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## **Fun Facts** about **the Roads, Highways & Byways of Kansas**





This booklet is designed to help you see the miles of Kansas scenic byways with new eyes.

Included are photos and brief descriptions of common sights. It is a booklet that young and old will enjoy whether you are a visitor to the state or a life-long Kansan.

There are many available identification booklets about the birds and wildlife in this region. However, this booklet will feature fun facts about the birds and wildlife that you see often on these byway miles.

Other booklets in this series are on: **farms and ranches; grasses, trees, wildflowers and shrubs; weather; architecture; rocks, fossils and the landscape** of Kansas; and the **roads** themselves. Each booklet has a map of the scenic byways of Kansas and a game for kids.

We hope that this little booklet will put a smile on your face as you drive around our scenic byways.

## Climb on board! Here we go!

There are some 135,000 miles of roads and highways in Kansas, *the fourth largest number of public roads in a state in the country!* You will find everything from sleek interstate highways to beautiful boulevards to small gravel roads. Kansas roads lead to urban centers, to small towns and to interesting historic and natural sites along the scenic byways. Every way you turn, Kansas' roads lead you to a fun adventure!



## How did it all get started?

If you traveled into Kansas in the early 1800s, you would have traveled on paths made by animals and by Native Americans who lived throughout the state. These were the first roads in the state and the ones followed by explorers, trappers, and early settlers.

## Exploring Kansas!

In 1804, Lewis and Clark paved the way for opening Kansas and the rest of the west. They traveled from what is now Wyandotte County, north through areas that are now Leavenworth, Atchison and White Cloud on their journey to the Pacific. At the Frontier Military Museum at Fort Leavenworth, located on the *Frontier Military Scenic Byway*, you will see the history of their journey through the state. At Atchison, on the *Glacial Hills Scenic Byway*, you can celebrate their journey by walking across the Fourth



of July 1804 Creek footbridge, built to honor these two explorers.

## You're in a rut!

Just west of Council Grove, near the *Flint Hills National Scenic Byway*, you can see the **actual ruts from wagons that crossed the prairie** on the Santa Fe Trail.

This trail was a commercial route, established in 1821, that ran from Missouri to Santa Fe, Mexico, generally along what is now US 56. Silver was plentiful in Santa Fe, and smart merchants

knew that trade there would be profitable. As you look at these ruts, imagine riding on one of the wagons as it bumped along the prairie, loaded with products and pulled by huge oxen.

## Heading to Oregon!

If you were a settler wanting to go to Oregon or the west coast, you would have taken the Oregon Trail, another important trail through Kansas. At a pace of 10 miles a day, the 2,000-mile trek might have taken you as long as six months to make.

If you'd like to follow the Santa Fe or Oregon Trails, there are some 370 signs and markers throughout Johnson County and nearby areas on the *Frontier Military Scenic Byway*.



## Are we there yet?

If you were one of those hot travelers, you would be ready for a nice cool drink and a good meal! Many travelers found these at the Mahaffie Stagecoach Stop in Olathe, which sits not far from the *Frontier*

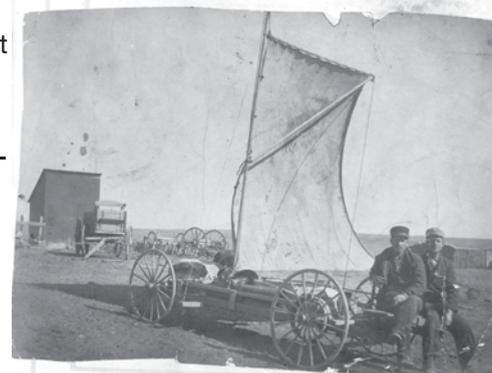


The Mahaffie Stagecoach Stop and Farm Historic Site is the only stagecoach stop on the Santa Fe Trail still open to the public.

stopped at the Sage Inn in Dover, on the *Native Stone Scenic Byway*. The inn was built of native limestone in 1878 at a spot on the Mission Creek where wagons could easily cross.

## What a way to go!

Believe it or not, some early travelers crossed the plains of Kansas in "wind wagons"--wagons outfitted with sails. While not much more than a fanciful curiosity, they reportedly traveled at up to 40 miles per hour—a very fast pace for those times, when you consider that ox-drawn wagons traveled at little more than *one mile an hour*.



*Military Scenic Byway*. In its welcoming environment you could prepare yourself for the three-month trek along the Santa Fe Trail.

If you were traveling from the Oregon Trail south to the Santa Fe Trail, you might have



## How did the bicycle help the roads?

During the mid to late 1800s, when Kansas was being settled, there was nothing but rough, muddy roads in the state. But by 1890, the popularity of a new contraption called a bicycle started people thinking about the need for better roads.

