

THE 1920'S

by JOHN STUDLEY



Women's Suffrage

THE DECADE which journalists refer to as "the roaring twenties" was ushered in with an historic note—women's suffrage became effective in 1920 and they exercised under the 19th amendment to the Constitution for the first time in November's general election their right to vote. Unfortunately from the historian's standpoint, local election boards tabulated no breakdown of the masculine and feminine vote, so the percentage of ballots cast by women that year remains obscure. It was not until 1937 that separate counts were made of men's and women's votes. Then it was found that women were casting approximately 40-45 per cent of the total vote.

Mayors who served Neenah in the 1920-30 period were E. C. Arne-
mann, '20-'21; J. H. Dennhardt, '22-'23; George E. Sande, present
full-time mayor, '24-'25; Dennhardt again in '26-'27 and Sande again
in '28-'33.

With their newly-won ballot franchise, a Neenah League of Women
Voters was organized in 1920. It went out of existence shortly, how-
ever, but was reorganized in 1947.

The year 1920 also marked the organization of the American Legion
Auxiliary to James P. Hawley Post No. 33, named after the first
Neenah boy to give his life in World War I service to his country.

Wisconsin Northern Railway

In that first year, also, of the boisterous era, the last railroad
reached Winnebago Junction on the outskirts of the city—the Wiscon-
sin Northern. The line was organized in 1906 by the late Charles R.

Smith, of the Menasha Wooden Ware Corporation, Leander Choate and Charles Bray, of Oshkosh, and M. J. Wallrich of Shawano.

The year also saw the establishment of the city's first "fresh air" school, set up in the auditorium of the City Hall, with a "fresh air" camp started at Wheeler's Point, on the shores of Lake Winnebago. They were maintained until 1926.

Banking and Industrial

In 1920 J. A. Kimberly was elected Chairman of the Board of the First National Bank, and F. E. Ballister was named President. Plans were made for a new building, the present edifice, and the institution increased its surplus account to \$125,000.

In the same year the Kimberly-Clark Corporation erected the first units of its Kapuskasing Mill, and also early in the 1920's, a two-machine paper mill was built at Niagara Falls.

1921 was marked by the opening of the new First National Bank building, opening of a branch of the Richmond Company, dry cleaners, here; establishment of the Lenz & Angermeyer Plumbing Company (which dissolved partnership in 1926) and establishment of the School Stationers Corporation, the Island Drug Store, and Olene's Shop.

First Automobile Dealership

While Charles Bergstrom seems to have been the first sales agency for automobiles in Neenah, the Jaeger-Dowling Company stands unchallenged as the oldest automobile dealership in the Neenah-Menasha-Appleton district, still in business. W. J. Dowling came to the Twin Cities from Oshkosh in February, 1920, taking over management of the Ford Garage and Neenah Taxi Line, operating at the Valley Inn Garage. The Jaeger-Dowling Company was incorporated August 1, 1922. In 1946 Dowling purchased the Standard Oil Station, at the intersection of First & Commercial Streets. This is said to have been the first regular filling station established in Winnebago County.

Doty Park and the Winnebago Players

Land for picturesque Doty Park was donated to the city by the late

C. B. Clark in 1922, and, with other individuals, added to the gift to increase the size of the recreation center. The park was formally dedicated in 1928, after dredging of the lagoon had been completed.

An out-of-door dramatic production, "Prunella," directed by Miss Ruth Dieckhoff, signaled the opening of this beauty spot to the public. It was from this performance that the Winnebago Players took off, and for several years put on outstanding productions in the parks of Neenah and Menasha.

The year also marked the purchase by the National Manufacturers' Bank of the site on which stood the historic Russell House. Razing of the hotel to make room for the present banking edifice was completed, and the new building occupied on June 15, 1923.

The costly Baptist Church fire occurred in 1922, but the building was promptly restored. In 1925 the name of the church was changed to "Whiting Memorial Baptist Church," further gifts having been made by the late George A. Whiting to the church.

The Edgewater Paper Company, located in Menasha as a converting mill, in 1922 installed a machine for the manufacture of duplexed waterproof papers.

Neenah's Disastrous Sleet Storm

Many Twin City residents can recall the disastrous sleet storm which struck the valley shortly before dawn of February 22, 1922, tearing down power and communication lines and all but isolating Neenah and Menasha for the better part of a week. Trees still bear the scars of the unprecedented ice deluge.

