

HISTORY OF APPLETON

The Fox, Menomonee, and Winnebago Indians all lived in the Appleton area before European explorers and settlers. The first white explorer to record his discoveries in what was to become northeastern Wisconsin was Father Jean Nicolet in 1634. He came here to explore the vast North American continent and to convert the Indians. He claimed territory in what is now Wisconsin for France. Other explorers followed Nicolet into Wisconsin. In 1673, Joliet and Father Marquette traveled up the Fox River through a future Appleton in their discovery of a route from the Great Lakes to the Mississippi River.

What is now Outagamie County was ceded to the US Government by the Indians in the 1836 Treaty of the Cedars. The treaty, which was signed just up river from what is now Appleton, gave the US Government over 4,000,000 acres of land in Northern Wisconsin that included cities as far north as Wisconsin Rapids. The land that was purchased by the Government was sold to settlers and land speculators.

As a result of the Treaty of Cedars more white people came into Northern Wisconsin. The first white man to settle in what is now the City of Appleton was Hippolyte Grignon. He built his home, the White Heron, just up river from the "grand chute" in 1835. His cabin had two wings; one served as an inn and the other as a trading post. It was located west of today's Lutz Park. A plaque there commemorates his settlement.

The settlement of Appleton was a result of the founding of Lawrence University. In 1847 Lawrence received its charter from the Territorial Legislature after Amos A. Lawrence made a contribution for its establishment to the Wisconsin Methodist Episcopal Conference in the amount of \$10,000, contingent upon the Methodist Church raising a similar amount. The money was raised by the Rev. William Sampson and a committee consisting of Colonel Henry Blood, Mr. George Day, and the Rev. Reeder Smith set out to find out a suitable location.

Mr. Lawrence wanted his "college in the woods" to be located between Lake Winnebago and Green Bay, preferably in De Pere where he owned land. The site chosen was in Appleton because of its beauty and its potential for water power. Many of the community's early buildings were built around the college at first because it was the center of the community. One of the first buildings was the small house owned by John F. Johnston, the first family to settle in Appleton. This house was located at what is now the northwest corner of Durkee and Washington. It served as a town hall, post office, hospital, and a church. Appleton's name comes from Samuel Appleton, a relative of Mr. Lawrence who gave \$10,000 to the college for the establishment of a library.

Appleton grew very fast. In 1848 the Appleton Village Plat was laid out by Rev. Sampson, Reeder Smith, Henry Blood, and Mr. Joel S. Wright. Within a year William Warner had established the first general store and by 1850 the population was 619. While Appleton was growing so were to rival communities to the east and west of Appleton; Lawesburg, which was east of Union Street, and Grand Chute, was west of Division Street.

In 1853 Appleton, Lawesburg, and Grand Chute combined forces and incorporated as the Village of Appleton. The first officers were John F. Johnston as President, James Phinney as Clerk, M. M. Egglestone as Treasurer, and James Gilmore as Assessor. There were also six Village Trustees. In 1857 Appleton having grown to 2,000 people incorporated as a city. The City of Appleton's first officials were Amos Story, Mayor; Fred Packard, Clerk; Anson Ballard, Attorney; and C. E. Bennett, Treasurer. The City was divided into three wards with two aldermen for each.

Soon after the establishment of Lawrence, business was also growing in Appleton. The first mill in Appleton was built in 1849 by Mr. T. P. Bingham. In 1853 the first paper mill was built by C. P. Richmond at the current site of Kimberly-Clark's Atlas Mill. In the early days flour mills, woolen mills and saw mills were common. Paper which has become a dominant factor in today's economy was then considered risky. In 1854, Appleton had two flour mills, a paper mill, four saw mills, two lathe mills, one planing mill, two sash and door factories, an edge tool factory, and a chair factory.

Appleton's first newspaper was The Crescent. Established in 1853 the Crescent was a Democratic paper that brought their view of the news to the city. In 1858 another paper, The Post, was established to offer an alternative to the Crescent's democratic bias with a republican one. In 1870 two more papers were created, The Times and the most widely read German newspaper in the state The Appleton Volksfreund. The Post and The Crescent eventually went on to merge and become The Post-Crescent while the other papers eventually died out.

The year 1856 was a special year for Appleton. The steamboat Aquila came through Appleton on its trip to Green Bay. It was a symbolic journey because it marked the completion of the Fox-Wisconsin locks system. The steamboat had started at Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, and traveled along the Ohio, Mississippi, Wisconsin, and Fox River to get to Appleton. Regretfully the era of steamboats was short-lived. The railroad soon took over freight transportation following the extension of the Chicago & Northwestern Railroad to Appleton in 1861. The City's first bond issue supported construction of the railroad.

During Appleton's development it experienced several scientific/industrial firsts. In 1877, Alfred Galpin Jr. hooked up Wisconsin's first working telephone. He erected telephone lines from his home at 726 E. College Avenue to his office on the corner of Morrison and College, a distance of about 1/3 of a mile. He was known to have been in contact with Alexander Graham Bell, the inventor of the telephone. Mr. Galpin's telephone encouraged Appleton to become one of the first cities in Wisconsin to have a switchboard and an extensive phone system.

Appleton was also the site of the first successful hydroelectric plant in the world. Electricity and electric lights were installed in the mill and home of Henry Rodgers. The lights were turned on for the first time on September 30, 1882. The Rodgers home, now known as Hearthstone, has been preserved as an historic landmark.

In 1885 the first successful electric street car began operation in Appleton. Under the direction of Judge Joseph Harriman, the Appleton Electric Street Car Company offered a successful and popular form of public transportation. The first line ran from the corner of State and Prospect east to Riverside Cemetery.

Appleton has grown considerably since the days of Hippolyte Grignon more than 150 years ago. We have had citizens go on to become well-known people in American history. The best known of Appleton natives include Harry Houdini (Erich Weiss), Edna Ferber, and Senator Joseph McCarthy. Though recent years have also seen Appleton natives achieve prominence, including Robert "Rocky" Bleier, Lynn Kellogg, and Willem Dafoe. Our city has grown tremendously in population and size. Preservation of the City's early history through identification of significant buildings and sites is the purpose of this report.