

# *First Impressions*

*of*

*Argyle, Wisconsin*

*Visit conducted 9-29-92*

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*A program for community improvement*

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Visited by:

Potosi/Tennyson, WI

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## REPORT INTRODUCTION

On Tuesday, September 29th, (an absolutely perfect, fall day) Potosi/Tennyson conducted a "First Impression" of Argyle, Wisconsin.

Our group consisted of three women and one man. All are active in business (two in retail, one in tourism and one in economic development), and three are involved in their Chamber of Commerce.

We were all in high spirits at the prospect of touring your community on such a beautiful day. The sky was deep blue and sunny, the weather was warm with just a hint of chill, and the leaves on the trees were livid with color.

Although none of us had a strong preconception, we were soon charmed by Argyle because of its picturesque setting, friendly people and "Small Town" nature.

We hope you will find the following report beneficial. Please do not hesitate to contact either Peg Walsh at (608) 763-2114, or Tami Stagman at (608) 822-3501, if you have any questions or comments.

## **1. What was my perception before visiting the community: What did I expect, etc.**

- *I expected a sleepy rural village. I didn't know where it was. Certainly, I was familiar with the name because of the phenomenal scoring by one of their high school basketball players last year.*
- *I really didn't know what to expect, not being familiar with Argyle at all. I know a Priest that came to our community from Argyle, and my kids talked about a boy named Tuttle from Argyle who was a great basketball player.*
- *Small farming community.*
- *I don't know that I've ever been in Argyle before, but I expected a small village with few businesses, consolidated schools, a farming community.*

## **2. Approaching the community, what do you notice first? (Evaluate EACH entrance)**

- *I was pleased to see the village nestling in a scenic valley among rolling hills and dairy farms. The water tower is quite evident.*
- *Approach from west on highway 81 - sign was not obvious; I wondered what Argyle Industries is.*
- *Approach from south on hwy 78 - the sign was quite visible. Is it at village limits. Good transition from farm to residential area. Argyle Industries building needs a bit of sprucing up. I liked the bridge and river to enter the main part of town.*
- *Approach from east - it was nice to notice a sidewalk all the way to the edge of town. Sign looked good.*
- *Approach from north - welcome sign o.k.; road sides could be better mowed. When coming by elementary school, athletic field and village park in-one gives a favorable impression of the town.*
- *From the west, it was very pretty - beautiful fall colors - Church steeple and water tower with name on it nestled in hill. Very New England looking. Entrance by elementary school was nice - all entrances had welcome signs and population signs - populations agreed.*
- *Beautiful view of water tower on top of the trees. Adequate entrance signs.*
- *Hwy 81 West - beautiful view, with colorful trees. The water tower "emerged" out of a background of beautiful trees. A great sight. Once you get in Argyle it looks a lot bigger than it is. Welcome sign should be positioned a little better to be more effective.*
- *Hwy 81 East - welcome sign half hidden by trees, many weedy lots, but nice homes.*

- Hwy 78 North and South - entrance signs looked good - liked the tie in with Yellowstone. As in other entrances, road sides need mowing. On 78 North - the white house on the left needs paint. The trailer park looks pretty good.

- A little careless looking coming in from the west - just needed some weeds and grass trimming.

### **3. As you drive around town your comments on:**

#### **Appearance**

##### **1. Downtown**

- Main street - good to fair. Some buildings are empty; others need some upkeep (such as front of Masonic Temple); others are well kept, or even new. Off main street - south, old cars and appliances in some disarray. Off main street north - something needs to be done with old filling station.

- There is nothing to tell the visitor about the hydro-electric plant - one of the interesting and unique features of Argyle.

- Neat, some empty storefronts - stores that were open were well maintained in front. Nice to see bank building on main street. One small gas station on side street should probably be torn down. Kind of an eye sore (behind supper club).

- Clean, adequate parking, new bank under construction.

- Small but inviting downtown. Lots of businesses for such a small community.

