

Ransomville

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According to A.T. Andreas' History of Kansas, James H. Ransom, born in New York in 1836, came to Kansas in 1868. He located at Burlington for a year where he established a dairy farm; went to Douglas County to operate saw and grist mills for six years; in 1875 started coal mining at Lawrence and Carbondale and in 1878 in the Williamsburg area.

Williamsburg's history related that Ransom opened rather extensive mines northeast of town. He built a 'colony' of houses in Williamsburg for the coal miners that was called 'Brooklyn, a suburb of Williamsburg.' In 1881 Ransom moved east of Williamsburg where he established a general store and opened a post office in 1882 called Ransomville.

Ransom mined at least five shafts each 50 feet deep, yielding about 1000 tons of coal a month. Sixty men were employed. The mines supplied coal to the Santa Fe Railroad that ran to Burlington and back. The mines closed in 1914.

Family history relates that Ransom made butter when he had the dairy herd in the Burlington area where he lived in a dugout. After he had a ton of butter, he sold it for \$1 a pound to raise money for his coal mining enterprise.

In 1906 Ransom brought the first registered Guernsey cattle to his farm, considered one of the oldest Guernsey herds west of the Mississippi river.

When asked, not many people in Franklin County even know where the small town is located. It may have contributed greatly to the formation of Williamsburg, but unfortunately, the small town just a half mile east of Williamsburg on Old Highway 50 is almost gone. The only remaining buildings are the store and the post office, two storage buildings and Ransom's house built in 1903. Midge Ransom currently lives there.

Catherine Jane Richards, 1993, and Deborah Barker, 2011