

West Lawrence

THE VILLAGE OF LAWRENCE, THE 'PRETTIEST IN THE TOWNSHIP'

Real-estate brokers know what makes a home important to a potential buyer: Location, location, location.

Lawrence's location at the end of an American Indian trail gave it an early advantage for attracting settlers.

Gradually that trail widened and motorists today use it as a major road connecting Anderson and Indianapolis.

Original plats of Lanesville - the first community of present-day Lawrence – centered around Pendleton State Road. Founder James White's plats, on the southwest corner of what is now Franklin Road and Pendleton Pike, were laid out Feb. 27, 1849. A second plat, North Lanesville, was laid out Dec. 27, 1850.

Reuben Hunter formed a third early addition June 14, 1852. Samuel Records entered 1 addition Nov. 5, 1856. Four more additions as well as William M. Voorhes addition north of the railroad followed on unspecified dates.

Historian B.R. Sulgrove, author of the 1884 book "History of Indianapolis and Marion County," also describes an addition to Lanesville laid out by Robinson & Co. That addition was west of North Lanesville and contained 368 lots during a great real-estate boom, Sulgrove's history shows. The book also points out that the Robinson & Co. addition "never benefited the town."

Each of these early plats to Lanesville was an area east of Interstate 465 on both sides of Franklin Road between 42nd and 46th Streets.

A 1927 report from The Indianapolis News describes Lawrence as "one of the county's most picturesque towns... which has enjoyed no less than five different names."

Besides Lanesville, North Lanesville and Lawrence, the other town names were these:

- Huntersville, after Reuben Hunter.
- Recordsville, after Samuel Records.

The town of Lanesville became Lawrence, thanks to several circumstances, primarily the name of the township.

When Marion County was established, it was divided into nine townships, named in 1822. Lawrence Township honored War of 1812 hero James Lawrence whose most remembered words were "Don't Give Up the ship!"

The first township names are the same, which exist today; however, in the earliest years, several of the townships were operated as one due to a lack of population. Lawrence and Washington townships shared administrators, such as constables, until they were separated on Oct. 6, 1826.

The early post offices in Lawrence Township were located in Lanesville, Castleton and Oakland. Oakland's post office was later renamed Oaklandon.

For some reason, James R. Beard, the first postmaster of Lanesville, put the name of Lawrence on the post office in 1847 or 1848, perhaps to establish the office's dominance as the official township post office, over Castleton and Oakland. In addition, another Lanesville in Harrison County, Ind., also had a post office and the mail mix-up between the two created confusion.

According to The Indianapolis News, in 1866 the Marion County commissioners "put their foot down on whims" and officially named the village Lawrence to correspond with the name on the post office.

The first merchant in old Lanesville, according to Sulgrove, was Elijah Knight. By 1884 when Sulgrove wrote his history, Lawrence was nine miles northeast of Indianapolis. He describes the town as follows:

"The streets are well-graded and graveled; the buildings are in good condition, and the village is a lively little place, and the prettiest in the township. No village of the size in Marion County outranks it in enterprising businessmen.

"The Western Union Telegraph Company have (sic) an office there, and it has a telephonic connection with all important towns in Indiana. It has a graded school, a Methodist and Baptist Church, an Odd-Fellow' lodge, and a lodge of Knights of Honor; two physicians (Dr. Samuel Records and Smith H. Mapes, M.D.); two general dry goods stores, conducted by M.E. Freeman and H.M. Newhouse & Co., both doing a thriving business. William Hubbard has the oldest drugstore, is a man of the strictest integrity and has an extensive trade. Mapes & White carry a large stop of goods, and though the first is new, it is an enterprising one. Peters Brothers have a knife-manufactory. M.C. Dawson manufactures drain-tile, and does a business not surpassed by any firm in that line in the county. The population of the village is about 150. M.E. Freeman is the postmaster."

By 1927, The News described Lawrence this way: "The town of late years, has been important in the ever-increasing suburban life of the county as new country home additions for those employed in the city rapidly develop. The stores of Lawrence enjoy a brisk patronage from this source with the additional trade of numerous soldiers from Fort Harrison, who give the town a martial air by day and night."

"Lawrence is a regular stop for 'week-end tourists' who can find many a scenic drive in the hills and valleys of the neighborhood. The Lawrence grade and high school serves the district for miles about and its wintertime schedule of basketball contest is a source of

lively entertainment. As more and more Indianapolis residents seek the fresh air of the countryside, Lawrence is destined to become one of the most important community centers in Marion County."