

## Williamsburg, Iowa Creation (1840–1957)

**Source: Owen R. Jones Williamsburg, IA Historical Research** - The following summary of the creation of Williamsburg as compiled by Owen R. Jones from his research of county and historical and records.

### Early Williamsburg

Richard Williams, the founder of the town, was a sturdy Welshman; in fact, nearly all of the early settlers to this community were of his blood. The names of Williams, Evans, Jones, Roberts, Davis, Hughes, Powell, Edwards, and Harris were early settlers. Richard laid out the town of Williamsburg in 1854.

During the early years of Williamsburg, there was very little growth; in the year 1880 there were only 130 people who claimed Williamsburg as their residence. The presence of the Rock Island Railroad eight miles to the north of town drew the trade and people in that direction. It was not until the Chicago, Milwaukee & St. Paul railroad extended tracks through Williamsburg in 1884 that the town began to take on new life.

### Land Additions to Williamsburg (1851 - 1921)

Date	Description
1851	Richard Williams bought 40 acres from U.S.A.
1854	Richard Williams bought 120 acres from Hugh D. Downey
1854 and 1856	From the 120 acres, Richard Williams laid out the 1 <sup>st</sup> addition plate in 1854 and the 2 <sup>nd</sup> addition plate in 1856
1854	Original town of Williamsburg created
1856	Williams Addition added to original town
1884	Railroad come to Williamsburg; Hughes 1 <sup>st</sup> addition, W.E. Evan addition, Long 1 <sup>st</sup> addition
1885	Williams Heirs addition
1888	John D. Evans 2 <sup>nd</sup> addition
1890	W. E. Evans 2 <sup>nd</sup> addition
1891	McFann and Hulls addition
1892	Long 2 <sup>nd</sup> addition
1893	Carmichael's 1 <sup>st</sup> addition
1894	Williamsburg Produce Company addition; Cook's addition
1896	Hugh's 2 <sup>nd</sup> addition
1898	Cook's end addition
1898	Cook's 3 <sup>rd</sup> addition
1905	Yoss and Wallace 1 <sup>st</sup> addition
1910	Yoss and Wallace 2 <sup>nd</sup> addition; Hannah M. Long 3 <sup>rd</sup> addition
1920	Burgside addition
1921	Richard A. Williams 1 <sup>st</sup> addition

### Founders Vision of Williamsburg

The following diagrams show the initial layout of Williamsburg with the town square where the elementary school east of Highway 149 is now. The town square was later relocated to its present site.

# WILLIAMSBURG AS ENVISIONED BY ITS FOUNDER

**SOME SPECULATION ON THE FOUNDING OF WILLIAMSBURG**

Did the Welshman, Richard Williams live in the town which he founded? Probably not. He lived north of it in a grove where he operated a saw mill. Certain evidence would point to the year 1846 or 1847 as the time he settled in the area. He may have lived on his 40 acres through virtue of "squatters rights" previous to 1851 when he purchased it from the U. S. A. in 1851.

