

NEWS RELEASE

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8 Wonders of Kansas Revealed

For more information: Contact the Kansas Sampler Foundation, wendee@kansassampler.org; cell, 620.727.0738 or 620.937.2101; office 620.585.2374 (use the cell on the 29th). Photos available.

TOPEKA, KAN. – The votes are in. More than 24,000 people from all 50 states cast votes to determine Kansas' most important natural or manmade wonders.

The winners were announced by Kansas Gov. Kathleen Sebelius in a ceremony at the capitol on Kansas Day, Jan. 29. The winners were selected from 24 finalists; eight attractions were chosen because the Kansas Sampler Foundation, organizer of the project, bases its criteria on eight rural culture elements.

The winners are (in alphabetical order): the Big Well, Greensburg; Cheyenne Bottoms and Quivira National Wildlife Refuge, Barton and Stafford counties; Eisenhower Presidential Library & Museum, Abilene; Kansas Cosmosphere & Space Center, Hutchinson; Kansas Underground Salt Museum, Hutchinson; Monument Rocks & Castle Rock, Gove County; St. Fidelis Church (Cathedral of the Plains), Victoria; and the Tallgrass Prairie National Preserve, Chase County.

Representatives from all 24 finalists as well as over a thousand fourth- and fifth-graders and other fans of Kansas were on hand to hear the announcement.

"It's very exciting to announce what the public chose as our very best in terms of places totally unique to Kansas or sites that are iconic," said Marci Penner, director of the Kansas Sampler Foundation. "We'd love it if the fun of the contest would launch a wave of exploring Kansas!"

The 8 Wonders of Kansas is a project of the Kansas Sampler Foundation, a non-profit whose mission is to preserve and sustain rural culture and believes that educating the public about what there is to see and do in the state helps make a difference for all Kansas communities, regardless of size.

Following is just a bit about what makes each Wonder unique. More information and photos can be found at 8wonders.org.

BIG WELL: The construction of the 1887 well was an engineering marvel in its day and it is the world's largest hand-dug well.

CHEYENNE BOTTOMS and QUIVIRA NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE: These two entities make up the Kansas Wetlands Complex. They share a vital and international importance as a migratory stop for North American shorebirds.

EISENHOWER PRESIDENTIAL LIBRARY & MUSEUM: Dwight D. Eisenhower was the only president who also had been a five-star general thus making this display of his remarkable lifetime achievements significant.

KANSAS COSMOSPHERE & SPACE CENTER: The Cosmosphere has one of the most significant collections of U.S. and Russian space artifacts in the world.

KANSAS UNDERGROUND SALT MUSEUM: The only underground salt museum in a working mine in the western hemisphere showcases our natural treasure, salt, 650 feet below the earth's surface.,

MONUMENT ROCKS and CASTLE ROCK: These ancient chalk beds have produced scientifically significant fossils and have been highly eroded into unusual spires and shapes, making them spectacular landmarks on the plains of western Kansas.

ST. FIDELIS CHURCH: The architectural grandeur and impressive craftsmanship make this church built by the Volga German pioneers in 1911, a masterpiece.

TALLGRASS PRAIRIE NATIONAL PRESERVE: The preserve represents the last significant example of the tallgrass prairie in North America.

MEDIA NOTES:

Other finalists:

Arikaree Breaks, Cheyenne County
Ball of Twine, Cawker City
Big Brutus, West Mineral
Brookville Hotel, Abilene
Chase County Courthouse, Cottonwood Falls
Cimarron National Grassland, Morton County
Constitution Hall State Historic Site, Lecompton
John Steuart Curry Murals, State Capitol, Topeka
Davis Memorial, Hiawatha
Fort Larned National Historic Site, Pawnee County
Garden of Eden, Lucas
Gypsum Hills Scenic Drive, Barber County
Keeper of the Plains, Wichita
Lake Scott State Park, Scott County
Pawnee Indian Museum State Historic Site, Republic County
St. Mary's Catholic Church, St. Benedict

For high-resolution pictures go to <http://www.travelks.com/s/index.cfm?SSID=34>.