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MEZZANINE

Centennial Memories

*A Brief History of
Menasha, Wisconsin*

By JAMES M. AUER



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Centennial Memories

A
Brief History
of
Menasha, Wisconsin

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1853 · 1953

Centennial Memories

THE SAGA OF MENASHA is an adventure story that began not one hundred, not one thousand, but many millions of years ago.

It is difficult for the present-day inhabitant of the Fox River Valley to imagine this area covered by lush, tropical vegetation in which enormous prehistoric beasts roamed at will for more centuries than a man can comprehend. It is not easy to visualize an irresistible mass of ice moving southward, crushing forests in its path, changing forever the courses of great rivers, carrying with it the very soil on which our homes and farms now stand, and leaving when it finally melts a great sea on the bottom of which our city is situated.

But geologists tell us that all these things happened and more, shaping for all time the face of the Wisconsin countryside, and influencing the lives of the thousands of people who would one day live and work here.

Before the glacier pushed down from Green Bay, Lake Winnebago was the bed of the Fox river. But the glacier filled in the ancient channel at Appleton and Fond du Lac and created a new one, which at Menasha formed a marvellous source of water power as well as a convenient transportation route. As the glacier receded, men followed it and came to live in the valley. These newcomers manufactured primitive weapons and tools out of argentite, a dark, lustrous mineral which contains silver.

Later, people who may have been the builders of Menasha's famous mounds settled down to raise crops. They had domesticated such wild plants as the potato, tobacco, and corn. Another group, known as the "Clam Eaters," left heaps of mussel shells near the site of their village on the west shore of Little Lake Butte des Morts. Some of their tepees were circular; others were as much as 180 feet long and fifteen feet wide. Certain prehistoric tribes practiced Cairn burial; that is, they protected the graves of their dead with heaps of stone. Others sought out sand and gravel pits and interred their fallen comrades there. This is called Kame burial. Skeletons are still being found in such locations.

The Indians who succeeded the prehistoric peoples also recognized the peculiarly advantageous location of what is now Menasha and the Fox River Valley generally. Like their predecessors, they

were farmers, and in their patches grew beans, pumpkins, melons, and squashes as well as corn. In the rivers and forests lived fish and game for them to hunt. From maple trees they made sugar. Grapes, plums, apples, and nuts grew wild. And they were able to tan animal skins for clothing. On the island formed by the two channels of the Fox river which connect Lake Winnebago with Little Lake Butte des Morts was the village of the Winnebagoes. North of them dwelt the Fox tribe.

Parts of Canada had been explored by the French many years before Champlain, the governor of "New France," decided to send an emissary to the Winnebagoes in the hope that he could establish peace between them and the Hurons, who were friends of the European invaders. For the mission he chose Jean Nicolet, a young Norman who had come to the New World to seek his fortune. He hoped, too, that Nicolet's journey would help to expand the profitable fur trade.

In 1634 the youthful explorer reached his destination and held council with the Indians, who greeted him warmly and called him "Manitourinion" or "The Wonderful One" because on his arrival he had worn a colorful oriental costume and shot off a pair of pistols. Like other Europeans, Nicolet had half expected to find Chinese mandarins here. He also sought the "Northwest Passage" to China. The Winnebagoes gave him their solemn promise that they would remain at peace; however, as soon as Manitourinion was out of sight, they proceeded to break their word.

Several decades passed before two more Frenchmen, Pierre d'Esprit Sieur Radisson and his brother-in-law, Medard Chouart Sieur des Grosilliers, set foot in the Fox River Valley on their way to the Mississippi, which they were to reach fourteen years before Father Marquette. Their avowed purpose simply to see the world, these adventurers also spent some time under the protection of the British flag, during which they laid the foundation for the great Hudson Bay Company.

On the evening of April 19, 1670, Father Claudeus Allouez, a Jesuit priest, reached Lake Winnebago. The following morning he offered the first mass ever heard in this area.

Unlike the wandering traders and trappers who were soon to frequent the valley, the Jesuit fathers dreamed not of the fortune in beaver and otter pelts which was to be won here, but of an empire of Christianized Indians under the dominion of the King of France.

All too often the religious and secular forces were to clash, for the Jesuits considered the traders a demoralizing influence and fought to halt the traffic in brandy which could only harm the

Indians as it enriched the French commercial interests. But neither side thought about the possibility of bringing white settlers into the virgin land as did the British in later years.

The Territory of the Great Lakes became a part of the French Empire in 1671 when a nobleman named St. Luson, wearing the impressive uniform of an army officer, officially claimed it in the name of Louis XIV. In 1672 the famous Jesuit missionary, Father Marquette, made the voyage from Mackinaw, up the lower Fox, through Lake Winnebago, again up the Fox, and down the Wisconsin to the Mississippi. He died May 18, 1675, at the age of thirty-eight.

During almost a century of French rule, voyageurs paddled up and down the Fox river with their precious furs. At the rapids where Menasha is located it was necessary either to pole or haul canoes up the channels, and the Foxes took advantage of the situation by exacting tribute in the form of gifts from the boats that passed their land. When a trader refused to stop and bribe them, they attacked his craft and pilfered his cargo. In time the French tired of this practice and decided to defeat the Foxes in battle, but the attack, under DeLouvigny in 1716, did not subdue them.

When the Indians killed a young Canadian and some of his men, a Captain Morin decided to embark upon a surprise attack. Accordingly, in 1730, he assembled a party of Frenchmen and friendly Indians and set out to destroy the Foxes. Legend has it that he prepared the way for his soldiers by sending ahead a boatload of brandy with orders that it be allowed to fall into Indian hands.

Then Morin divided his forces. The Indians he sent on by land, instructing them to circle behind the village. The white men he concealed in the bottoms of his large Mackinaw boats under tarpaulins. Only two oarsmen were visible in each vessel as the Foxes put up the torch which was a signal for them to heave to. They gathered on the beach as the French boats put in to shore. Probably the unsuspecting savages were already too drunk to notice anything suspicious about the approaching boats.

