

Winona Railroad: An Interesting Part Of Our Heritage

By WILLIAM DARR

One can get a glimpse of the past by taking a look at the present. First, drop by the Amtrak station in Warsaw in the morning or evening when the passenger train stops to pick up or leave off passengers; and then observe the size and the style of the railroad equipment. Then drive on North Hickory Street, which has the Conrail tracks running down the middle of the street, to experience the feeling of a railroad track in a place usually reserved for motor vehicles. Both ventures used to be common, every-day experiences in Warsaw and in Kosciusko County.

Railroads have played an important role in the development of Kosciusko County. All cities and towns, with the exception of North Webster, are located by, and grew up along, these ribbons of steel. Most of the railroads ran east-west and connected the industrial East with Chicago and the West. These lines were constructed after the Civil War and into the late 1800s by Eastern investors. However, one of these railroads, which no longer exists, was a local phenomenon.

A lake east of Warsaw had been called Eagle Lake, and the area around the north shore of the lake was called Spring Fountain Park. This area was described in the 1870s as being infested with bullfrogs, dead trees and having an abundance of low and marshy ground. This area had been partially developed in the 1880s by the Beyer brothers, German immigrants who used the area as a small recreational area; and used the water from the natural springs to cool the eggs and butter that they purchased from local farmers, and then shipped and sold these products to markets in such places as New York and Boston.

IN THE LATE 1880s a Presbyterian minister, whose father had been one of the founders of Wabash College, was looking for a place to locate a Chautauqua and Bible conference in the Midwest. The Chautauqua movement, which got its name from an upstate New York town of the same name, was a system of bringing culture and education to the common people. One has to remember that there were no televisions, VCRs, radios or movies at this time. Entertainment and education was live.

Sol Dickey was that Presbyterian minister, and he felt that this Spring Fountain Park area would be perfect for a Christian Chautauqua, so arrangements were made for its purchase from the Beyer brothers, and the lake and the area were renamed Winona.

Obviously, it would require more than the 5,000 citizens of Warsaw to provide the crowds to attend such gatherings. Transportation of the day was more or less limited to bicycles, horse and buggy, and the steam railroad. The main line of the

EDITOR'S NOTE: The accompanying article is the second in a series written by the fifth class of the Kosciusko Leadership Academy. It is geared toward other members of the group as part of a final project. Twenty-five people, chosen on recommendation of board members and employers, took part in the 16 sessions making up the academy. Seminars dealt with various topics, with one of the goals being the development of "informed and capable leaders." The final project essays analyze various community challenges, listing factual background, then making recommendations. The reports will be featured each Tuesday in The Times-Union.

track used by the shuttle train would no longer be available for local use.

The economic survival of Winona depended on the guests delivered to its gates by this shuttle, and without the "dummy" the future of Winona Lake as a Christian Chautauqua center was in doubt. In 1902, 12 Pennsylvania and eight "Big Four" passenger trains stopped in Warsaw each day. Imagine, for a moment, what it would be like for 10,000 people, on a busy day, to be transported the three miles between the Warsaw train stations and Winona Lake utilizing horse and buggies on unpaved streets. Winona was facing a major problem.

America, at the turn of the century, was devoting a great deal of its energies to achieving technological superiority over the rest of the world. This was the era of great inventors and inventions, and among these inventions was the electric trolley. The trolley cars were powered by electricity which was supplied to the trolley by means of an overhead wire.

Thus, the necessity of getting visitors between Warsaw and Winona Lake seemed, to the board of directors of the Winona Institutions, as a natural use of the electric trolley, and as a result of Winona and Warsaw Railroad was incorporated on Oct. 30, 1902, to carry guests to and from Winona Lake.

The Eastern border of Warsaw, in 1902, was in the vicinity of Bronson Street. The land between this area and Winona Lake apparently was mostly farm ground. There was a golf course in the area of present day OEC, Arnolt's and Armstrong Products companies. The streets of Warsaw, with the exception of the uptown area which were paved in 1903, were gravel. The trolley tracks were placed in the middle of the city streets. A local historian described the scene as "awful lines of big poles on either side of the street and with wires that were suspended from the poles." These tracks were of standard gauge, the distance between the rails, and used wooden ties. The

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... Rd. 19, until State Rd. 19 in easterly jog in Fulton County Rd. 100 South. At point the Winona ran the west side of State Rd. reached Akron. There was yard on the north side of e area of the present day line continued down the of Akron, which then tion of 1,000. After going downtown area the line o the area of the present r Company. The line e now abandoned Erie t with a timber bridge. a concrete and steel south abutment of the visible.

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Miami County ment to Chili ssed under the alia Railroad. State Rd. 19, the electrical is now part of ment dealer- th Peru seg- le-mile right- abandoned by, a division of d included a River. The Brownell, ing utilized e line then is to a staed with the interurban mati and.