## Here comes the horseless carriage!

By 1900, the "horseless carriage" had come to Kansas and there were 220 of them in the state.

**The first roads convention in the West was held in Topeka that year and drew 10,000 visitors,** including the national press. It ended with the organization of the Kansas Good Roads Association, whose slogan was "Lifting Our People Out of the Mud."

## A bumpy ride!

Some early streets and roads in Kansas were made of brick. Brick making was a flourishing business in the state and brick roads were an economical way to pave.

Along the *Flint Hills National Scenic Byway*, you can bounce your way down brick streets in Cottonwood Falls; along the *Frontier Military Scenic Byway*, you can bounce across them in Fort Scott.



## Why are the roads so straight in Kansas?

You'll notice as you ride across Kansas that the roads are generally laid out in nice, even squares on the map. Early road planners intended for them to be like that. In the eastern part of the U.S., curvy roads were built around the many mountains and rivers. But in Kansas, with few hills or mountains to go around, it was practical to lay the roads out on a grid. *It sure makes it easy for modern-day drivers!*

## What important highways went through Kansas?

US 40, designated as such in 1926, was a well-traveled highway that stretched from Atlantic City, New Jersey, to San Francisco, and ran right through Kansas. I-70 has replaced much of it today, but parts of it remain.

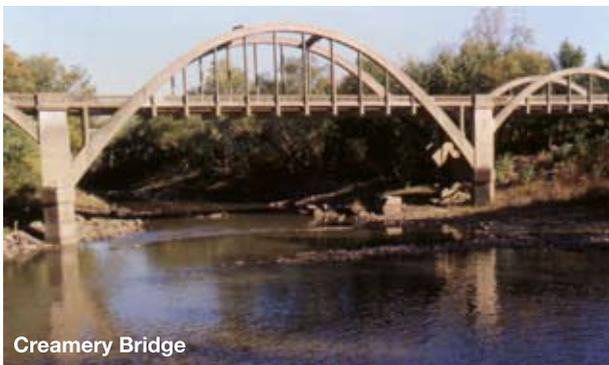
Travel along US 40 as it runs through the heart of Wilson, along the *Post Rock Scenic Byway*, and enjoy a meal at the historic Midland Hotel, which has been welcoming hungry guests since 1899.

## Get your kicks on Route 66!

Historic Route 66 runs for 13 miles through the southeastern corner of Kansas. From the 1920s to the 1960s, it was the main road between Chicago and Los Angeles, passing through many small towns and rural areas as it went. You can see the history of Route 66 in Kansas at the Baxter Springs Historical Museum, on the *Frontier Military Scenic Byway*. Don't miss beautiful **Rainbow Bridge** on Route 66 just northwest of Baxter Springs.

## Take a tour of Kansas bridges!

Start with the *Centennial Bridge* at Leavenworth near the beginning of the *Glacial Hills Scenic Byway*. This bridge was built in 1955 one year after Leavenworth celebrated its centennial as the first incorporated city in Kansas. It is the only "Tied Through Arch" bridge in Kansas.



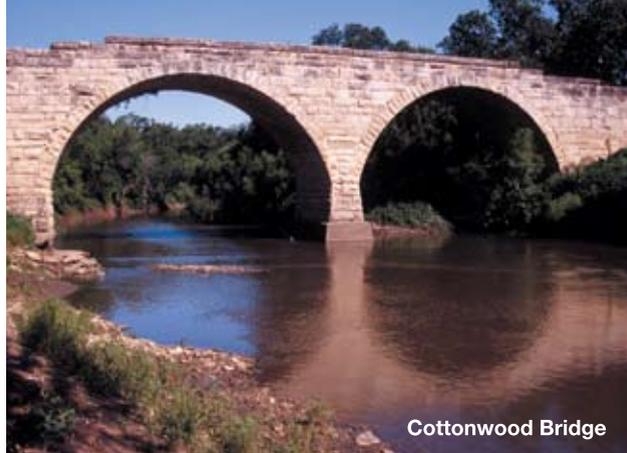
Creamery Bridge

## On to Osawatomie...

Osawatomie, near the *Frontier Military Scenic Byway*, is a great place for seeing old bridges, with **four bridges on the National Register of Historic Places.**

The *Asylum Bridge*, built in 1905, is a steel bridge that crosses the Marais des Cygnes River and is no longer in use. *Carey's Ford Bridge*, built around 1900, also crosses the Marais des Cygnes and is in use. The 1930 *Creamery Bridge*, across the Marais des Cygnes, and the *Pottawatomie Creek Bridge*, built around that same time, are both arched bridges that are still in use.

