



# WELLS COUNTY

*2023 Official Visitors Guide*

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in our next visitors guide!

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For general inquiries or to contribute to the next publication,  
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## Town of Ossian

Welcome to the Town of Ossian, located in  
Wells County, Northeast Indiana.

Norwell Community School • 12 miles from Fort Wayne • 7 miles from Bluffton  
Population: 3,289 • Public Library • Restaurants

### Ossian Parks and Recreation Department

**1,189 square feet of park space per person**

The Ossian Parks and Recreation Department is comprised of five park sites: Archbold Wilson Park, Maplewood Park, Melching Park, Sandalwood Park, and our Baseball Diamonds.

Our five park sites total 80.36 acres.

In a community the size of Ossian, this amounts to approximately  
1,189 square feet of park space per person.

Summer Music Concerts  
Amphitheater & Event  
Center Rental Available



Amphitheater • Basketball Half Court • Corn Hole Boards • Disc Golf Course • Dog Park  
Fishing Pond • Horse Shoe Pits • Pavilion • Playground Equipment • Skate Park  
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# The HIDEAWAY

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# Places to be



- Archbold-Wilson Park
- Caylor-Nickel Family Foundation YMCA
- Green Valley Golf Club
- Kunkel Lake
- Markle Swimming Pool
- Ouabache State Park Fire Tower
- Timber Ridge Golf Course
- Washington Park
- Wells Community Pool
- Whicker Park Inclusive Playground

*For a complete listing visit: [visitwellscounty.com](http://visitwellscounty.com)*



# Our Cherished Deam

A centerpiece of Wells County's offerings for recreation and "getting away" is surely its state park. You may not find it easy to pronounce it, but Ouabache State Park offers extensive camping, hiking, recreation, and educational programs by a full-time naturalist.

There are more than 20 miles of trails in the 1,104-acre park, winding through the native forests and a meadow. The trails will take you around the 20-acre bison pen where a small herd has populated the park since at least the early 1930s. The park's landmark fire tower was refurbished by local community efforts in 2018. You can climb its 100 steps to take in a wide view of the bison pen and the park.

Those 20-plus trail miles include a paved walking and biking trail that extends west from the park to connect to Bluffton's Rivergreenway. This will allow park visitors to bike or ride into downtown Bluffton's events, shops and eateries. The connecting Interurban Trail can then take you as far north as Bluffton's Walmart, Lowes and a Walgreens.

Kunkel Lake, located pretty much in the center of the park, is stocked with game fish; canoe, john-boat and paddle boat rentals are available. Kunkel Lake Beach features 215 feet of waterline and more than 2,500 tons of sand.

Wells County's state park is unique in hosting that small herd of bison, but even more unique is the state's smallest property

maintained by the Department of Natural Resources: a nearby 1/5th-acre plot that hosts the "Deam Oak Tree."

## CHARLES DEAM DID NOT DISCOVER THE DEAM OAK

The tall and stately oak tree at the corner of Ind. Highway 116 and County Road 250 North has the distinction of being the only currently known – or at least easily accessible – tree of its kind. (There is plenty of evidence there were others although their locations are uncertain nowadays.) How it was discovered, how it got its name and how the state came to maintain it has enough of a history to fill a thick manuscript written by local historian Alan Daugherty that you can find in the Wells County Public Library. The myth that Deam had discovered the oak was one of the reasons Daugherty took on his research project. A very brief summary:

Charles C. Deam, a Bluffton druggist by trade, was drawn to a strong interest in botany that eventually led to him serving as the Indiana State Forester. It was his friend, E.B. Williamson, who discovered what he believed to be a unique oak variety on Oct. 4, 1904. He took the leaf and nut specimens to Deam to examine. Long story short: the tree was indeed determined to be a new variety and was named after Deam at the suggestion of Williamson. (E.B. Williamson's role in Wells County's fame is detailed elsewhere in this Visitor's Guide.)



DEAM OAK COURTESY OF OUABACHE STATE PARK

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Deam later discovered the farmer who owned that land was going to cut it down. Deam attempted, but failed, to convince the farmer the tree was worth more than the additional farmland. As a result, Deam paid the man \$75, an outrageous price at the time for such a small parcel, which Deam personally paid. He donated the tree's land to Indiana in 1925. As a result, it became known as the Deam Oak Monument Forest, (indeed, a nearly one-tree "forest") with maintenance eventually falling under the care of the nearby state park.

Current park manager Jon Winne is aware that the tree, obviously much more than a century old, is beginning to show signs of poor health. Attempts to produce new saplings from the tree's acorns have proven unsuccessful, hence grafting will be needed to propagate nature's original crossbreed between a chinquapin and a white oak. That project will need to be taken up by the state's Division of Forestry, Winne shares.

So, nature lovers may have a limited opportunity to view and appreciate something they will not find elsewhere. The state park's maintenance crews recently installed new fencing and a new signage was at least in the works at this writing; a few picnic tables afford an opportunity to enjoy a summer respite under some historically unique branches.

**THE ECLIPSE IS COMING!  
THE ECLIPSE IS COMING!**

Wells County is in the "bullseye" of a full solar eclipse that will sweep across the Midwest on Monday afternoon, April 8, 2024. Ouabache State Park is gearing up.

