
Dwight D. Eisenhower Memorial Commission

Dwight D. Eisenhower and the State of Kansas

"I come from the very heart of America."

--Dwight D. Eisenhower, 1945

- **Ike was famously proud of being from Kansas.** His standard question when speaking to troops during World War II was to ask if any of the soldiers were from Kansas. Eisenhower grew up in Abilene, which he described as a typical small town in Midwestern America, a community-centered town that took care of its own. Almost twenty years old when he left Abilene to attend the U.S. Military Academy at West Point, Ike kept Abilene in his heart the rest of his life.
- **Although Ike's greatest gift to Kansas was serving America so well,** he knew that his family and Abilene were the foundation of his identity. Returning to Abilene after Germany's surrender in World War II, Ike stated, "The proudest thing I can claim is that I am from Abilene." He loved Kansas and made it the site of his presidential library, as well as the burial ground for Mamie, himself, and their first son "Icky," whom he moved there secretly in 1966.
- **"I never saw a paved road in my youth,"** said President Eisenhower, but he "changed the face of America" when he signed the Interstate Highway Act in 1956. The first segment of Interstate highway completed in the United States was the segment of I-70 that opened west of Topeka on November 14, 1956. Today, the Kansas Interstate System is at the crossroads of transcontinental travel. Kansas has two major interstate routes and seven other interstate routes with a combined length of 874 miles.
- **Ike was issued a private pilot's license in 1939** by the Commonwealth of the Philippines and had a Certificate of Competency from the U.S. Civil Aeronautics Authority, having logged 350 hours of flying time from 1936 to November 1939. As President a half-century later, he sponsored the Federal Aviation Act in 1958 and founded the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA). Today, the aviation industry is one of Kansas' most important industries. Appropriately, two of the four figures memorialized in the Kansas capitol are aviators, Amelia Earheart and Dwight D. Eisenhower.
- **Eisenhower chose Abilene as the site of his presidential library.** This center also includes the family home and a museum dedicated to the veterans of World War II. The museum exhibits material on Eisenhower's military career, presidency, and the culture of the 1940's and 1950's. Eisenhower was responsible for signing into law the Presidential Libraries Act on August 12, 1955. This act encouraged other Presidents to donate their historical materials to the government and ensured the preservation of Presidential papers and their availability to the American people.

- **Kansas honored Ike in Washington in 2003** when his statue was placed in the Capitol's 139-year-old National Statuary Hall. Now, the nation will join the state of Kansas in honoring Ike. A new national memorial site near the Capitol has been approved by Congress and the President. It is a superb location with neighboring institutions directly linked to the Eisenhower legacy:
 - **The Departments of Education and Health & Human Services.** Ike created the predecessor cabinet-level Department of Health, Education, and Welfare (HEW) in 1953. It lasted until 1979, when the current Department of Education was created. The Department of Education directly overlooks the Eisenhower Memorial site.
 - **The Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) and the National Air and Space Museum (NASM).** Ike created both the FAA and National Aeronautics and Space Administration in 1958. NASM and FAA are both located across the street from the Eisenhower Memorial site.
 - **Voice of America headquarters** was transferred in 1954 by President Eisenhower from New York to 330 Independence Avenue, just three blocks from the U.S. Capitol. The broadcasting studios remain active at this location. President Eisenhower established the U.S. Information Agency in 1953 and made the Voice of America its principal component.
 - **A striking view of the U.S. Capitol** dominates the Eisenhower Memorial site. The location near the Capitol emphasizes President Eisenhower's prudent relationship with congress. President Eisenhower believed that power ultimately resided on Capitol Hill, not in the White House or executive agencies, and he held special respect for the authority of congress.