Pottawatomie Bridge



Cottonwood Bridge

## A trail of two bridges

In Cottonwood Falls, on the *Flint Hills National Scenic Byway*, you will find two bridges of interest -- the ***Cottonwood Bridge***, a concrete and stone bridge built in 1914 across the Cottonwood River, and right down the road the ***Fox Creek Bridge***, a native limestone single arch bridge built in 1893.

Before long you will be able to cross these two bridges as you walk the new Community Connection Trail that will link Cottonwood Falls, Strong City and the Tallgrass Prairie National Preserve.



Fox Creek Bridge

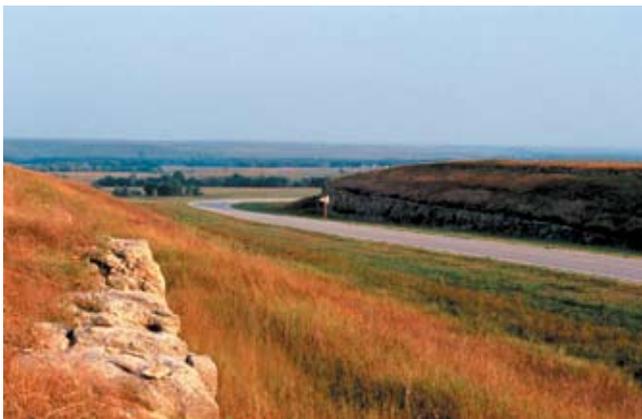
## Let's build a road!

Designing and building a road is a big task and may take years. Engineers must consider the type, amount, and speed of traffic -- now and in the future -- and how the road will affect the houses and buildings nearby.

Once the project is started, the roadways are cleared of trees, boulders and, perhaps even buildings that are in the way. The ground is leveled, packed down and then covered with several layers of roadway materials.

**Asphalt or concrete?** The top layer can either be asphalt, concrete, gravel or dirt. Gravel or dirt surfaces are usually used only on roads with low traffic volumes. Asphalt is a gravel and petroleum mixture, and concrete is a mixture of cement, sand, and gravel. Both have their advantages and disadvantages.

**Is that road really flat?** Though roads look flat, roads are built with a "crown" -- a high point in the middle to allow rain to run off in both directions. On curves, roads are also sloped to one side so that cars have an easier time staying on the road. If you look closely you will see that the surface of the road has a rough texture so that car tires will have better traction.



**Don't forget the shoulders!** Once the road is constructed, the shoulders -- the edges of the roads -- must be built, either with gravel or paving. Shoulders are important to make it less likely that a car will run off the road, for making car repairs, and as a bypass route in case of trouble on the road. The road builders also plant native grasses and beautiful wildflowers on the side slopes and the ditches to reduce erosion and beautify the roadway.

**Stay on your side!** In the U.S., vehicles drive on the right side of the road. To make staying in your lane easier, the roads are marked with lines down the middle.

Special line-marking machines are used to mark the center line and passing lines. You can pass when the passing line is dashed, but if the line is solid, it is not safe to pass. These lines are painted with a highly reflective paint made with glass beads, so drivers can see the lines at night.

**Signs show the way!** Putting up road signs is one of the last steps in building a road. Signage and rules of the road are uniform throughout the country so that drivers know what to expect no matter where they go. Roads that travel generally east and west have even numbers and roads that travel north and south have odd numbers. It is interesting that one Kansas Highway, K-4, is on three of Kansas's byways: Native Stone Scenic Byway, Smoky Valley Scenic Byway and Wetlands and Wildlife National Scenic Byway.



## Kansas -- *first with Interstates!*

Kansas was the first state in the country to open an interstate highway. President Eisenhower signed the Federal Aid Highway Act in 1956 and started the effort to build a nationwide system of highways. The first link in the system opened in Kansas in that year. It was a portion of Interstate 70, west of Topeka, that had been in the planning stages before the new program began, but was finished with federal interstate funding.

The national system, called the Dwight D. Eisenhower National System of Interstate and Defense Highways, today stretches some 46,000 miles throughout the country.



## Let's take a trip along *Kansas Scenic Byways!*

Kansas Scenic Byways are special roads that offer you fun, interesting adventures as you drive across Kansas. From east to west and north to south, there are byways where you can enjoy the real Kansas -- the scenic beauty, the history, the nature, the culture -- *all waiting for you just outside your car door.*

## Where can I stand and see four states?

On a hilltop in White Cloud, along the *Glacial Hills Scenic Byway*, you can see four states: Kansas, Nebraska, Iowa, and Missouri. See if you can tell where they are!

