JANESVILLE, the chief city of Rock county, Wisconsin, is in longitude 88 degrees west from Greenwich and between the 42d and 43d degree of latitude. It is situated on the most beautiful stream that meanders through the meadows of the Mississippi valley—a stream that is officially navigable but among whose obstructions a Venetian gondola or a Chinese junk would lose its bearings. It is about midway between Lake Michigan on the east and the Father of Waters on the west, thus getting the benefit of whatever advantages may arise from such a location. It is far enough from Madison not to be contaminated by the intellectual and political degeneracy of that capital, while it is in such close proximity to Beloit that its citizens are not obliged to rely on the hotels of that city for any part of their subsistence. It is four thousand miles from the equator, less than two hundred and fifty miles from the “Zenith City of the Unsalted Seas,” and only one hundred and forty miles in a straight line from Kalamazoo—a situation which, as can be seen at a glance, is at once remarkable, unique and suggestive. Such exceptional and favorable conditions make Janesville the most envied of all the municipalities of the commonwealth.

It can boast of no possessions which carry the mind back to an obscure antiquity and arouse an intellectual interest by reason of their mystery. It has no tumuli which have been excavated for mummies and jewels; no Assyrian bricks bearing strange cuneiform inscriptions; no Egyptian catacombs covered with uncouth hieroglyphics; no ruins of Roman palaces; no remains of Grecian temples; no traces of Druidical altars. Curiosity-mongers who visit Janesville for the purpose of obtaining specimens with which to enrich their collections of antediluvian bric-a-brac will leave the city with a feeling of poignant disappointment; for its streets are not underlaid with the remnants of a lost civilization, nor do its residents devote much time to questions pertaining to their predecessors. Its people are plain everyday American citizens who are not of the kind described as “true but for lying and honest but for stealing,” but are rather of the kind whose industry and frugality have enabled them to attain to a comfortable and independent position in life.

And this leads naturally to the thought that while wealth and prosperity have been the portion of the city, these results have come without the aid of outside or adventitious assistance. Janesville is the seat of the “Wisconsin Institution for the Education of the Blind,” the support of which costs the state the annual outlay of thirty-five thousand dollars; and this is the only institution of any kind within its borders to which the nation or state contributes in any degree. If it were the seat of the state capital with its multitude of employees and of the State University with its one hundred and fifty professors and twenty-five hundred students costing the taxpayers of Wisconsin four hundred thousand dollars a year, there would not be required a “Forty Thousand Club” to infuse energy into its veins and stimulate its growth. If capital from points outside of its own boundaries were furnished in large sums for the purpose of establishing vast manufacturing concerns employing scores and hundreds of artisans, while it would be cordially welcomed, it is by no means certain that such a condition would add to the beauty and improvement of the town; for the profits of such enterprises are diverted to the great marts of trade, leaving an increase in population as the almost sole result to the place where such an investment is made. None of these external and extraneous advantages are contributing to the progress and development of our city.

It is fifty years since it obtained its municipal charter; the enthusiasm of youth has vanished; its inhabitants have passed through the throes of inflation and contraction; they have experimented with a system of financing according to the ideas of a modern Hamilton; they have laid out additions and sub-divisions on the outskirts; they have erected useless factories in distant and inconvenient localities, and they have indulged in sundry other vagaries which indicated the possession of more hope than judgment; but these experiences were mere episodes in the history of the city; they were simply phantoms and visions which disappeared when the excitement of the hour had passed. Compared with many other towns of similar size and character the permanent destruction and desolation which these calamities left in their wake were trifling.

Without any aid from outside its own borders the city has entirely recovered from its unfortunate ventures; it has long and well paved streets; it has charming groves and well kept parks; it has an electric street car system connecting its business and residence sections; it has an abundant supply of artesian water distributed throughout the city; it is excellently lighted by electricity; its manufactured products are varied and extensive, and thrift, enterprise and prosperity are manifest in every direction.

And while it is true that comfort and contentment are plainly visible among its citizens this condition is not of that self-satisfied kind which leads them to

"Mistake the gentle rustle of their burg
For the great wave that echoes round the world."
There is a permanent element of conservatism in their composition; and this conservatism, born of experience, leads them to look with pronounced disfavor upon any promoter or adventurer who proposes to cut up hundred and sixty acre tracts into forty-eight lots with the expectation of selling them to gullible purchasers at a hundred dollars per front foot or at some other fancy price. Persons who promise prosperity and expansion on these terms will find it to their advantage to seek some more secluded place where, to achieve success, these lines have not been tried to a finish. The entire country, from Hell Gate to the Golden Gate, is overstocked with towns which adopted as a war cry the sentiment of the Kentucky statesman that "He who dallies is a dastard and he who doubts is damned;" under which inspiration they budded, blossomed and collapsed after a brief season of excitement and enthusiasm. Janesville has had such disturbances; but through them all it continued to flourish and display a placid solidity; and now it can be said that not a bank has gone out of business in forty years; not a manufacturing concern of any importance has become insolvent in a generation; not a mercantile establishment of any magnitude has failed to pay its debts through a long term of years, and the credit of its merchants and dealers has always stood, and now stands, above suspicion. The record of the city from the standpoint of commercial honor is extremely bright. The municipal authorities have always been reluctant about running the city in debt, and before the sixty-five thousand dollars in bonds—to pay for the new city building and for the site of the new library—were issued less than a year ago—the outstanding indebtedness of the city was only forty thousand dollars; which indebtedness was incurred for the purpose of erecting the High School building. This gratifying condition and this superior credit have resulted from the excellent municipal government which the city has enjoyed, and not by reason of a parsimonious treatment of the educational or material interests by the authorities, who have always been judicious and economical in the expenditure of the funds which have been collected and disbursed under their direction.