##### **2. Residential**

- By and large, the homes are neat and well kept. Broad Street is not labeled as a "Dead End": but twice we found it to be so. I liked the idea of 'Yard of the Week':

- Yards well kept - homes well cared for.

- Well kept homes and lawns.

- Some very nice homes, most well taken care of. One lady waved at us from her yard.

##### **3. Industrial park**

- Apparently there is none. Argyle Industries is at three sites.

- Couldn't find one.

- ?

- Didn't see one.

#### **4. Parks**

- Legion Park is good sized, well located. Good tennis courts, but I didn't notice if they were lighted.
- Apparently some use is made of the Peconic River. There is a small boat dock in west part of town. No boats or canoes were in evidence. (Are they all out at Yellowstone Lake?)
- Park was kind of sparse without many trees - well maintained area. Nice that it's next to the elementary school.
- Legion Park - nice little park complex - clean, well kept.
- Legion Park is very nice. Good location right by elementary school. Nice tennis courts!

#### **5. Schools**

- Elementary - nice location with adequate space and nice surroundings. High School - not easy to find, looked cramped; certainly not an appealing campus.
- Well kept. High school needs a sign in the yard - took awhile to find sign on side of building.
- Elementary - modern and nice building. Neat high school - older building - could use a sign in front of building, maybe on grass.
- Schools looked to be in good shape. Didn't see any children around elementary school. Elementary had a nice sign but the high school needs one. Are you consolidated with another school?

#### **6. Infrastructure (Sidewalks, streets, lighting, etc.)**

- Streets in better than average condition. Sidewalks fair, but non-existent in much of residential area. Does no one walk in Argyle? Hydro-electric dam and plant produce enough cheap electricity for 30 to 40 homes.
- Sidewalks in residential area could use some work - main street fine.
- Fairly good streets except North Street needed repair.
- Streets were OK N North Street needs work, it was pretty rough. A lot of sidewalks had grass growing up through - but I don't think I would try to get them too perfect - it would ruin the charm.

#### **7. Other**

- Recommend that you do something with old gas station behind supper club.

## **B. Signing**

### **1. Community entrance/exit signs**

- *Good, the one at west entry could be slanted a bit more so it would be noticed sooner. Overall, quite nice with appropriate theme.*
- *Well kept signs carried theme through at all entrances.*
- *Adequate signs on all entrances to community. Highway 78 entrance sign was best location. Tree could be trimmed by Highway 81 East entrance sign.*
- *All the entrances had the same sort of "Welcome" sign. It was a nice sign, but on 81 West and East it was not real noticeable. Hidden by a tree on 81 East. 78 North and South was much more effective.*

### **2. Streets**

- *O.K. Dead end should be marked.*
- *Pretty well marked. Need a dead end sign on Broad Street! We went there twice.*
- *Good.*
- *Streets seemed to be signed OK, except for "DeadEnd" signs. We drove up one street and saw the prettiest blue barn and other blue farm buildings. . . a couple of times.*

### **3. Directions to Hospital/Parks/etc.**

- *?? Little evidence of such. Is there a hospital? Nothing to indicate location of park or schools.*
- *Didn't see any signs directing to Legion Park - sign to Yellowstone good.*
- *Adequate to park*
- *I wouldn't imagine you would have your own hospital or clinic, but your EMS Center looked impressive. I didn't see any signs for the park*

### **4. Storefront signs**

- *Almost entirely on wall of building, so one must be directly in front to see the name.*
- *Nice.*
- *Good.*
- *I really noticed a lack of signs on front of several stores. We couldn't tell what was in the bldgs.*

## **5. Industrial park**

- *Not a designated area; Argyle Industries has three sites.*
- *Where.*
- *?*
- *Didn't see one. I did, however, see a nice looking business called Argyle Industries. I inquired about it at the clothing store and the clerk told me about it. She also answered all the other questions we asked (and very graciously).*

