

RUTLAND
HISTORICAL SOCIETY
Quarterly

Volume 53 No. 1

Spring 2023

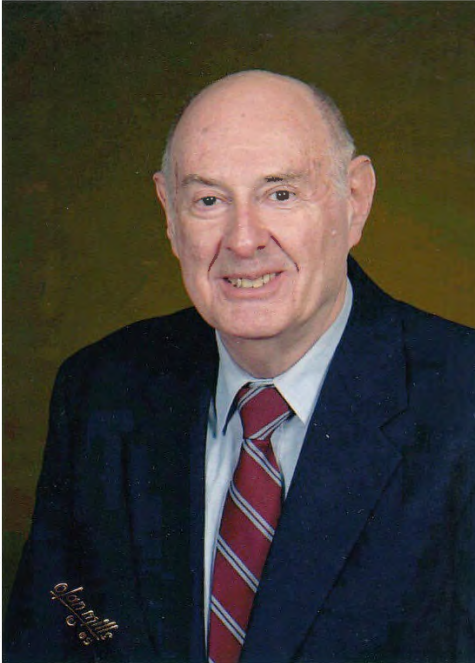
DIVING DEEP



Into the History of the Rutland Municipal Pools

Photo: A J Marro collection

**This Quarterly is Dedicated to a Founder,
Curator, and Friend.**



Jim Davidson

November 11, 1931 - May 7, 2023

**A full quarterly about Jim will be
published in the future.**

A full obituary can be found at
https://www.rutlandherald.com/obituaries/james-s-davidson/article_c74b9d46-bee2-5ce8-88ae-867c9ae5a5ba.html

About the Author

Ron Hemenway was born in Rutland, Vermont and grew up on the remnant of a small farm in Rutland Town. He graduated from the University of Vermont in May of 1991. Upon his graduation from the University of Vermont, Ron joined the Peace Corps and served in both Eastern Caribbean and in Eastern Europe. After the Peace Corps, Ron taught English as a second language in Sakata, Japan. When he returned from Japan, he went to the College of St Joseph and received his Masters in Education. For the last 16 years Ron has been a member of the Rutland Historical Society and currently serves as its collection chair. Ron also volunteers at the farm museum and is a member of the Rutland County Agricultural Society, which operates the Vermont State Fair in Rutland.

The **Quarterly** is published by the Rutland Historical Society, 96 Center Street, Rutland, Vt 05701-4023. Copies are \$2 each plus \$1 per order. Membership in the Society includes a subscription to the **Quarterly** and the **Newsletter**. Copyright 2023 The Rutland Historical Society, Inc. ISBN 0748-2493.

Introduction

Rutland City has had three city pools over the years. This is not by any means a definitive history of Rutland City's public pools, as there are too many gaps in the records for this to be a complete history and sometimes history raises more questions than it answers. Examples of these questions include: Why was the first pool built at Rotary Park? Why was it an above ground pool?

What were the reasons for building a public pool? The first and foremost reason is a place to teach young people to swim. Other reasons include giving people a place to go and relax with their friends, giving older people a place to exercise and giving youths a place to have friendly competitions.

The author asked Alderman Tom Depoy, who is head of the Aldermanic Recreation Committee, what was it about Rotary Pool that instilled such a nostalgia, whereas White's Pool did not? He seemed to think that it was a generational matter. By the time White's Pool was built, his generation was getting in their cars and going to Lake Bomoseen as soon as they were old enough. The youth who learned to swim at White's Pool left the confines of the city and went to the nearby lakes. Back in Rotary Pool's heyday this was not really possible. Superintendent Kim Peters of Parks & Recreation agreed, saying even today there are usually 200 individuals in the pool, but it's all scheduled activities between day camps, swim meets, and lap swim times. The pool is always busy.

Rotary Pool

Interestingly enough, the pool was on a site that was formerly occupied by a tannery. Across Route 7 from the tannery was an outfit that made slate pencils. This has nothing to do with the pools, but it seemed too intriguing not to include.

The pool was designed by Wesley Bintz of Lansing, Michigan. An article in the Rutland Herald dated from July 11th, 1929, stated work on the pool was to begin soon. The pool was expected to use 25 tons of reinforced steel, 2700 bags of cement, 1,109 cubic yards of filling dirt, and also expected to hold a quarter of a million gallons of water. In an interview in a 1929 Rutland Herald, Richard Royce, then Commissioner of Public Works, said the pool was expected to open in about 3 months if all went well. Costs had been kept low because the pool was built by the Rutland City Public Works Department.

