ad astra per aspera," and beneath a cluster of thirty-four stars. The circle is surrounded by the words, "Great Seal of the State of Kansas January 29, 1861."



The words "Ad astra per aspera," are the the state's motto, meaning "To the stars through difficulties". The 34 stars identify Kansas as the 34th state to enter the Union.

STATE CAPITAL (Topeka)

Topeka is the capital city of the state of Kansas and the county seat of Shawnee County. It is situated along the Kansas River in the central part of Shawnee County, located in northeast Kansas. As of the 2010 census, the city population was 127,473. The city is well known for the landmark United States Supreme Court case *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka*, which overturned *Plessy vs. Ferguson* and declared segregation in public schools on account of race to be unconstitutional. Three US Navy ships have been named USS *Topeka* in honor of the city.



The Kansas State Capitol, also known as the Kansas Statehouse, located in Topeka, is the building housing the executive and legislative branches of Kansas state government.

Topeka has served as the capital city of Kansas since Kansas became a state in 1861. It took 37 years to complete the capitol building at a total cost of about \$3.2 million.

Capitol Sate Capitol Building, erected 1866-1903:

- The east wing cornerstone was laid October 17, 1866. This wing was completed in 1873.
- The west wing was started in 1879 and enclosed by 1880. It is four feet wider and six feet longer than the east wing.
- Work began on the central portion of the building in 1885. Prior to its construction, the east and west wings were connected by a wooden footbridge called the "Cave of Winds."
- Work on the roof and dome of the central portion began in 1889.
- E. Townsend Mix's building design is described as French Renaissance architecture with Corinthian composite details
- Brown Tennessee marble and varieties of Italian marble decorate the House walls.
- The Statehouse has a cage elevator, one of the few remaining hand-operated elevators. It was installed in 1923.
- The marble in the Senate chamber was imported. The bluish marble at the base came from Belgium, while the onyx in the center portion is from Mexico. The narrow white strip at the top is Italian Carrara marble, but the tan marble carved around the windows and door came from Tennessee.
- In the early days of the Statehouse, a stone fence that was built for protection from cows and other animals was deemed "unsightly" and replaced with a five-board fence around the Capitol Square.

STATE MOTTO

“To The Stars through Difficulties”

The state motto of Kansas is *Ad astra per aspera* (To the stars through difficulties). The state motto can also be seen on the Kansas state flag and state seal.

STATE FLAG

The Kansas State Flag was officially adopted by the Kansas State Legislature on May 21, 1927.

The State Flag displays the Great Seal of the State of Kansas centered on a blue field.



Above the seal is the state crest, a sunflower resting on a twisted blue and gold bar. Below the seal in gold block lettering is the name of the state, "KANSAS"

The State Crest consists of a twisted blue and gold bar representing the Louisiana Purchase, from which Kansas was carved. The state flower, the Sunflower is depicted as if "torn from its stalk." Some say that the "open frankness of the Sunflower is indicative of the fearlessness with which Kansas meets her problems and solves them."

The State Seal centered on the flag tells, eloquently, the story of Kansas. The thirty-four stars clustered at the top of the seal identify Kansas as the 34th state to be accepted into the Union. Above the stars is printed the state motto, "Ad Astra per Aspera", Latin for "To the Stars through Difficulties."

The rolling hills around Fort Riley are reflected in the seal. The Indians hunting American Bison, the prairie schooners heading west and the oxen mirror the expanding frontier. The farmer, plowing his field before his cabin represents agricultural assets while the steamboat navigating the Kansas River, delivering supplies to Manhattan and Fort Riley, represents commerce within the state.

STATE NICKNAMES

The Sunflower State

A reminder of the wild sunflowers that grow in profusion across the state, the Sunflower is also the official State Flower and Floral Emblem of Kansas.

The Wheat State

One of the nation's leading agricultural states, Kansas has long been known as "The Wheat State." It was number one in all wheat produced, wheat flour milled, and wheat flour milling capacity in the year 2000.

Midway, U.S.A.

Kansas has been called "Midway, U.S.A." because the geographic center of the Continental United States is located in the state. The location, just over a mile to the north and west of the north-central Kansas town of Lebanon, is marked by a stone monument.

The Central State

For the reasons given above, Kansas has also been referred to as "The Central State."

The Cyclone State

Kansas earned this nickname due to weather conditions conducive to the generation of tornadoes, or cyclones. Kansas gets its share of twisters, most notably memorialized in *The Wizard of Oz*, however, statistics since 1961 show that Oklahoma is more frequently visited by these often devastating wind storms.

