

The 16-part "Dreams of a Barefoot Boy" originally appeared in the 2017 Kansas Newspapers in Education. Have fun reading stories, answering questions, and completing activities while learning about Dwight Eisenhower's childhood.



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"Dreams of a Barefoot Boy"

Chapter 5: FATHER EISENHOWER



"Because no man is really a man who has lost out of himself all of the boy, I want to speak first of the dreams of a barefoot boy...Because today that dream of mine of 45 years or more ago has been realized beyond the wildest stretches of my own imagination, I come here, first, to thank you, to say the proudest thing I can claim is that I am from Abilene."

Dwight D. Eisenhower June 22, 1945

Dwight Eisenhower remembered his father, David, as "the breadwinner, Supreme Court, and Lord High Executioner" of the family. Serious and often the disciplinarian in the family, he had high expectations of all six children, whether in school, chores, or daily behavior.

David Jacob Eisenhower was born in Lancaster, Pennsylvania, one of fourteen children born to Jacob and Rebecca Eisenhower. He came to Dickinson County, Kansas, from Pennsylvania in 1879, when he was about 15 years old. The journey by train took three days and cost \$20.05 per person. Although this was a large sum of money for the time (about \$460.80 in 2017), land was cheap in Kansas and people were making the move west hoping to find success. David's parents were members of a religious group called the River Brethren, many of whom moved to Kansas for its land and opportunities.

As David grew, he didn't care for farming, and began studies at Lane University in Lecompton, Kansas. He met and married Ida Stover, and although he didn't finish college he was constantly reading and teaching himself skills needed to provide for his family. After

an unsuccessful partnership in a general store, David took a job working for the railroad in Denison, Texas, where Dwight was born. After moving back to Abilene, Kansas, in 1892, David took a job in the Belle Springs Creamery. While there, he completed a correspondence course in engineering and eventually was promoted to refrigeration engineer.

Hard work paid off for Dwight's father, earning him promotions and then switching jobs to work first as a manager of a gas plant, and then director of employee savings for several utility companies. David worked six days a week, ten to twelve hours each day, just to buy the necessities for his growing family. When the family moved from a small home on Second Street to a larger home on Southeast Fourth Street (the home visitors can tour today), it was up to Mrs. Eisenhower and the six boys to take care of the cleaning and cooking, as well as keep their vegetable garden, feed the chickens and horses, and milk the cows.

The boys didn't get an allowance for doing chores, but they did each get a small plot of the land where they could grow vegetables and then sell them to neighbors; Dwight grew sweet corn and

cucumbers. During the months when he didn't have vegetables to sell, Dwight learned how to make hot tamales, which he then sold three for five cents. It didn't make him rich, but he was able to buy some things he wanted like a new baseball glove or bat. More importantly, he learned the value and rewards of hard work.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. When did David Eisenhower move to Dickinson County, Kansas?
2. What religious group did Dwight's grandparents belong to?
3. How many different jobs did David Eisenhower have and what were they?
3. How did Dwight and his brothers earn money when they were growing up?

ACTIVITIES

1. Add events from the above story to the timeline of Dwight Eisenhower's history.
2. Do some research to find out how much a baseball glove and bat cost in 1905, when Dwight was 15. Now do the math: How many tamales did Dwight have to sell to make enough to buy the glove?