The cost for the pool was quoted to be \$29,000 but due to the generosity of the Rotary Club, the actual cost to the city was \$25,000. There is information suggesting that \$5,000 was given to the city for the pool in the name of Percival Clements. The Rotary Club also generously gave the land for the pool as early as 1925.

This land was given to the Rotary Club by a Rotarian, Herman W. Vaughan in either 1923 or 1924. Mr. Vaughan was a friend of Paul Harris who started Rotary International. Mr. Vaughan married Mary Fox, a cousin of Paul Harris wife, and did many generous things for the city over the years.

According to an article in the Rutland Herald dated June 26th, 1929; Wesley Bintz the designer of the pool, said it would be finished by Oct. 1st 1929. Mr. Joseph E. Marceau, chairman of the Recreation Committee, said that the pool would not be ready for use that year. Members of the recreation committee included Dr Clarence Ball and Henry Brislin. Ex-officio members of committee were Mayor Arthur Perkins, Richard Royce, Commissioner of Public Works and Will Davis, Treasurer.

On June 16th 1930, the Rutland Herald had another article celebrating the opening of the pool at Rotary Field. The opening was slated to include much entertainment. The Rutland Herald congratulated the city of Rutland on the opening of its first public swimming pool, which is designed for all ages.



Rotary Pool was the first public pool in the City of Rutland. Built on North Main Street, the Rotary Pool was originally called a "Natatorium". It was an 80-ft by 120-ft oval pool, and had a 12-foot high diving board as well as a slide. The diving board was ominously called "the Tower". Cue the "jaws music" in your mind. This pool was very unique in that it was built above ground, whereas both of the later pools were built in- ground.



One interesting feature of the Rotary Pool was a foot bath that you walked through in the locker room to keep the pool as clean and sanitary as they could back in the day.

In a January 30th 1932 article in the Rutland Herald, the pool manager Walter Gustafson says that total attendance for the 1931 season was 30,421 people. The receipts from the pool showed the cost of running the pool was \$2788.02 and the money made by the pool was \$3012.35. The total profit from the pool was therefore \$224.33. Expenses to the

pool also included replacing a sign which was destroyed by vandals.



On August 2, 1932, according to the Bethel Courier, the City of Rutland started charging a nickel for children to use the pool due to a lack of funds. This information was carried by other local newspapers.

Various local playground groups, would meet at the pool and have competitions. On June 27th 1944, there was an advertisement in the Rutland Herald for free swimming lessons at the Rutland City Pool.



An article in the Herald dated July 2nd 1947, comments that the pool would be opening that day after a week's delay. Among the staff for the pool would be Bob Perkins, as a qualified senior life guard and Miss Marjorie Perkins, who held a certificate as a junior life saver. Also on staff were Michael Jennings and James Jeffords who would serve as clerks and basket attendants for the pool. The Rotary Pool was the place to be in the summer. The local youth would bike to the pool and hang out there all day. There was a food vendor who sold treats to the pool-goers of the day. The children would go to the pool change into their bathing suits, place their clothes in a basket and turn them into the pool attendant and in exchange they were given a bracelet with a tag.



Aldo Meursi collection





Aldo Meursi collection





One story has it that the area between the pool and Route Seven would be filled with kids on bikes waiting for the pool to open up. When the pool opened for the day, the kids would leave their bikes in the field between the road and the pool. It was said you could look down from the road, which was higher than the pool and see the whole area between the pool and the road either cluttered with bicycles, or with kids on bicycles waiting to use the pool.



Another fond memory is of people crossing North Main Street to grab an ice cream cone from Seward's Dairy Bar after the fun at the pool in the summer heat.



August 26th of 1960, the pool was still the place to be. On that day the city held a water carnival with races, clowns, a water ballet, and a high diving exhibit. The diving exhibit was given by Arnold Kirbach. The individuals who clowned around on the high board in what was described as “bizarre

dress" included Mike Courcelle, John Littler, Kenny Thornton and Bob Johnson.