Radio was then in its infancy, and all messages sent on the "air" waves were in code. Quinn Bros., pioneers in the retail radio field, improvised a station on the top floor of the Bergstrom Paper Company mill, and made this city's first post-storm contact with the outside world. The station was established in the Bergstrom Mill, because its own power plant furnished the alternating current necessary to operate the radio transmitters. The station continued in operation for six days, its time being chiefly devoted to coding orders to railroads for coal for Twin City industries, and dispatching trains. Permission for temporary operation of the station on a commercial basis was obtained

from the headquarters of the Ninth Naval Reserve District at Chicago. William and Cornelius Quinn, owners of Quinn Bros., were assisted in the dispatch and receipt of messages by Homer Bishop and Harold Nielsen, among the earlier Neenah "hams."

William Quinn, incidentally, recalls that he received his first speeding ticket during the sleet storm emergency. The brothers, in addition to their radio activities, operated a restaurant near the Soo Line Depot, and it became necessary for William to make a hurried trip to the Hopfensperger Market at Menasha for a supply of meat. He did it in record time, but a watchful policeman judged he drove too fast and gave him a court summons.

Another interesting sidelight of the storm was its effect upon publication of the city's only daily newspaper, *The News-Times*. Its linotypes and presses immobilized for lack of power, its editors recovered sufficiently from the first day's shock to produce a miniature four-page paper, hand set and printed on a job press, which carried an abbreviated report of the catastrophe, and was complete even to a weather forecast and single advertisement, a church social! Subsequent days' issues were somewhat enlarged, with a tractor obtained from the Jaeger-Dowling Company powering the main press with belt transmission.

Boy Scouts

Boy Scouting, which had its origin in 1910, came to the Twin Cities in 1921 with organization of St. Thomas Episcopal Church troop, the first of which there is any authentic record.

The Valley Council of Boy Scouts was organized at Appleton in 1920, and was joined by Neenah and Menasha troops in 1923.

The First Service Station

Al Laffin is claimant to the distinction of operating Neenah's first all-round service station, including window and car washing, greasing and vacuuming of car interiors. In 1930, Al leased the property at 521 Winneconne Avenue from Cook & Brown Lime Company and purchased it from them in 1937. Its first owner was C. A. Douglas.

King's Daughters Service Circle was established here in 1923, a Junior Circle, known as Frances Gilbert, two years later, and the Welfare Circle of King's Daughters in 1949.

The year 1923 marked establishment of the Quality Printing Company in the present *News-Record* building (owned by the Sherry interests) by Arnold Jacob, its present President. The business is now located in its own building on Main Street.

First ILYA Regatta Staged Here

The first regatta of the Inland Lakes Yachting Association to be sailed in Neenah was held here in August, 1923, and attracted sailors from many midwestern sailing centers.

Completion of the present Roosevelt (Third Ward) school also was recorded in 1923.

Immanuel's Evangelical and Reformed Church completed a large addition to its building in 1924.