At a given signal the white men threw aside the oilcloths which covered them and rose to their firing positions, guns blazing. Men, women, and children fell before they could turn to run. From one of the vessels a swivel gun sent terrible charges of grape and cannister into the crowd. Hundreds were mortally wounded in the first few minutes of the massacre. Meanwhile the rest of Morin's men were attacking from the rear, cutting off the Foxes from a mass retreat. The pitiful remnant of the once powerful tribe gathered later on elevated land several miles above Great Butte des Morts, but

Morin followed them and once more took the offensive, forcing them to flee to the northern bank of the Wisconsin river.

It was from this "battle" that the lower lake derived its name, *Butte des Morts*, which means "Hill of the Dead" in French; for the bodies of the Indians who lost their lives in the destruction of the village were buried in a communal grave, a mound which was a familiar sight to travellers on the lake until it was destroyed to make way for the "mile" railroad bridge of the Chicago and Northwestern line.

Thus did the French destroy once and for all time the power of the Fox tribe in the Fox River Valley.

In 1759, after 99 years of French control, the territory became a British possession with the signing of the Treaty of Paris which followed the great battle outside the walls of Quebec. It became a part of the United States of America according to the Treaty of Ghent (1814) as a result of the War of 1812. Actually the land had been legally a part of the new country for 32 years, so the agreement was definitely an anticlimax.

In all, the area between Lakes *Butte des Morts* and Winnebago was included in four successive American territories: the Northwest territory (1787-1800); the Indiana territory (1800-1809); the Illinois territory (1809-1818); and the Michigan territory (1818-1836). In 1836 it became the Wisconsin territory.

As early as 1820 James D. Doty, who later became a figure of much importance in Menasha's history, had noted the island in the Fox as an extraordinarily promising site. And by 1834 General Albert G. Ellis had completed surveying the area. In 1835-36 the Federal Government chose the place as the location of a model village where the wandering Menominees and Sacs could be taught the arts of civilization. In Winnebago Rapids, as it was called in those days, they erected a grist mill, a saw mill, a school house, a blacksmith shop, twenty or thirty medium sized dwellings, and five two-story homes. "The work being done under government direction," an early historian remarks, "no expense was spared." Four white men were brought in to operate the mills; and a school teacher, a blacksmith, and a missionary joined them. They were paid \$800 annually and given their lodgings.

The Indians were reluctant, however, to accept the pattern of living the government men sought to impose on them; they much preferred the old ways. So little success did the teachers have in turning them into farmers that barely enough grain was raised to feed the staff. The braves pulled the floors out of their little homes and built fires on the ground instead of in the fireplaces. Some

Menominees went so far as to camp outside and stable their ponies in the buildings. To complete the catastrophe an epidemic of small-pox hit the community and wiped out about one-third of the Indian population.

In 1836 the Menominee Indians and Governor Dodge made a treaty at Cedar Rapids (now Appleton) by which the whole territory ceased to be a reservation and became instead government land. Writing the social experiment off as a total loss, the white men deserted Winnebago Rapids and left it to the occasional wandering Indian, trader, or trapper who took refuge in the abandoned houses.

But the island and the lands north of the river had not been included in the reservation. They went on sale August 31, 1835. James D. Doty, John M. McCarty, Daniel Whitney, Morgan L. Martin, and others, paid high prices for what they bought, demonstrating considerable confidence in the future of the area. Later Harrison Reed, a New Yorker, purchased the Winnebago Rapids settlement hoping to develop it by himself. He soon became financially embarrassed, however, and had to enter into an agreement with another Easterner, Harvey Jones, who agreed to bail him out in return for a parcel of land. The partnership did not work out very well, for Reed was a visionary and Jones a conservative tradesman.

First on the agenda was the development of the water power of the Fox river. February 8, 1847, Doty succeeded in having the state legislature pass an Act granting him and his associates (Jones, Harrison Reed, and Curtis Reed, Harrison's younger brother) permission to construct a dam across each channel from the island to the mainland. Jones and Harrison Reed were identified with south side property and Doty and Curtis Reed with north side land. Soon their interests clashed, and Doty and Curtis Reed returned to the legislature and obtained a new charter which in effect repealed the old one in regard to the north side dam, March 10, 1848. As a result of the differences which had arisen between the parties involved, two towns were to be formed instead of the one which nature seemed to have ordained. The rivalry continued for many years.

In June, 1848, Curtis Reed moved here in order to locate the village and start work on the dam. About this time Mrs. Doty named the site "Menasha," an Indian word meaning, aptly enough, "island." Reed built a log house near the head of the present canal. Clark Knight soon moved into it and operated it as a combination tavern and boarding house.

The first home in Menasha was constructed by Corydon Northrup in the forest north of the river. Here, in the center of what

is now Milwaukee street, he lived with his parents and their children. Corydon Northrup's daughter, Miss Lucy Northrup, the last of the line, passed away May 28, 1953, a little more than a month before the celebration of Menasha's hundredth birthday.

Reed also constructed a store building and commenced work on the dam, which was completed in 1850. In October, 1848, Elbridge Smith, a lawyer from the East, moved to town and began building the first frame dwelling in Menasha. (Northrup's had been a slab house.) Located on Canal street, Smith's home served as the first law office, the first dance hall, and the first school, which was privately taught by Miss Hettie Frost. The tuition was one shilling per week.

The first Protestant services in Menasha were conducted by Rev. Orson P. Clinton, a Congregational minister, in the log tavern, whose owner kindly threw open the bar and the sitting room for the occasion. The first Catholic services had been conducted by Rev. Theodore J. Vanderbrook of Little Chute for the benefit of the government employees at Winnebago Rapids during the noble experiment some years before.

Some new arrivals in 1848 were Philo Hine, George Stickles, Thomas and William Brotherhood, Henry C. Tate, I. M. Naricong, William Geer, J. H. Trude, Uriah Clinton, Henry Alden, John B. Lajest, and Jeremiah Hunt, whose daughter, Lydia, was the first white child born here—February 22, 1849. The first death, that of Fannie McCollum, occurred in May, 1849. In the same year Cornelius Northrup, Corydon's father, and Harrison Reed put up the first manufacturing establishment, a sawmill.

