Welcome to the Kansas State Capitol

Kansas became a state on January 29, 1861. On February 22 at Independence Hall in Philadelphia, President-elect Abraham Lincoln raised the United States flag bearing a 34th star, honoring Kansas as the newest member of the United States.

Topeka had been designated the temporary capital of Kansas by the Wyandotte Constitutional Convention with the idea that the home of the permanent state capital would be put to a vote of the people. Cyrus K. Holiday and other members of the Topeka Town Association worked hard to convince the people of Kansas that Topeka was the perfect capital city. The most persuasive argument came in the form of a donation of 20 acres of land upon which the Capitol could be built. Topeka easily won the election becoming the permanent state capital.

The founders undertook what many thought was an impossible task—to create a grand classical structure on the frontier that would symbolize their pride in Kansas’ tumultuous path to statehood and their grand hopes for the future. The undertaking was immense and impressive. Under construction for more than 37 years from 1866 to 1903, the statehouse was the place for the daily business of state government.

While ongoing work was completed over time to accommodate the business functions of the growing state, much of this work changed the original appearance of the building. By the end of the 20th century, portions of the statehouse were in poor condition. A multiyear restoration project began in 1999 to return the Capitol to its original grandeur and preserve it for the next century. On January 29, 2014, the state dedicated the newly restored Capitol.

Credits

All images and photographs are the property of the Kansas Historical Society unless otherwise noted below. For more information on the collections of the Kansas Historical Society visit kshs.org, the Kansas Museum of History, State Archives, or one of the 16 State Historic Sites.

- 1904 G. B. Steen glass negatives, courtesy Joe and Frances Swalwell
- Cedar Bluffs Reservoir; Cheyenne Bottoms Wildlife area; Flint Hills; Gypsum Hills; Konza prairie with buffalo; Northeast Kansas, courtesy Kansas Department of Wildlife, Parks, and Tourism
  (For more information, visit kdwpt.state.ks.us)
- Construction workers, 2009, Trevar Scott Photography, JE Dunn
- Czech festival, Wilson, Hays Daily News, Steven Hausler photographer
- Bob Dole, Mike Hutmacher photographer, Wichita Eagle
- Dwight D. Eisenhower, Library of Congress
- Flint Hills rodeo, Strong City, Doug Stremel photographer
- Kansas 34-star flag and Kansas banner, replica created by Vicki Seeger
- Kansas map sponsored by the Kansas Association of Counties
- Kansas Semi-Centennial poster and photographs, C.W. Parker Archives/
  Collection of Barbara Fahs Charles
  (For more information visit the C. W. Parker Carousel Museum in Leavenworth,
  firstcitymuseums.org/carousel_main.html.)
- Kansas-Nebraska Act, 1854, National Archives
- Jack Kilby, photo courtesy Texas Instruments
- Mexican fiesta, Garden City, Garden City Telegram, Becky Malewtz
  photographer
- Missouri River overlook, Harland Schuster photographer
- Monument Rocks, Doug Stremel photographer
- Nicodemus Buffalo Soldiers, Lawrence Journal World
- Party of Patches, Judge, 1891
- Svensk Hyllningsfest, Lindsborg, Erica Heline photographer
- Veterans Day parade, Blue Rapids, Tom Parker photographer
Fourth Floor

House and Senate galleries
On the fourth floor in the east wing and the west wing are galleries that provide public viewing areas. The public can view the Senate in session from the east wing gallery. A similar view of the House of Representatives in session can be seen in the west wing gallery. The restoration included cleaning and retouching wall art and improving accessibility in both galleries.

Fifth Floor

Dome
Controversial dome murals created by Jerome Fedeli in 1898s were replaced in 1902 with four allegorical murals by Abner Crossman of Chicago. His firm also designed the semi-relief statues and state seals located below the paintings. As part of the restoration, a replica was created of the original 1897 gas and electric chandelier, which had been donated in 1942 to the World War II scrap metal drive.

