

University of Nebraska-Lincoln

[Virtual Nebraska](#)

Nebraska...Our Towns

Nebraska...Our Towns

Winside -- Wayne County



Winside's main street, 1908, following a March snowstorm. Telephone lines parade down the sidewalks. The mounds of snow, all shoveled by hand, will melt into muddy puddles before running off to the rivers. [\(image.php?image=1\)](#)



Many of the same buildings are visible in the same area, 53 years later. Telephone lines now buried, overhead mercury lights illuminate the wide, paved streets. [Jaeger]



Public School at Winside. [Nebraska State Historical Society] ([image.php?image=3](#))

Our town of Winside, incorporated in 1890, actually began in another place and under a different name. "Northside," three miles west, was an established settlement in 1881. In 1885, because of "problems with the landowners," or perhaps an inducement by a competing town site company, the railroad moved its section house and siding. It is said to have been done on a Sunday "to avoid injunction proceedings." McDerby's store and Day's blacksmith shop also moved to the new location that fall.

In June 1886 the plat was registered and lots were auctioned off. Dr. R. B. Crawford, who had owned the land, chose the name "Winside," touting that it would "win" over Northside. It did. Soon after the depot was in place and a house built on the corner of Main and Allen Street, the move was on. In a few years Northside was no more.

A fire in 1889 that originated in McDerby's store, destroyed Miller & Cherry's Drug Store, plus Matthew's Furniture Store. They were immediately replaced, further indication that Winside was here to stay.

A city park was donated by J. T. Bressler in 1889 and by 1890, Winside had a population of 130 and over 20 businesses. Building continued during the 1890s despite the money panic felt in many areas. A hardware, grocery, and clothing stores, two elevators, a blacksmith shop, newspaper, saloons, professional offices, and many other businesses took shape.

A roller mill, built in 1891, was destroyed by fire in 1902. It did not rebuild. Frank Weible's brickyard, established on his land for a short time, closed in 1903.

In 1894 an opera house was built on the west end of Main Street by Al Woodward. In 1903 Martin Redmeer bought the building and had it moved to lots he owned next to his saloon. Later, when the building burned, it left Winside with no meeting place, until a city auditorium was built by the WPA (Work Progress Administration) in 1939. This building is still used for many activities, as well as housing the library.

By 1900 the population of Winside had grown to 400 people. A privately owned water system, used until the fire of 1889, was replaced by a municipal system which was completed in 1908.

Gasoline lamps were used to light the streets in the early days, with candles or oil lamps in homes and businesses. In 1909 a natural gas lighting and heating system was installed. The first electric lights were

turned on in 1912, using a privately owned generator. The light company, purchased by the town in 1917, served until 1967, when Wayne County Public Power contracted to supply power.

A sewer system was installed in Winside in 1921. Storm sewers and pavement were put in on Main Street in 1925. More paving was done in 1927 from Main Street north to old Highway 35. The rest of the town streets were "oiled" and remained that way until 1975, when all of the streets in town were paved and storm sewers improved. A waste water treatment facility was completed in 1966.

During the 1930s many businesses closed their doors, including the bank for a time, and the town experienced a decline in population. Winside had one of the Federal government's CCC units (Civilian Conservation Camps) in 1939, which provided jobs and homes for many young men, and improved the economy somewhat. It closed in the fall of 1941, when every able-bodied man went to the service.

After the war, from 1950-70, Winside experienced a number of major changes. Many businesses changed hands and some closed altogether. The railroad was removed and the old depot torn down in 1967. Winside still has a K-12 school, a Methodist and two Lutheran churches, and 25 businesses.

In 1987 the Theophilus Church, a 90-year-old structure, was moved from its location five miles east and north of town to a lot south of the city park. It is to be preserved as a country church with a museum in the basement.

The current population of 439 is not far from its peak of 479 in 1930. Winside began hosting the Wayne County Old Settlers Reunion in 1915. Started elsewhere in 1901, it continues to be an annual event. Plans are now underway to celebrate Winside's centennial in 1990.

By Bill Burris, Rural Route, Winside, NE 68790, with the help of Veryl Jackson, who also supplied the photographs.

ADDITIONAL MATERIAL: A centennial edition Winside History is to be completed early in 1990. Contact Veryl Jackson, Box 128, Winside, NE 68790

© 2005 CALMIT • University of Nebraska-Lincoln | Lincoln, NE 68588 | 402-472-8197 | [comments?](#)