



PULASKI COUNTY
HISTORICAL SOCIETY
MUSEUM

The Story of Us

WINAMAC TOWN PARK: PART 2 OF A SERIES OF 5

THE ARTESIAN WELL

2022

Winamac Park Series

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Artesian Well: The Beginning

The story of the artesian well begins on a cold February evening in 1887 when residents met at Vurpillat's Hall. They shared dreams of future wealth in oil and natural gas, as Indiana was in the middle of a natural gas boom. Companies were drilling on the west side of the county, and discoveries of both oil and natural gas had been made.

The Winamac Gas & Oil Company was formed on that February night. In June, they sank a well on Water Street in search of oil. Oil was not found, but water was!

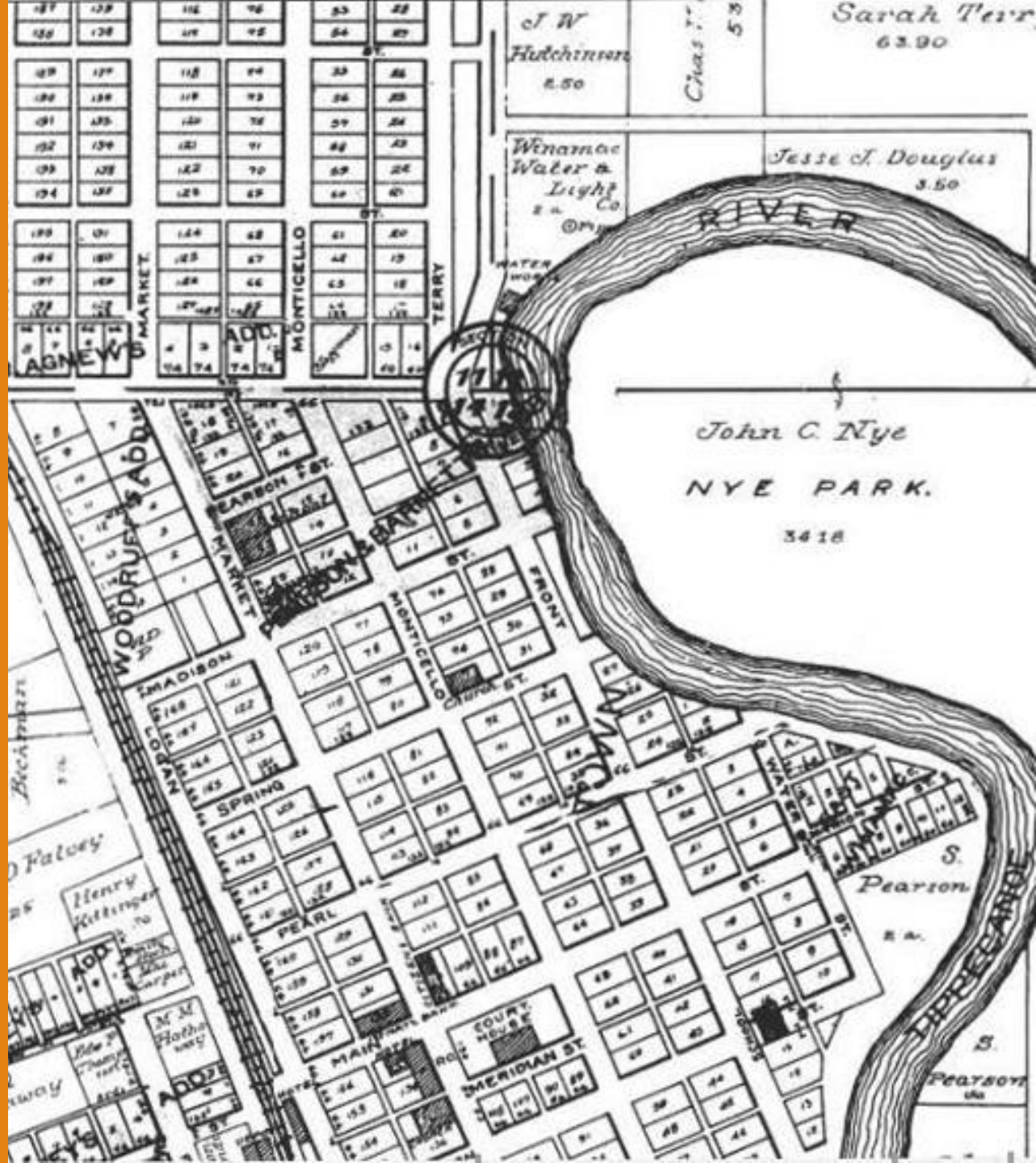
Barnett's Peninsula

Plat Map from 1873 showing ownership of the peninsula, and much of the land around it, by W. C. Barnett. While not marked, you can see the town comes right to the river; there is no park on the west side.



Nye Park

Plat map from 1907 showing ownership of the peninsula by John C. Nye. More visible, you can see the private properties of Winamac residents owned up to the river. You can see Water Street, which runs from Pearl Street to Jefferson Street. Fun fact, the "S Pearson" property connected to the privately-owned plots is the son of John Pearson, the man credited with naming the town for "Chief Winamac."