"Right now, it is mostly logistical planning," park manager Jon Winne reported in early 2023. "Parking and traffic control. We're expecting the park to fill up early." The staff is also working on some specific eclipse-related activities to utilize the somewhat once-in-a-lifetime event at the park as a learning opportunity.

"And we're hoping for good weather," he added. 🌤️



# Friends of Ouabache

Be sure to catch this quarter's issue of **DISCOVER Ouabache** by the Friends of Ouabache State Park. Filled with informative facts to help educate you on the natural world and enrich your visit to the park.

Be sure to check out the special events, youth day camps, lunch & learns, and volunteer opportunities for all ages.



Scan me to read  
**DISCOVER Ouabache**



# Visit Year Round

**Wells County Public Library**  
200 W Washington St, Bluffton

**Wells County Historical Museum**  
420 W Market St, Bluffton

**Caylor Nickel Foundation Family YMCA**  
550 W Dustman Rd, Bluffton

**EZ Bowl**  
1231 S Scott St, Bluffton

**Five Points School**  
5300 W 1100 S-90, Montpelier

**Wells County Trails**  
For more information visit:  
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# That's a lot of pianos!

While many communities in Northeast Indiana have a large mural painted on a downtown wall, Bluffton has three. How that came to be is one story, but a more interesting tale for visitors and natives alike is what they depict.

Two of the murals were painted almost concurrently during the summer of 2020. The painting that borders the west side of the Parlor City Plaza, painted by Portland, Oregon, artist David Rice, is dominated by large irises. Local artist Nancy Wagner's creation on the south wall of the nearby building at Main and Market streets includes irises as well. A short stroll just a block or so west on Market Street will find the third mural, painted in 2021 by Amy Buchs of Waterloo, Ind., assisted by Sydney Spevak. It includes a dragonfly.

Bluffton was once quite famous for The Longfield Iris Farm, a 15-acre plot where West Market Street ends. Not only was it "a visual treat" as described in contemporary accounts, it became the country's second-largest commercial iris farm, producing not only award-winning new varieties – 85 during its lifetime – but bulbs and rhizomes that were shipped around the world. It was famous for drawing iris enthusiasts to Bluffton every year. One newspaper story in 1936 reported "75 carloads of people came to Bluffton" to see Longfield.

Edward Bruce Williamson – known as "Bruce" to his friends but as "E.B." professionally – was born in Marion in 1877 but grew up in Bluffton where his father founded the Wells County Bank just a few years later. After

graduating from The Ohio State University, he taught high school science for a year before heading to Vanderbilt University where he became quite well known for his studies and collections of dragonflies. This led to his position as the Assistant Curator of Insects at the Carnegie Museum in Pittsburgh.

After his marriage in 1902, he returned to Bluffton to work at his father's bank, which did not interfere with his love of science. By 1909 he was hybridizing irises and he and his wife took frequent trips abroad to study both irises and dragonflies. It was said at one time that his collection of dragonflies was only eclipsed by the collection of the Queen of England.

The American Iris Society continues to present two annual awards named after Williamson and his one-time protege, Paul Cook, who at one point went off on his own to establish his own iris fields and his own reputation. He even eclipsed his mentor in one sense, being named the 1946 Hybridizer of the Year by the American Iris Society.

The West Market Street mural is dominated by an entirely different theme: a piano keyboard. Bluffton has a rich history of piano manufacturers, with pianos traveling around the world made here between 1908 and 1970.

It began with A. J. King Piano Company. Their specialty was an upright grand piano, one preserved in playable condition at the local museum. Next was H. C. Bay Company, beginning 1917, and at peak production



LOCATED AT 218 W MAIN STREET, BLUFFTON

for Bluffton employed about 1,500. B. K. Settergren was in charge of that factory and he had also become the head of King Piano beginning in 1914. After it folded in 1928, he bought the plant and formed Settergren Piano Company. King Piano was also noted for player pianos. Old factory photos are available at the Wells County Historical Museum.

Settergren would also purchase what remained of the Estey Piano and Organ Co. and moved its operations to Bluffton from New York City in the late 1920s. After a number of ownership changes after World War II, financial woes in 1969 led to the last piano to be produced in Bluffton in 1970.

A list of brand name piano labels of Bluffton's production include Bay, Estey, Settergren, and lesser known, Alexander, Alexander Brown, Bellman, Chase & Baker, Drachman, Lancaster, Malcolm Love, Meldorf, Metropolitan, N. W. Nelson, Purcell, Schumann, Soward, Vollmer, Vough, and Wegman.

Whew! That's a lot of pianos, and those are pretty big keys on the West Market Street building. And as Paul Harvey used to intone, that's "the rest of the story" behind Bluffton's three murals. 🎹

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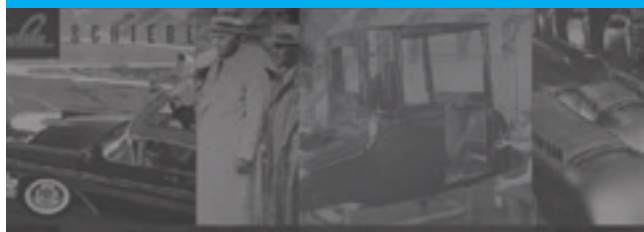
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Automotive suppliers may boast about their new ideas, but innovation at Inteva is more than just "the big idea." What sets us apart is the ability to anticipate what customers want before they even want it — time and time again — then bringing on the hard work and perseverance to make it happen. Inteva is the collection of the world's "best of the best" talent, experience and technologies in three global product lines — interiors, closures, and motors & electronics. Although our brand name was introduced in 2008, we bring decades of know-how and a well-honed, proven culture of vision and problem-solving.