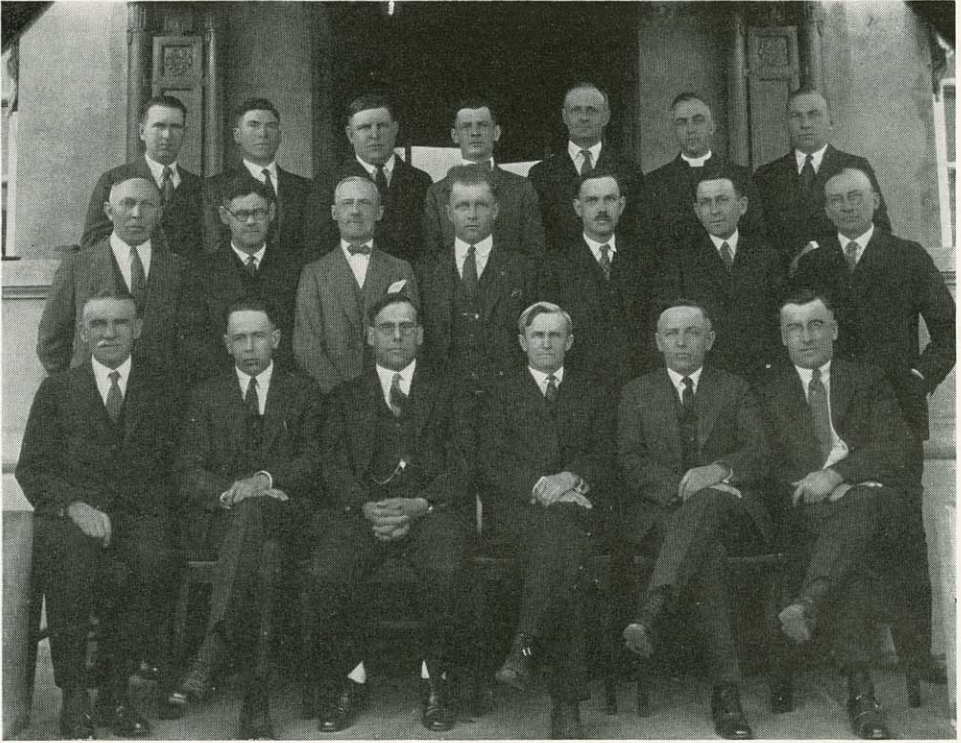
First of the Service Clubs

The year 1925 brought organization of the Neenah Rotary Club. Lee Rasey, prominent Appleton Rotarian, and Howard P. "Cub" Buck, of Green Bay Packer football fame, were largely instrumental in formation of the club, which had a group of about twenty charter members. The club remains active, with a much larger membership.

Establishment of the Ideal Bakery, by Edward Tyrriver, took place in 1925, and in the same year, the late George Danke started the Neenah Milk Products Company. The firm was reorganized in 1939, with the Galloway interests, of Fond du Lac, owners.

Dedication of the beautiful Masonic Temple, on Wisconsin Avenue across from the Neenah Library, took place in the year 1926.

Neenah made its start as a leading bowling center in the year 1926, when the first mixed doubles league of the Fox River Valley was organized in the Muench alleys, then located in the basement of the building on East Wisconsin Avenue across from the Valley Inn, then known as the Valley Inn Garage. Muench's Recreation Center is now



The First Rotary Club—1925. Front Row, left to right: Joe Weishaupt, John Studley, T. D. Smith, George Kelly, Will Krueger, Lynn Leffingwell. Middle Row: Hy Behnke, Toby Kuehl, Richard Disney, Ray Peters, Knox Kimberly, Harley Hilton, Andrew Anderson. Third Row: J. M. Donovan, Charles Sommers, "Cub" Buck, Leo Schubart, Ed Arnemann, Ray Heron, D. L. Kimberly.

located on North Commercial Street, and has been the site for many outstanding kegling events, including one state tournament.

Also in 1926 the late George Burnside organized the Burnside Paper Company, now known as the Sawyer Paper Company. Establishment of the Valley Press occurred in the same year, and the Bergstrom Paper Company constructed a new warehouse.

Neenah's present vigorous summer recreation program had its beginning in 1926, when George Christoph was hired as organizer and director.

The year was also marked by construction of McKinley Grade School, serving Fourth Ward students.

Doty Cabin Moved to Doty Park

In 1926, as Doty Park was taking shape, the Strange family, at the suggestion of the Neenah Park Board, gave to the city the original Doty Cabin, the one-time home of James Duane Doty, second territorial Governor. The old structure originally faced the mouth of the river, as shown on page 42 of Cunningham's history. It was moved to the site of its replica in Doty Park, facing Lincoln Street. Today the replica of this historic old cabin houses many relics of the pioneer days, including some of the possessions of the late Governor and his wife. It is visited each year by hundreds of persons, including tourists from practically every state in the union.

When the original edition of Cunningham's History was exhausted, Emma Foeltzer Burnham made 27 longhand copies for her friends and relatives, and one of these remarkable copies is placed in the Doty Cabin. Mrs. Burnham celebrated her 90th birthday on February 22, 1958. Her interest in the writing of this history never dimmed.

The Neenah-Menasha Finance Company began doing business here in 1926.

The year 1927 brought Krause's, a men's clothing store, to Neenah; saw the name of the Wisconsin Traction Light, Heat & Power Company changed to the Wisconsin Michigan Power Company, and the Postal Telegraph Company moved into the Spude Electric Company building on North Commercial Street.