Artesian Well: The Beginning

The well turned into a cottage industry. Young boys, instead of paper routes, would tote containers of artesian water to homes and businesses. An attempt was made to interest tourists in the “medicinal properties” of the water, and artesian baths were also considered.

The artesian water love affair didn't last long. By 1889, a short two years later, Winamac was turning its attention to the building of a water works and electric plant. People wanted water piped into their homes.

Cottage Industry

From RootsWeb, a photo submitted by Jerry A. Mosholder. "This is a photo of my great-uncle William Ewing driving the dray which was operated by his father, Milton Ewing. William said that he was beginning to develop customers in Chicago to whom he was delivering artesian water." Circa 1900



Artesian Well: The Beginning

On the other side of the river, on the “peninsula,” another history was taking place. In 1908, Mr. Nye sold his property to Ben Herrick. Mr. Herrick planned to convert the land to private use. On the day he began cutting trees, citizens banded together to raise funds to purchase the property. They raised enough on the first day to retire the debt, and the Winamac Park Association was born. The park remained available to residents at no charge.

The Park Association raised funds in 1922 to improve the park on the peninsula. Late in 1921, the Winamac Kiwanis Club had been formed. The two groups together envisioned a premier tourist attraction using both sides of land at the bend of the river.

The Well in 1905

This photo dates to 1905 and was submitted by Dee Galbreath for use in the book *Images of America: Pulaski County*



Artesian Well: The Beginning

It cannot be determined from Town minutes, but either the descendants of Mr. Nye approached the Kiwanis Club, or the Club approached the Nyes. They family still owned land on the west side of the river. The plots of land included the historic artesian well. The area by the well was also the site of two local fords from the town to the park, one at Pearl Street and one at Market. It was the place that both permanent bridges had been attempted and temporary bridges were still placed “in season.”

A representative of the Kiwanis Club approached the Town Council with the idea of purchasing the land. Minutes were not specific, and it is unknown if the Town, at that time, envisioned another public park. While their intent was not clear in the minutes, they were amenable to the purchase. Water Street was vacated, and by 1923, this area was public property. The Town was happy to leave the details to the Kiwanis Club.

The Well in 1915

1915 PHOTO, TAKEN FROM
ROOTSWEB.COM.



1915 Artesian Well at Winamac

Artesian Well: The Beginning

Either through invitation or self-driven in this regard, in 1923, R. E. Nutt spoke to the Park Association about a suspension bridge that he believed could be installed for \$2,000. The Association approached the Town, asking them to share expenses on a 50/50 basis. The Town agreed, so long as they did not have to pay more than \$1,000.

The bid, when submitted, of course came in higher than \$2,000, The Town of Winamac refused to pay more than \$1,000, so the item was tabled until the Park Association and the Kiwanis Club could make a plan to pay for it. The Park Association took to the streets and raised the necessary funds before a planned meeting could take place.

The Well in 1922



In this photograph, taken about 1922, young Reuben Olson sips artesian water from the well, while his father, Charles, looks on. By 1920, the well had been damaged through age and vandalism, and it was improved and repaired in that year. Photo submitted by Charlene Olson Fritz for use in the book *Images of America: Pulaski County*

Artesian Well: The Beginning

With the necessary funds coming in, the Town accepted Mr. Nutt's bid in April. By May, Memorial was under construction, and the Park Association launched into additional improvements to their privately-owned "river park." At the same time, the Kiwanis Club put their members to work.

The new town park, which included the artesian well, was to become a campground. Club members provided a general clean-up and put the area in shape for use by auto tourists. "Combination dining tables and seats for the use of picnic parties" were constructed. Two camp stoves were erected and a cinder walk from the well to the footbridge was installed.

Winamac's Tourist Attraction

POSTCARD FROM
CARDCOW.COM.



Artesian Well,

Winamac, Ind.

CardCow

Artesian Well: The Beginning

The plan was coming together. A first-rate campground on the west side and a first-rate park on the other, with a permanent bridge to bind the two.

GREETINGS FROM WINAMAC, INDIANA



WINAMAC'S FAMOUS ARTESIAN WELL

PRESS, WINAMAC

Winamac's Tourist Attraction

THIS POSTCARD WAS
SWIPED FROM THE
INTERNET!

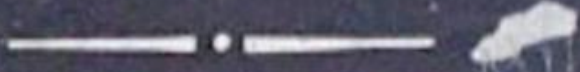
Good Things Don't Always Last

The well eventually ran dry, a victim of other water projects in town. Projects which created issues with the pressure of the artesian well. Eventually, the well was capped, and it exists today only as a point of history.

In 2022, 135 Years Old

This placard was placed by the Pulaski County Historical Society on the 100th anniversary of the artesian well's drilling.

THE ARTESIAN WELL



This well was drilled in 1887 by the Winamac Gas & Oil Co., during Indiana's natural gas boom. The water vein was struck at 284 feet; drilling ceased at 1,200 feet.

The area between well and river was privately owned and platted as East Winamac until purchased by the town of Winamac in 1922 and established as a public park. The Memorial Bridge was dedicated July 4, 1923.

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