

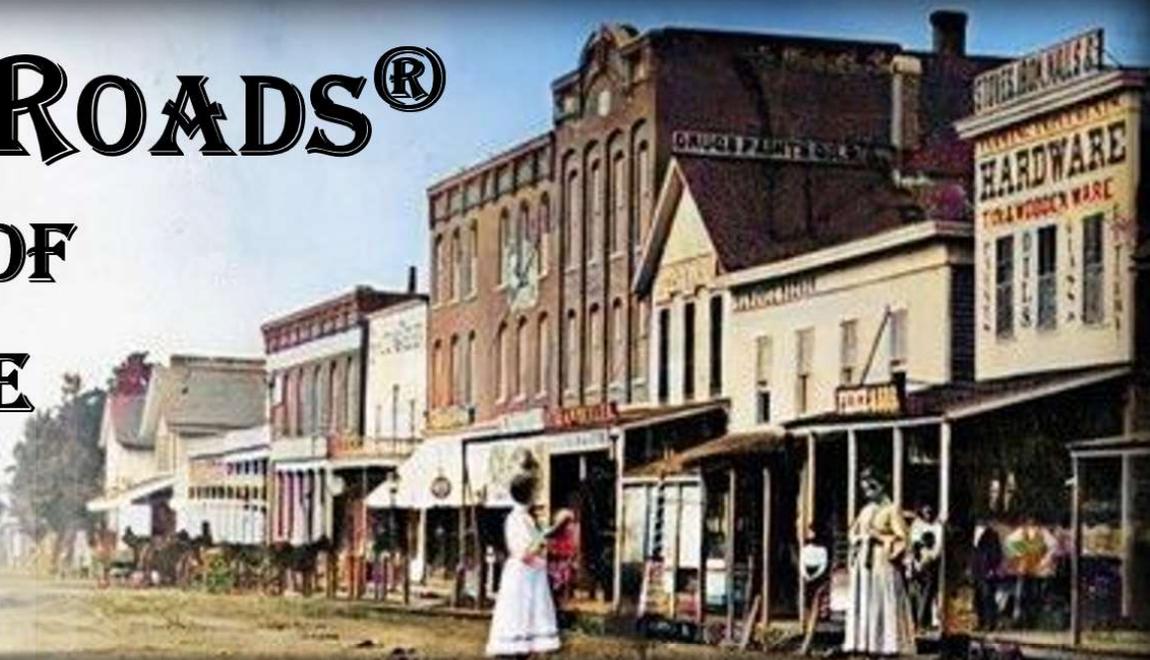
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STORIES OF

KEWANEE

PAST &

PRESENT



Dean Karau

December 2021

Terminal Park

The Kewanee Park Given New Life by Its New Streetcar System

The story behind Terminal Park, as with Kewanee, begins with the iron rail. But it was the streetcar, not the railroad, which breathed new life into the park.

In 1901, the Galesburg & Oneida Electric Railway Company was organized. A year later, it began planning a streetcar system in Kewanee and inter-urban transport between Kewanee and Galva. Soon, the Galesburg & Kewanee Electric Railway Company was formed, and it absorbed the earlier entity.

Meanwhile, a mile east of downtown Kewanee, Charles K. Ladd owned land that at one time contained a small lake created by a dam on a nearby creek. In the 1880s, it became a popular boating, picnicking, and entertainment location called East Lake Park. Even after the dam was destroyed and the lake was only a wetland, the park was still heavily used.

When the G & K began planning its route in Kewanee, it was natural for it to lay a track to East Lake Park. In fact, the company announced plans to upgrade the park into a “modern” recreational area. The

November 17, 1902, Kewanee Daily Star Courier reported that

“[a] recreation park on the old lake grounds, east of the city, is contemplated by the [company] . . . The local street-car system will be extended to the location and it will be a place of easy access when the lines are completed. Pavilions will be erected and other improvements made which will make the park an inviting place.”

The company also planned a streetcar barn and repair pit at the park.

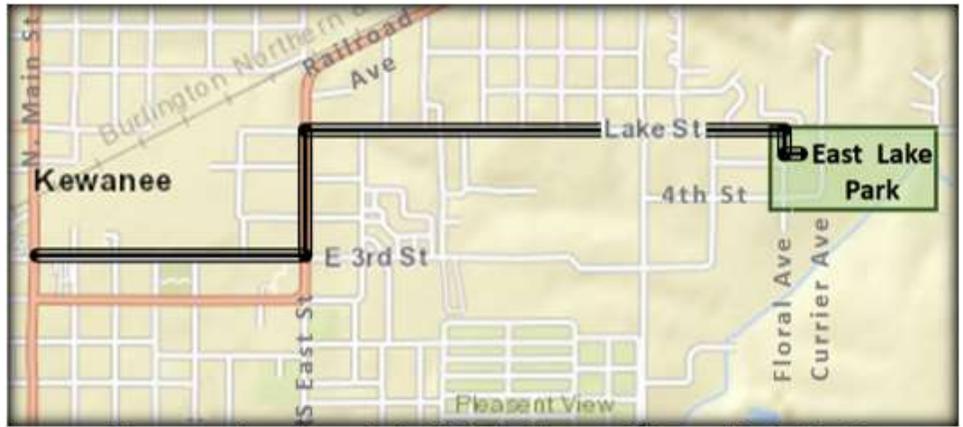
By early 1903, G & K began laying track to old