Marathon Corporation

So far as this record is concerned, 1927 is the key date in referring to the Marathon Corporation, for it was in this year that the Marathon Company, of Rothschild, Wisconsin, under the far-sighted leadership of D. C. Everest, acquired the Menasha Printing & Carton Company. The Menasha Printing & Carton Company was the result of a merger in 1917 of the Menasha Printing Company, founded by Sam Clinedinst, and the Menasha Carton Company, organized by George S. Gaylord. From 1927 there followed, through the '30s, '40s and '50s, expansion at home and across the land, until today Marathon

(now a subsidiary of American Canco) leads in the fields of food packaging, household papers, general packaging and other paper and paperboard products.

Latterly, Marathon's local growth has flowed into Neenah:—a graphic arts plant on Western Avenue, built in 1954; 1955, the impressive flexible packaging plant on Cecil Street; and now, a new general office on land recently annexed to Neenah's south side. See Part II.

It was in the same year that a Neenah Chapter of the Daughters of the American Revolution was organized in Neenah, and the Business and Professional Women's Club was formed in the same period.

Passing of the old Appleton-Neenah interurban street cars came in 1928, one year following the demise of the Neenah-Oshkosh interurban line. In the former instance, the cars were replaced by motor buses.

A new power plant was constructed by the Bergstrom Paper Company in 1928, and the year also saw erection of a new nurses' home for Theda Clark Hospital.

The Young Women's Club of Neenah and Menasha affiliated with the national Young Women's Christian Association in 1929, and moved into its present building, the former S. A. Cook homestead, on North Commercial Street.

In the same year the Visiting Nurse Association employed its first trained graduate public health nurse, Miss Laura Chase. Miss Ida Heinicke had been the only staff member prior to this time.

Organization of the Valley Plumbing and Heating Supply Corporation, now the Valley Supply Corporation, occurred in 1928. Records also indicate establishment of the Comfort Beauty Shop in the late 1920's, one of the earlier establishments of its kind in the city.

Helen K. Stuart Promotes Band and "Point" Park

In 1929 the late Mrs. Helen K. Stuart, who later served one term on the common council, representing the First Ward, was largely instrumental in organization of the Neenah High School Band, and brought Lester Mais here as Director. Under his skillful and indefatigable leadership, a band music program was instituted which has resulted in the

band and its individual members annually taking first place awards in state and regional tournaments. Les Mais' contribution to the youth of Neenah is a generous one, and extends beyond the school curriculum to such organizations as the Brigade and Bluket bands. It is fitting that he was honored by his former students in 1954, as they celebrated with him his 25th year of service to Neenah.

In the same year (1929) Mrs. Stuart acquired the property which is now the location of Kimberly Point Park, and presented it to the city.

The Senior High School, located on Division Street, was completed in 1929.

Break in the Stock Market

Who will ever forget the bewilderment of the last weeks of 1929 following the break in the securities market in October? Retrenchment everywhere. Fear gripped the hearts of people, and fear made a bad situation worse.

Thus the '20s bequeathed dismay and unemployment to the '30s.



“With the frequent comings and goings of these friends and relatives, the Doty household experienced little ‘isolation.’ Even when no visitors were about, the sense of companionship persisted, for in this ageless spot it was easy to conjure up a pageant of the past. What processions had rounded the foot of the island to swing their craft into Winnebago’s shallow waters: intrepid explorers, black-robed missionaries, light-hearted voyageurs whose melodies lingered on the air long after they had passed from view, red men setting out for the hunt or on the grim business of war, soldiers flying the banners of France, of Britain, and of the United States. In that historic array Doty himself often appeared: in the Cass entourage, in Rolette’s fur brigade invested with the new dignity of Judge, on the gay picnic excursion with the Kinzies.”

From Chapter 18 of Alice Elizabeth Smith’s biography of *James Duane Doty*, The State Historical Society of Wisconsin, Copyright 1954.

Notes

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After the first few months of the year, the market for securities, as stated by Wall Street, is in a state of depression. The price of the *Wall Street Journal* is \$1.00.

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Under the title "A New Era in Wall Street," the *Wall Street Journal* has published a series of articles which are highly interesting and which are well worth reading. The price of the *Wall Street Journal* is \$1.00.

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