

G.S. Williams & Sons, Inc. Eliminates a Three-Generation Drainage Problem By Enlisting the Expertise and Versatility of Dean Drainage, LLC.



Thanks to the strategic planning, superior equipment, and punctuality of Dean's crew, G.S. Williams & Sons was presented with the proper analysis and the solution they needed to end a drainage problem that had plagued their family for three generations.

Challenge:

G. S. Williams & Sons, Inc. has been farming in Douglas County, Illinois for three generations. During that time, they have battled a severe drainage problem at one of their farms. In high rainfall years, Williams & Sons would lose 80 of the 240 acres at the North Place farm in Sargent Township to ponding. In agribusiness, just like any other industry, that loss translates to shrinking profit and has a rippling effect throughout the management of the entire enterprise.

Steve Williams leads the operations of Williams & Sons. With a wide range of knowledge and experience reaching back decades, Steve and his sons, Luke, Chris, and Brock, offer a variety of products and services, from seed corn to commodity trading and consulting. The reputation of the company echoes the message of stewardship in their slogan, "Leaving the land better than we found it."

Through the years, Williams & Sons has made attempts to drain the acreage at the North Place. In a cooperative effort to establish a new outlet in 1956, they partnered with a group of six landowners representing a total watershed of 800 acres. The first step was to have the North Place surveyed, but the technology at the time indicated that there was not enough change in grade for the project to succeed.

In 1963, Williams built a waterway to relieve some of the pressure in the problem area. There was another attempt at implementing the project in 1971, but the momentum stagnated due to a lack of cooperation between landowners. Following a few changes in landownership during the next forty years, Williams & Sons was close to facilitating the effort once again.

Solution:

In 2009, Steve Williams contacted Bill Dean of Dean Drainage, LLC to have the acreage surveyed again. Equipped with the latest surveying technology, Dean Drainage deployed their Trimble RTK ATV-mounted unit and rapidly mapped the topography of the North Place. Due to the high precision and accuracy of the equipment, Dean Drainage was able to show comprehensive proof that the desired grade change was present and that the project would be a success.

"Precision had to be excellent. And Bill proved that with his equipment and his ability. So that was essential to the success of the project."

**—Steve Williams
G. S. Williams
& Sons, Inc.**

Over the next year, Steve won the support for the cooperative drain project from all other six landowners. In April of 2010, they broke ground. It was spring, and timing was essential.

With the right equipment readily available and the capability to instantly download the design to their 2600 Hydramaxx Wheel Trencher and 450 Wolfe Plow, Dean Drainage was able to be on site and work efficiently as weather permitted. Guided by the same GPS technology used in the survey, they installed 1600 feet of 18-inch dual wall corrugated plastic pipe to complete the outlet.

Thanks to the strategic planning, superior equipment, and punctuality of Dean's crew, G. S. Williams & Sons was presented with the proper analysis and the solution they needed to end a drainage problem that had plagued their family for three generations. Steve was impressed with Bill's capabilities.



From left, Steve Williams & Bill Dean

“He had the ability to run on a very slight grade. Because we're at the bottom of the bowl, we had very little grade to work with. So the accuracy of the equipment was crucial to the success of the project. We could not have anything out of grade, or we were going to have problems.

When you have all kinds of fall, you don't have those issues. But we did not... Precision had to be excellent. And Bill proved that with his equipment and his ability. So that was essential to the success of the project,” Steve said.

With the outlet finished, the project moved forward. Over the following years, all seven landowners had Dean install systems to drain the complete 800 acres into the new cooperative drain. According to Steve Williams, the project continues to pay dividends.

Results:

In 2012, Williams & Sons system-tiled the first 80 acres of the North Place and tied into the cooperative drain. In that first year, they compared the yields of the tiled 80 acres to the untilled 80 acres next to it and

saw a 38 bu/A increase. Steve was happy to see the dramatic increase, but he knew that it was partially due to having lost so much acreage during wet years in the past.

With confidence, he continued to have Dean Drainage tile another 80 acres each year until the project was complete. The results continued to show proof of increased production. Current analysis by Williams & Sons shows that over the five years since the cooperative drain was installed, they have seen an average of an 11 bu/A increase.

Steve estimated that the project would require 10-11 years to recoup the amount invested, but that the investment should last 70-80 years. According to Steve, solving this one problem amplified the success and profitability of Williams & Sons' total acreage.

He believes that tiling projects go way beyond draining water. After the success of their project, Williams & Sons saw the productivity of their fields continue to improve. The drainage system created more opportunities to get work done. Before the project, he was constantly playing the waiting game. Consequently, he would miss the optimum time to plant, apply ammonia, or harvest. He was always battling the lingering effects of the weather. Precise drainage has removed that barrier.

“We're always trying to create solutions. And, really, in creating solutions, we're eliminating objections. An objection here was that we couldn't get on the farm when we needed to. By creating that solution, we've eliminated that problem. Every time we eliminate problems, we increase our overall profitability,” Steve said.

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