Visitor Center
The Kansas State Capitol Visitor Center is the gateway to the Capitol. Located to the north side on ground level, the visitor center includes the Capitol Store, the tour desk, a classroom and auditorium, as well as exhibits. For hours of operations please refer to kansascapitol.org.
Visitor Center – Ground Level

Lobby
The State of Kansas has 105 counties that are depicted in stone on the lobby floor. The map is placed to accurately reflect the correct cardinal directions. Images on the wall of the lobby are reproduced from early 20th century postcards. The gray stone found in the lobby is Tuxedo Gray limestone quarried in Kansas.

Auditorium
Kansas today has a population of nearly 2.9 million people from many different origins. Immigrants in the 19th and 20th centuries brought their Old World traditions that continue in Kansas today. The photographs in the auditorium reflect the diversity of the state’s heritage.

Senate
The Senate Chamber on the third floor of the east wing serves 40 senators who are elected every four years. When the east wing stood alone, the Senate and House shared the space on the third floor. The chamber was remodeled once the House moved to the west wing. It opened in 1886 featuring different types of marble and massive hand-cast columns with ornate circular grills that once encouraged air circulation. The restoration included repairing moldings, polishing copper and brass details, and returning the original native Kansas wild cherry wood desks to their original place in the semicircle.

Old Supreme Court
The former Kansas Supreme Court chamber is located on the third floor of the south wing. The chamber was completed in 1896. From this chamber the court decided many significant cases including the 1925 ruling that made Kansas the first state to outlaw the Ku Klux Klan. In 1978 the Kansas Supreme Court moved to the Kansas Judicial Center located to the south of the Capitol. The restoration honors the chamber’s original appearance with stenciling, bench, and railings.
**Third Floor**

**House of Representatives**
The House of Representatives is comprised of 125 members elected every two years. Representative Hall was first used during the 1881 session. Located on the third floor in the west wing, the hall features marble, gold leaf, and pink columns made from a faux marble process. Allegorical murals were added on the ceiling, along with the names of 10 prominent figures from Kansas Territory. The restoration included repairing moldings and carvings and replacing large voting boards from the late 20th century with electronic versions, which disappear when not in use.

---

**Notable Kansans Hall**
For the state's sesquicentennial in 2011 a panel of historians selected 25 Kansans who made a significant impact on the state and the nation. Many other notable Kansans have contributed their talents and vision to the world.

---

**Construction Hall**
Life was challenging when Kansas became a state. A serious drought took its toll and the young state was in financial trouble. Yet the people of Kansas were inspired to build a state capitol that would rival the United States Capitol in Washington, D. C. Tools used by the original stonemasons can be found in this area, as can historic items found during the more recent restoration.

---

**Dining Room**
Kansas is a land of contrasts. The state is environmentally diverse with wooded areas and rolling hills in the east and short grass prairies in the west. Current photographs depicting the Kansas landscape can be found in this area.
Second Floor

Curry Murals
John Steuart Curry, who was born on a farm in Dunavant, created the murals in the east and west wings on the second floor. Curry is considered one of the great painters of American regionalism. *Tragic Prelude*, in the east wing is considered among the best of public art. The mural is rich in symbolism and features abolitionist John Brown amid a tornado and prairie fires to represent the gathering storms of war during Kansas Territory, leading to the Civil War. Curry also created *Kansas Pastoral* in the west wing, and planned for eight panels in the rotunda to depict the life of the homesteader. The relationship between Curry and the murals committee soured and the artist left the murals unsigned; the state refused him compensation. Lumen Martin Winter, who grew up on a ranch near Larned, was selected to complete the artwork on the second floor.

Secretary of State's Ceremonial Office
In 1896 offices were completed for the statewide elected officials. Located on second floor, these offices for the governor, secretary of state, state treasurer, and attorney general featured fireplaces, hand-carved oak details, oak floors, and washbasins. Most of the washbasins were removed by 1935. The restoration honored the original appearance of the secretary of state's office, located in the northeast corner of the wing. In this space, used today as a ceremonial office, the fireplace, oak details, and washbasin can be seen. The Kansas Secretary of State's office was moved to Memorial Hall in 2000.

