

# This Day in History... January 29, 1861

## Kansas Becomes 34th State

On January 29, 1861, Kansas was admitted to the Union as America was on the brink of Civil War.

Four main tribes lived in eastern Kansas before European settlers arrived – the Kansa, Osage, Pawnee, and Wichita. These tribes hunted buffalo and planted corn, beans, and squash. After acquiring horses in the early 1600s, the Arapaho, Cheyenne, Comanche, Kiowa, and other tribes moved into the central plains to hunt buffalo.

Spanish explorer Francisco Vásquez de Coronado led the first Europeans into the area in 1541. Coronado's expedition was looking for a land called Quivira, where a Native American guide told him he would find gold. No gold was found, and the Spanish left without creating a settlement. By the early 1600s, France had claimed much of North America, including Kansas. During the early 1700s, French fur trappers began to settle in what is now the northeastern corner of Kansas.

In 1803, France sold the vast Louisiana Territory to the United States, including most of Kansas. The southwestern corner of present-day Kansas was claimed by Spain. This land would later become part of Mexico, and then Texas, before being made part of Kansas.

Kansas was governed as part of the District of Louisiana, the Louisiana Territory, and the Missouri Territory. Many Native Americans from the East were resettled in Kansas for a time. These natives included the Chippewa, Delaware, Fox, Iowa, Kickapoo, Ottawa, Potawatomi, Sauk, Shawnee, and Wyandot, and those who already lived in the area. But soon, Americans began to settle the area. Some came as missionaries, while others decided to stay while traveling the Santa Fe Trail. In 1827, Colonel Henry Leavenworth opened the first US outpost, Fort Leavenworth. By 1850, there was a great deal of pressure to open Kansas for white settlement. The federal government forced the Native Americans to cede most of their land. In 1854, Kansas was declared open for settlement. The natives were sent to reservations in Oklahoma, but some decided to stay and fight.

However, none of these groups were successful for long.

During the 1850s, Kansas became the center of the America's fight over slavery, an issue which had divided the nation. In Congress, slavery created a deep rift between the North and South. This was particularly true over the fate of new US territories – there

was a great struggle to see whether the practice of slavery would be allowed in the new territories or not. Congress sought to avoid the issue with the Kansas-Nebraska Act, which essentially let the people who settled these territories decide whether slavery would be legal or not.

Kansas became a US territory on May 30, 1854. US President Franklin Pierce appointed Andrew H. Reeder the territorial governor. Soon, settlers from the North and South were pouring into Kansas. Groups looking to influence the decision over slavery aided these people in an attempt to gain a majority. The election of 1855 was marred by widespread voter fraud, intimidation, and violence. Many



*Stamp pictures the state flower, the sunflower, and a pioneer family with a covered wagon and stockade.*



*Stamp picturing the western meadowlark and sunflower*



*Stamp issued for the 100th anniversary of the Kansas Territory.*



*The flag includes the state motto, which translates to: "To the Stars through Difficulties."*

# This Day in History... January 29, 1861 continued

residents from the slave state of Missouri crossed the border into Kansas and voted. Pro-slavery candidates did well in the election. Soon after, violence broke out in Kansas, particularly near the border with Missouri. The fighting became so intense that newspapers began to call the territory "Bleeding Kansas." Pro-slavery officials wrote a constitution favoring slavery, but Congress refused to admit Kansas to the Union as a slave state. Finally, politicians opposed to slavery were able to gain control of the legislature.



*Stamp pictures a combine harvester and grain elevator.*



*37¢ Greetings from Kansas Stamp*

Kansas achieved statehood on January 29, 1861. At that time, several Southern states had already seceded from the Union. Within a few weeks, the Civil War erupted. Kansas was soon hit with a new wave of violence. Confederate raiders burned most of the town of Lawrence, Kansas, and massacred around 150 people. During the war, Kansas sent more men to the Union, in proportion to its total population, than any other state. When the war ended in 1865, thousands of Union veterans and newly freed slaves moved to Kansas.

Railroads were completed from the East to Kansas during the 1860s and '70s. These railroads brought settlers to Kansas and transported farm goods to the populated areas in the East. Cattle farmers from Texas and other areas began transporting their cattle to Kansas railroad towns. This created the growth of such famous cattle towns as Dodge City, Ellsworth, Newton, and Wichita. These towns and their cowboys have become a part of America's folklore and featured in countless books and movies. By the mid-1880s, the cattle drives died down. The railroads reached Texas, and farmers had fenced in the land with barbed wire.



*Stamp picturing the classical and modern ways Kansas harnesses wind power.*



*This Flags of Our Nation stamp pictures the Kansas flag waving and farm buildings.*

In the 1870s, Mennonites from Russia introduced a new type of wheat which flourished in Kansas. Farmers in much of the state began planting this wheat, producing a bountiful harvest. Flour mills were built to process the wheat into flour. Kansas became known as the Breadbasket of America.

Mining became an important economic activity in Kansas during the early 1900s. Large deposits of coal, lead, and zinc were discovered in the southeast. Oil was discovered in Kansas in 1895, but the industry didn't develop until after the turn of the century. The discovery that helium could easily be removed from natural gas increased the profitability of mining in Kansas.

The Great Depression struck a terrible blow in Kansas. Banks shut down and factories closed. The state suffered from a severe drought and the precious topsoil needed for farming blew away in great clouds of dust. The clouds of dust were so large, people could not eat or drink without feeling grit between their teeth. This area of the Great Plains became known as the Dust Bowl.

Soil conservation techniques helped farmers prevent the soil from being blown away. World War II (1939-45) did a great deal to stimulate the economy – especially the aviation industry. During the 1950s, a drought nearly as severe as that in the 1930s struck Kansas. Irrigation helped to alleviate the problem during the 1960s. Today, Kansas remains the leading producer of wheat and has a large total agricultural output.



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