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Inteva is led by a diverse team of experienced multi-disciplinary professionals who are passionate about customer service, value-based innovation, and quality products and services. The Inteva Executive Staff is the senior-most leadership, management, and decision-making team of the company. Learn more about the people who are driving Inteva's global growth and success.

### Sustainability



At Inteva Products, we take seriously our responsibility to be good stewards of the environment. From reducing waste in our offices and technical centers to implementing energy-efficient lighting and solar panels at our sites, we work to lessen our carbon footprint and protect the air and water we all need.

# Seasonal

## GOLF

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www.thetimberidge.com

**Green Valley Golf Course**  
2635 E 150 N, Bluffton  
For more information call 260-824-4510

## DISC GOLF

**Archbold Wilson Park**  
3398 E 900 N, Ossian

**Markle Fish & Game Park Club**  
260 S. Clark St, Markle

## SPLASH PADS

**Pickett's Run Park**  
304 E Washington St, Bluffton

**Roush Park**  
925 W Silver St, Bluffton

**Melching Park**  
705 Park Dr, Ossian

## POOLS

**Wells Community Pool**  
310 W Spring St, Bluffton

**Markle Swimming Pool**  
100 Park Dr, Markle

**Kunkle Lake Beach Front**  
Ouabache State Park



PHOTO COURTESY OF TIMBER RIDGE GOLF COURSE



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# Things to do



Archbold Wilson Park Concert Series

Bluffton Free Street Fair

Car Shows

Creative Arts Council Performances

Disc Golf

Downtown DIY

Golfing

Kayaking & Canoeing

Kehoe Summer Concert Series

Music on the Plaza

Parlor City Market

Wells County Trails Hiking & Biking

Yoga in the Park

*For a complete listing visit: [visitwellscounty.com](http://visitwellscounty.com)*



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# So much to do, so little time...

Wells County offers a very full calendar of things to do for both visitors and the natives. While much of it is concentrated during the warmer months, there are any number of attractions year-round. The best source for the most up-to-date information is at [visitwellscounty.com/events](http://visitwellscounty.com/events)

as Queen and Dave Matthews) to gospel music. Ossian will host a summer series at Archbold Wilson Park (check their calendar at [ossianparks.com/events](http://ossianparks.com/events)) and Markle is set to introduce their own musical summer evenings as well.

If you're camping at either the state park or Bluffton's KOA franchise, Bluffton's award-winning Parks & Recreation crew can fill your – and your family's – days with fun. You can find the full list at [blufftonindiana.net/parks-department](http://blufftonindiana.net/parks-department) along with a listing of the city's numerous parks, pool hours and other information.

There is also "Music on the Plaza," one of many programs organized by "Bluffton NOW!," a very active group that has created new excitement in Bluffton's downtown area with activities and shopping.


Consider two summer events that have proven very popular: a "Foam Party" and a "Shaving Cream Fight," both of which very conveniently take place on the splash pad at Pickett's Run Park.

Those include a weekly Saturday Parlor City Market on the Parlor City Plaza, events such as a Chili Walk in the fall and a Brrr Fest during the winter. The group's current major focus is the Downtown Pathways Project, which will improve five key alleyways in downtown from "forgotten downtown spaces" to "actively used pedestrian-friendly spaces." These alleyways are key connections between the public parking lots and the Market Street corridor.


Outdoor summer concerts have become quite the rage; Bluffton's have been going on for 32 years at Kehoe Park, right on the banks of the Wabash River. Six concerts are set for three Friday evenings and three Sundays during the summer ranging from tribute bands (such

While there is some evidence of progress already – specifically the music-themed mural on the west-facing wall of the building at 216 W. Market St. in Bluffton – fundraising

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and engineering for the project are a work in progress. It is something visitors can watch for as well.

"We're at about 75% of the goal, which gives us many options for moving forward," reports Bluffton NOW! leader Michael Lautzenheiser, Jr., "all of them good. But we remain optimistic we will get there. Regardless, construction will begin soon." The "NOW!" in their name by the way, stands for "New, Old and Wonderful!"

There are also a number of events for the more athletic minded, with several footraces utilizing the scenic paths along the Wabash River. Look for "Chicks Run," "Iron Kids Triathlon," "Parlor City Trot," and the "Wobble Before You Gobble" events on the Bluffton Parks' website.

Speaking of recreational opportunities, besides the splash pads in Bluffton and Ossian, you can cool off at the Wells Community Pool and Markle's "swimming hole" – a converted gravel pit that draws people from a wide circle of the surrounding area. Enjoy two golf courses in Bluffton and the only bowling alley in the nation that can boast at being the home of the reigning PBA U.S. Open champion, EJ Tackett.