It had long been obvious that a canal would have to be dug connecting the two lakes if Menasha were to become an important shipping point, for the rapids made the river impassable in both channels. When the state contemplated beginning the construction work, both Menasha and Neenah naturally wanted the waterway. Harvey Jones tried to induce the authorities to choose Neenah by offering to do the job at his own expense. Hearing of the offer, Curtis Reed did Jones one better by promising not only to pay for the canal out of his own pocket but to set aside five thousand dollars for repairs in the event Menasha was fortunate enough to be selected. The state accepted Reed's proposition.

It was later asserted by partisans of Neenah that Reed did not fulfil his part of the bargain and was, in fact, repaid for what he spent on the waterway. The truth of the matter seems to be that when, in 1853, the state turned over the project to a private company, he settled the balance of his contract with them by turning over to them the right of way for the canal and the dam as

well, retaining only the right to all surplus water power. He had originally conveyed the rights to the land only by implication; furthermore, the Improvement Company had never disputed his claim to the dam site. In addition, he had done some extra excavating which was to be deducted from the sum held in reserve for necessary repairs.

The little community grew rapidly. Late in 1849 a post office was established with James R. Lush as acting postmaster. That winter Mrs. Henry Alden took charge of the first public school. And in 1850 the steamboat John Mitchell was constructed here by Captain James Harris. The following spring it became the first boat to pass through the Upper Fox river to Fort Winnebago. The Barlow was the first boat to go through the locks when the Improvement Company finished them in 1852. Until the building of a bridge across the Menasha channel in 1851, a small boat ferried passengers between the twin cities.

Citizens who wished to send letters out of the city could take advantage of the regular mail service that was soon established, communicating with Fond du Lac and Green Bay twice a week; with Manitowoc, Plymouth, Waupaca, and Lake Shawano weekly; and with Lake Superior monthly. In 1851 the government land office was moved here from Green Bay, and in 1852 Congress appropriated money for a light house which was built of stone in Lake Winnebago on a small island off the present eastern end of Nicolet Boulevard. This warning beacon was later abandoned.

On July 5, 1853, the Village of Menasha was incorporated by an Act of the Legislature which divided it into two wards. Curtis Reed was elected president. The trustees of the first ward were Leonard Williams, Isaac Hough, and Uriah Clinton; Lyman Fargo, Walter Cranston, and Carlton Bachelder were their counterparts in the second ward. J. W. Thombs became the first clerk. At this time the community had thirteen factories giving work to a grand total of 125 hands.

Soon after the incorporation of the village methods of transportation began to improve; by 1855, there were two routes open between Menasha and the rest of the world. One was to board a steamboat here for Fond du Lac, beyond which a toll plank road forty miles long led directly to Sheboygan. (The road is now Highway 23 and Sheboygan County Trunk A.) The other was to take one of the post coaches that left Menasha daily and ran along the plank road to Kaukauna, a distance of fifteen miles. Steamers connected Kaukauna with Green Bay. Because of its central location Menasha rapidly became a favored stopping point for travellers.

In order to buy machinery for a grist mill he was starting in

association with Harrison Reed, H. A. Burts actually walked all the way to Milwaukee and back, a total distance of 200 miles! With the construction of other flour mills Menasha became one of the most active milling centers in the West. Lyman Fargo and J. W. Thombs founded the Fargo Flouring mill in 1853; R. M. Scott built the Star mill in 1855; H. A. Burts put up the Coral mill in 1859. It is recorded that one hundred teams journeyed to and from Kaukauna daily after the record wheat crop of 1855. By 1879 the Eagle, Coral, and Star mills were producing 450 barrels of flour a day. Later the Syme flour mill occupied the land originally covered by the buildings of the Northrup-Reed saw mill and the Reed-Burts grist mill.

The first paper mill in Menasha was a factory which Scott and Hewitt put up to manufacture straw paper. It was followed by the Howard mill.

There were now three schools in Menasha, attended, in 1852, by 243 students. By that year the population had already swelled to 1,625.

In the spring of 1849 the Messrs. Sanford, Beckwith, and Billings put into operation a pail factory which consisted of a two story building, 24 by 36 feet in size, and a small dry house which they erected from lumber cut on the land where the canal was later dug. The young firm immediately ran into difficulties, the worst of which was a delay in the completion of a mill race which was to supply the plant with water power. Because of it they were unable to get into production in time to pay off the 50 per cent interest on their capital, and they failed after making only 1,500 pails.

Joseph Keyes and Lot Rice took over the company after that, but they, too, were unsuccessful in making a go of it. The next owner was an ex-storekeeper named Elisha D. Smith. He had come to Menasha in 1850 and gone into business where the hotel is now located. Little money was in circulation, however, and times were generally bad. Barter was the only means of exchange. Selling his store, Smith bought the moribund plant in 1852 for \$1,200. He immediately enlarged the building and installed more efficient machinery. By 1880 the Woodenware occupied two large factories and three saw mills, employed several hundred men, and consumed six million feet of timber each year.

The hazards of business are nowhere better illustrated than in the story of Menasha's early newspapers. Jeremiah Crowley started the Advocate in November, 1853, and sold it four years later to E. P. Morehouse, a deaf mute, who eventually disposed of the property. The Conservator, founded in Neenah in 1856 by Harrison Reed, was taken over by B. S. Heath and moved to Menasha. In 1860 Goodwin

and Decker became its editors and publishers. The Island City Times was printed first by J. N. Stone, then by Ritch and Tapley as the Winnebago County Press. In 1871 Thomas B. Reid purchased it and once more changed its name, this time to the Menasha Press. The Manufacturer, which William M. Matts began in 1860, succumbed after only a year of publication.

The Menasha Post was a German language paper which Mussans and Hein founded in 1871 and moved eighteen months later to Shawano county. J. C. Klinker began The Winnebago Observer, another German language publication, in 1873.

During the years between 1848 and 1857, the population reached and exceeded the two thousand mark. Then civic leaders made the alarming discovery that Neenah interests had persuaded the Chicago, St. Paul, and Fond du Lac railroad to bypass Menasha entirely and lay its track along the western shore of Little Lake Butte des Morts. Fortunately, a visit to the spot by some of the line's officials convinced them that Menasha's expanding industries could make good use of railroad transportation, and in December, 1862, the village gained a station.