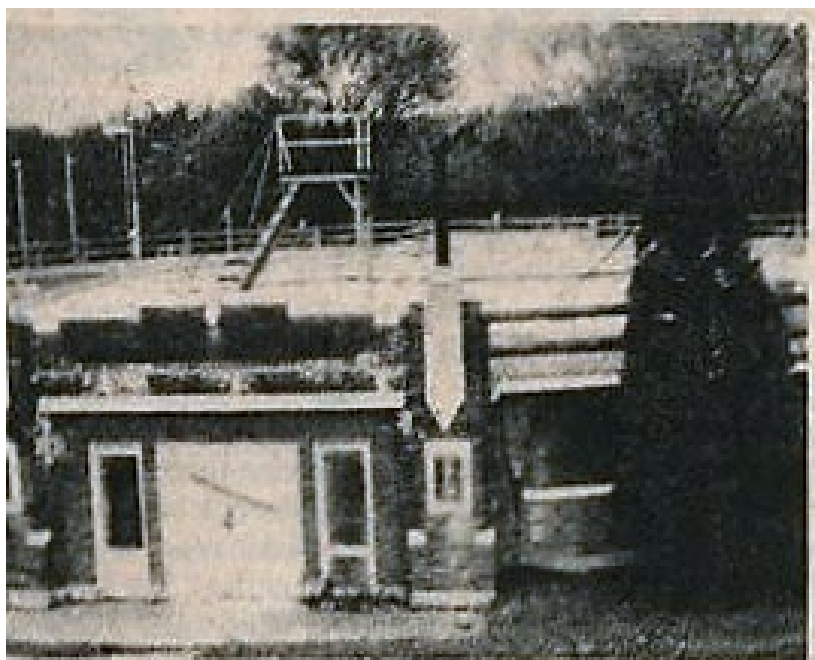
1963 - Aldo Meursi collection



It is the author's understanding that The Rotary Pool, closed in 1972, but it was opened, at least part of the season, in 1973. The confusion maybe the result of the Rotary Pool being closed for part of the 1973 season due to major leaks in the pool which required repair. This information was found in an article dated Sept 13th, 1973. In this narrative article, Dept. of Parks and Recreation Superintendent, John Cioffredi, said the Rotary Pool needed repairs totaling \$65,000. Although the city would like to open Rotary pool next year, unless the fixes could be made permanent, he could not justify the costs fixing the pool despite the fact many people preferred Rotary Pool to the new pool at White's. The water at Rotary was colder because it had to be continually pumped into the pool, as opposed to White's pool which retained all of its water.

It appears that the necessary repairs could not be accomplished in an economically viable manner. In 1977, Rotary Pool was deemed unsafe by the city building inspector. In 1978, Rotary Pool was finally torn down. The Army Corps of Engineers and Dave Mac Steel & Equipment worked together to do this. Mac Steel was in the process of razing the structure and the Army Corps of Engineers agreed to take the material away. The rubble was used at the White's Memorial park as fill, as the area was described as a swamp.

A minor delay occurred when Dave Zsido, of the Army Corps of Engineers could not maneuver the bulldozer around the various pieces of the foundation. Mac Steel waited for him to take the rubble away after Zsido requested that Mac Steel take out the east side of the building. This was done and soon the rubble was gone.



old North Main Street pool, built nearly 50 years ago, soon see wrecking cranes approach. (Photo by Stein-

Rotary Pool would soon be just a fond memory. On June 26th, 1978, an article predicted the site would certainly be used for something according to Mayor Gilbert Godnick.

White's Pool

Frances Egerton Woodfin White was the widow of well-respected Rutland lawyer, Frank Denison White, as well as the daughter of John N. Woodfin, who was the president of Lincoln Iron Works. Mrs. White drew up her will on May 22nd 1950. The last section of the will, gave instruction that 1/3 of her remaining estate would be placed in a trust for the City of Rutland. This trust would be used to establish a museum if there is sufficient interest. This was to be done at the discretion of the executors of her estate, R. Clarke Smith and Christopher A. Webber. The executors elected not to pursue or establish the museum. Instead the remaining 1/3 of the estate was used to purchase a minimum 5-acre lot within the City of Rutland and for the maintenance of a playground. The will directed to have the playground with the following features: tennis courts, a baseball diamond, a skating pond and other recreational facilities that might be needed for a fine playground. Interestingly enough, there was no specific mention of a pool in the will. Given that the Rutland Pool at Rotary Field on North Main Street was only 21 years old at the time that the will was made, this is completely understandable.