And each community boasts its own festival of course. Most notable is Bluffton's Free Street Fair, an event that dates back to more than 100 years, making it most likely Indiana's oldest street fair. The event begins each year on the third Tuesday after Labor Day and wraps up the following Saturday at midnight. Its fame over the years has drawn natives back to Bluffton from across the country each September as well as visitors from around the globe.

There are also a number of events at private venues. Dash-90 Winery will host a series of concerts and comedians throughout the year, as does the Club 250 Event Center at Timber Ridge Golf Course on Bluffton's north side.

Timber Ridge is also a popular venue for weddings and family reunions, as are the White Rock Barn and Terrace just south of Ossian, Lighted Gardens just north of Ossian and Bluffton's 4-H Community Center. The Wells County Commerce and Visitors Center is also open to rentals for showers, family reunions, business meetings, luncheons, and conferences. ☺



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# Arts & Entertainment

## CREATIVE ARTS COUNCIL

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April 21st, 7:00 p.m.

April 22nd, 7:00 p.m.

April 23rd, 3:00 p.m.

### Wizard of Oz: Youth Edition

June 16th, 7:00 p.m.

June 17th, 3:00 p.m. & 7:00 p.m.

### Winnie the Pooh: Youth Edition

June 23rd, 7:00 p.m.

June 24th, 3:00 p.m. & 7:00 p.m.

### Excerpts from the Nutcracker

**by the CAC Dance Program**

December 2nd, 2 - 4 p.m. & 6 - 8 p.m.

For tickets visit [wellscocreativearts.com](http://wellscocreativearts.com)

## GOSPEL BARN

429 E Dustman Rd, Bluffton

Music from 6 - 9 p.m.

April 29th | The Blackwood Brothers

May 13th | The Booth Brothers

June 24th | Jeff & Shari Easter

July 15th | Master's Voice Quartet

July 21st | Triumphant Quartet

August 12th | The Isaacs

September 9th | Mark Trammell Quartet

October 7th | The Mylon Hayes Family

October 14th | Soul'd Out & The Quartet Classics

December 2nd | Christmas Banquet with The Hoppers

For tickets and more information visit:

[thegospelbarnofbluffton.com](http://thegospelbarnofbluffton.com)

## PARLOR CITY FINE ARTS DAY

Parlor City Market

September 9th, 9 a.m. - 1 p.m.

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[thetimberidge.com](http://thetimberidge.com)

## FORT WAYNE BALLET:

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Kehoe Park

May 30th, 7 p.m.

## SILLY SAFARIS ANIMAL SHOW

Wells County Public Library

June 6th, 4:30 p.m. & 6:30 p.m.



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# Free Concert Series

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300 N. Main St, Bluffton

June 9th, 8 - 10 p.m.

Simply Queen

June 11th, 7 - 8:30 p.m.

Dan Heath and the Paradise Band

June 23rd, 8 - 10 p.m.

The Eliminator (ZZ Top Tribute Band)

June 25th, 7 - 8:30 p.m.

Community Worship Celebration

July 7th, 8 - 10 p.m.

The Dave Matthews Tribute Band

July 14th, 8 - 10 p.m.

Crush (Bon Jovi Tribute Band)

July 16th, 7 - 8:30 p.m.

Cornfield Mafia

July 19th, 7 - 8:30 p.m.

38th Infantry Division Band

For more information call 260-824-6069 or visit: [blufftonindana.net/parks-department](http://blufftonindana.net/parks-department)

## BLUFFTON NOW! MUSIC ON THE PLAZA FRIDAY NIGHT SUMMER CONCERT SERIES

118 W Market St, Downtown Bluffton

Music from 7 - 10 p.m.

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June 16th | HWY Band

July 21st | Jennie Devoe

August 18th | Whoa, Man!

September 15th | Rylie Lynn Band

For more information visit:

[blufftonnow.org](http://blufftonnow.org)

## ARCHBOLD WILSON PARK OSSIAN PARKS

3398 E 900 N, Ossian

Concerts held from 7 - 9 p.m.

Food and drinks available at 6 p.m.

June 3rd | TBD

July 8th | The Bulldogs

August 9th | TBD

August 12th | TBD

September 9th | TBD

October 14th | TBD

For more information call 260-622-4251

or visit: [ossianparks.com](http://ossianparks.com)

# Yoga in the park

Washington Park Pavillion

Saturday mornings 9:30 - 10:30 a.m.