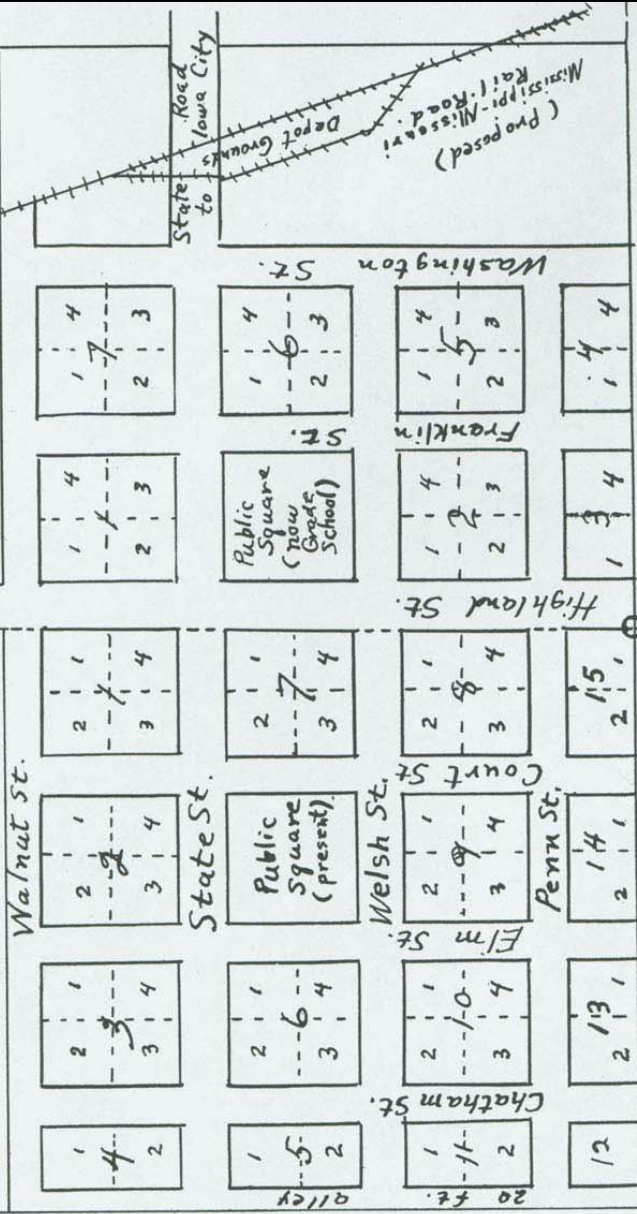
But Richard Williams had ambitions beyond the ownership of 40 acres. He no doubt saw the possibility of a town near his farm with an east-west rail road passing through it. In 1854 he purchased the 120 acres west and south of his 1851 original holdings from Hugh D. Downey of Iowa City. The same year he platted the "original town" of Williamsburg--with a railroad that didn't exist but was no doubt expected.

By 1856 the prospect that Williamsburg would get the railroad was no doubt gone. The southwest 40 acres was better suited for an "in-land town". So he had it platted as the "Williams Addition" to the town of Williamsburg, the part that today contains the business district.

This 40 acres, the 40 acres below and the 40 acres to its right were purchased from the U. S. A. by Hugh D. Downey in 1853 and sold to Richard Williams in 1854.  
(This part now contains the Williams Heirs' Addition.)

Richard Williams' 40 acre farm purchased from U. S. A., 1851  
(Today, "Hakes Addition")  
Saw Mill

(Present Highway)



"Original" Town of Williamsburg on above 40 acres, platted Apr. 1, 1854 by C. H. Stoddard for Richard Williams. The proposed rail road never materialized as originally planned,

Convergence of Sections	9	10
Twp. 79 N	16	15
Range 10 W		
(Troy Twp.)		

Above 40 acres is the Williams Addition Platted May 20, 1856. It eventually became the business section.

A "REASONABLE FACSIMILE" OF THE PLAT OF THE ORIGINAL TOWN OF WILLIAMSBURG as copied from the original plat in the Iowa County Recorder's Office, Land Deed Record Book 3, page 411. The plat bears the date, April 1, 1854. It was plated for Richard Williams, owner of the land, by C. H. Stoddard, surveyor. It was registered by Richard Williams July 4, 1854 at the county courthouse before Judge William Wallace, county judge. The name of the town — Williamsburg (Now named "original town of Williamsburg" to distinguish it from "Williams First Addition to the town of Williamsburg" added to it on the west two years later).

