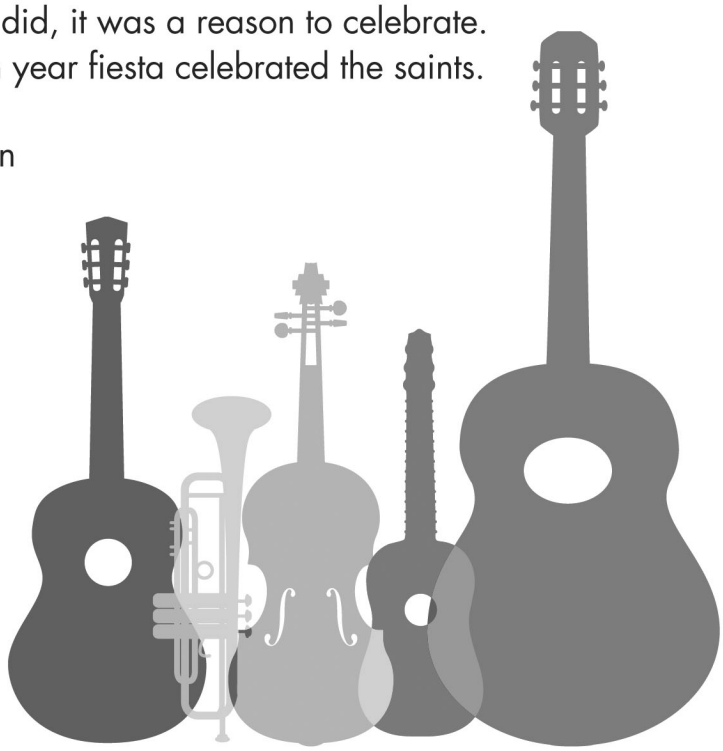
Celebrating Our Heritage: Fiesta

People who came to Kansas brought with them the celebrations they had always known. One kind of celebration is fiesta. It is a Mexican celebration. Fiesta is an annual event in some places in Kansas. This tradition has continued in Topeka, Chanute, and Garden City for many years.

Many Mexicans came to Kansas to get jobs. The families worked together to build churches and schools. Often they held a fiesta like they had in Mexico. They shared food, music, and fun. In Mexico the fiesta began as a religious celebration. People who reached the highest level of holiness could become saints. When they did, it was a reason to celebrate. Each year fiesta celebrated the saints.

In Topeka there has been an annual Mexican fiesta for more than 70 years. In the early years this fiesta was a small event in the Mexican community. Today it is like a big party for everyone.



The Mexican community is still the core of the fiesta. Mexican culture is the heart of the fiesta. People come to fiesta from all over the area. At the fiesta people eat authentic Mexican food. They listen and dance to Mexican music. They get to learn more about Mexican culture. Everyone has fun and money is raised to support the church and school. Today the fiesta includes a parade and a carnival. The Topeka fiesta lasts about a week.

Much of the fiesta food is made with a tortilla. A tortilla is a type of bread that is pressed flat in a tortilla press. Tortillas used to be made from corn meal. Today they are also made of flour. Tortillas are used to make tacos, enchiladas, tostadas, and other foods. Sauces are added to make some of the food very spicy.

Mexican dance and music are an important part of fiesta. Historically, Spanish theater included music and dance. Musicians played violins, harps, and guitars. Over time this music became part of Mexican tradition. It became mariachi music. Today mariachi music is played at every fiesta. It includes songs of love and death. Musicians often dress in fancy clothes and hats for fiesta.

Fiesta is an important part of the Mexican community in Kansas. Fiesta reminds people of the important contributions Mexicans have made to Kansas. Fiesta is a Mexican celebration that is now a Kansas celebration.

Kansas state department of Education

Copyright © 2006

KANSAS HEALTH FOUNDATION