YOGA IN THE PARK SPECIAL EVENT

May 20th, 9 - 11 a.m. | Plants & Poses

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HOURS: Thursday - Friday 3:00 - 8:00pm

Saturday 12:00 - 8:00pm

[zane@dash90wines.com](mailto:zane@dash90wines.com)

[www.dash90wines.com](http://www.dash90wines.com)



## Current Wine Menu

### RED

#### Merlot

An easy drinking, young merlot

#### Pinot Noir

Immature light colored, dry red

#### Cabernet Sauvignon

Young, dry red with a bountiful fruit flavor

#### Grandpa's Pick

A semi-dry Marquette

#### Oak Aged Farm Wine

Delicious Concord aged 10 months in bourbon barrels leaving a robust sweet spice flavor

### WHITE

#### Rural Treasure

A semi-dry Seyval Blanc with notes of green apple

#### Salamonie White

A semi-dry Riesling

#### Drylicious

A semi-dry Diamond

### SWEET

#### Salamonie Sweet

Semi-sweet Riesling

#### Catawba

Semi-sweet, crisp, White Catawba with a hint of grapefruit

#### The White G.O.A.T.

A sweet Diamond grape with notes of apple, certain to be your new best friend

#### The Golden Clucker

Mouthwatering tropical Brianna grape

#### Farm Wine

Wells County's finest sweet red

### FRUIT

#### Blackberry

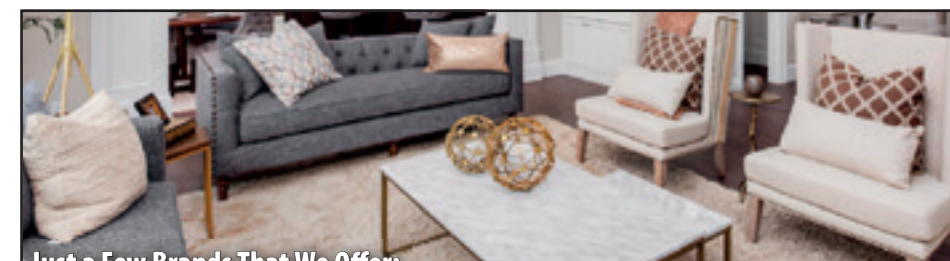
Semi-sweet, delightful blackberry finish

#### Cranberry

Sweet, tart, holiday treat

#### Rhubarb

Zingy, like straight from grandma's Rhubarb patch



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# Run, Walk, Peddle, & Paddle

## MUSHROOM MANIA HIKE

Ouabache State Park  
April 15th, 8 a.m. - 5 p.m.

## EARTH DAY 5K

Bluffton Parks Department  
April 22nd, 9:00 a.m.

## 5K CHICK'S RUN

Pickett's Run Park  
June 15th, 7 - 9 p.m.

## IRON KIDS TRIATHLON

Well Community Pool  
June 24th, 8:00 a.m.

## SUPER HERO 5K RACE & 1 MILE FUN RUN

Pickett's Run Park  
June 29th, 7 - 8 p.m.

## LIGHT THE NIGHT-LATE NIGHT BIKE RIDE

Wabash River Park  
June 29th, 9 - 10 p.m.

## PARLOR CITY 1/2 MARATHON, 10K TROT

Bluffton City Gym  
September 2nd, 9:00 a.m.

## WALK STEADY FOR ROCK STEADY

Bluffton Parks Department  
September 23rd, 9 - 11 a.m.

## W.O.O.F. 5, 10, 15 MILE TRAIL RUN

Ouabache State Park  
November 4th, 9:00 a.m.

## WOBBLE BEFORE YOU GOBBLE RUN

Wabash River Park  
November 23rd, 9 - 10 a.m.

## BLUFFTON SANTA RUN

Bluffton City Gym  
December 24th, 9 - 10 a.m.

# Cars, Jeeps, Motorcycles, Tractors...

## WHEELS OF YESTERYEAR TRACTOR PULL

Wells County 4H Park (free admission)  
June 3rd, pull starts at 9:00 a.m.

## WHEELS OF YESTERYEAR TRACTOR PULL

Wells County 4H Park (free admission)  
July 14th, pull starts at 5:00 p.m.

## WHEELS OF YESTERYEAR TRACTOR SHOW

Wells County 4H Park (free admission)  
August 11th, pull starts at 5:00 p.m.  
August 12th, pull starts at 9:00 a.m.  
August 13th, pull starts at Noon

## TOUCH A TRUCK

Downtown Bluffton (free admission)  
August 26th, 9 a.m. - Noon

## MOON PIE MANIA CAR SHOW

Downtown Bluffton  
August 26th, 8 a.m. - Noon, awards at 4 p.m.

## WHEELS OF YESTERYEAR TRACTOR PULL

Wells County 4H Park (free admission)  
October 1st, pull starts at 9:00 a.m.



# Fairs, Festivals & Markets

## PARLOR CITY MARKET (Saturdays)

118 W. Market Street, Bluffton  
June 3rd - September 17th, 9 a.m. - 1 p.m.

## FREEDOM FEST

Ossian Health Communities  
June 22nd

## WELLS COUNTY 4H FAIR

1240 4-H Park Road, Bluffton  
July 15th - 20th, 9 a.m. - 1 p.m.

## BLUFFTON FREE STREET FAIR

Downtown Bluffton  
September 19 - 23th

## STAUFFER FARMS CRAFT & CAR FEST

3584 IN-116 #90, Markle  
October 6 - 7th

## CHILDREN'S BOOK FESTIVAL

Wells County Public Library  
October 7th, 10 a.m. - 3 p.m.

# Seasonal

## OUABACHE NATURE LOVER'S

### LUNCH & LEARN

Ouabache State Park  
April - October  
2nd Thursday of each month  
Noon - 2 p.m.