Curtis Reed, his brother, Judge George Reed of Manitowoc, and Matt Wadleigh of Stevens Point were responsible for the founding of the Wisconsin Central R. R. Company. In January, 1870, they established their general headquarters in the New National Hotel with the objective of building a line north from Doty Island to Lake Superior. May 14, 1870, the village of Menasha voted to float a bond issue which would help pay for construction of track from there to Gills Landing, 25 miles west on the Wolf river. Later, with the aid of Eastern capital and Government land grants, the road became quite an extensive system. The Milwaukee and Northern railroad reached Menasha shortly afterward by extending a branch line from Hilbert Junction, a distance of 15 miles.

November 1, 1870, the National Bank was established. Its first stockholders were H. Hewitt, Sr., J. W. Williams, J. A. Kimberly, H. Babcock, J. R. Davis, Sr., Robert Shiells, Moses Hooper, and A. G. Galpin, Jr.

The City of Menasha was incorporated March 5, 1874. O. J. Hall was elected mayor in the first contest. On the City Council H. Hewitt, Jr., and C. P. Northrup represented the First Ward; Julius Fieweger and Pat McFadden, the Second; John Harbeck and Joseph Mayer, the Third; C. H. Watke and H. B. Taylor, the Fourth.

The following year the National Bank officially changed its name to the Bank of Menasha. And in 1856 a float bridge was built across the channel of the Fox, connecting the Island and the main-

land. Unfortunately, citizens who crossed the span were often sprayed with water on account of its peculiar construction. As a consequence it became necessary to replace the pontoon affair with a wooden drawbridge in 1860. The latter soon settled into the water, however, and in 1886 the city bought a swing bridge from a Milwaukee company for the enormous sum of \$7,000. When the rest of the span partially collapsed a few years later, Menasha purchased a riveted iron bridge that cost \$14,500, thus completing the Mill street bridge which endured until 1951, a remarkable length of time considering that it had been planned with light, horse-drawn vehicles in mind. Saturday, August 25, 1951, the new Racine street lift bridge was dedicated in memory of Curtis Reed, and the old Mill street swing bridge was demolished shortly afterward. Built at a cost of \$585,000, the modern structure with its automatic warning lights and power driven lifts is a far cry from the first crude bridge that the early settlers threw across the treacherous stream.

Menasha has reason to be proud of its public and parochial schools; from the very beginning of its existence as a community, it has recognized the fact that an educated citizenry is the backbone of our representative democracy. The first public high school building was erected in 1857. It cost \$8,000. Not until 1876 were the first graduation exercises held; before that time, scholars completed their work and left school without any formal ceremony.

By 1879, according to a report by Superintendent of Schools Silas Bullard, there were six substantial school buildings, including the denominational, within the city limits. Of a total of 1,140 children between the ages of four and twenty, 374 were enrolled at public schools, and 470 attended parochial schools. The high school boasted a library of 325 volumes, and the entire public school system employed ten teachers. St. Mary's congregation had erected the first Catholic school in the Green Bay Diocese in 1868. It was replaced by a new structure with eight classrooms and an auditorium in 1893. A year later grade schools were put up on the present sites of Jefferson and Nicolet, and in 1896 the city tore down the historic old high school building in order to make way for a 13-room, \$40,000 structure.

In these days of universal high school education, it is often difficult to realize how few people completed the twelfth grade before the turn of the century; but by 1898 only 124 young people had gone through high school since its inception. The yearly average was about six; furthermore, for the first fifty years of its existence Menasha had lacked a public library. Recognizing the important part such an institution would play in the intellectual life of the city, Miss Lucy Lee Pleasants, organizer of the Menasha