## **6. City Hall, police, etc.**

- *Did not see a police officer (or any reason to). Village Hall well located.*
- *Well marked - like flag flying out front.*
- *In middle of town.*
- *There were signs on the buildings - very easy to find and very nice looking.*

## **7. Billboards/advertising, etc.**

- *Not an over proliferation.*
- *Nicely done - nothing gaudy.*
- *Didn't notice many billboards. You should put some **up** regarding the Pecatonica and canoeing. We were told by a city employee how beautiful it is to canoe down from the "Thunder Bridge": (I also found out where the name "Thunder Bridge" originated.)*
- *I also would have new signs made for the bait shop in the alley.*

## **4. Visitor/community information (Visited by one team only)**

### **A. City/Village Hall**

#### **1. Is there a street map?**

- *No.*
- *There was a map on a wall - that might have been at the post office though - I don't think it marked streets either.*
- *?*
- *My team didn't go there, but it was easy to find.*

## **2. Community brochure/directory**

- *None.*
- *None, really need a brochure.*
- *Community does not have a brochure. Asked at Chamber Office in Civic Bldg. Might recommend having a brochure printed and listing Yellowstone Park on it.*

## **3. Community profile (including business and industrial opportunities).**

- *None.*
- *None.*

## **4. Recommendations on place to stay/eat/visit.....etc.**

- *Don't know about place to stay, but exceptionally thorough regarding place to eat.*
- *None.*
- *Supper Club on main street and Irma's Hometown Cooking.*

## **5. Contact people & addresses listed if I want more info.**

- *Available at City Hall.*
- *None.*

## **6. Complimentary Items (Postcards, bookmarks, coupons, etc.)**

- *None.*
- *None.*

## **B. Chamber office/visitor info center**

### **1. Easy to locate (and did people refer you to it?)**

- *Yes; people gave good directions.*
- *Chamber meeting room was in Village Hall - asked a man at the park how to get to civic center - told us exactly where to find it - he was from out of town too!*
- *In Civic Bldg.*
- *My team didn't go there, although we were told there was one by a business person.*

**2. Comments on info available (Street map/brochures/community profile/etc.)**

- *Little available; on Argyle sign it says, "Gateway to Yellowstone": but there was no information about the lake.*
- *None, you really need some type of brochure of your community, something to tie you with Yellowstone Lake - weren't any brochures about lake either.*
- *A community brochure or profile is needed.*

**3. Recommendations on places to stay/eat/visit etc.**

- *Lodging? Good eating places. Limited recommendations regarding places to visit.*
- *None.*
- *Didn't see any overnight accommodations.*

**4. How prepared/helpful were they.**

- *Nothing special.*
- *I believe we ~~may~~ have talked to the Village Clerk or a secretary - was no help at all!*
- *Very helpful in giving directions to locations asked.*

**5. Convenient hours?**

- *OK for us.*
- *Hours looked good. Nice that you have a library! Didn't get to see it as it was closed at that time.*
- *?*

**C. Info from general community (service station/motel/bars/restaurants/shop employees/etc.)**

**1. How knowledgeable about the community were they?**

- Most were well informed. Does Argyle have only one filling station?*
  - Gracious lady working in a store gave us a lot of information, and was extremely friendly.*
  - Lovely lady in another store shared information of historical significance.*
- Talked to employee at women's clothing store, owner at jewelry store and waitress at cafe - all were very helpful and congenial, and lady at post office was nice.*

- a. Clerk at clothing store was very friendly and helpful.
- b. Jewelry store clerk was very friendly and helpful.
- c. Postmaster was helpful in giving directions to park.

- a. Hardware store - very knowledgeable, friendly and helpful.
- b. Clothing store - positive clerk here. Invited us back. Knew history of area and all about Argyle Industries.
- c. City Employee "Randy" - told us about the hydro dam, canoeing on the Pecatonica, and any other questions we had. He offered much additional information as well.
- d. Fellow cementing in front of new bank - didn't want to be bothered by us.