## JULY 4TH CELEBRATION

Archbold Wilson Park, Ossian  
July 1st

## JULY 4TH CITY OF BLUFFTON FIREWORKS

Bluffton Harrison Middle School  
July 4th, 10 p.m.

## WELLS COMMUNITY POOL

LAST DAY is August 6th

## BLUFFTON NOW! CHILI WALK

Downtown Bluffton  
October 7th

## AUTUMN ADVENTURE

Bluffton City Hall  
October 31st, 5 - 6 p.m.

## SMALL BUSINESS SATURDAY

November 25th

## WONDERLAND OF LIGHTS

Ouabache State Park  
December 1 - 31st

## OSSIAN HOMETOWN CHRISTMAS

Downtown Ossian  
December 7th

## PARLOR CITY CHRISTMAS

Downtown Bluffton  
December 9th







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*For a complete listing visit: [visitwellscounty.com](http://visitwellscounty.com)*





# Wine Country

Touring in rural Midwestern areas is obviously different than touring in the mountains or along the seashores. A tour of rural France, for example, will include some wineries that are appropriate to that locale. So it only seems natural that a winery in rural Indiana is on a working farm.

The Herr family began making their own wine just six or seven years ago, largely out of curiosity as to whether they could. In April 2017 they planted 500 vines on their southern Wells County farm, where they've had a large poultry operation for about 30 years. After putting the finishing touches last year on their new tasting room – a former sheep barn – the “Dash-90” winery hosted several weekend “pop-up sales” that have now expanded to a much more regular schedule.

In fact, the news from down on the farm on 6750 W. 900 S-90 is fairly extensive:

- The tasting room is now open each and every Thursday and Friday from 3 to 8 p.m. as well as Saturdays from noon until 8. But keep an eye on their Facebook page for special events such as the Valentines Day get-together that drew a near-full-house. There's also a regular euchre tournament on the second Saturday of each month.

- Dash-90 is now partnering with Columbia City's The Kitchen & Co. to offer light snacks, wraps and something called “Grab-and-Go Grazers” – a down-on-the-farm term for what is elsewhere called a Charcuterie Board. (A side note: Dash-90 wines are now available at The Kitchen & Co. booth at Fort Wayne's Electric Works.)

- Weekend and special events will include at least one food truck, and often at least a couple.

- Permanent restrooms have been added ... goodbye porta-potties!

- The outdoor area has been enlarged to include an expanded patio and a handicap ramp has been added. Also new this year to add to the rural ambiance: a genuine restored corn crib that will serve as a covered patio.

- The wine selection keeps expanding: There are now 16 varieties with two more to be added sometime this year. “We have an apricot and a Pino Grigio in the works,” says Twilla Herr. And they like to keep that farm-theme going in what they name their varieties of dry, sweet and semi-sweet creations, such as “Golden Clucker,” “White GOAT,” “Rural Treasure,” and two wines named after the nearby river: “Salamonie Sweet” and a dry “Salamonie White.”

- Wine slushies have proven to be a customer favorite, so they now come up with a flavor-of-the-month. February's red-themed variety, for example, was “Strawberry and Cream.”

- Entertainment. Weekends will often include live music featuring live local individual talent and/or bands. Memorial Day weekend will feature the “Rock Bottom Boys,” a band lead by “Southern Wells boy” Trent Palmer. The family is working on special July 4th and Labor Day weekend programs as well. They will also be featuring a comedian from time to time and will again host the Post Turkey Trot 5-K race to benefit the Southern Wells High School cross-country team.

“We're having fun,” Twilla says, providing what can surely be called a true “taste of Wells County.”



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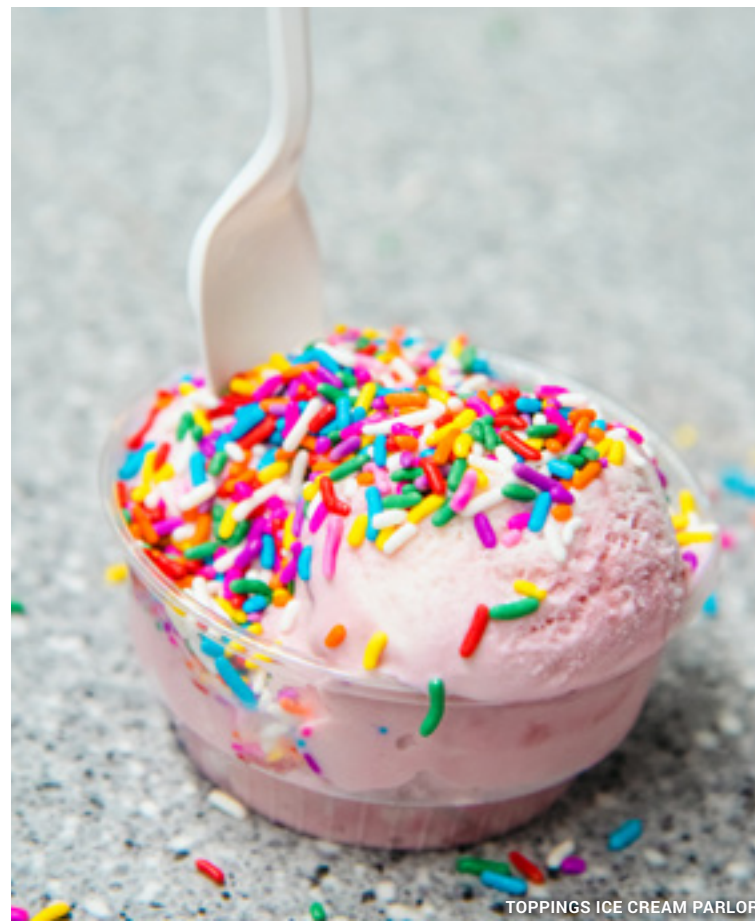
**www.AdamsWells.com**