When Mrs White died on January 25, 1954, the willed portion of the estate to the City of Rutland totaled \$180,000. At the same time, the Pool at Rotary Park needed several thousands of dollars in repairs. According to Superintendent Cioffredi, building a new pool at White's playground was added to the agenda at that time.

In June of 1955 the Rutland Herald reported to the Citizen's Committee that two sites were being considered for the new White's Playground. One location was a 12-acre area 300 feet distance from Route 7 and south of Jackson Ave. This site was recommended by Allen Associates, Bennington Recreation Consultants and was described as a large "green bowl of Buffum's lot ". The second site was the "Combination Farm" site, which was located east of Stratton Road. This area was described as large rolling meadowland with a pond that, at one point, had a mill located on it. The playground developed by Allen Associated could be placed in either area.

The June 1955, article said that the Citizen Committee had much to consider such as cost for each site to be developed. Additional costs involved were the development of a road into the either site as well as parking. Other questions included grading and amounts of fill needed. Where were the population shifts trending in the city? These were questions that the Citizen Committee headed by R. Clarke Smith considered.

Looking back, we now see that the Citizen Committee chose Buffum's lot to be the home of White's Memorial Playground. It would be interesting to ask ourselves, what if the "Combination Farm" site had been chosen? Would that have influenced what sections of the city gained or lost population over time? Having a really great playground in the area could be considered a really great amenity in this or that area of the City of Rutland.

In 1957, White's Memorial Playground was built. The cost was roughly \$60,000. A series of articles in the Rutland Herald in 1966 and 1967, enlightened us to the next phase of development of White's Memorial Park.

An interagency committee approved the use of \$50,000 in federal / state funds in August of 1966 for the pool, if the city could come up with matching funds by October 1st of 1966. The City of Rutland sought an extension to this by December 1st, 1966 in order to have more time to go to White's Trust. It would be extended again to March 15th, 1967. It was believed that getting the money would not be a problem, but the trustees of the White's Trust were reluctant to give 1/3 of the principal from the trust.

The city was getting approximately \$4,000 a year in interest from the trust for the maintenance of White's Memorial Playground. The trustees questioned whether Mrs. White would approve of this use of her money. Needless to say, the trustees wanted to see the plans for the pool before they signed off on the deal.

On May 15th, 1967 the Board of Aldermen voted to have Mayor Nichols ask the trust for \$40,000.00 or however much was required to build a new swimming pool at White's Playground. The City broke ground on the pool on April 16th 1970 where both Mayor Nichols and Superintendent of the Recreation & Parks Dept, John Cioffredi, were on hand. Interestingly enough the cost of the pool is listed as being \$ 207,071.00. It seems as though the pool cost more than they originally had intended. Although much of that cost was covered by the state and federal government.

THURSDAY MORNING, APRIL 16, 1970.



Mayor Harold J. Nichols, left, and John W. Cioffredi, superintendent of the Rutland Recreation and Parks Department, helped do the honors Wednesday afternoon at the groundbreaking ceremony for the new \$207,071 Rutland City Swimming Pool at White's Playground. City officials hope the pool will be ready for the coming swimming season. (Herald photo—Jackson).

On June 16th, 1970 White's Pool finally opened. On that day at 12:55 p.m., children were shouting "Open Up, Open Up, Open up !!!" At precisely, 1:00 p.m., Superintendent John Cioffredi of City Parks & Recreation and John Daly opened the doors to the White's Pool. By 2:30 p.m. over 300 youth were in the pool. At the time, a family season pass was \$10 and an individual pass was \$5. Daily prices for children under the age of 15 was only a quarter.



AJ Marro collection



The original White's Pool was an Olympic-size swimming pool with two diving boards, a high diving board and low diving board . It contained 250,000 gallons of water. The pool was used by the Rutland swim team to hold competitions. The pool was open to the public for lap swim by adults at 6:00 a.m. before swimming lessons began at 8:00 a.m.