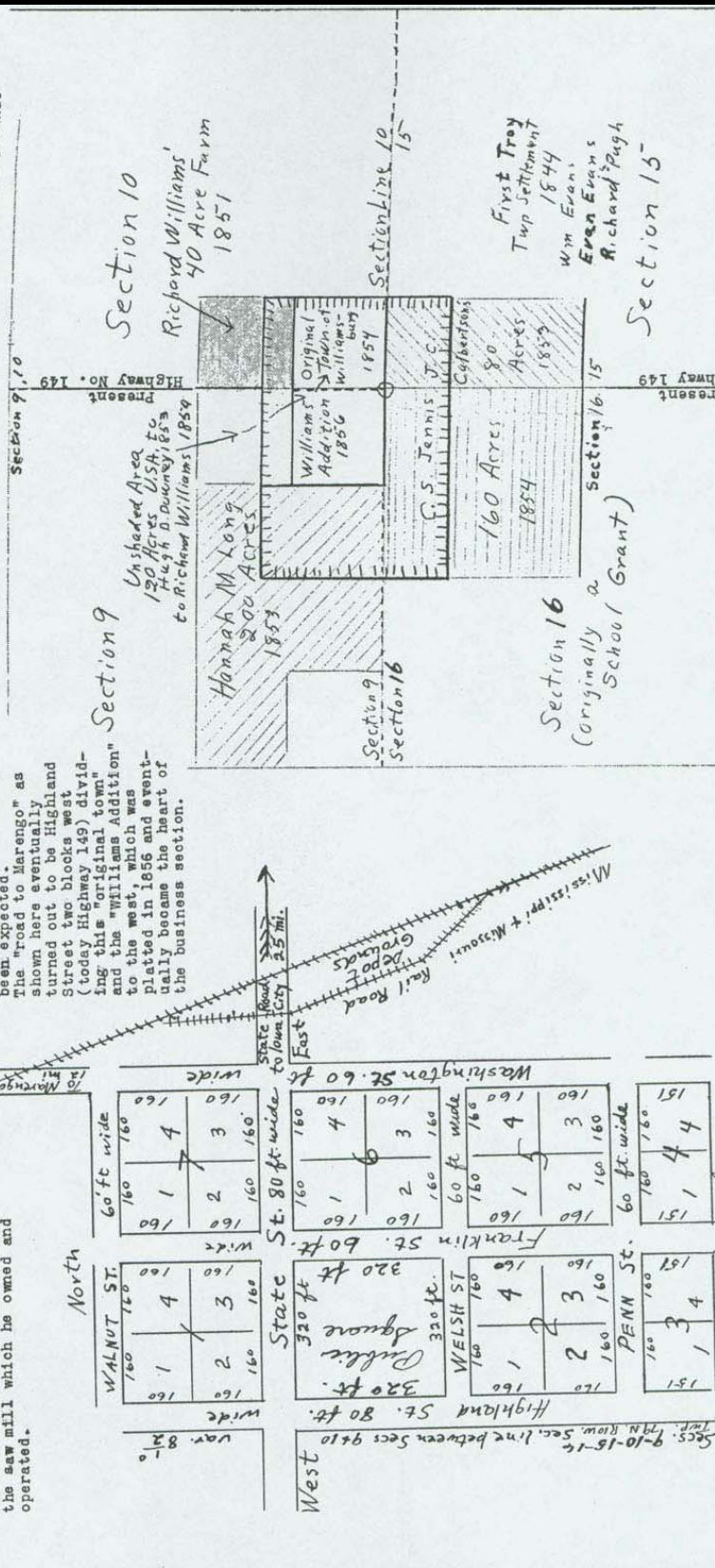
Editor's note: Richard Williams didn't actually live in the town of Williamsburg as plotted in 1854 but north of it, near the saw mill which he owned and operated.

Editor's note: The "Mississippi Missouri Rail Road" as shown on this map never materialized. It was thirty years later (1884) when a rail road came, and then it was a north and south route instead of an east and west route as had first been expected. The "road to Marengo" as shown here eventually turned out to be Highland Street (today Highway 149) dividing this "original town" and the "Williams Addition" to the west, which was plated in 1856 and eventually became the heart of the business section.

ORIGINAL LAND HOLDINGS THAT INCLUDE PRESENT DAY WILLIAMSBURG

Present-day Williamsburg, represented by the fringed rectangle on the above map, is contained in parts of Sections 9, 10, 15, & 16 of Troy Township, Iowa County, Iowa. The town planned by Richard Williams forms a rectangle within this rectangle. He had the "original town" platted in 1854 on the 40 acres south of his farm. The 40 acres west of it became the Williams Addition in 1856. Various additions from that day to now have increased Williamsburg to its present size. The original land entries with the size of the holdings are shown by the various rulings and shadings.

To help you to orient yourself as to what constituted the original town and the Williams Addition, take for the starting point the tiny circle at the meeting of the section lines. This point is on the west side of Highway 149 across from the south edge of the Catholic Church. 3 1/4 blocks north is the northern boundary. 3 1/4 blocks west is the west edge of the Williams Addition. The original town was two blocks in width from east to west plus the railroad grounds