PARLOR CITY BREWING COMPANY

A similar but different kind of tasting can be found in downtown Bluffton. Chris Bryant's Parlor City Brewery has only been open a few years, but he's been in the hospitality business for 29 years and brewing for more than 15, including a stint working for a small brewery in northern Michigan, before finding his way to the Parlor City. His nano-brewery has 16 varieties on tap, all brewed on site.

His kitchen adds a selection of munchies, sandwiches and soups, all made from scratch. What Chris likes most about his own brewery is the opportunity to get to know his patrons and recommending the brew best for them. Additionally, you can enjoy his brews at the pub or on the go, with growlers and howlers and even some of his creations canned. 🍷



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# Antiques & Boutiques



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- Country Road Primitives
- Ellie Grace & Co.
- Fields of Grace Floral Boutique
- Fraction Apparel & Home
- Magnolias & Minis
- Markle Exit 86 Antique Mall
- Minnich's Antiques & General Store
- Rods Rustics
- The Modern Eclectic

*For a complete listing visit: [visitwellscounty.com](http://visitwellscounty.com)*



# Unique finds

If it's antiques and boutiques that trip your trigger, Wells County offers a wide range of opportunities – from small shops with hand-chosen menageries and larger, family-operated treasure chests to a large sprawling antique mall.

Like many people who find themselves in the business, antiques were initially a hobby for Rod and Paris Fetters. He was a corporate trainer for the Subway restaurant chain; she worked in quality control at a local factory.

"We always enjoyed antiques and auctions," explains Rod, who also admits that he had always wanted to be an auctioneer while growing up on a farm. Their private collection evolved into some buying and selling: "We would recognize some really good deals, so we started buying those up and then have a garage sale," he continues. Those grew in frequency and size until about seven years ago.

"We had a sale that filled up a three-car garage, our driveway, our side yard and the empty lot next door." The couple had developed enough relationships with antique dealers by this time that "we had some drive

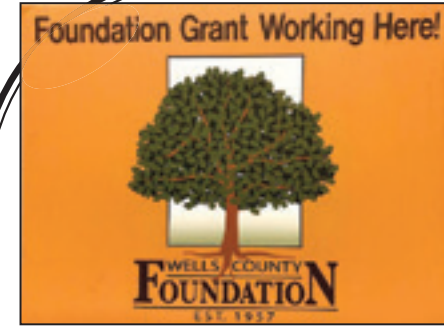
200 miles" to attend this sale. "We figured that maybe it was time for us find a spot."

A friend at church introduced them to Rex Harris, who owns a building in downtown Ossian that was once a car dealership. Any possible renters had to agree to not touch the large, glass-block front counter that dominates the front room.

"Are you kidding?" Rod remembers asking him. "That's perfect."

They started with "Sunday Only" hours of noon until 5 p.m. on Feb. 11, 2018. Five years later they had a special event to mark their fifth anniversary that was attended by more than 300 people, several of whom were other dealers from miles away with whom they maintain strong relationships. By this time, they had both quit their day jobs, Rod had attended the Reppert School of Auctioneering and earned his license, and the store is now open from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Tuesdays through Saturdays.

"But we live just a few minutes away," he adds. They do their best to accommodate customers' schedules.



The mission of The Wells County Foundation, Inc. is to improve the present and future quality of life in Wells County. Through the generosity of our donors, the Foundation invests grant funds in projects and programs

that make Wells County an amazing place to live, work, *visit* and play!



Find us online at:

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Within about eight months of opening in 2018, the portion of the building to the north became available. They moved into the first floor, utilizing the small spaces that had been offices and closets to display their ever-growing inventory. This portion had also originally been part of the car dealership; the second floor was the storage space for automotive parts. It would need major renovation.

While the COVID pandemic had its often-devastating impact on life with which we are all familiar, it also opened some opportunities for the Fetters to work on that room. Through their connections at church, "there were several part-time pastors who were out of work and some missionaries who could not return to their missions," Rod shares. Paris also spent countless hours hand-scrubbing and re-finishing the hardwood floor that had years of automotive grease and grime ground in.

The result is rather stunning and worth the trek up the back stairway. That second floor completed their growth to what is now 6,000 square feet for a vast variety of largely unique finds, priced from \$1 to \$5,000 and more.

As Rod is now a practicing auctioneer with a local firm, one might think that's their main source for new inventory. Not so.

"I'd say about 80% of the store is bought from individuals," Rod says. It seems the couple has built a reputation and relationships that people increasingly come to them. "We've come to look at this as a ministry," he says. "We often work with families who are dealing with death or divorce."

