

## Princeton

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Princeton had its beginning as a railroad siding on the Leavenworth, Lawrence & Galveston Railroad as it pushed its way southward from Ottawa in the 1860s. The siding was built to serve farms and businesses of Ohio City, two miles to the northeast. E.M. Peck, a settler on land north of the siding asked the LL&G to deliver his immigrant car to that siding. The railroad agreed if Peck would give the siding a name for billing purposes. He chose the name of his hometown—Princeton, Illinois.

In October 1869 Thompson Jones donated a strip of land parallel to the railroad, 2,000 feet north and south and 100 feet wide. The land was platted, streets named and in 1870 Princeton was established. Soon families from Ohio City moved into Princeton, some moving their homes on rollers. School District #63 was established in 1869 and a frame schoolhouse built in the south part of the town. The first teacher was Miss Linda Mayhew.

Jacob Barnett is credited with establishing the first store—general merchandise. A post office was established in 1870 when the Ohio City post office closed and its equipment moved to Princeton. Thomas Fletcher was the first postmaster. Ohio City vanished as Princeton grew and prospered.

A Methodist Church was built in 1872. A two-story, four-room school building replaced the one-room school in 1878, and was enlarged in 1886. A Presbyterian Church was built in 1880, and a Christian Church in 1886. The town's boundaries were enlarged to meet the town's growth—east to the highway (59). A new depot was built, and stockyards and a feed yard east of the tracks were added for cattle buyers.

Princeton was a busy and growing city from 1900-1910. Peoples State Bank was organized in 1907 by George Harris who operated the bank along with Mark Walter for 53 years. The bank was robbed in the late 1920s one quite afternoon by a trio of strangers who were later captured in Ottawa and identified by Princeton bystanders. The bank closed in 1960 and most accounts transferred to Peoples National Bank in Ottawa. The Bingaman General Store was robbed in the early 1930s.

The Princeton Telephone Co. was organized and operated by Miss Belle D. Davies in 1903-04 in her home and was purchased in the 1960s by Kansas Telephone Company. Early town social activities included the annual Woodman's Picnic in Bingamans' Grove, dances, bazaars, hayrides, sleigh rides and performances by the circuit Chautauquas every summer from 1904 to

1920. A number of fine homes were built in this same time period. A new two-story brick school (grades and high school) was built and opened in 1913.

The city was incorporated in 1921 and W.E. Stinebaugh was elected Princeton's first mayor. City council action brought electricity, sidewalks, and traffic and safety regulations.

Even in the adversity of three major fires that burned many buildings in the business district, WWI and II, the depression and crop failure, the town struggled on. The school was enlarged, new businesses opened and many residents returned after the wars. Main Street was hard surfaced in the 50s, and water and sewer systems added in the 60s. A Citizens Improvement Committee was formed in the 70s. The town celebrated its Centennial September 1969. Population has shown some growth throughout its history. Census figures: 1882, 150; 1910, 240; 1990, 275.

Listed in the Kansas State Historical Collections, volume 2 is the story of the Civil War monument in the Princeton Cemetery. The Monument of Barre granite, six feet high, was dedicated to the soldiers of the Civil War on Flag Day, June 14, 1907. Cost was over \$600 and money was raised by the Ladies of the Grand Army, Princeton Circle No. 33. Twenty-one soldiers are buried at the base of the monument. The dedication was originally planned for Decoration Day, but was postponed because of heavy flooding in the county.

Catherine Jane Richards, 1993 and Deborah Barker, 2011