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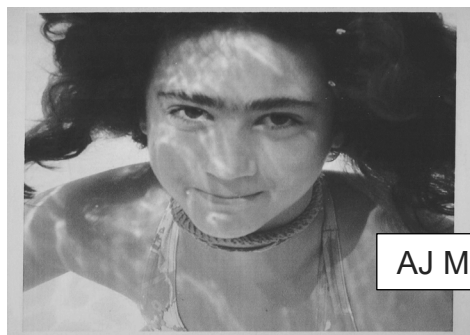


According to an article in the Rutland Herald from September 15, 1973, a meeting about Meadow St Park, Cioffredi asked the residents what amenities the residents of the area wanted for the refurbished park. Many residents said, they wanted a pool in the park. This was after White's Pool had opened. Superintendent Cioffredi said that he was not against the idea of another new pool, but it would be expensive and use a lot of land. He said it could be done as the federal / state dollars picked up most of White's Pool. This may have been an over simplification of the financial

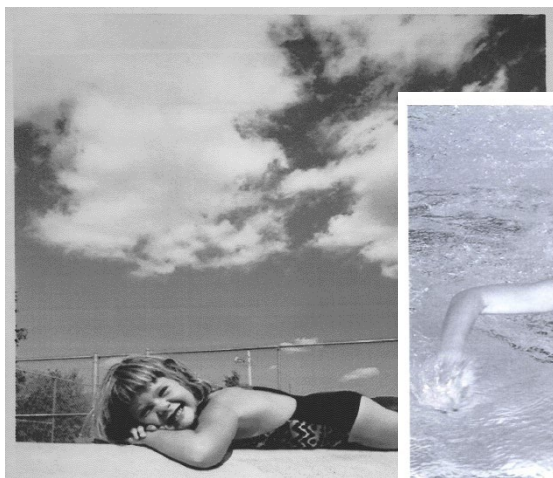
contribution of Frances Edgerton Woodfin White. Needless to say, a big Meadow Street Pool was never built. Recent information has come to light that a small wading pool was built sometime in the 1970's or 1980's, however. this no longer exists.

While researching for this quarterly the author found a letter from the City Attorney, Mr. Richard Walsh Norton dated May 7, 1975 to Mayor Godnick. Mayor Godnick wanted to know if White's Memorial Playground could be used for anything other than recreation or if it could be sold. City Attorney Norton said that in his opinion this was not possible. Also, the city was continuing to get yearly dividend from the White Trust for the maintenance and upkeep on the playground.

In 1992, The White's Trust was closed out. A November 20th 1992 letter from city Treasurer Mr. Ron Graves asked the Howard Bank to close out the trust. The city planned major renovations to White's playground with specific emphasis on White's Pool. These renovations were expected to cost at least \$380,000. On November 3rd of that year, the voters of Rutland City approved these renovations. The City of Rutland was expected to bond for the remaining amount. This was verified by bank statements from the Howard Bank dated 1993 about the White Trust Fund.



AJ Marro collection



In August of 2014, the original White's Pool closed for good. We all knew it was coming as during the summer 2014 water had to be left on continually to keep the pool filled with water because the pool had cracks in it that were causing the water to flow from it straight into Moon Brook. This was impacting the water quality of the brook. Ironically, Moon Brook is still considered an impaired waterway, which has led to conversations about Combination Pond as well the City of Rutland purchasing of Piedmont Pond in 2022.

A New Pool

On December 11, 2014, the first meeting was held in the Fox Room at the Rutland Free Library to discuss see what the public wanted in a new pool. Many ideas and topics were raised and discussed. Some wanted an indoor pool, so that people could enjoy a pool year-round. It was decided that a committee would explore this option.

One gentleman suggested that we have 5 different pools in 5 different locations. He made the argument that Rutland City was trying to promote growth and it would be beneficial to have more than one pool to spur growth in the city. In the end before any action was taken, it was determined that we need to find out what the public wanted and would be willing to pay for.

It was deemed too late to bond for any more money for a new pool. As this information had to be ready for the ballot within a month. It was decided to explore all the options and go for a bond in March of 2016.



Rutland Historical Society archives

Over the next few months options were explored for an indoor pool. After a long look at these options, this was deemed not to be economically viable. It was decided that if an indoor pool were to be developed, it would have to be done by a group of towns. It was decided to continue discussions regarding a regional indoor pool, but to move ahead with the outdoor pool.