Northeast Room
The Capitol dome reaches 306 feet in the air offering magnificent views of Topeka. To reach the top of the dome visitors must climb 296 steps from fifth floor to the cupola. In 1904, shortly after the dome was completed, G. B. Steen of Topeka documented the views from the dome. Steen’s photographs are displayed with current views from the same perspective. The large dome window was removed during the restoration.

Northwest Room
Many well-known businesses began in Kansas including Cessna, Coleman, Koch, Lear, and Pizza Hut. The C. W. Parker Amusement Company of Abilene and Leavenworth was a well-known maker of carnival rides that were sold throughout the country. In 1904 it brought a carnival to the Capitol grounds. The images depicted here show the promotion of the Capitol carnival and actual photographs from the event.

Secretary of State's Ceremonial Office
In 1896 offices were completed for the statewide elected officials. Located on second floor, these offices for the governor, secretary of state, state treasurer, and attorney general featured fireplaces, hand-carved oak details, oak floors, and washbasins. Most of the washbasins were removed by 1935. The restoration honored the original appearance of the secretary of state's office, located in the northeast corner of the wing. In this space, used today as a ceremonial office, the fireplace, oak details, and washbasin can be seen. The Kansas Secretary of State's office was moved to Memorial Hall in 2000.
First Floor

Overmyer Murals
An illustrator, artist, and muralist, David H. Overmyer of Topeka gained recognition with his murals at Kansas State University and Topeka High School. His Capitol murals picture significant events in Kansas history.

Interior Dome View
The center of the first floor rotunda offers perhaps the most dramatic view of the interior dome. The interior dome is composed of an inner and outer section that extends to the ninth floor. Ornate brass columns on the sixth floor provide support for the dome.

Cage Elevator
Unique by today's standards, the cage elevator was installed in 1923. This type of hand operated passenger elevator was once common in public buildings. Visitors can ride the elevator from first to fifth floor.

Hall of Native Peoples
The Wichita, Kansa, Osage, Pawnee, and Plains Apache descended from the earliest peoples who once lived on this land we call Kansas. As the American population grew eastern tribes were displaced to reservations in Kansas. The Indians were once again moved (this time to present-day Oklahoma) as Kansas Territory was open for settlement. Today Kansas is home to the Iowa, Kickapoo, Potawatomi, and Sac & Fox nations.

Rotunda Rooms
The center of the rotunda rooms lies directly under the Capitol dome. The exhibits in this area focus on the creation of state government and the role of each branch of government.

Rotunda, North Room – All Eyes on Kansas
When Kansas Territory was formed the issue of slavery threatened to tear the nation apart. Kansas settlers were given the right to decide whether or not to allow slavery in Kansas. At times, violence erupted over the issue of slavery and the territory became known as Bleeding Kansas. The whole nation watched the struggles in Kansas as a prelude to the Civil War.
Rotunda, Center Room – We the People
In order to become a state Kansas had to write a state constitution, which the United States Congress had to accept. The chaos in Kansas Territory politics led to election fraud and 10 territorial governors in seven years. Four constitutions were written; and two separate governments operated at the same time. Eventually the people of Kansas easily approved a constitution banning slavery.

Rotunda, East Room – Kansas Banner
The Kansas banner design was adopted in 1925 and used until the state flag was adopted in 1927.

Rotunda, West Room – United States 34-Star Flag
The first 34-star flag, including Kansas as a state, was raised by Abraham Lincoln in Philadelphia on February 22, 1861.

Rotunda, South Room – Three Branches of Government
The executive, legislative, and judicial branches of government are identified in the Kansas Constitution and have parallel duties to those outlined in the United States Constitution. All three branches of government hold distinct powers. During the Legislative War of 1893 in which Populists and Republicans fought over control of the House of Representatives, all three branches of government worked together to solve the issue.

East and West Halls
Kansas has often been at the forefront of national movements. Some events emerge as defining moments, not only impacting Kansans, but affecting those well beyond our borders. Twelve events that changed Kansas and the nation are commemorated.

South Wing
Fairs have long celebrated the bounty of the season with displays of crops and livestock shows, plus cooking, arts, crafts, and other activities. Creative posters were historically used to encourage citizens to support the local fairs.