The Grasshopper State

Kansas was nicknamed "The Grasshopper State" for the 1874 Grasshopper (Rocky Mountain Locusts) Plague. The lush landscape of Kansas was denuded by swarms of Rocky Mountain Locust that swept into the state in July of 1874. Millions of these "hoppers" swarmed down upon the middle section of the country from the Dakotas south to Texas. Kansans withstood the attacks and came back, in 1875, with the largest corn harvest in the state's history at that point. Perhaps calamity was one of the reasons the "Garden of the West" never caught on.

Garden of the West

Also referred to as "The Garden State," this nickname was given to the Kansas because of the beauty of the landscape and the fertility of the soil. This nickname may have been promoted by northern newspapers in attempts to lure people to the territory to counteract the pro-slavery movement in Kansas that was present in the years leading up to Kansas statehood.

The Squatter State

Kansas was referred to as the "Squatter State" because of the new settlers that flocked into the new territory establishing claims to the land. Early squatters were from the slave state of Missouri. They moved in as quickly as possible to prevent the territory from being populated by people from free states, especially those from New England. Missouri squatters organized the Squatters Claim Association in 1854 in order to secure their claims to the land and prevent emigration from the northern states. Before any arrivals from the northern free states, nearly every man in west Missouri had staked a claim in the new territory of Kansas and become a "Squatter Sovereign" of the state. Almost all desirable land that was open to settlement had been claimed by pro-slavery Missourians.

Bleeding Kansas

This name for Kansas originated in the tense years leading up to the Civil War and as the territory was being considered for statehood. At this time, states were either admitted to the Union as slave states or free states in an effort to maintain a balance of power between the two in the United States Congress. It was well known that when Kansas entered the Union, it would alter the balance of power between the free states and the slave states.

Hundreds of "outsiders" migrated to the territory to fight for pro-slavery or anti-slavery causes. Settlers from Missouri, a slave state to the east of Kansas, crossed the border to attack those who spoke out about slavery. Kansas settlers also launched raids into Missouri. The territory became known as "Bleeding Kansas" for the violent conflicts between anti-slavery and pro-slavery factions. On January 29, 1861, Kansas joined the Union as a free state.

The Battleground of Freedom

During the violent period of conflict before the Civil War, Kansas was sometimes referred to as "The Battleground of Freedom."

The Jayhawk State

This historical nickname, sometimes phrased as "The Jayhawker State," traces its history back to 1856 and the conflicts between Kansas and Missouri during the time when Kansas earned the name "Bleeding Kansas" (see above). When an Irishman, named Pat Devlin, was asked what he was doing participating in raids crossing the border into Missouri, he replied, "You know, in Ireland we have a bird we call the Jayhawk, which makes its living off of other birds. I guess you might say I've been Jayhawking!" Originally, this term may have applied to Kansans and Missourians, alike, who were involved with these cross-border raids, but eventually the term came to refer to Kansans exclusively. Missourians became known as "bushwhackers."

The Jayhawk was later transformed into a mythical creature, a blue and red bird. Kirke Mechem wrote in his booklet, *The Mythical Jayhawk*, that the jayhawk "not only could change its size at will but could make itself invisible, and was immortal."

STATE BIRD (Western Meadowlark)

In 1925, the Kansas Audubon Society conducted a contest in which the school children of the State chose by ballot the bird which they wished to become the State bird. The western meadow lark, the bobwhite quail, the cardinal, and the robin were the closest competitive candidates. Of 121,191 votes cast, the western meadow lark received 48,395 votes, about 10,000 more votes than its nearest competitor. The bobwhite quail and the cardinal finished second and third respectively.

The Kansas Legislature approved the western meadow lark (*Sturnella neglecta*) as the official state bird of Kansas in 1937.



Below, you will find 15 general questions to help review what you have learned. Use the following page(s) for documenting your answers. Older students may choose to write a State Report as well.

Review Questions:

1. List the states and/or bodies of water that border this state.
2. What was the date of statehood?
3. What is the state capital?
4. What is the state motto?
5. Name at least one state nickname.
6. Describe the state flag.
7. What is the state bird?
8. What is the state flower?
9. List at least 5 other state symbols.
10. Describe this state's government.
11. Name the major imports and exports for this state.
12. Describe the weather and climate in this state.
13. List at least 5 famous people from this state.
14. Describe at least 5 significant events in this state's history.
15. What other interesting information have you learned about this state?

Answers to Review Questions:

