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OFFICIAL PAPER OF THE CITY OF MENASHA

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IT IS with a feeling of genuine, and, we trust, pardonable pride that the management presents to the people of Menasha and readers generally this souvenir edition of The Press. Weeks of careful and painstaking labor have been expended upon it, and many dollars have gone into its production, and that neither money nor labor has been expended in vain we believe is evidenced by the work itself.

The aim of this souvenir is to present to its readers a faithful and comprehensive picture of the Menasha of 1898. It does not attempt to deal extensively with things past, but is pre-eminently a work of the present. In the distant years of the future, when perhaps 1898 will be to Menashans what 1848 is now, it is hoped that this little work will exist to tell the people of the Greater Menasha which shall then stand guard at old Winnebago's head just what the Menasha of 1898 was—what advantages it possessed; what hopes it cherished, and what factors worked for the betterment of its people. In its pages are shown all or nearly all of the more prominent buildings of the city; descriptions appear of all of its varied interests; sketches are presented of many of its business men and citizens, and thousands of facts are set forth which will be of interest not only to the people of to-day, but to the generations of the future.

But it was not with an eye single to the distant future that the work was prepared. Its pages were written more with the object of immediate results in view. Placed in the hands of thousands of people all over the United States, it is hoped that its contents will serve to attract new blood and capital to one of the best manufacturing and residence localities in the great West. It is no extravagant setting forth of advantages that exist only in the imagination of the enthusiastic or the boomer, but a calm, dispassionate presentation of facts that can easily be verified. The writer firmly believes that if Menasha's remarkable location as a manufacturing point were known throughout the United States, instead of thirty manufactories it would have twice that number. And it is one of the purposes—and perhaps the chief purpose—of this little work to more fully acquaint the world abroad with the splendid advantages possessed by the city in whose interest it is issued.

A Brief History.

MENASHA was settled in the spring of 1848. Its first two settlers were Messrs. Cornelius Northrup and Curtis Reed, who came here in April and June respectively and built homes—the former a slab house on what is now Milwaukee street, north of the railroad tracks, and the latter a log house near the head of the present canal. Mr. Reed also commenced the improvement of the water power here by the erection of a dam across the Fox river near the site of the now famous Menasha dam. These two pioneers—whose names are held in reverence by every true-hearted Menashan—were soon followed by a half score of others, of whom but one—Philo Hine—is now living.

The first frame building was erected in October of the same year by Elbridge Smith, then a young and energetic attorney from the East, and it is worthy of note that this house is still standing on its original site on Canal street—a very Nestor among Menasha buildings. In this venerable building the first public dance was held, the first
school was taught, and the first law expounded. The first church services were conducted by the venerated O. P. Clinton, in the log house of Mr. Reed not far away.

From 1848 to 1857 Menasha grew and flourished in a way that was little if at all short of remarkable. In those nine years the population increased to nearly 2,000, and thirteen manufactories were established, among them the “pail factory” in 1849, which since, under the management of Mr. E. D. Smith, has grown to be the largest wooden ware plant on earth. During the next ten years, which included the exciting war period in the early ’60’s, the town made slow progress, adding little to its population, but steadily increasing its trade. In passing, it should be remarked that the little village of 2,000 made a glorious record for patriotism during the trying years of the rebellion, sending parts of three companies to the front and contributing its best blood to the preservation of the union. In 1871 Menasha seemed to take on new life. This was the period of railway construction, and to secure the Central and Northern roads the town was bonded for $120,000. The roads came; the town boomed; and for a time the future held out promises of metropolitan greatness. “But then there came a frost, a killing frost.” The roads were built on and beyond Menasha; the bonds began to mature, and for ten or fifteen years the town languished, and it was not until 1885 that the place in great measure recovered from the blow sustained in the early ’70’s, although the blow, like most calamities of the sort, made itself felt more through the medium of sentiment than of substance, for as a matter of fact, the bonds were afterwards all paid and nobody was seriously inconvenienced by reason of their liquidation. And although Menasha did not realize all of the promised benefits, yet the two roads thus secured have proven splendid acquisitions to her advantages, and the city would not part with them today for twice $120,000.

Since 1895 the growth of Menasha has been of a most gratifying character, and it now looks as if the dreams of its stout-hearted pioneers who pitched their tents in the wilderness fifty years ago in the fond hope that some day a metropolis would stand at Winnebago’s head will become realities before many more decades pass.

But few of the pioneers of 1848 to ’52 are left—Philo Hine, Ed Smith, S. S. Roby, E. D. Smith, Carlton Bachelder and W. P. Rounds, are all the writer knows of—the rest having passed “through the suburb to the life Elysian whose portal we call death.”