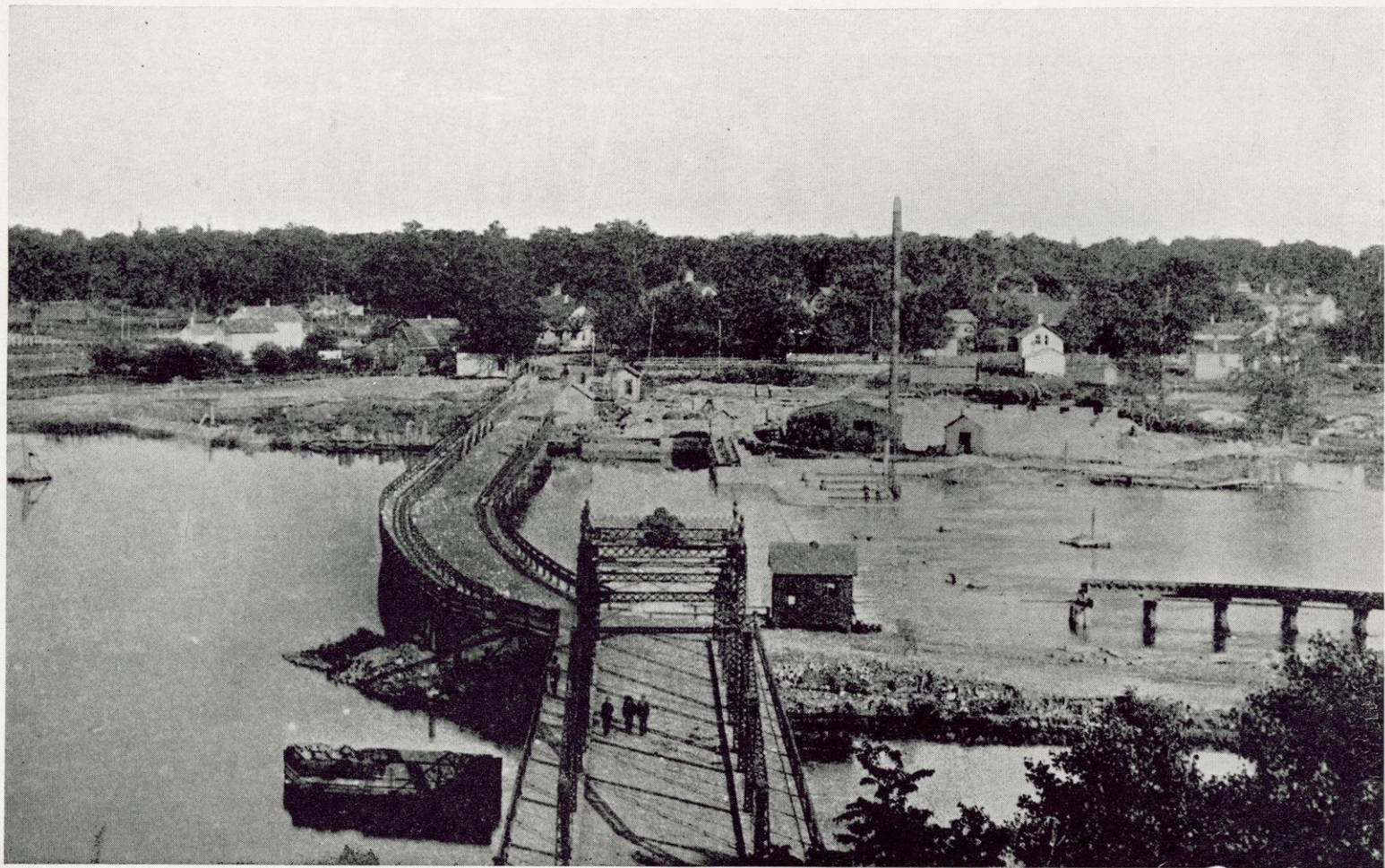
Centennial Pictorial



TAKEN IN 1871, these photographs depict the village of Menasha as a mushrooming community with unpaved streets and buildings both simple and rather elaborate. Even then, however, the city as we know it was shaping up. The picture at the upper left shows the corner of Main and Tayco streets, looking south toward the government canal. The large building in the foreground is the Landgraf Hotel; in the distance is the crude pontoon drawbridge which had to be replaced because it sprayed water on pedestrians and the occupants of horse-drawn vehicles. At the upper right we see the National Hotel, which was later destroyed by fire. In its place today stands the Menasha Hotel. The photographer chose the top of the hotel as his vantage point when he decided to take the pictures reproduced in the lower row. The view at the left shows Main street and the river, looking east. At that time water transportation was gradually being displaced by the railroads. The photo at the lower right, taken with the camera pointing west, shows Main street, a portion of the city square, and the old National Bank building.



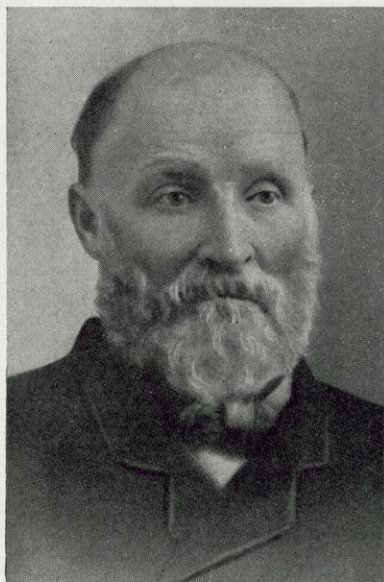
HORSE-DRAWN VEHICLES lined up for inspection the day this picture was taken of Menasha's city square in 1888.



LOOKING SOUTH across the Mill street bridge in 1886 we see the present location of the George Banta Publishing Company.



TAKEN ABOUT 1887, this photograph shows a view of the city looking east from the city square to the dock, where a sailboat is tied up. One end of the new Racine street lift bridge now covers what was once the steamboat landing. Several of the buildings in the picture are still in use today.



CURTIS REED, who came to this vicinity in June, 1848, and put up the first building, is known as the Founder of Menasha. To him goes the credit for having the village chosen as the site of the government canal, which meant so much to the early industrialists and caused great dissension between the twin cities. One of the organizers of the Wisconsin Central R. R. Company, he also built most of the original dam. His older brother, Harrison Reed, figured in the development of both towns. Curtis Reed was the mayor of Menasha, 1890-91, and an active participant in all local affairs. The Racine street lift bridge was dedicated to his memory, and a plaque to this effect hangs in the reading room of the Menasha Public Library.

Free Library Association, which occupied rooms on the second floor of the Tuchscherer building, induced Elisha D. Smith to donate \$25,000 for the purpose of establishing a fine library. The \$13,695 structure was put up on land which was also given by Mr. Smith, where it has endured until the present time.

In 1930-31 a children's room was built as an addition to the library and dedicated to the memory of Miss Pleasants. The building was entirely redecorated in 1938.

Another of E. D. Smith's benefactions is Smith Park. Landscaped by Olaf Benson of Chicago, it contains, undefiled, several of the famous mounds raised by the prehistoric inhabitants of the valley, in addition to children's swings and other recreational apparatus, an open-air theater, and swimming facilities. Before his death in 1899, Mr. Smith had given the city a total of more than \$50,000.

By 1898, the year of the Spanish-American War, the population was approximately 7,000. Total public school attendance had risen to almost 800 children. In the city's 30 factories 2,500 persons were at work, 1,600 of them engaged in the manufacture of wooden ware. Seventy-five arc lights illuminated the streets, and the Telephone Company had all of 100 subscribers. The Interurban Electric Line which had replaced the horse-drawn streetcars ran between Menasha, Neenah, and Appleton. Such steamboats as the Evalyn, the Marston, the Lynch, and the Carter made the city dock a regular stopping place. Roberts' Resort, the popular vacation hotel, attracted visitors from all parts of the nation during the summer months.

Menasha now had a fire department, members of which received the grand sum of sixty dollars annually in return for their services. Two horse-drawn steamers were in readiness at all times in case of disaster. The department was quite an improvement on the valiant Pioneer Bucket Brigade which, by the most primitive means imaginable, had fought the conflagrations which engulfed so many early factories and homes.

Most of the industries which have given Menasha economic stability during years of widespread depression elsewhere had already been founded.

It was in 1887 that William M. Gilbert began operation of a one machine paper mill. Then with the invention and adoption of the typewriter, he introduced and started to manufacture bond paper composed partly of rag and partly of sulphite or wood pulp. The following year John Strange organized another paper mill. It is today the oldest maker of kraft papers in the country. In 1915 the John Strange Pail Company went into operation.