One of the phenomena of modern civilization is the vast increase in transportation facilities; and this development is more marvelous in the United States than in any other country. In this respect Janesville has more than kept pace with the average places in the northwest. Forty years ago the original Chicago & Northwestern line, extending from Chicago to Fond du Lac, was crossed at this point by the branch of the Milwaukee & Prairie du Chien road running to Monroe. The time tables published in the newspapers of that period show that three trains were dispatched daily each way between Janesville and Chicago; the same number between Janesville and Milwaukee; two trains to Fond du Lac and one to Monroe. Now there are fifteen daily trains each way between Janesville and Chicago; seven to Milwaukee, six to St. Paul, and direct lines lead to Mineral Point, Lake Geneva, Rockford and other important places, making a total of sixty-four passenger trains arriving at and departing from our station daily. The freight traffic has increased in proportion, and the total annual receipts of the railroad companies at this point reach well up towards half a million dollars. Three years ago the Chicago & Northwestern company erected here a very attractive passenger station, while the Chicago, Milwaukee & St. Paul company is now constructing a similar building of the most modern type.

The active life of the city is well exemplified in the number of bridges which have been built across Rock river within the municipal limits to accommodate the traffic between the two sides of the city. Formerly two railroad bridges, one city bridge on Milwaukee street and the Monterey bridge furnished ample means for conducting all necessary business; while at the present time, to provide for the increasing demand, eleven permanent bridges are required to furnish avenues of access from one side of the river to the other. From the upper bridge the good stage of water that always exists enables a large number of steamers and launches to ply the river in a northerly direction for a distance of ten miles; along the banks are numerous cottages and resorts which are the homes of many of the city's residents during the warm season. Among these resorts is the celebrated "Burr Springs" which have a national renown for supplying a water which more nearly meets all human needs than any other water in the entire western country. This water took the first prize at the World's Fair at Chicago for its excellent qualities, and it is probable that an extensive sanitarium will be erected at that point within a year or two. "Burr Springs" are but two miles from the city and a visit to that locality by steamer is a delightful diversion on a summer day. In addition to the railroad and steamboat lines, communication to and from the city is furnished by an inter-urban electric line which directly connects it with Beloit and Rockford; a line about forty miles in length and built in the most substantial and permanent manner. A franchise has been granted for the construction of another road of this kind to extend from Madison by way of Stoughton and Edgerton, the motive power in this instance to be furnished from the Dells of the Wisconsin river at Kilmour. Another line is projected to run to Delavan and Geneva Lake; all of these lines indicating that Janesville is the center of a very large traffic and something more than a mere stopping place for accommodation trains.

It is expected in these modern days that all towns will have educational facilities commensurate with their needs. In no other respect is there such a difference between the early English civilization and that of the present age as there is between the intellectual poverty of the former and the general diffusion of knowledge in the latter. No more suggestive illustration of the universal ignorance of former times can be given than the fact that of the twenty-six barons who signed the Great Charter, the foundation of modern English liberty, in the year 1215, only three could write their names. What men of power and wealth were unable to do in those days is now the common accomplishment of children in their early years; and following this rudimentary knowl-
edge they are supplied by the community with the means of securing a useful and gen-
erous education. The four thousand school children of Janesville have their full share
of these opportunities and blessings; for the city provides eight buildings besides the
High school building for educational purposes. Four of these nine structures have
been recently erected and they contain all the devices and inventions for contributing
to the comfort and development of the pupils which pedagogical science has been able to
suggest. The High school building is elegant and elaborate and within its walls del-
parments of cookery and calisthenics, of mental and manual training, of music and math-
ematics, of philosophy and political economy, of sewing and singing and all the
other arts, sciences and accomplishments which go to make up the sum of modern life
are presided over by able and practical teachers. There are sixty teachers regularly
employed in the city schools and the cost of the educational system is something over
forty thousand dollars per year.