The issue then became where the new pool should be placed. There was some discussion about having the pool up at Giorgetti Park. In the end, it was decided to rebuild a new White's Pool where the former pool was.

A design committee was formed to investigate which features from the original White's Pool were to be kept, and what new items were to be added. In order to get this information, the design committee surveyed the community to find out what features the residents of Rutland really wanted in their new pool. Based on this information, Weston & Sampson, a company hired by the city to design a new pool, gave the committee three options with various features .

OPTION A: Had three pools. The first pool was 6-lane lap pool. Pool two was a family pool with zero-entry kids area and a large slide. The third pool was a large pool with a diving board. Pool two and three were connected together.

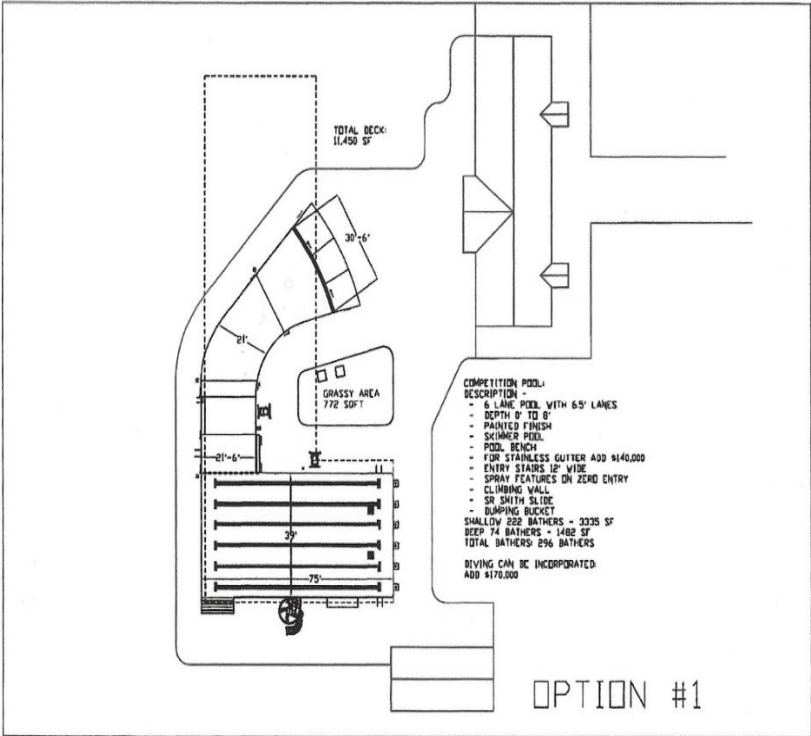
OPTION B: This option was a combination family pool and lap pool with a deep diving well.

OPTION C: This option was a single pool with 6-lane lap pool, zero entry and spray features.

The final choice of the design committee most resembled Option A.



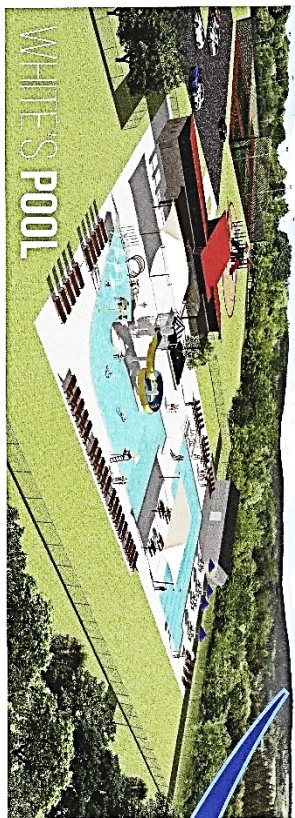
Rutland Historical Society archives



After the design team decided on a pool design, it was presented to the Board of Aldermen and encountered its first real set back.

The City of Rutland had always subsidized the pool, and always found it to be a worthwhile investment. At that time, the design team was told that the pool had never made money. They were told that one alderman did not wish to have a pool unless it was financially viable. After contacting the wayward alderman, it was discovered that the issue was not exactly how much revenue was generated, but rather reluctance to put the issue of a pool on the ballot. At the cost of 2.5 million dollars, it could only be used 1/3 of the year. An indoor pool was more acceptable. The pool was placed on the ballot for the voters to decide.

