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**ECONOMIC
GROWTH & OPPORTUNITY**

LAWRENCE & DOUGLAS CO [IN PERSPECTIVE]



Douglas County Mills, 1874,
on the Banks of The Kaw River

A Bustling Marketplace

Many of the elements that make up Lawrence as we know it today are products of the community started and grown during the 1880s.

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photos provided by Douglas County Historical Society, Watkins Museum of History | watkinsmuseum.org

The early history of Lawrence was turbulent. When the Kansas-Nebraska Act was passed in 1854, residents of the newly established territory would vote to determine whether Kansas Territory would allow slavery. Lawrence was founded by the Massachusetts Emigrant Aid Co. to support antislavery advocates to move to Kansas. Originally a for-profit company, it intended to send settlers to Kansas to purchase land and build houses, shops and mills. After several investors found the notion of profiting from the antislavery cause distasteful, the company's model reorganized as a benevolent society, and it was renamed the New England Emigrant Aid Co. in 1855. This led to Bleeding Kansas, with numerous skirmishes between anti- and proslavery supporters. The animosity between the two continued during the Civil War, culminating in a raid on Aug. 21, 1863, by William Quantrill, a Confederate guerrilla leader. He led a force of about 400 men into Lawrence, where they ransacked homes, looted stores and set fire to buildings. Quantrill's men killed between 160 and 190 men and boys, and destroyed about 185 buildings, causing about \$1.5 million in property damage. The raiders held the town for several hours and then withdrew.



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Original Merchants National Bank Building at the corner of 8th and Mass St

today's *Lawrence Journal-World*. The two flour mills included Bowersock's Douglas County Mills, which was producing 500 barrels of flour per day.

Financial institutions were crucial to the growth of Lawrence. In 1865, Lawrence National Bank started as the National Bank at the corner of Seventh and Massachusetts streets. In 1877, First National Bank started as Merchants Bank at the corner of Eighth and Massachusetts streets, founded by G. W. E. Griffith, Theodore Poehler and J. B. Watkins. In 1886, Merchants Bank became Merchants National Bank, which then in 1925 acquired Citizens State Bank. In 1930, Merchants National Bank became First National Bank of Lawrence.

Lawrence also had a brewery, a foundry and the following businesses: two broom factories, a barrel factory, a canning factory, a carriage factory, a rope manufactory, a shirt factory, two sawmills and a vinegar works. In 1885, the production of the mills, factories and manufactories was valued at \$1,762,199.

Two examples of retail businesses operating in the 1880s illustrate that Lawrence business had moved beyond the frontier stage. One was the Shane-Thompson Photography Studio. In 1878, James Shane moved his family to Lawrence, Kansas, to provide his 10 children with access to better schools. The following year, Shane spent three weeks with a specialist in Chicago receiving treatments for his worsening hearing loss. The doctor had several framed photographs of famous men displayed on his office walls, and this gave Shane the idea to have his picture taken. While visiting with the photographer, Shane took an interest in the work of photography and paid the photographer \$50 for two weeks of lessons. By the end of this time, Shane was hooked. He gave the photographer \$200 to purchase a photography "outfit" for him and then bought a railroad car for \$100 to use as his gallery. He returned to Lawrence with a new profession, although unfortunately, his hearing was no better. Shane moved his railroad car photo gallery around northeast Kansas and into Iowa. Eventually, his wife wanted him to stay closer to home, so he parked the car on Massachusetts Street in North Lawrence and bought a house on Louisiana Street. When his business outgrew the railroad car, Shane traded it for a gallery at 829 Massachusetts St., where Brown's Shoe Fit is today.

The second example that provides flavor (pun intended) to the community was a confectionary. In 1868, William Wiedemann purchased an existing store at 11 E. Eighth St. from a Mr. Terry. Two years after that, Wiedemann moved the store to 833 Massachusetts St. In 1879, the elder Wiedemann died, and his son, William, inherited the business that he moved to 835 Massachusetts St. in 1886. A soda fountain was installed. Originally, the ice cream was made behind the store. A horse was hitched to the freezer, and it walked around the tub until the ice cream was frozen.