## March where Frontier Soldiers did!

At historic Fort Scott on the *Frontier Military Scenic Byway*, you can march over the same parade ground that frontier soldiers and their horses did some 150 years ago. You can also see the buildings where they worked and lived.



## Can we hike the Flint Hills?

**Yes, you can.** At the Tallgrass Prairie National Preserve you can get out of your car and hike the beautiful prairie and see the bluestem grasses and wildflowers that flourish along the *Flint Hills National Scenic Byway*.

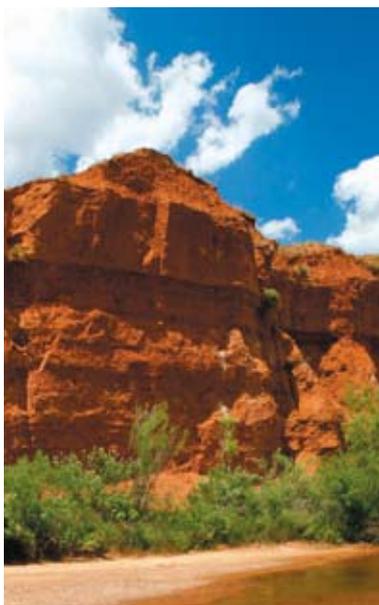


## Where do stone fences line the highways?

Take a drive down the *Native Stone Scenic Byway* and you will see miles of stone fences made from the native limestone found in that area.

## Where is the countryside red?

Driving along the *Gypsum Hills Scenic Byway*, you will be amazed at the red hills on both sides of your car. Notice how this byway goes up, over, through, and around the hills. Take a moment to enjoy the fascinating views from one of the overlooks along the road.



## How long have those fences been here?

Many of the limestone post fences that you see as you drive along the *Post Rock Scenic Byway* were built by the early settlers and are still around today. Count how many you see! And, check out Kill Creek Bridge on the way!



## What is a good drive to take at Christmas?

Take off for WaKeeney, on the *Smoky Valley Scenic Byway*. It is known as "The Christmas City of the High Plains"

and has a display during the holidays that features a 40-foot handmade tree and more than 6,000 lights.



A fun game for the kids!

# THE SIGN GAME

Have you seen these signs?



1. Stop sign



4. Railroad crossing



2. Yield sign



5. Deer crossing



3. S-curve in the road sign



6. No U-turn

# They're building highways!

Did you see this equipment?

1. Road Grader



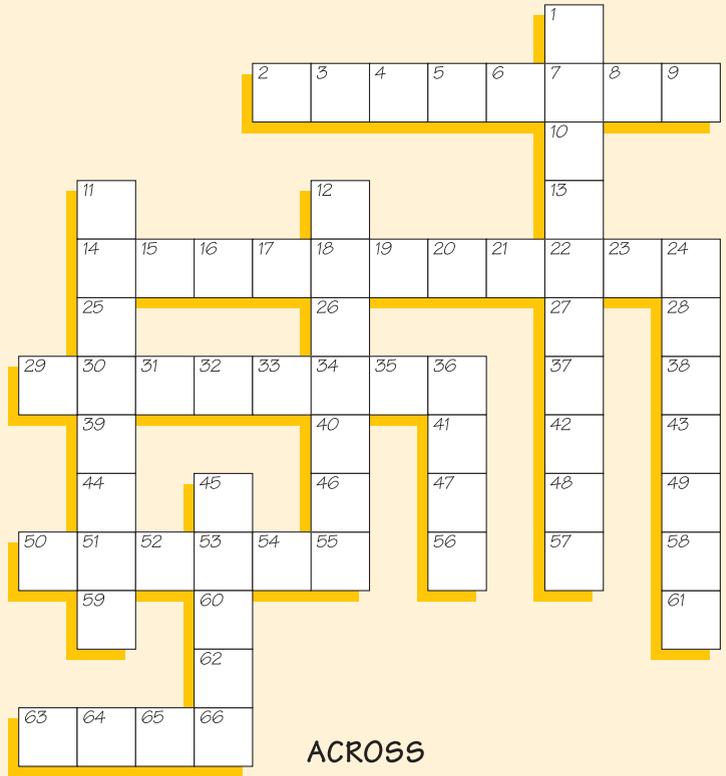
2. Backhoe



3. Roller



# "Crossroads" Puzzle



## ACROSS

2. Two-wheeled vehicles with pedals  
 14. Eisenhower's roads  
 29. Edge of the road  
 50. Fun roads to travel in Kansas  
 63. Stop \_\_\_\_\_

## DOWN

1. A Kansas National Scenic Byway  
 11. Major roads  
 12. They go across rivers  
 24. \_\_\_\_\_ Trail  
 36. The grooves left in the earth by wagons  
 45. Pioneers used it to travel

ANSWERS  
 Across:  
 2. Bicycles  
 14. Interstates  
 29. Shoulder  
 50. Byways  
 63. Sign  
 Down:  
 1. Flint Hills  
 11. Highways  
 12. Bridges  
 36. Ruts  
 45. Wagon

# SCENIC BYWAYS Etiquette

**K**ansas scenic byways are to be enjoyed by everyone.

Please help us preserve this beautiful land by not picking the flowers and native grasses, and by not straying onto private land.