Due to the political nature of the vote for the new White's Pool, the city's officials that the pool committee had been working with had to step back once the pool made its way onto the ballot. An alliance took shape called the Friends of White's Pool. The membership collected donations, created signs, flyers, and canvased neighborhoods. Other individuals placed posters and flyers at high school sporting events. Of course, the swim team, which had been competing out of Northwood Pool in Rutland Town, was a big help promoting the new pool.



WHITES POOL

MARCH 1

**vote
YES**

WHY YES?

POSITIVE COMMUNITY IMPACT

AFFORDABLE SWIM LESSONS
SUPERVISION FOR YOUTH
COMMUNITY GATHERING SPOT
PROMOTING A HEALTHY COMMUNITY

POSITIVE ECONOMIC IMPACT

RAISES PROPERTY VALUES
ATTRACTS YOUNGER FAMILIES
BRINGS PARTICIPANTS AND GUESTS
CREATES A VIBRANT COMMUNITY

FOR MORE INFORMATION PLEASE CONTACT THE
FRIENDS OF WHITES POOL:

FRIENDSOFWHITESPOOL@GMAIL.COM

AND FIND US ON FACEBOOK

Rutland Historical Society archives

The City of Rutland voted for the new pool bond on March 1, 2016. The bond totaled 2.5 million dollars. In the end 71% of the people of Rutland, voted for the new pool. This was an extreme relief, as it was a resounding “YES” to a city pool.

The bids for the new pool came in nearly a million dollars over budget. The pool committee needed to regroup. Weston & Sampson was asked to redesign a more cost-effective pool. They decided on a much smaller pool with 6 lanes, zero entry, and spray features without a diving board which could be added in the future.

A Rutland Herald article in December 16, 2016 noted the reaction of the recreation committee of the Board of Alderman. The Recreation Committee looked on with disappointment at the scaled back design for the new pool. The alderman asked Superintendent Wight of the Department of Parks & Recreation to scale back the building. Wight said that due to coding issues the bathhouse could not be made smaller. It could be made with more inexpensive materials, but this would mean it would not last as long and the maintenance costs would be higher. Alderman Donahue summed up the reaction of the Board of Aldermen, “ We can always improve the (existing pool house) building”. Needless to say, nothing was decided.



Members of the Rutland City Parks and Recreation Department, city government, construction officials and engineers pose with shovels during the White's Pool groundbreaking ceremony Thursday.

So how did the City of Rutland manage to build the pool under budget ?

The initial cost of the bathhouse was placed at \$800,000.00. This was not acceptable. Instead the Public Works Dept refurbished the existing bathhouse for just \$200,000.00. They also saved money by eliminating one of the diving boards. According to Mayor Allaire this total cost came slightly under budget.

Originally proposed \$800,000 renditions



Pool side



Parking lot approach



Aerial pool grounds rendition

Rutland Historical Society archives

June 23rd, 2018, was the grand opening of the “new” White’s Pool. Mayor Allaire and Superintendent of Parks & Recreation, Kim Peters, were on hand to cut the ribbon for the new pool. Cindi Wight, former Superintendent of Parks & Recreation, and many aldermen were also in attendance for the official opening of the new White’s Pool.



PATRICK MCARDLE / STAFF PHOTO

Rutland Mayor David Allaire, along with Recreation and Parks Superintendent Kim Peters, cut the ribbon for the new pools at White's Park on Saturday in Rutland.

The pool was built by John Russell Corp. and had a soft opening on Wednesday so many people had already seen it before it officially opened. The overall reaction was one of surprise and excitement at the various amenities of the bathhouse. The bathhouse has six unisex changing rooms, with showers, a changing room for men, a changing room for females and a community room. The layout of the pool area was reverted back to the original design of a completion pool and a family pool. Both pools hold approximately 150,000 gallons of water. Superintendent

Peters said she liked the fact that there were two pools, meaning activities can still be happening in the family pool. when competitions are held. Also, one pool is out of order and it has to close, the whole pool complex does not have to close.