George A. Whiting started manufacturing paper in association

with the Gilbert family in 1882 and bought them out shortly afterwards. The original plant was destroyed by fire August 23, 1888, but it was soon rebuilt.

The Menasha Wood Split Pulley Company was incorporated in 1888 with P. V. Lawson, Jr. at the head. The two buildings at the east end of the Menasha water power which it occupied burned to the ground in 1892, after which Mr. Lawson moved the plant to its present location on the shore of Lake Butte des Morts. In 1901 the company once more was leveled by fire. But again the work of reconstruction was begun, and soon it was producing pulleys, broke trucks, and other wood products in profusion.

September 28, 1901, articles of incorporation for the George Banta Publishing Company were filed with the Secretary of State of Wisconsin. Mr. Banta, the state agent for the Phenix Insurance Company, had long been interested in printing as a hobby, and he had turned out thousands of insurance forms and letterheads in his shop. Now he planned to carry on a job and newspaper printing business. How well the enterprise succeeded is indicated by the fact that the Banta company now employs over 600 men and women. It specializes in educational books and magazines of the highest quality.

The Walter Bros. Brewing Company, another industry for which Menasha has long been famous, was founded in 1888 and incorporated in 1894.

Menasha had two competing daily newspapers in 1898—the Daily Press and the Evening Breeze. Monday, November 2, 1903, publisher Charles W. Lamb remodeled the Breeze's typography and renamed it The Menasha Record. The Press later discontinued publication. Early in 1949 Edward C. Cochrane, publisher of the Neenah News-Times, bought The Record from Ira H. Clough, who had been associated with it for 47 years. September 19, 1949, Mr. Cochrane combined his two properties in order to form The Twin City News-Record.

The city began to manufacture its own electric power in 1905 with the construction of the first all-diesel generating plant in the world. After six years of powering only the carbon incandescent street lights, it started servicing private customers in 1911. A commercial electric company immediately brought suit against the municipality, claiming that the city had no right to engage in such a business within the company's sphere of distribution, but several court decisions confirmed Menasha's stand in the matter, and it continued to operate the publicly owned utility for the benefit of its citizens.

In 1949 the new steam plant was erected on the canal. Valued at \$1,600,000, its two turbines produce 4000 kilowatts each. The total value of the city plants is now \$3,600,000. The filtration equipment, built in the spring of 1928, has a capacity of ten million gallons daily.

But a community progresses in many ways. The soda fountain, for instance, was introduced to Menasha by druggist John Rosch. At first Mr. Rosch could only offer his clientele vanilla, sarsaparilla, and lemon flavors; later he added more. Several times a delegate to the National Democratic Convention, he entertained William Jennings Bryan at his home during a speaking engagement here. It is not recorded, however, whether or not the celebrated orator sampled one of the early drinks.

In 1906 the Women's Clubs of Menasha erected on Doty Island a monument commemorating Jean Nicolet's visit in 1634. The Soldiers and Sailors Memorial Building was built in 1928 at a cost of \$35,000. Three years later the Federal Government appropriated \$120,000 for the construction of a new post office.

One of Menasha's largest employers at the present time is the Marathon Corporation, which in 1927 purchased the Menasha Printing and Carton Company and renamed it the Menasha Products Company. The firm has pioneered in the development of modern food packaging materials, and many of America's famous brands are marketed in Marathon containers.

March 21, 1936, the old high school building was destroyed by fire, and for a time classes met of necessity in various public buildings. Two years later the new, Georgian-Colonial structure was dedicated. Built during the administration of the late Superintendent of Schools, Frank B. Younger, it cost \$600,000 and houses in one unit the Vocational, Junior, and Senior High Schools. In addition to classrooms it has a completely equipped gymnasium, a theater, a swimming pool, and facilities where students may learn printing and the manual arts.

The three public grade schools now in existence are Nicolet (1927), Butte des Morts (1928), and Jefferson (1933). The Trinity Evangelical Lutheran Church and School, a one unit structure at the corner of Broad and Tayco streets, was completed in 1953. The Catholic grade schools are St. Patrick's and St. John's as well as St. Mary's which also offers a complete high school course.

The Congregational Church, one of Menasha's oldest religious institutions, celebrated its own centennial in 1951. St. Thomas Episcopal Church is presently located on Washington street. St. Timothy's English Lutheran Church and the Bethel Lutheran Church

are modern structures which add much to the beauty of the city.

In one hundred years Menasha has changed from a sparsely populated village into a stable, mature manufacturing city. The dreams of the pioneers have been largely realized. Paved roads have taken the place of the muddy, rutted wagon paths of the past; automobiles, busses, airplanes, and streamlined trains unite the community with the rest of the nation; complex machinery makes it possible for men to produce more in less time, thus shortening the work week and improving the general standard of living.

But one thing cannot be replaced or improved upon. It is the courageous spirit which motivated the early settlers in their struggle against the wilderness. And it is needed now, more than ever, as Menasha enters the second century of its history.

Winnebago County History

THE STORY of Winnebago County has been one of rapid industrial and agricultural development and continued growth, ever since the year 1818 when Augustin Grignon of Kaukauna and James Porlier of Green Bay set up a trading post near the head of Big Lake Butte des Morts. There, where the Indian trail from Green Bay to Fort Winnebago crossed the Fox river, they operated a tavern and a ferry for the convenience of travellers.

The land at that time was a virtually untouched wilderness which the Indians still owned. Vast forests covered much of central and northern Wisconsin. For almost a century the French had controlled the territory, but their only interest had been the fur trade, which, of course, continued to operate under the American flag. Many Indians brought their otter, mink, and beaver pelts to the trading post in order to exchange them for other goods.

Another public house and ferry was established in 1835 by George Johnson where the new mail route between Fort Howard and Fort Winnebago met the river at Coon's Point. The business passed through several hands and ultimately was purchased by James Knaggs, a half breed, who opened a trading post on the spot.