Of course, please do not litter.

This magnificent scenic land is home to many Kansas residents who welcome you to their communities, shops, and restaurants.

Please respect their privacy by not photographing cowboys or their families.

Stay out of the way of cattle drives.

Do not climb fences or gates.

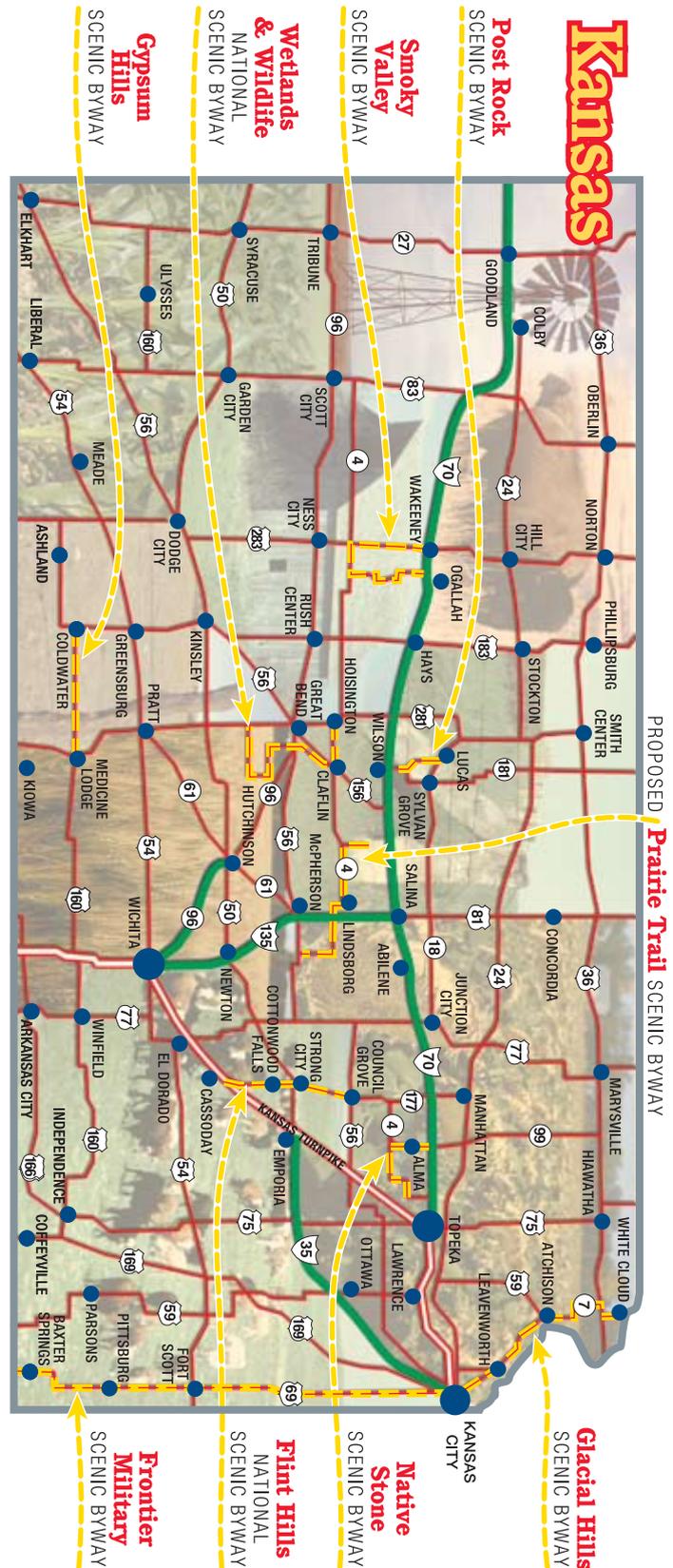
And please, help keep everyone safe

by obeying posted speed limits.

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**Enjoy Kansas Scenic Byways!**



PROPOSED **Prairie Trail** SCENIC BYWAY