Right next door – part of that same building that had been a car dealership – is The Modern Eclectic. While Chris and Tsipporah Harris have gathered a number of "vintage treasures" chosen specifically for their uniqueness, their home decor collection is largely new goodies from both "local and global artisans."

A side trip to the small town of Uniondale will find a truly unique combination of antiques and food located in a former church: Minnich's Antiques and General Store. While "antiques are still our biggest drawing card," Kim Minnich shares, there are locally made products and a growing selection of Indiana-made "goodies." The kicker: Shop while you wait for your order from their kitchen that offers a surprisingly diverse menu.

On Wells County's western border is the Markle Exit 286 Antique Mall, located just east of I-69 (at, you guessed it, Exit 286). The 30,000-square-foot mall includes 100 dealers, but it is anchored by owners Connie and Carol, twin sisters who turned their love for antiquities into what they call the "Wunderkammer of the Wabash."

Bluffton is the home of the American Salvage Co., a store that lives up to its name. The Bermudez family fills – and re-fills – their downtown shop with "unique finds from across our country," Pam Bermudez reports.

Downtown Bluffton is a wonderful collection of a variety of small shops and the scenery is enhanced by three large and unique murals. The one constant in all of this "uniqueness" is the personal, small town service. 🍷



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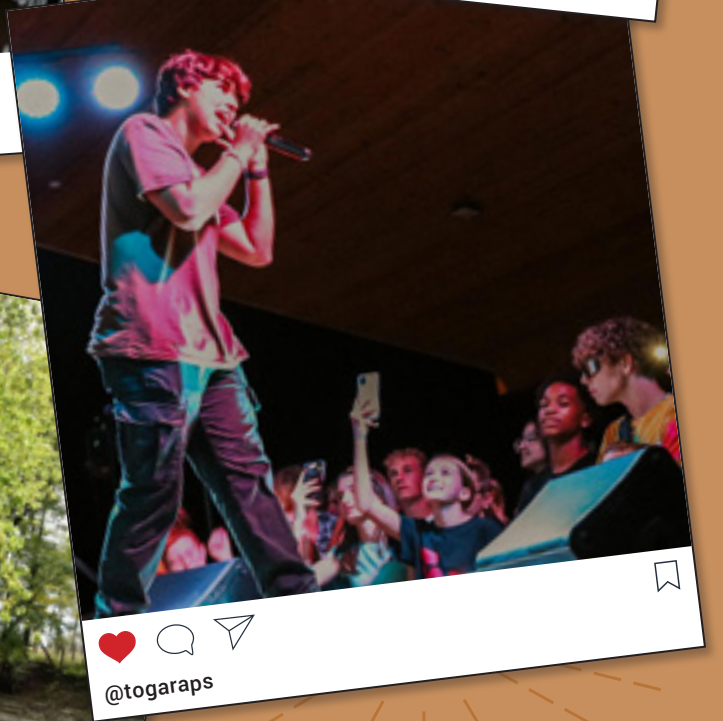
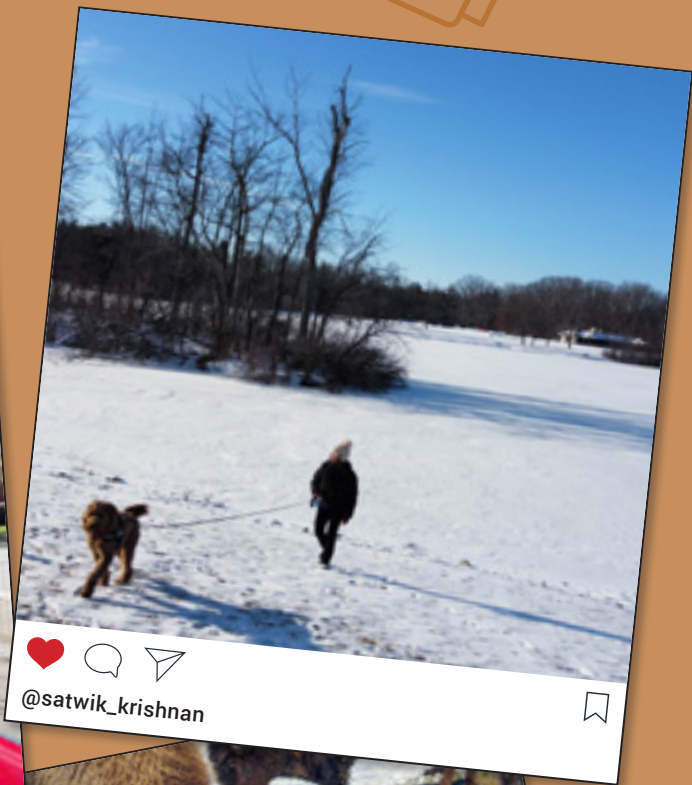
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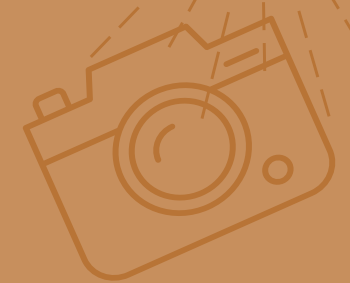




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