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 Pleasant. 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.