If the intellectual wants of the children have their full measure thus filled and satis-
fied, so likewise are the mental and spiritual needs of the more mature portion of the
community attended to. In the early sixties a half-dozen young men used to meet in the
Water Witch Engine Company building on North Main street and discuss momentous
questions pertaining to politics and science, and they gathered together a few books which were termed “a library.” This lyceum and the library expanded until they blossomed into the “Young Men’s Association,” which from 1866 to 1875 was an important factor in the social and political life of the town. About the latter year the lyceum part of the organization was abandoned and the books passed under the control of a company of public-spirited ladies, who succeeded in obtaining an appropriate building, the site of which was purchased from the old Public Library, which in time came under the control of the city government. The growth of this enterprise is now a familiar story to all the citizens of Janesville. At the present
time there are more than sixteen thousand volumes on the shelves; on its tables are to
be found all the latest and best periodicals; it is open every week-day and evening at
regular hours; during every year forty-five thousand books are drawn from the rooms
and taken to the homes of the borrowers, and fifteen thousand persons annually consult
the reference books. The thirty thousand dollar contribution of Mr. Andrew Carnegie
and the ten thousand dollar bequest of Mr. F. S. Eldred, together with the purchase of
a site by the city, and the liberal endowment of the board to enter into a contract for the erection of a handsome and suitable building for a perma-
nent home for the library. This building, constructed of brick and stone, with accommoda-
tions for fifty thousand volumes and with convenient reading and children’s rooms,
is now in process of construction (a very fair design of the building being presented in this Souvenir) and will doubtless be completed in the fall of 1902; and fronting, as it
does, on the Court House park, the beauty of that section of the city will be greatly
enhanced. The religious demands of the population are ministered to in an even dozen
church edifices, nearly all of them creditable structures; while some of them, erected
within the last few years, are fine examples of church architecture. The most recent
addition to the number is St. Mary’s church (Catholic) which—by its commanding
situation, its symmetrical appearance and its spire, reaching to a height of more than
two hundred feet—is an ornament to the city. The Young Men’s Christian Associa-
tion is a very decided moral force in the community; it has a thirty thousand dollar
home of great beauty and utility and it is prosperous and sustaining.

To leave the realm of the spiritual and educational and enter that of the practical
and commercial, it is to be remarked that a variety of manufacturing enterprises employ
the time and thoughts of a large portion of the city’s population. One concern that
turns out nails and wire fencing and another that makes agricultural machinery have
an annual trade of nearly a million dollars each; the finest underwear and the best
cloth are available in every store; the best quality of ladies’ shoes are produced here in great quantities; the largest mill in the west for the production of cotton batting and twine is found in Janesville; a company
making fountain pens has a four-story plant and its trade extends to every civilized
nation; concerns that turn out elegant furniture; others that produce punches and shears;
companies that make buggies and carriages by the hundred; a canning factory, a large
woolen mill, a corn planter factory, a cigar box factory, flouring mills which grind rye
and buckwheat, a pearl button factory and a variety of smaller manufacturing plants.
To say nothing of four breweries whose product makes the city famous, constitute the
bulk of the industries of Janesville; and all are active and prosperous. A large factory
for the making of artificial fence posts and similar articles from sand and cement is be-
ing erected, to have an annual output of fifteen hundred thousand posts.

No notice, however brief, of the city would be at all satisfactory without reference
to the extensive dealing in tobacco which is here carried on. This industry has rapid-
ly grown in Wisconsin in the last dozen years and excepting one or two other places
Janesville is its most important center. There are over thirty warehouses where tobacco
is assorted, cased and stored in the city, more than one thousand persons are employed
in handling it during the season, and the total investment in this interest at this point
represents nearly a million dollars.

This industry, in which, since the revival of prosperous times, Janes-
ville has resumed its leading position, is the traffic of horses. All the important for-
ign and domestic breeds are represented in its stables, and draft, trotting and coach
horses are distributed by its dealers over the entire country. The aggregate of sales
amounts annually to a very large sum and the trade is constantly increasing and extend-
ing.

Reference has been made to the library building now in process of construction,
and in addition to this fine edifice, the building for the home of the city government,
 costing, with the site, about sixty thousand dollars, is now approaching completion.
It is a handsomely designed building, it is made of stone and steel, three stories in height and of architectural corneliness. On an adjoining square in a central location, the national
government is to erect a postoffice building, for which an appropriation of seventy-five
thousand dollars has been made by congress. The contract for its construction has
been let and work is to be begun without delay. The court house, fronted by the
monument erected by Rock county to its soldiers and sailors of the civil war, located
in the center of the largest public park, with its environment of trees and flower, is one
of the many choice views of that vicinity. The business streets of the city are lined with
substantial and attractive blocks—some of which are new and have all of the accommo-
dations furnished by the “sky scrapers” of the large cities. Several miles of macadam
pavement lead into the various residence districts in which handsome homes with lovely
lawns and other pleasing surroundings multiply the charms of living and add to the
beauty of the city. Partaking of the spirit of the times these improvements are ex-
panding and peaceful rivalry among the various sections causes them to be carried on
in every direction.