## 2. Did they refer you to someone else who could help?

- a. In the two cases where appropriate.
- a. Didn't really need to be referred to anyone - all were very helpful.
- a. No.
- a. They didn't have to, they answered all our questions.

## 3. Attitude, appearance, etc.

- a. Very good.
- b. Excellent - lovely elderly lady who could well serve as town greeter on festive occasions.
- c. Fair - I think he was anxious to take a lunch break. He was doing concrete work and may not have been a resident.
- a. Neat, clean, smiling!
- a. Appearance and attitude was very good and very friendly in retail stores.
- a. Definitely older, small town stores, but that's OK, as long as they are neat and clean.
- b. Clothing store - wonderful old fixtures, stairway, etc.
- c. Masonic Temple was a nice old building - in need of a little upkeep.
- d. Tear down that little old station by laundromat. Sometimes those little buildings can be restored, but I don't think that one can. You seem to have several of them partially restored as it is.
- e. Clean up around Ostby Garage.
- f. Sinclair Station (convenience store) was nice looking.

## 4. Other comments

- a. One worker said that he wasn't from the area, but he knew where things were, and he gave us clear directions.
- a. Enjoyed the lady at the clothing store - very congenial.
- a. We didn't find any info on Argyle anywhere!

- b. *One fellow we stopped said he was from out of town, but still gave directions. (He was right too!)*
- c. *Irma's Kitchen was a great place to eat, but the rest rooms need some care.*

## **5. General**

### **A. Do residents know their community history/events/directions/etc.**

- *Yes.*
- *Yes, nice signs around about your duck races. Lady at grocery store said it was in conjunction with homecoming. Also told us about how long clothing store was in town.*
- *Good directions.*
- *Didn't ask much history, lady at clothing store told us about the origin of the store - she was good.*
- *All gave good directions when asked.*

### **B. Services...variety of retail ..lodging facilities..**

- *Exceptionally nice clothing store. Lodging? Health?*
- *Didn't see a motel. Nice that you have a jewelry store and clothing store, hope the residents take advantage of these shops in town.*
- *Did not see any lodging facilities.*
- *Can't believe the variety for a small village. What a clothing store and jewelers!*

### **C. Are there public rest rooms.**

- *Other than village hall?*
- *Didn't see any.*
- *Not that we noticed possibly at Civic Hall.*
- *Didn't see any.*

### **D. Pay phones ..are they working, phone books intact.**

- *Unnoticed.*
- *Couldn't find one.*
- *Didn't see any pay phones.*
- *Didn't see any.*

**E. Industrial park...does it look active & attractive.**

- *None specific.*
- *None.*
- *?*
- *Didn't see one.*

**F. What does the community TASTE like? (Specialty restaurants/bakeries/etc.)**

- *Very good eating places.*
- *Ate at Inna's. Excellent homemade soup and homemade pies. Very busy - lots of men so food must be good with large helpings!*
- *Ate at Irma's Cafe - food was great. A busy cafe with good service.*
- *Irma's Kitchen had good "homemade" food. It came well recommended.*

**G. What does community SMELL like?**

- *Clean country-like air.*
- *Had the smell of fall - very **homey!***
- *Nothing unusual - clean.*
- ***A** river town - clean smell.*

**H. What SOUNDS did you hear?**

- *Quiet, lawn mowers could be heard.*
- *High school kids on lunch hour - man working on side walk.*
- *Usual traffic - quiet.*
- *Very little, quiet little community.*

**I. What did community FEEL like (Emotional response, i.e. cold/warm, crowded/deserted, inviting, etc.)**

- *Warm. Not much movement on sidewalks or streets.*
- *Warm, inviting, cozy in residential area. Sometimes we were the only ones on main street so that was kind of a lonely feeling.*
- *Quiet but friendly and warm.*
- ***A** "Charming" little place. Most people were very friendly.*

