

Small Historic Towns across America.

Danville was founded in 1827 on 60 acres of land donated by Guy W. Smith and 20 acres donated by Dan W. Beckwith. The sale of lots was set for April 10, 1827 and advertised in newspapers in Indianapolis, Indiana and the state capital of Vandalia. The first post office was established in May of the same year in the house of Amos Williams, organizer of Vermilion and Edgar Counties and a prominent Danville citizen. Williams and Beckwith drew up the first plat map; the city was named after Dan Beckwith at Williams' suggestion, although Beckwith suggested the names "Williamsburg" and "Williamstown". Beckwith was born in Pennsylvania in 1795 and moved to Indiana as a young man; in 1819 he accompanied the first white explorers to the area where Danville later existed because of his interest in the salt springs of the Vermilion River. He died in 1835 of pneumonia contracted on a horseback ride back from Washington; he was 40 years old. Danville became a major industrial city in the late 19th and early twentieth centuries. From the 1850s to the 1940s, Danville was an important coal mining area; some of the first open pit mining techniques were practiced here. The coal formation underlying eastern Illinois and western Indiana is named the "Danville Member," after the area where it was first discovered. With the closure of the mines and many factories, Danville's economic base suffered in the latter half of the 20th century. The former mines were converted into lakes, creating fishing and recreation opportunities at parks such as Kickapoo State Recreation Area and Kennekuk Cove County Park. Danville is located approximately 120 miles south of Chicago, 35 miles east of Champaign-Urbana, and 90 miles west of Indianapolis, Indiana. Illinois Route 1, U.S. Route 136, and U.S. Route 150 intersect in Danville; Interstate 74 passes through the south end of town. Lake Vermilion is located on the northwest side of town. The president at that time was president John Quincy Adams.

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