

Richmond

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Although the town of Richmond was not laid out until 1870, its early history is definitely connected with the settlement of Berea, a community established as early as 1857. In that year Rev. J. N. Smith brought a small company of United Presbyterians to this area located about three miles east of Richmond. Here he organized a church under the name "Berean," and in 1858 directed the group's building which was the first one of that very antislavery denomination west of the Mississippi. In the same year a town was laid out, and in 1863 a post office was established. A school was opened in 1861, and an Associate Presbyterian Church was established in 1867. A store built by the town company and a half dozen houses completed the settlement.

When in 1870 the post office was moved to Richmond, the Berean settlement came to an end. Richmond had become a "railroad town," for in December 1869, the Leavenworth, Lawrence and Galveston Railroad built a line from Ottawa to one mile south of Richmond. Ten years earlier in June 1860, the government had issued to James Robb a patent on the land later known as Richmond. This land was transferred to three or four other men and finally in 1869 to the LL&G Railroad, later to become a part of the Atchison, Topeka and Santa Fe. John C. Richmond, an inspector of ties for the railroad, is said to have donated forty acres of land for the townsite and to have requested that the town be called Richmond. In March 1864, he had built a home in Ottawa—the first one on the townsite—on the northeast corner of Walnut and First Streets. Richmond was friends with Isaac S. Kalloch, the founder of Ottawa. The streets of Richmond are named for Richmond's family and there is a Kalloch street, as well.

In 1871, Thomas B. Kelsey moved from Berea to Richmond and built the first blacksmith shop. His brother, J.F. Kelsey, postmaster and railroad agent, ran a general store that had been started by George Harshberger, Richmond's first merchant. This store was in the depot and served a number of purposes. Kelsey's son, C. W. Curry Kelsey, was the first white child born in Richmond.

Early business enterprises before the turn of the century were a hotel, livery barn, two banks, and a creamery. Businesses through the 1950s included a lumber yard, general merchandise stores, hardware and implement store, a plumbing and heating shop, four service stations, Peoples National Bank and the Farmers Coop grain elevator and feed store. In the 1990s many of these businesses were gone. Remaining were the bank, the grain elevator and feed store, insurance office, one service station and several cafes.

In 1877 a Presbyterian Church was organized, followed that same year by the organization of a Methodist Episcopal Church. The two congregations met in the one-room school house, one in the morning and one in the afternoon. In 1879 the Presbyterians built a church and the Methodists built in 1882. In 1884 the United Presbyterians decided to leave Berea and built a church in Richmond. In later years these churches merged to form one church—the Methodist Community Church, now in a 1962 building on Franklin Street. The St. Theresa Catholic Church was built in 1926 as a mission of St. Boniface Catholic Church in Scipio. St. Boniface is listed as the oldest congregation in Anderson County.

A town band was organized 1924-5 that played at The Anderson Royal and area fairs and offered summer band concerts on Saturday evenings for many years.

The schools in Richmond have kept pace with the growth of the town. The first frame school was built in 1874, and in 1885 a two-story frame building was erected. In 1922 a Rural High School district was established and a new high school constructed. A grade school building was built in 1925 and a large modern gymnasium added later. With school unification in the 1960s, a new school was built north and east of Richmond in 1968. Known as Central Heights USD 288, the school includes both grade and high school serving students from Richmond, Princeton, Lane and Rantoul and all rural areas.

Located in a rich agricultural district, farming and stock-raising are still strong. The 4-H program continues to be highly developed in the area. At one time Richmond was called the Shetland Pony Capital of Kansas. A city lake built east of town provides water. The city is served by Kansas City Power and Light and the Cities Service Gas Co.

A small library downtown continues to serve the public and a community center on Franklin Street provides space for meetings and the Senior Center. Oakhaven, a 53-bed nursing home, was built in 1969 at the south end of town, and is now known as Richmond Healthcare and Rehabilitation Center. It features a wellness wing for in-patient and outpatient rehabilitation and an Alzheimer's unit. The Richmond Community Museum, using as a building the old Putnam lumber yard which the group remodeled, provides a showcase for artifacts from the Berea and Richmond area.

Population continues to grow. Records show 100 persons in 1882, 475 in 1910, 528 in 1990, 510 in 2000, and 464 in 2010

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