### Williamsburg Milestones (1840-1957)

#### ➤ 1840 – 1850

- 3 married couples (Richard Pugh and wife, Anne Evans Pugh, and her two brothers, William Evans and wife Sara and Evan E. Evans and wife Jane) settled in Troy Township, Section 15 in 1844. These four families built log cabins and farmed with oxen. The nearest town was Iowa City.
- Richard Williams and his wife Jane Tudor Williams settled in Johnson County.
- In 1846 all four families attended Welsh Church southwest of Iowa City. All four families had letter from their church in Wales to join the new church. To attend church, they traveled 26 miles by ox-team and wagon on Sunday for 10 years.
- The Pugh's had 3 children (Richard Jr. – 1847, David – 1849, Mary Anne – 1850); Richard Williams had 2 girls (Elizabeth – Born 1843 and died in 1845, Elizabeth – 1848); William Evans had 5 boys and 5 girls; Evan Evans had 3 boys and 1 girl)
- Jane Tudor Williams died in 1848 and Richard Pugh, Sr. died in 1850.

#### ➤ 1851 – 1885

- From 1847 to 1851, only 25 couples were married in Iowa County.
- On January 4, 1851 Richard Williams and Anne Evans Pugh were married in Troy Township. Richard and Ann Pugh Williams had three children (Sara – 1852, Jennie – 1854, and John – 1856). The four older children from his first marriage lived with them making it a family of 7 children.
- 1851 Richard Williams bought 40 acres of land for \$1.25 an acre and built a sawmill on this land. In 1854 he bought 120 acres from Hugh Downey southwest of the original 40 acres. Hugh Downey had bought this land from the USA in 1853.
- In 1854, Richard Williams laid out the town of Williamsburg. There were only 6 houses and some lots sold for only \$25.
- In 1856, Richard Williams laid out the Williams addition west of the original town where the town park and business district is today. From 1856 to 1859, Williams donated land for 2 schools and 2 churches. The Welsh Church (Congregational) was organized on October 26, 1856 and the American Congregational Church was organized in 1857. In 1858, a 2 story school house was built.
- In 1860, Richard Williams died and Elizabeth Williams went to Johnson County to live with her uncle.
- From 1875 to 1885, Richard Pugh married Sara Jones, David Pugh married Sara A. Jones, Sara Williams married Ed Jones, Jennie Williams married Tom Jones, and John Williams married N. Walker. The three Pugh families and the Ed Jones stayed in Williamsburg. The Tom Jones and John Williams families moved to California.

#### ➤ 1880 – 1900

- In 1880 there were 130 residences in Williamsburg and several farmers living close to town. There were no gravel and/or paved roads in Williamsburg, only wagon roads.
- In 1884, the railroad came to Conroy, Williamsburg, and Parnell.
- In 1884 the Williamsburg Journal newspaper was started. In 1885, the Williamsburg Tribune newspaper was started. In 1901 the two newspapers merged to form the Williamsburg Journal Tribune.
- In 1885, the town was incorporated. The first mayor was W.R. Evans.
- From 1886 to 1887 a new brick school house was built with two stories the lower elementary school is now. A fairground was built east of Williamsburg.

- From 1887 to 1890 improvements were made to the water works and gas lights installed. In 1895 to 1898, the water works was improved with deep water wells, new electric lines came into town (e.g. 1 from Cedar Rapids, 1 from Marengo).
- From 1898 to 1899, the following businesses were established: a brick yard southeast of town, a canning factory, a Co-op creamery, and a telephone company (52 Jones listed).

### ➤ 1900 – 1957

- In 1908, a new four year high school was built where the post office is today.
- In 1911, Eugene Ely, from York Township, flew the first airplane to land on and take off from the Pennsylvania ship in the Pacific ocean in California (Note: A mural commemorating this is in the lobby of the current post office).
- From 1912 to 1920, brick streets were laid. From 1918 to 1926, the Model T Fords were introduced and in 1927 the Model-A Fords and some Chevrolet were introduced. In 1934 V-8 cars were introduced.
- From 1930-31, Highway 149 was paved through Williamsburg and along with a few Williamsburg streets.
- In 1936, a new elementary grade school was built.
- In 1939, the first W.H.S. year book was published and City hall and the fire station were built on the north side of the square.
- In 1948, TV black and white sets were in dealer stores and had no remotes. Stations were only on for 6 hours per day.
- In 1950, the first school buses were purchased for the Williamsburg school district.
- From 1956 to 1957, a new high school was built on the west edge of Williamsburg which included a junior high.
- In 1957, dial telephones were introduced in Williamsburg.