

Horse tank --- yes - no

A lot of people have talked to me about the "horse tank" in Knox. Early in Knox history, horse tanks were needed, not only for horses to drink, but for fire protection. Knox didn't have much of a fire department in the early days. There were some driven wells and some volunteers. Each merchant in town was expected to help in case of a fire and was required to have two galvanized buckets for that purpose (Bucket brigade). If you couldn't show your two buckets upon inspection, you would be fined \$5, which was a lot of money in 1900.

The attached photo, taken in 1897 during the construction of the courthouse, shows clearly on the bottom right of the photo, a **horse tank**. This was a one-piece tank, carved out of limestone. One can see the horse hitching area to the left with the post and chain. Remember, in 1897 the method of transportation was by horse, or you walked. There were no cars. I vaguely remember as a kid a horse tank similar to this on the east side of the courthouse.

The second attachment shows a 1904 Sanborn insurance map of Knox. These maps were made to show the danger areas for fires in towns. On this map one can see a well and pump across the street from the courthouse on Washington Street. (Near the current offices of LeRoy Gudeman and Ken Whiles.) There was probably a horse tank nearby.

The third attachment shows what a lot of people think is an old time horse tank, just east of the Community Center on Lake Street. **Sorry, folks**, this was not a horse tank.

OK - so what was it?

During the early years of Knox, wood was used as fuel for stoves in homes and offices. Wood was replaced by coal shortly after the turn of the century. Then in the 1930s, fuel oil started being used for heat. That "horse tank" is really a flower bed with a fuel oil tank buried half-way into the ground. Notice the filler pipe and the vent pipe. It was a concealed fuel oil tank servicing Dr. Bell's home and office.

Jim Shilling
Starke County Historical Society

<http://www.starkehistory.com>
<http://www.scpl.lib.in.us/historical/>



