



Early Kansas Settlement – Fact Sheet

- Humans have lived in the Flint Hills of Kansas since at least 8,000 BC
- For most of the Archaic period, people did not transform their natural environment in any fundamental way.
- Some archaic groups transferred from food gatherers to food producers around 3,000 years ago. They also possessed many of the cultural features that accompany semi-sedentary agricultural life: storage facilities, more permanent dwellings, larger settlements, and cemeteries or burial grounds.
- Despite the early advent of farming, late Archaic groups still exercised little control over their natural environment. Wild food resources remained important components of their diet even after the invention of pottery and the development of irrigation. The introduction of agriculture never resulted in the complete abandonment of hunting and foraging, even in the largest of Archaic societies.
- In 1541, Francisco Vasquez de Coronado, the Spanish conquistador, visited Kansas, allegedly turning back near "Coronado Heights" in present-day Lindsborg. Near the Great Bend of the Arkansas River, in a place he called *Quivira*, he met the ancestors of the Wichita people.
- This was the first time that the Plains Indians had seen horses. Later, they acquired horses from the Spanish, and rapidly radically altered their lifestyle and range.
- Following this transformation, the Kansa (sometimes Kaw) and Osage Nation arrived in Kansas in the 17th century.
- By the end of the 18th century, these two tribes were dominant in the eastern part of the future state: the Kansa on the Kansas River to the North and the Osage on the Arkansas River to the South.
- At the same time, the Pawnee were dominant on the plains to the west and north of the Kansa and Osage nations, in regions home to massive herds of bison.
- Apart from brief explorations, neither France nor Spain had any settlement or military or other activity in Kansas.
- In 1763, following the Seven Years War in which Great Britain defeated France, Spain acquired the French claims west of the Mississippi River. It returned this territory to France in 1803, keeping title to about 7,500 square miles (19,000 km²).
- In the Louisiana Purchase of 1803, the United States (US) acquired all of the French claims west of the Mississippi River; the area of Kansas was unorganized territory.
- The Lewis and Clark Expedition left St. Louis on a mission to explore the Louisiana Purchase all the way to the Pacific Ocean. In 1804, Lewis and Clark camped for three days at the confluence of the Kansas and Missouri rivers in present-day Kansas City, Kansas (today recognized at the Kaw Point Riverfront Park). They met French fur traders and mapped the area.
- In 1806, Zebulon Pike passed through Kansas and labeled it "the Great American Desert" on his maps. This view of Kansas would help form U.S. policy for the next 40 years,

prompting the government to set it aside as land reserved for Native American resettlement.

- Explorer Zebulon Pike first coined the name the Flint Hills in 1806 when he entered into his journal, "passed very ruff flint hills".
- After a brief period as part of Missouri Territory, Kansas returned to unorganized status in 1821.
- In 1821, the Santa Fe Trail was opened across Kansas as country's transportation route to the Southwest, connecting Missouri with the well-established Santa Fe, New Mexico. Because of the burgeoning trade, the United States Army set up posts throughout the area. In 1827 Fort Leavenworth, was built to protect travelers.
- A section of the Santa Fe Trail through Kansas was used by emigrants on the Oregon Trail, which opened in 1841. The westward trails served as vital commercial and military highways until the railroad took over this role in the 1860s. To travelers en route to Utah, California, or Oregon, Kansas was an essential way stop and outfitting location
- Beginning in the 1820s, the area that would become Kansas was set aside as Indian territory by the U.S. government, and was closed to settlement by whites.
- The government resettled to Indian Territory (now part of Oklahoma) those Native American tribes based in eastern Kansas, principally the Kansa and Osage, opening land to move eastern tribes into the area. By treaty dated June 3, 1825, 20 million acres (81000 km²) of land was ceded by the Kansa Nation to the United States, and the Kansa tribe was limited to a specific reservation in northeast Kansas. In the same month, the Osage Nation was limited to a reservation in southeast Kansas.
- Despite the extensive plans that were made to settle Native Americans in Kansas, by 1850 white Americans were illegally squatting on their land and clamoring for the entire area to be opened for settlement.
- Presaging events that were soon to come, several U.S. Army forts, including Fort Riley, were soon established deep in Indian Territory to guard travelers on the various Western trails.
- Congress began the process of creating Kansas Territory in 1852. Southern Senators stalled the progression of the bill in the Senate, while the implications on slavery and the Missouri Compromise were debated. Heated debate over the bill would continue for a year, before eventually resulting in the Kansas-Nebraska Act, which became law on May 30, 1854, establishing the Nebraska Territory and Kansas Territory.
- Meanwhile, by the summer of 1853, it was clear that eastern Kansas would soon be opened to American settlers. Nearly all the tribes in the eastern part of the Territory ceded the greater part of their lands prior to the passage of the Kansas territorial act in 1854, and were eventually moved south to the future state of Oklahoma.
- The final step in Americanizing the Indians was taking land from tribal control and assigning it to individual Indian households, to buy and sell as European Americans would. For example, in 1854, the Chippewa inhabited 8,320 acres in Franklin County, but in 1859 the tract was transferred to individual Chippewa families.
- The Great Seal of the State of Kansas was established by the legislature on May 25, 1861. The design was submitted by Senator John James Ingalls. He also proposed the state motto, "Ad astra per aspera", which means "to the stars through difficulty".

- Kansas became the 34th state admitted to the Union on January 29, 1861.
- The 1860s saw several important developments in the history of Kansas, including participation in the Civil War, the beginning of the cattle drives, the roots of Prohibition in Kansas (which would fully take hold in the 1880s), and the start of the Indian Wars on the western plains.
- Early settlers discovered that Kansas was not the "Great American Desert," but they also found that the very harsh climate—with tornadoes, blizzards, drought, hail, floods and grasshoppers—made for the high risk of a ruined crop.
- Many early settlers were financially ruined, and especially in the early 1890s. In the 20th century, crop insurance, new conservation techniques, and large-scale federal aid have lowered the risk.
- Immigrants, especially Germans and their children, comprised the largest element of settlers after 1860; they were attracted by the good soil, low priced lands from the railroad companies, and the chance to homestead 160 acres and receive title to the land at no cost from the federal government.
- On the Great Plains very few single men attempted to operate a farm or ranch; farmers clearly understood the need for a hard-working wife, and numerous children, to handle the many chores, including child-rearing, feeding and clothing the family, managing the housework, and feeding the hired hands.
- Although the eastern image of farm life on the prairies emphasizes the isolation of the lonely farmer and farm life, in reality rural folk created a rich social life for themselves. They often sponsored activities that combined work, food, and entertainment such as barn raisings, corn huskings, quilting bees, Grange meeting, church activities, and school functions.