

KANSAS

HISTORY

Native nations, Spanish explorers, trail traders and settlers each shaped Kansas. It became a state just before the Civil War began.

The First Peoples

People have lived in Kansas for more than 10,000 years. By the 1500s, the Wichita lived in villages of grass houses. The Kansa, Osage and Pawnee also lived along the rivers. They grew corn, beans and squash and hunted buffalo. Later, the Cheyenne, Arapaho, Kiowa and Comanche rode horses across the western plains to follow the herds.

Explorers and Trails

In 1541, the Spanish explorer Coronado rode into Kansas looking for gold. He found Wichita villages and no gold. The United States bought the land from France in 1803. In 1821, traders opened the Santa Fe Trail across Kansas. The army built Fort Leavenworth in 1827 to guard the trail.

New Nations Arrive

In the 1830s, the United States moved many eastern nations to Kansas. The Shawnee, Delaware, Potawatomi and Kickapoo were among them. They signed **treaties** that traded their old land for land here. After 1854, most of these nations sold their Kansas land in new treaties and moved to what is now Oklahoma. Some stayed, and four tribes have reservations in Kansas today.

Bleeding Kansas

In 1854, Congress made Kansas a **territory**. Its settlers would vote on whether to allow slavery. Some came from the North to make Kansas a **free state**.

Others, many from Missouri, wanted slavery. The two sides fought. In 1856, proslavery men wrecked a hotel and two newspaper offices in Lawrence. Days later, John Brown and his men killed five proslavery settlers. The free-state side won the vote. Kansas became the 34th state on January 29, 1861. In 1863, Confederate raiders burned Lawrence and killed about 150 men and boys.

Wars on the Plains

In the 1860s, railroads and settlers moved onto the buffalo hunting grounds. Cheyenne and other warriors raided railroad crews, stagecoaches and farms. The army burned a Cheyenne and Lakota village in 1867. That fall, in the Medicine Lodge Treaty, the Kiowa, Comanche, Cheyenne and Arapaho agreed to move to reservations in what is now Oklahoma.



Building Kansas

The **Homestead** Act of 1862 gave 160 acres to a settler who farmed the land for five years. Trees were scarce, so many families built houses of sod. Railroads crossed the state. Cowboys drove Texas cattle north to the trains at Abilene and later Dodge City. In 1877, Black families from Kentucky settled the town of Nicodemus. In the 1920s, Wichita began building airplanes. Dust storms ruined many farms in the 1930s. Farmers planted rows of trees to slow the wind.

KANSAS THROUGH TIME



PEOPLE TO KNOW

Dwight D. Eisenhower	General and 34th president.
Charles Curtis	Kaw Nation member. Vice president.
Langston Hughes	Poet who grew up in Lawrence.
Clyde Cessna	Built airplanes in Wichita.
Gordon Parks	Photographer from Fort Scott.

WORDS TO KNOW

treaty	a written agreement between nations
territory	land run by the United States that is not yet a state
free state	a state that did not allow slavery
homestead	land a family owns by farming it