Sources:

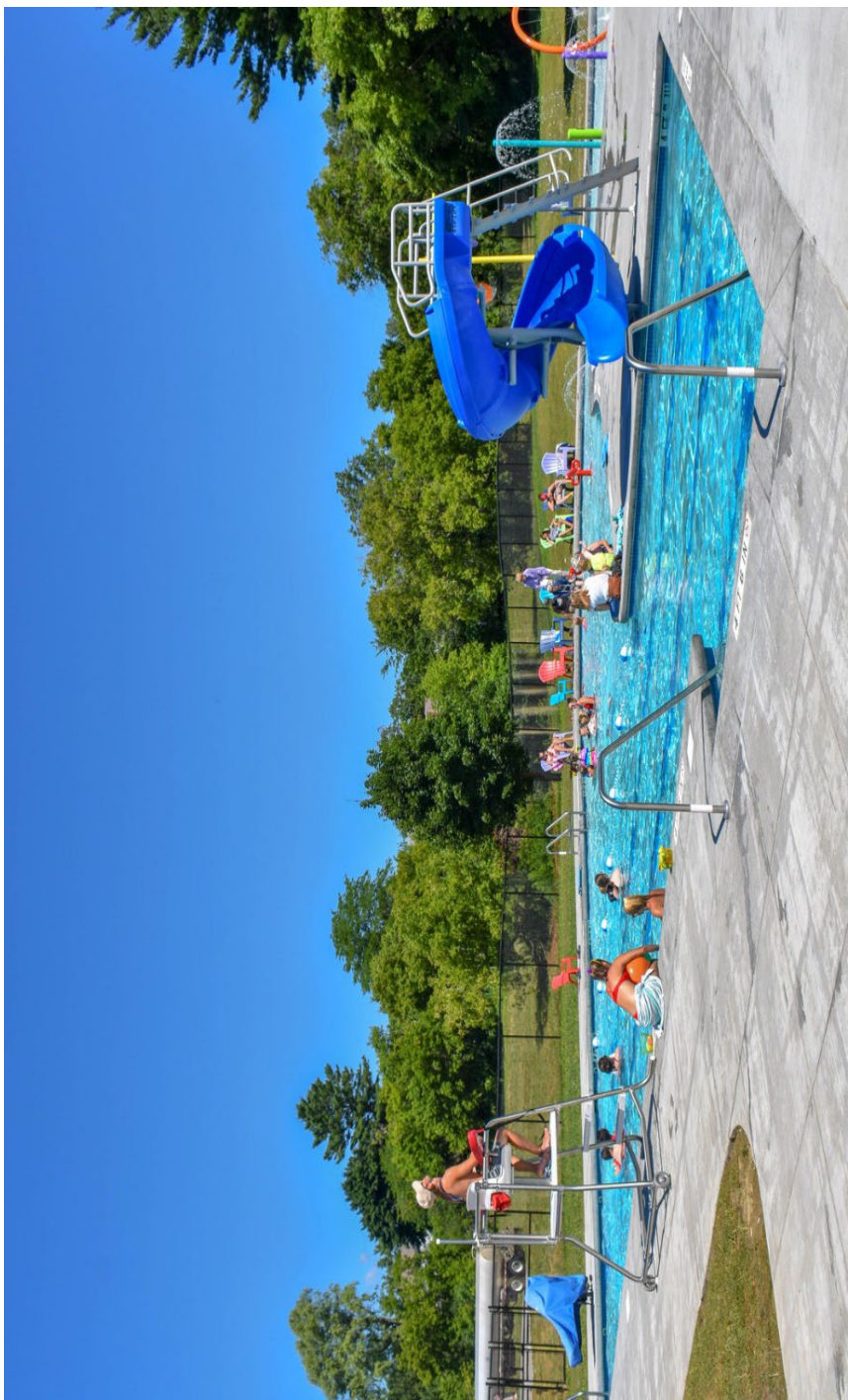
Last will and testament of Frances Edgerton Woodfin White d. Jan 25, 1954

Trust of Frances Edgerton Woodfin White - bank statements & Letters

Rutland Herald articles to include:- Jan 26, 1954, Tue pg 7 *obituary* and Feb 17, 1954 Wednesday pg 7 *Playground Fund Granted*.

Aldermanic records including emails and letters

First-Person Interviews, experiences, and thoughts of committee and department members involved.



Rutland Historical Society MEMBERSHIP DUES

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☐

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☐

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☐

Senior (62+)

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☐

Contributor

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☐

Sponsor

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☐

Life

\$200

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Street Address or P.O. Box_____

Town State Zip_____

Optional: (Phone)_____ (Email)_____

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