After this traumatic start to the early days of Lawrence and the end of the Civil War, the city could finally begin the process of becoming a commercial center. The population of Lawrence increased from 8,637 in 1869 to 25,092 in 1885, with 13,006 males and 996 females. In terms of race, 21,892 residents were white, and 3,198 were Black. Two people were identified as Chinese/Indian. People born outside the United States (foreign born) totaled 2,490.

Several railroads served the community. The Union Pacific Railroad arrived in 1864 and ran along the north bank of the Kansas River, necessitating building a wooden bridge to reach the city proper on the south side of the river. The Leavenworth, Lawrence and Galveston Railroad saw its first locomotive cross the Kansas River in 1867. By the 1880s, both the Union Pacific and the Atchison, Topeka, and Santa Fe railroads made a number of daily stops in Lawrence.

In addition to railroad service, the new city needed energy. Lawrence leaders planned to take advantage of the Kansas River by building a stone dam to provide the water needed for a power plant. After several unsuccessful attempts, property was purchased by James H. Gower, who conferred it upon his son-in-law, Justin DeWitt Bowersock. Apart from a small break in 1885, the dam withstood floods under Bowersock's leadership, and this waterpower fueled substantial industrial growth in Lawrence in the late 19th century.

In 1880, only two Lawrence businesses, Douglas County Mills and Delaware Flour Mill, relied entirely on waterpower. By the mid-1880s, the dam had been stabilized, and Lawrence had a reliable source of cheap mechanical waterpower. By 1885, 12 waterwheels drove two flouring mills, a paper mill, two elevators, a twine factory, a shirt factory, two machine shops, the Leis chemical works, two printing offices, several barb-wire works and a brewery. Two of the customers were *The Lawrence Journal* and *The Lawrence World*, predecessors to



top to bottom
Men inside of A. L. Levy's gentlemen's clothing store at 807 Mass St
Exterior of the C. Achning hardware store at 822 Mass St

The candy was well-known throughout Lawrence and the region. The boxes holding the candy were covered with white, shiny paper. The lid had "Wm. Wiedemann" stamped in gold lettering. The contents included square caramel pieces, chocolate creams, some pieces of silver or gold foil, violet-flavored mints and green leaf-shaped mints, among other candies. The most popular chocolates were squares of fudge topped with coconut and vanilla creams.

Lawrence also had many other institutions associated with a prosperous community. There were 56 churches in Douglas County in 1885 (a breakdown by city was not available) associated with the following denominations: African Methodist Episcopal, Baptist, Christian, Congregational, Episcopal, Lutheran, Methodist Episcopal, Presbyterians, Roman Catholic, Swedish Baptist, Unitarian, United Presbyterian, Universalist and Wesleyan Methodist. As for schools (again no breakdown by city), there were 85 districts with a student population of 8,697 in 1886. Male teachers made \$51 per month, while female teachers earned \$44.73 a month. In 1861, The University of Kansas was established, and it became a major economic and social contributor to the community. Lawrence had three major newspapers: *The Lawrence Weekly Journal*, the *Lawrence Tribune* and *The Lawrence Gazette*. It had a German language newspaper titled *Die Germania*, *The True Citizen*, which was a prohibition paper, and an amateur newspaper called the *Kansas Zephyr*. Two newspapers were published by The University of Kansas, the *University Courier* and the monthly *University Review*.

By 1890, Lawrence had everything it needed to continue to be one of the leading cities in Kansas. It had a growing population, railroads, factories, banks, retailers, newspapers, schools including The University of Kansas and churches. In retrospect, most of the elements that make up the city we know today were products of Lawrence's community growth in the 1880s. ▲



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