One of the Government employees who had occasion to pass through the area was Webster Stanley, on whom the potentialities of the land made a profound impression. Giving up his federal job, he returned to Coon's Point and took over James Knaggs' business "on shares." When, following the Treaty of Cedar Rapids, the land was put up for sale, he and another newcomer, Henry A. Gallup, bought farms and became the first permanent white residents of the county.

To William A. Boyd goes the distinction of having brought the first sheep into the area. Having shipped them by water from Cleveland to Green Bay, he drove them here in 1840 along an old Indian trail.

Winnebago county was set off from Brown county, of which it had previously been a part, January 6, 1840; and an election was held in April, 1843. Lacking sufficient knowledge of the new county's geography, the lawmakers had erroneously specified that the voting must take place at Manchester, Calumet county, across the lake, but the settlers went to the polls at Webster Stanley's cabin in defiance of the law. It was later necessary to legalize this election by another

act of the Legislature, March 29, 1843. The county board of supervisors had its first meeting at the Stanley cabin, May 1, 1843.

Because of the great demand for timber and wood products in general it was not long before towns began growing around the sawmills which enterprising lumbermen put into operation. C. J. Coon had built the first such factory in 1839 near the place where Lake Butte des Morts empties into the Fox river, but it burned before it could go into production.

The first report of the County Treasurer, made October 1, 1844, makes interesting reading in these days of elaborate budgets and high taxes. It went as follows—

To the Board of Supervisors of Winnebago County, Wisconsin Territory:

The undersigned submit the following report of the state of the treasury, for the current year. There has been received into the treasury, of

H. A. Gallup, collector of taxes	\$36.75
J. L. Mead	1.60
J. L. Mead30
W. C. Isbell and G. F. Wright	1.99
Emmett Coon	1.84
G. F. Wright	2.50
J. L. Mead	3.55
C. J. Coon	1.16
	<hr/>
Making	49.76
To costs on lands sold to county, on thirteen tracts	3.80
Two per cent commission, for receiving and paying out moneys	1.00
One quire writing paper25
Orders redeemed	44.71
	<hr/>
Total	\$49.76

In 1845 Charles Dickson, Robert Grignon, and Harrison Reed were chosen to locate the county seat. They selected the town of Butte des Morts, angering the citizens of Oshkosh, who promptly went to the Legislature and managed to have a bill passed removing the county seat to the larger town. This infuriated the Butte des Morts townspeople, and they in turn demanded a county-wide vote on the question. An election was held, in which Oshkosh was able to swing enough votes to retain the seat of government.

The first court house, a simple frame building, was erected there on land donated for the purpose by Lucas M. Miller, Sewall A. Wolcott, and Samuel H. Farnsworth, April 1, 1847.

By 1860 the first real court house had been built of Milwaukee

cream brick at a cost of \$19,689. In the basement of the two story structure were the jail cells and the sheriff's apartment. Judge A. A. Austin presided at the first session of the probate court.

The first school in the county had been taught in 1841 by Miss Emeline Cook at the village of Oshkosh. The third state Normal School, now Oshkosh State College, was completed in that city in 1870. It remained closed until September 9, 1871, however, because of a lack of funds. George S. Albee, A. M., was its first president.

In 1870 a law was passed which authorized an additional state hospital for the insane, and it was located four miles north of Oshkosh. The north and central wings were completed and opened in 1873, and the entire building was functioning in 1875. It had cost a total of \$525,250.00.

The old, historic court house was torn down following the completion of the new, million-dollar building in 1939. It is located at the corner of Jackson Drive and Algoma Boulevard and is a modern, limestone and marble structure.

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James Auer
209 Linden Ct.
Neenah, Wis.
May 31, 1965

Addition to "Centennial Memories"

The history of Menasha since 1953 can be summarized as one of continued change and progress in many fields.

Symbolizing the nation-wide trend toward centralization and consolidation of industry, the Wheeler Transportation Co., dating back in 1863, was purchased by Consolidated Freightways, of Portland, Ore., in September, 1955. The firm had been in the Wheeler family for three generations.

A plaque, observing the part the Wisconsin Central Rail Road played in Menasha's history, was unveiled in a ceremony held Oct. 3, 1955. The plaque,

mounted on the front of Hotel Menasha, commemorates the first train, which ran from Menasha to Waupaca, Oct. 2, 1871. The railroad was formally organized Feb. 4, 1871, in the National Hotel, on the present site of Hotel Menasha, by Judge George Reed and his associates. Dr. Clifford L. Lord, director of the State Historical Society of Wisconsin, pulled aside a flag which had been drawn across the new marker.

A highlight of 1957 was the founding of the Menasha Historical Society, which held its organizational meeting in October and elected Harold Bachmann its acting president. Subsequent presidents were Bachmann, Mrs. John Wilterding, Mrs. M.G. Auer and Jay Joalyn. The organization flourished. In 1959 it

received the coveted Reuben Gold Thwaites award of the State Historical Society. The previous year it had received a Certificate of Merit from the Society for its "unique and imaginative programs."

Two years after it was organized the Menasha Society conducted a bus tour of historic Twin City sites for a service club--a service which was later repeated for groups of children and educators. In 1962 two members of the Society Jim Auer and Jay Joslyn, received a Certificate of Merit from the state Society for their film, "Heart of a City", depicting the activities of the Menasha group. In May of that same year

* Film may be obtained through
"Ego Productions"
209 Linden Ct.
Neenah, Wis.

the Society held its first Week-end Museum at the First Congregational Church.

High point of the Society's 1964-65 program was co-sponsorship, with Neenah Historical Society, of a three-part local history seminar, aimed at enriching the teaching of history in the schools of the Twin Cities. Eighty teachers from all Neenah-Menasha schools participated in the seminar.

An outstanding addition to the life of the city is the municipal swimming pool, which was dedicated Memorial Day of 1958. The structure was designed by the Stanley Engineering Co., Muscatine, Iowa, in collaboration with the Menasha citizens advisory committee, of which Halphy Risley was chairman.

Opened for classes in the fall of 1958

was the new Clovis Grove elementary school in the northeast portion of the city. The school represented the realization of the long-cherished dream of a public elementary school in the fourth ward.

