

SPRING RISES, FALLS IN POPULARITY

Minnewan Springs Company makes bathhouse out of waters

While farming was one of the main pursuits in the early history of Lawrence, it seemed the early residents had nothing against a little commercial enterprise.

The charming pond just north of the former headquarters building 10 Fort Benjamin Harrison, south of the entrance to Fort Harrison State Park and across the street from the new Lawrence City Building is the only visual evidence of Minnewan Springs, waters that were once considered special.

Minnewan Springs is no longer visible, but Jeannine Montgomery, naturalist at Fort Harrison State Park indicates that pinpointing the location of the spring is a simple task for a geologist. The spring would have been directly below today's site of the water tower at the former Fort Benjamin Harrison. "No doubt the Army engineers utilized the water pressure from the springs for their water supply," she reasoned.

The pond which is visible today and no doubt contains waters from the former springs, was dug in 1985 by the Army as part of a passive park for the corner of old Shafter Road and Greene Avenue. The pond is named Hawthorne Memorial Pond for World War II tank corps veteran Parvin R. Hawthorne. Hawthorne was an engineer who was instrumental in digging Delaware Lake, now located in Fort Harrison State Park.

People came from miles around to drink from the spring and bathe in the waters of Minnewan Springs.

An early settler, Abraham Vines, owned the property, which is described by Indianapolis and Marion County Historian B.R. Sulgrove as three springs situated in the midst of a grove.

What is known is that the time of the discovery was 1860 and that Abraham Vines, who held a large amount of property in the Lawrence area, was then the owner.

Perhaps Abraham Vines really believed the springs had medicinal value. They were certainly located in a picturesque spot, which would promote rest and relaxation. Vines sold the property to a development company the Minnewan Springs Company - comprised of speculators from Indianapolis. Sulgrove lists the developers as J.L. Hunt, James Maolsley and Ruth Maulsley.

"Great excitement" surrounded the discovery of the waters and the Minnewan Springs Company erected a bathhouse, "fitted up" the springs and otherwise made the property accessible. Thomas D. Worrall was the property manager. The water was also bottled and sold.

Unfortunately, at some point, the waters were tested and found to have little, if any, medicinal value. Thus, on the 22nd of April, 1871, the Minnewan Springs Company was

sold to Smart and the property reverted to the picturesque spring it had been once.

More than 100 years later, in September 1989, Lawrence historian Henry Trittipio wrote in the Lawrence Journal of the discovery of the Vines family burial plot in Lawrence, amid a pile of underbrush, between Esquire Plaza and 42nd Street. A neighbor to the site reported she had played there as a girl and that 21 graves had been there. In addition to a stone with the name Abraham Vines, Trittipio found stones reading. "James Abraham, died August 23, 1854; Lilly Ella, died September 30, 1868; Amelia Belle, died October 12, 1868."

Trittipio also quotes Tom Royer, apparently an officer or civilian at Fort Benjamin Harrison, who had written in the Lawrence Journal, "several years ago" that Vines fathered 24 children by three wives. Sixteen of Vines' children, his first wife, Sarah Park Beard Vines and his second wife Sophia Hedricks Vines buried in an "old cemetery" in Lawrence.