The Lewis and Clark Expedition celebrated the first Independence Day of their journey near what is now Atchison, Kansas, firing the keelboat’s cannon morning and evening. According to Clark’s Expedition diary, “We passed a Creek... this Creek has no name, and this being the 4th of July the day of the independence of the US, call it 4th of July 1804 Creek. We came to another Creek... which we called Independence Creek, in honor of the day.”

For more information about the Glacial Hills Scenic Byway, contact:
Leavenworth/Ft. Leavenworth • 1-800-844-4114 • www.lvarea.com/cvb
Atchison • 1-800-234-1854 • www.atchisonkansas.net
Troy/White Cloud • 1-913-365-2604 • www.dpcountyks.com
Kansas Scenic Byways website: ksbyways.org

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The 63-mile Glacial Hills Scenic Byway crosses paths with history. On July 4, 1804, the Lewis and Clark Expedition made camp and celebrated Independence Day along a creek in what is now Atchison, Kansas.

Just fifty years later, in 1854, the Kansas-Nebraska Act opened the Kansas Territory for settlement. River towns sprang up and steamboats came to the towns unloading travelers and freight headed for the Western Interior. As they set off on the historic Oregon and California Trails, they traveled in wagon, on horse, but mostly on foot for the 2,500 mile trip. Even though the Pony Express lasted only eighteen months, it became one of the most famous routes ever as it crossed the northeastern corner of Kansas.

History written on the land.

A journey along the Glacial Hills Scenic Byway begins at the intersection of Kansas 7 and Kansas 92 highways in Leavenworth, Kansas. The Byway gets its name from the gently rolling hills and rock-strewn valleys carved by glaciers that once covered the land.

In their wake, the receding glaciers left some of the most beautiful landscape in the state, and some of the most fertile farmland. The area’s access to rivers and its fertile soil drew settlers who built communities such as Atchison, Leavenworth, Troy and White Cloud.

Along the Byway, near White Cloud, you’ll see unusual towering river bluffs of loess. Loess hills, pronounced luss, are composed of yellow loess soil overlaying older debris left from the last ice age. Sharp-edged ridge crests and slopes ranging from gentle to very steep mark these unique formations.

The heritage of a nation.

Many of the people who shaped American history have been a part of the history of the Glacial Hills region. In 1859, Abraham Lincoln delivered his renowned Cooper Union speech on the campaign trail through Troy, Atchison, Doniphan and Leavenworth, Kansas.

Fort Leavenworth, established in 1827, was named after Colonel Henry H. Leavenworth and remains the oldest Army post in continuous existence west of the Missouri River.