

## Vinland, Kansas



An early settlement of [Douglas County](#), Vinland is situated along the [Atchison, Topeka and Santa Fe Railroad](#) about seven miles south of [Lawrence](#). The first settlers came in 1854, among them Jacob Branson, Charles W. Dow, Franklin N. Coleman, W. E. Barnes, George Cutler, F.B. Varnum, William White, Josiah Hargous, Harrison W. Buckley and several others. They were mostly abolitionists spurred on by the [Kansas-Nebraska Act](#) settling in [Kansas](#) to make it a [Free-State](#). Renowned Jayhawker Silas Soule was also among the first settlers. Like much of eastern [Kansas](#), Vinland struggled in the [Bleeding Kansas](#) period to keep the land free from slavery, and at least one man was killed in the [Battle of Black Jack](#) in June, 1856.

The town was first named Vineland due to it being the home of William Barnes' orchards and nursery and all the new settlers quickly planted fruit trees and gardens. Due to a clerical error that omitted the "e," it became known as Vinland. Barnes old storage facility still stands and is considered the oldest barn in [Douglas County](#).



The Coal Creek Library in Vinland is one of the oldest west of the Mississippi River, photo courtesy [Wikipedia](#).

In 1857 a sawmill was erected by N.C. Cradit & Co. on Coal Creek. The first school was opened in a small building in the fall of 1858, taught by A.W. Smith. The town was of some importance during the years 1857-58, but did not grow much. It received a post office in 1868 with George Cuter appointed as the first postmaster. On July 1, 1870, Russell & Davis opened the first store. In 1874, a cheese factory was established, and in 1878, the Presbyterian Church was built.

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From 1914 to 1916, Dr. James C. Naismith, inventor of the game of basketball, served as minister of the Presbyterian Church. At that time, he was also serving as chaplain and physical education professor at the University of Kansas in nearby [Lawrence](#).

Vinland's population peaked in the 1920s, when it boasted three churches, two stores, a grain elevator, the Grange Hall, a bank, the train depot, a service station, the cheese factory, a few other businesses, and several dwellings. It began to decline along with rail passenger service, the depression of the 1930's, and consolidation of schools. By 1954, the town had dwindled to such a degree that its post office was closed.

Today the hamlet is part of the [Lawrence](#) Metropolitan Statistical Area and those who live in the vicinity are primarily running agricultural and dairy farms. It's tiny downtown consists of about a dozen homes, many of which are a century old, a small airfield, elementary school, the Grange Hall, and the Coal Creek Library, which is one of the oldest libraries west of the Mississippi River, operating since 1859. Vinland hosts an annual country fair which attracts numerous visitors.



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Compiled by [Kathy Weiser/Legends of Kansas](#), updated April, 2010.

**About the Article:** Much of the historic text in this articles comes from *Kansas: A Cyclopedia of State History*, edited by Frank W. Blackmar, published in 1912 as well as *Kansas: History of the State of Kansas*, by William G. Cutler; published in 1883 . However, other sources have also been used, the content combined, and heavily edited.