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and Syracuse. Phas
construction plans
construction of the
Warsaw and Goshen.

The right-of-way of
Division was 50 feet
16-foot graded roadway
topography presented
construction problems.
River, south of Goshen,
192-foot twin steel span,
are still visible between
of State Rd. 15 and Conrai
pecanoe River north of Wa
spanned with an 80-foot
bridge. It was reported th
foot-wide sink hole near
Junction, in the area of the
day golf course, required spli
ings that were driven 70 feet
firm foundation to stabilize the
bed.

WHEN THIS 1906 project
completed, documents indic
that towns served by the Winona
the following populations: Gosl
15,000; New Paris, 1,200; Milfc
2,000; Milford Junction, 5
Leesburg, 1,000; Warsaw, 5,000; a
although it was not officially a to
until 1914, Winona Lake, who
population varied from 500 to 7,00
The marketing people of the day
stated the railroad had an average
tributary population of 1,200 people
per mile living within a strip of 1.5
miles on either side of the track bet
ween Goshen and Warsaw, but not
including the population of the cities
listed above. The Winona was con
sidered a real boon. An authority on
Indiana interurbans stated that pre
sent day citizens would find it im
possible to realize the isolation
which was the lot of the typical rural
resident around 1900.

The construction of the Warsaw
Goshen branch, and the possible
construction outlined in its incor
poration papers necessitated the
construction of a much larger
powerhouse than the one mentioned
earlier. This new powerhouse is the
building presently occupied by
Gatke Corp. The original smoke
stack, which was removed in 1971,
was 175 feet tall and eight feet in
diameter. Water to feed the four
boilers came from an intake crib in
Winona Lake 200 feet from shore. A
36-inch wooden pipe connected the
crib with shore and a tile pipe. The
discharge conduit was also 36 inches
in diameter and emptied into
Winona Lake about 150 feet from the
intake crib. It is unknown if these
pipes still exist. There were four
large coal fired boilers which pro
vided a normal flow of 140 pounds of
steam pressure to two Allis
Chalmers engines designed to pro
vide a continuous load of 750 horse
power, with a maximum load of 850
horse power each. Each engine,
with its 20 foot in diameter
flywheels, was connected to a

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Obviously, it would require more
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steam railroad. The main line of the
Pittsburgh, Fort Wayne and
Chicago Railroad, later the Penn
sylvania, and now Conrail, ran
through both Winona Lake and War
saw. There were stations in both
places. Warsaw was also served
from the north and the south by the
Cleveland, Cincinnati, Chicago and
St. Louis Railroad or the "Big
Four," later the New York Central,
now also part of Conrail. The War
saw Pennsylvania station still
stands between Lake and
Washington streets. The "Big Four"
passenger station was in the area
where the offices of the Little Crow
Milling Company now stands at the
corner of Hickory and Market
streets. The Winona Lake Penn
sylvania station was located behind
the mobile home park on Kings
Highway. People getting off the
Pennsylvania and the "Big Four" in
Warsaw would board a Penn
sylvania Railroad "dummy," or
shuttle train, which consisted of a
steam engine and several passenger
cars, for the trip between Warsaw
and Winona Lake, which in 1900
made 16 round trips a day. Crowds
from all over Indiana and the
Eastern part of the United States
poured into Winona Lake for its pro
grams, and the healthful relaxation
of the resort offered.

HOWEVER, BECAUSE OF the
growth of the "West" and the in
crease in its freight and passenger
traffic, the Pennsylvania Railroad
served notice in 1902 that it would be
"double tracking" its line, and the

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dard gauge, the distance between
the rails, and used wooden ties. The
installation looked similar to a
modern railroad, with the exception
of the overhead wires. The first cars
were pulled by a small steam
engine, because the electrical
generating facility and electrical
distribution equipment had not been
completed.

THE ORIGINAL POWER house
was in the red brick building that
forms the south end of the present
AMPI, formerly Litchfield, plant on
Argonne Road. The track ran from
Center to Market to Lake, then on
west on Market to Lake, then on
Lake to Center where it turned back
east on Center Street. The single
track ran down the middle of Center
to an area between Maple and Bron
son streets where "passing" tracks
were installed. The track continued
east on present day Center Street to
what is now McKinley Street. There,
at the location of a soon to be aban
doned Conrail siding, the track turn
ed south and continued south where
they passed under the Pennsylvania
Railroad tracks next to the power
house. This underpass, the current
entrance to Gatke's, was especially
constructed for use of the W and W.
Today the grassy area between
Gatke's parking lot and the Winona
Hotel gives little evidence that the
trolleys made a loop, or circle, there
and stopped at a large combination
railroad station, office, and en
trance gate to the grounds of Winona
Lake.

During the first three months of
(See Winona on Page 10a)

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