### **DESCRIBE THE PEOPLE YOU MET (Friendly, helpful, etc.)**

- Warm, friendly, helpful people (except for one worker finishing concrete).
- Town's main street looks neat and well kept (with a few exceptions), despite some empty buildings. Adjoining main street - not as well kept.
- Fine clothing store - relished the old stamped metal ceiling and open stairway with oak banisters.
- Irma's Kitchen - busy, good service, good **food**.
- Everyone but the lady at the Village Hall was very friendly and helpful, polite and pleasant.
- Friendly and helpful in directing us to Civic Center, restaurant and lake.
- Almost everyone we met was friendly and helpful.

### **ADDITIONAL COMMENTS/OBSERVATIONS:**

- The hydro-electric plant is unique. I had never seen a bridge located directly over a dam before. Perhaps not enough is done with the Pecatonica River as a setting, or as a facility.
- Liked the sign in a residential yard. It said "Yard of the Week"! Is that a chamber project? If it is, I think it's an excellent idea. Be nice if the group identified themselves, possibly owner just put it up himself!
- Very surprised to see a jewelry store and clothing store in a small community. New bank is an asset for downtown. Nice to have a public library.
- Noticed a "Yard of the Week" sign, seemed a good idea - wondered **how** it worked. We also drove by Yellowstone. . . it is beautiful. Argyle seems to be trying to tie in with it - great!

### **WHAT WILL YOU REMEMBER ABOUT THIS COMMUNITY SIX MONTHS FROM NOW**

- The bridge and dam at the approach to main street.
- The lovely lady in the clothing store.
- Probably the homey look of the town coming in from the west. **Also**, seeing the kids out on their lunch hour downtown. Liked that high school downtown - might help. Good price on gas!
- Warm, friendly and clean community.

- *The Peconica - it's pretty - shame the old wooden bridge couldn't have been salvaged, rather than the green bridge. Would love to canoe there.*
- *I'll remember what a pretty little community it was. We toured on a "Perfect" day . . . blue skies, sunshine, fall colors. What more could a person want.*

## **6. Doing it Right!**

### **A. List the 5 MOST positive things you observed about the community.**

1. *Argyle still seems to draw trade from a fairly sizable area.*
  2. *There is a legacy of well kept residences.*
  3. *Despite a few empty buildings there is a definite effort to keep main street attractive and clean.*
  4. *The intersection of two state highways.*
  5. *Presence of water:*
    - a. *Peconica River*
    - b. *Yellowstone Lake**Exploit these more and formulate activities around them.*
- 
1. *Good welcome signs - good idea to connect town to Yellowstone Lake.*
  2. *Neat - clean residential area.*
  3. *Great women's clothing store and jewelry store. I'm coming back to do some shopping in those two places!*
  4. *Nice to have two eating places open downtown - gives people a choice.*
  5. *The kids out for lunch hour just seemed like really nice kids. Actions of teenagers can tell a lot about a community. You can be proud!*
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1. *Clean and well kept community in general.*
  2. *Friendly clerks in stores.*
  3. *Legion Community Park - tennis courts.*
  4. *Entrance signs at each entrance.*
  5. *New bank building under construction.*
- 
1. *Variety of retail for small village.*
  2. *Big clothing store.*
  3. *Nice City Hall bldg., Library, EMS Center, Fire Dept!*
  4. *That it was so picturesque!*
  5. *What a great river for canoeing.*

### **B. Describe ONE idea that you will steal for use in your own business/community and describe the steps you will take to implement it within the NEXT 72 HOURS!**

- **'YARD OF THE WEEK'**
  1. *Place on agenda of forthcoming Chamber of Commerce meeting.*
  2. *Have in mind suggestions for those who might act as judges.*
  3. *Get on the ball and improve my own yard.*
- *Really liked that sign in the yard "Yard of the Week": We could easily do that from about June through September - good chamber project. Will discuss this with other chamber members tomorrow.*