Work began in July, 1958, on the \$75,000 remodeling of St. Mary Catholic church, which was soon to observe its Diamond Jubilee. The congregation of St. John the Baptist Catholic church also announced plans for building a \$120,000 addition to its elementary school.

In August, 1958, a new street, Curtis Reed Plaza, was created by the Common Council. Named in honor of Kenasha's first mayor, the street runs in front of the office of the George Banta Co., Inc.

A half-century of industrial that the Gilbert Paper Co., founded

activity in Menasha was observed Feb. 6, 1959, when Marathon Division of American Can Co. marked its 50th year. Formerly Marathon Corp., the paper products manufacturing firm had been acquired by American Can on Dec. 3, 1957. D.C. Everest, first president of Marathon, died in 1955, marking the end of an era in the development of the company.

Late in 1964, American Can Co., in a major corporate reorganization, abolished the divisional concept and with it the Marathon Division as it had previously been known. The Neenah-Menasha operation of American Can Co. is now known as Marathon Products.

Another well-established Menasha business passed from local ownership with the announcement, on Sept. 21, 1960, that the Gilbert Paper Co., founded

in 1887, would be sold to the Mead Corp., Dayton, Ohio. Directors of the Menasha firm indicated that Gilbert would be operated by Mead as a subsidiary, continuing the Gilbert name, management and policies. Mead is among the five largest paper companies in the U.S.A.

Less than a month later--in October, 1960--one of the city's most venerable landmarks fell as the Elbridge Smith home, built in the fall of 1848, was removed from its site at 376 Water St. to provide space for a municipal off-street parking lot. A T-joint from this dwelling, oldest frame house in the city, was presented to the Menasha Historical Society by Harold Baehmann. At the time of its removal the house was owned by Mrs. Oliver Esslinger.

Another historic home, the Stein

homestead, built on land purchased by George Stein in 1858 and handed down to the unmarried members of the family, was honored in 1960 with a "Century Home" certificate awarded as part of the Wisconsin State Fair program.

By 1960 the city's population had swelled to 14,647. Four years later the population was estimated at 15,243.

The city suffered a major loss as the aftermath of a fire which on Friday afternoon, July 17, 1964, destroyed two four-story buildings of the Menasha Corporation's plant. Urged on by 60-m.p.h. winds, flames not only roared through the factory buildings but ruined three boxcars, nearly all of the factory's converted stock, some warehoused materials and a new railway trestle.

The Menasha Corporation was formerly called The Menasha Wooden Ware Co. The firm dropped the term "Wooden Ware" from its name in September 1962 and became simply Menasha Corporation.

Just 14 days after the fire, the company's Board of Directors announced that a new plant would be constructed in an industrial park three miles south of Neenah, on a site purchased from the Bergstrom Paper Co. Corporate offices for all operating facilities throughout the U.S. would be put up adjacent to the 185,000 square-foot corrugated container manufacturing plant, the directors said.

The board's action ended a 115-year tradition in which the company's offices had been in Menasha.

On the happier side a long-held dream

of Menasha's citizens came true on Sept. 12, 1964, as Nathan Calder Stadium was dedicated at a football game between Menasha and Berlin High Schools. The stadium was the outgrowth of a suggestion made in 1947, by George Banta Jr., at a dinner honoring the popular M.H.S. coach on his retirement. Much credit for the successful completion of the project must go to the Banta Foundation, which not only contributed land for the stadium, but also pledged \$25,000 toward the construction cost and assured the city that the total cost to the taxpayers would not exceed the \$150,000 bond issue, even though the final expense was more than this amount.

The name "Menasha" went to sea on Feb. 2, 1965, as the U.S. Navy dedicated the rudderless tugboat YTB Menasha at the

U.S. Naval Station, Norfolk, Va. Corp.,
Representing the city and the Chamber
of Commerce at the dedication ceremonies
were Mayor John Klein, George Banta Jr.,
Cong. John A. Race, Don Wirth, Wesley
Saecker and Ald. Joseph Omachinski.

The tug, YTB-733, is a new-type
craft using cycloidal propulsion instead
of conventional screw propellers. A
plaque on the wheelhouse commemorates the
city, and was presented to the tug by
Mayor Klein, on behalf of the Common
Council.

Plans for a new Catholic Central
High School, to be built on a 16-acre
site near Calder Stadium on County Trunk PP,
came one step nearer to fruition on
April 4, 1965, with the appointment of
Lewis E. Phenner, senior vice president,

Consumer Division, Kimberly-Clark Corp., as general chairman for the building fund appeal. St. Mary High School, long an important part of the Menasha educational picture, will no longer be in operation once the new Catholic Central High has been completed.

On Oct. 4, 1964, the membership of the First Congregational Church instructed the Oshkosh architectural firm of Irion and Reinke to proceed with plans for a new, \$300,000 church, to be constructed on 2.2 acres of land on the Neenah side of Nicolet Boulevard.

The church whose history is intimately linked with that of Menasha, expanded into the Menasha area from Neenah in 1848. Twenty years later the congregation built a red brick edifice at the corner of

Broad and Milwaukee Streets. In 1926 additional facilities were added to the 1868 building. The chancel was enlarged in 1955, and the second floor modified for more church school space in 1958. A long-range planning committee, headed by Charles Greiner, was formed in 1957.

The proposed building will be located on a site donated by the late Mowry Smith Sr., chairman of the Menasha Corp. and a member of a family whose history was for many years linked with that of the church. At the time of this writing (1965) the congregation was engaged in a canvass to raise sufficient funds to begin construction of the new building.

Prospects for the construction of a municipal building brightened May 4, 1965, when the City Council went on record

favoring such a building, to be located on an undetermined site. The Aldermen had just voted 9 to 3 against accepting an offer of \$111,000 from a realty firm for the Racine Park property.

As summer, 1965, neared, the people of Menasha were eagerly looking forward to the Aug. 1 celebration at Smith Park, arranged by Ald. William Erickson. Many business and civic organizations had agreed to participate in the celebration, and a company of entertainers from the Wisconsin Idea Theatre were scheduled to present "Badger Ballads," a history of Wisconsin in song and story.

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