Author's approximation of location of East Lake Park and its lake

East Lake Park, starting at Third and Main Streets, then east on Third Street past the large Western Tube plant, north on East Street, then east again on Lake Street to the park. The line ended with a turn onto Floral Avenue and then into the park.

On August 23, 1903, the maiden voyage of the first streetcar took place, from downtown to East Lake Park. Meanwhile, work continued on the line and on the recreational facilities at the park, soon renamed Terminal Park.



Streetcar line from 3rd & Main Sts. to old East Lake Park (later renamed Terminal Park)



One of the first two streetcars used in 1903

In mid-November, the G & K completed its 30 ft. x 75 ft. Terminal Park train barn. It had room for two tracks that could shelter six cars and it included a repair pit.

Kewanee raconteur John P. Brady leased grounds at the park as part of the continued effort to promote Terminal Park as a recreational destination. He closed down his Crystal Lake amusement park and moved the Crystal Lake baseball field fence to a new Terminal Park ball field to the southeast of the Floral Avenue entrance. The area where the former lake was located created a natural amphitheater with the ground rising to the west. Bleachers would be built to the

south under the shade of the willow trees that had grown around the lake.

Also in late 1903, a 44 ft. x 100 ft. pavilion/roller skating rink was completed. Initially, kerosene lanterns illuminated it for skating, but electric lighting was completed in February 1904. Brady had purchased 125 pairs of wooden-wheeled roller skates for use on the hardwood floors. One end of the building included a stage for a variety of programs and events with seating for 800



Author's approximation of location of Terminal Park, the streetcar line, the car barn, the pavilion, and the ball diamond

people. Brady planned for a high wooden fence around the park for events requiring an admission fee.

Baseball was especially popular, and the games played at Terminal Park generated significant traffic – and revenue - for G & K. Eventually a grandstand was built, and it was then replaced in 1906 by a new 90 ft. long grandstand erected behind home plate. At that time, other seating was moved closer to the field and more bleachers were added. Those additions helped Kewanee guarantee



Crowd enjoying a ballgame on a 1910 afternoon



Baseball players in front of the Terminal Park grandstand (note the chicken wire protecting the fans)

sufficient attendance to secure a franchise in the Iowa League, a member of the National Association of Professional Baseball Leagues. The first league game was played in the spring of 1908.

Many amateur baseball teams played at the new diamond. Football was played there, too. The pavilion, in addition to roller skating, was the site of dances and a multitude of events. The grounds

were popular for picnicking, and for group outings, both large and small.

But as early as 1904, the G & K decided to build a car barn in Wethersfield, based on its decision to proceed with a Galva – Kewanee interurban railway. Originally planned to be built on Tenney Street, the G & K decided to build a new recreational park where it would also house the car barn. By 1906, Windmont Park was born.

The G & K then decided to move the Terminal Park pavilion to Windmont Park. But as they tried to jack up



The Terminal Park pavilion was moved to Windmont Park, and a promenade with a roof was built around it. The author removed the promenade and its roof from a photo of the Windmont Park pavilion.

the entire building, they realized they would need to cut it in half and move it in two parts. Once it arrived at Windmont, they added a ten-foot wide, roofed promenade around the pavilion.

Even without a pavilion, Terminal Park thrived. In 1912, the newspaper positively gushed about Terminal Park. *“Kewanee has a grand stand that is large enough . . . [and] the shaded seats are the finest in any ball park in the country. . . . Kewanee has bleachers, too, that compare with any other in the country, because during the progress of all afternoon games, the sun is always at the back of the fans.”*

But after World War I, the Kewanee Park District was soon created and funded. When Northeast Park on North Main Street opened in 1922, the new park supplanted Terminal Park. As a result, the streetcar company closed the section of its line along Lake Street between May Street and the park. Terminal Park was a destination no more.

For over four decades, that plot of land to the east



Early Windmont Park, pavilion and roofed promenade

of downtown Kewanee provided quality recreational opportunities for our hometown. For almost two decades, it was the “go-to” place for Kewanee baseball, professional and amateur alike.

Still, Terminal Park lives on in the memories of many Kewaneans. And, if you find yourself on Floral Avenue just south of Lake Street, you can see the location of the entrance to Terminal Park, our hometown’s first park given a new start by the iron rail.



Author’s photo of the location of the former entrance to Terminal Park on Floral Avenue