

Kansas! Say It Above a Whisper

Some people say Kansas is boring, but I beg to differ. The vast array of nicknames is one way to prove it. Kansas's wild nicknames stem from a variety of things from its history to its location in the country.

The Sunflower State is a nickname that reminds us of the natural beauty of the Kansas landscape and the wild sunflowers that grow on it. Other nicknames have to do with agriculture. The Wheat State is a widely known nickname referring to our state being one of the leaders in agricultural production, especially wheat. The Grasshopper State is a lesser known name coming from a plague of grasshoppers back in 1874 that ate up the state's crops and landscape.

As you probably know, Kansas is right in the middle of the country. This is where the nicknames Midway, U.S.A. and The Central State come from.

Our state is also known for its tornadoes, which were made famous by the movie The Wizard of Oz. And even though statistics show that Oklahoma sees more tornadoes, Kansas is still known as the Cyclone State.

These nicknames are all products of slavery and the Civil War. The Garden of the West or the Garden State was a name used by newspapers to try and get people to move to Kansas. They needed people to counteract the pro slavery squatters that were taking up the territory. Which brings me to another nickname, The Squatter State. This referred to pro slavery people from Missouri who were claiming land in Kansas to keep it from getting populated with people from the free states.

The Jayhawk State also traces its roots back to before the Civil War. Antislavery "jayhawkers" from Kansas and proslavery "bushwackers" from Missouri were crossing each other's borders and raiding homes. The jayhawk was later created into a mythical bird.

The last two nicknames, Bleeding Kansas and the Battleground of Freedom, refer to the bloodshed between anti and pro slavery people in Kansas and Missouri leading up to the Civil War. Kansas was crucial because it would enter the Union either as a slave or free state. Which ever way it went, it was going to change the balance between the two.

Now, after all that, can you honestly say that Kansas is boring?

Brooks Hobrock
St. Francis Community High School
St. Francis, KS 67756
Freshmen