

Williamsburg

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History lists an Englishman, William Schofield, who came to the United States in 1848, as the founder of Williamsburg. In 1855 Schofield settled in Williamsburg Township and from there served as an agent (1860-67) for Baker University at Baldwin City. In 1867 Schofield purchased a large tract (34,000 acres) of former land of the Sac and Fox Indians that included the townsite of Williamsburg. That year a Charter of Incorporation for The Williamsburg Town Company was drawn. The Charter filed on July 28, 1867, was good for the duration of ninety-nine years.

In 1868 the first house was built. The town was officially surveyed and staked out and the streets were named the following fall. A certification of the map of the town site of Williamsburg was filed for record in the office of the Franklin County Register of Deeds on October 123, 1869, by H.F.

Sheldon, the Register. Schofield honored the town with his name of William as well as its main street.

In 1869 the Rev. C. Holman built a stone store building and Lott Wainwright started a blacksmith shop. Other businesses quickly followed and the early city grew fast. In the next 10 to 18 years there were four general stores, two butcher shops, two drug stores, three lumberyards, two hardware stores, a post office, a printing shop, a grain elevator, two livery stables, a jewelry store, a tin shop, two blacksmiths, two wagon shops, two boot and shoe shops, two harness and saddle factories (Ringer's and Magrath's), and eventually two banks—E.M. Bartholow's, established in 1881, and F.W. Olson's, established in 1882. There were two hotels—Stauffer's with rooms for 40 guests, and The Lamont. A newspaper, the Gazette, was established on April 3, 1880 by Frank Bennett.

Williamsburg showed promise as an early manufacturing center for the county as a number of innovative enterprises were part of the city's growth—a large flour mill, saw mill, and cheese factories all powered by steam supplied by coal mined in the area. A silk factory (Silkville) was established on a 3600 acre farm just southwest of the city.

At one time, the city had three doctors and a dentist and real estate, insurance, and law offices. Henry Diestelhorst ran a mortuary and had a coffin, furniture, and cabinet shop. The lodge hall was a popular place where oyster suppers and other entertainments were held. Daniel Fogle bought Holman's store near the west end of Main Street in 1873, and in 1876, he rebuilt a

massive and imposing two-story, three-wing building which did business as the D. Fogle Mercantile Co. Everything was bought and sold in this business—everything but tobacco and liquor, which Fogle refused to sell.

Inside the city was a brick factory, two kilns, a stock yard, and a bandstand. Also there was a widely-advertised sanitorium, in connection with a mineral well. There were three city wells, one of which was in the middle of the street at the corner of Main and East Avenue.

Outside the city stood Schofield's big mill, built in 1870 on a mount just north of the city, that supplied the essential foods for the people and their livestock—flour, bran, shorts, and corn meal. It was operated by steam and could generate 60 horsepower and turn out 5,000 pounds of flour daily. Two large wells supplied water to the mill. There were two ponds which were also utilized by the boys who went swimming there in the summer and skating on the ice in the winter. The mill was the hub of Williamsburg. Everything is gone now, even the mound where the historic mill stood—gone except for some nostalgic memories.

Also, outside the city there were two or three cheese factories, a slaughter house, a race track and an ice house. The biggest winter project was filling the ice house with blocks of ice from the Fogle lake, southwest of town. Fifteen or twenty men worked at this job when the ice was thick enough to cut. It was marked, sawed into 200-pound blocks, and hoisted by horsepower into the ice house where it was packed in saw dust. This was the city's ice supply for the summer months.

When the city had reached its prime, the business district comprised three blocks on William (Main) Street. The two western blocks were almost solid business blocks on both sides of the street including several fine two-story stone buildings. These buildings gave Williamsburg an imposing skyline that none of its neighboring towns could rival. In the center of the city stood the massive and stately stone schoolhouse.

Coal mining was a prosperous business in the Williamsburg area for a number of years. Most of the coal was mined in big mines 85 feet deep back into the earth and branching out in several directions. In 1931 a mining machine was introduced in the area by the Williamsburg Coal Co. organized by Dan, Walter and Arza Fogle. The area coal tested "best coal" in the state averaging 25 to 30 tons a day. Coal was delivered to 39 cities and communities.

School District No. 51 was organized in 1868, and a schoolhouse was built in the summer of 1870. The first school was taught by Miss Helen M. Beardsley. In 1885 a two-story school was built replacing the earlier structure. This school burned in 1942, was rebuilt and later torn down when the present school complex was built in 1959 to house grades and high school. The school is now a part of West Franklin U.S.D. 287.

In the early days several churches were erected in and around Williamsburg. The Methodist Episcopal Church was organized in 1868 and a stone church was built in 1878. The Saint Barnabas Episcopal Church was organized in 1878 and the church, a stately stone building of Gothic design, was built in 1883. The third church was the Campbellite (or Christian) Church, a fine large stone building with a spire. The ground for its location, in the Bartholow addition of town, was purchased in 1886, and the church was built shortly after that time. It later became a Free Methodist Church. The Methodist Episcopal and Santa Barnabas Episcopal Churches were razed in later years and the Methodists replaced their stone church in 1965. Saint Patrick's Catholic Church stands on an eminent mount at Emerald, six miles south of town. Central Church (Methodist), built of stone in 1873, is four miles north of town. The Mount Olivet Baptist Church was built in the Sac Creek neighborhood southeast of town, and Rosemont Methodist Church was built at Rosemont five miles west of town.

Schofield is credited with bringing a branch of the Lawrence, Leavenworth and Galveston Railroad to Williamsburg after it reached Ottawa in 1868. It was completed in 1876 and was built on to Gridley in 1895 when there were four trains daily—two freight and two passenger. The line was later purchased by the Atchison, Topeka and Santa Fe in 1896. The railroad's arrival was a great event for the local community. Before the coming of the railroad, goods for Williamsburg were hauled, mostly from Lawrence, in horse-drawn wagons. Early day travel was by horse or on foot. Ninety-seven years later, in 1973, the doom of our faithful train was sealed when its track was dismantled.

Williamsburg has suffered several disastrous fires. A fire in 1890 destroyed half the town. Several years later lightning started a fire in the Finley barns and stables and carriage sheds which were located behind the bank. The horses were saved but all the carriages were lost. Fires destroyed the two large hotels, and in later years two great fires decimated the main business block; the second fire burned every business but the D. Fogle store. There were several other fires; the latest one destroyed the school auditorium-gymnasium in January of 1942.

Williamsburg lies in a scenic area. Tequa Creek, named for a Sac and Fox Indian named Tequa, winds through a beautiful wood just west of the town where many school and Sunday School picnics have been held. Many people have told stories around campfires and hiked and explored in these woods. Such is the story of Williamsburg, a little town that grew up on the prairie of pioneer eastern Kansas.

Information from Lila J. Reekie:

1986. The year Williamsburg High School's house building class started construction on a community building on William Street in downtown Williamsburg—a building that would bring

together all of the Williamsburg community. Fund-raising earned its way into this small town which sponsored street dances, Jayhawker Day, and just asking for help through hundreds of letters. By September 24th, over \$18,000 had been raised. The community bought the land for \$5,000 and tore down an old gas station that was established there. The building process then started and was completed in 1987.

Community members hold their family gatherings, weddings, business meetings and community-involved programs in this building. Senior citizens' meals are also served in the building.

Catherine Jane Richards, 1993 and

Deborah Barker, 2011