

The Fox Indians

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A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE TOWN OF MENASHA

Illustration showing Little Lake Butte des Morts and Prime Park. Wisconsin State Historical.

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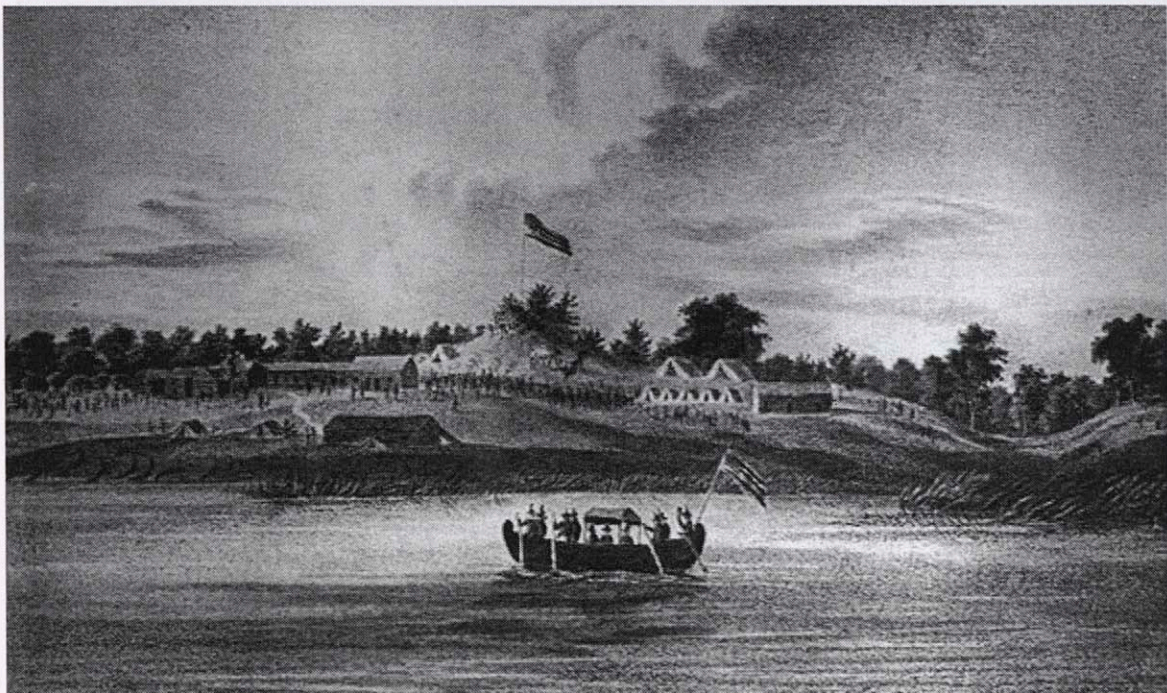


Illustration showing Little Lake Butte des Morts and Fritse Park. *Wisconsin State Historical.*

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The morning sun shown pleasantly on the wigwams of the Little Lake Butte des Morts village. The inhabitants reposed in the fancied security, the squaws moved about in performing their usual duties, the papooses played their juvenile games, and the warriors lolled about, comfortably contemplating their next foray on the boats of the French voyagers, which should furnish them a generous supply of white man delicacies, especially tobacco and 'Shootay waubo'(alcohol). They did not have long to wait, as Morand's fleet was rapidly approaching the village. It was composed of boats and canoes covered with oil skins, which the traders used to protect their goods from the weather. Under these oil skins were concealed 100 armed men. When they got to within one mile of the village, the Menominees and some of the French proceeded up Duck Creek to the main Fox village to cut off the retreat of the Foxes. The main part of Morand's fleet continued up the lake. As soon as it was in sight of the village, the dogs barked, the squaws screamed with delight, and the warriors ran down to the shore, eagerly expecting a rich booty.

When the foremost boats came in front of the Indians, they congregated on the shore demanding their stoppage. The rowers immediately stopped, and Morand asked what they wanted. "Shootay waubo" was yelled by hundreds of voices. Morand ordered the boats to shore. The Indians swarmed forward to board the boats. Morand ordered them back and not to touch the boats, but on they came. In an instant the oil cloths were thrown back, and 100 men stood up with muskets ready. At the command of "Fire!" they simultaneously discharged their guns, and scores of Foxes fell to the ground. The suddenness of the attack sent the Indians howling and panic stricken from the shore. They retreated toward their village where they were met with the war whoops of the Menominees with tomahawk and scalping knife in hand. The wigwams were already burning, as the Menominees had set fire to the whole village. Then came terrible hand to hand fighting. The Foxes had to retreat to the woods, and then to Big Lake Butte des Morts, about 13 miles away.

In the short time of one hour, a peaceful village was turned into one of complete desolation. Morand and his men followed the Fox and attacked them again at Big Lake Butte des Morts. The remaining Foxes retreated to the mouth of the Wisconsin River, where once more they were attacked by Morand and his forces.

It was from this battle, that the lower lake got its name, *Butte des Morts* which means "hill of the dead" in French. The Indians that lost their lives in this battle were buried in a communal grave, a hill which was visible for many years until it was destroyed to make way for the railroad trestle bridge. This site was made a Wisconsin State Historical site and is marked as such at the present Fritse Park. In 1827, Governor Cass held a council here with the Winnebago, Chippewa and Menominee Tribes to fix their tribal boundaries. At this council, Oshkosh was made chief of the Menominee Tribe.



REAL CENTENNIAL DISCOVERY are these ancient Indian mounds across Little Lake Butte des Morts. They are the burial mounds raised to memorialize the Fox warriors and women and children that were slaughtered by the French. When the C. & N. W. railroad completed its bridge across the lake it was believed that these mounds were destroyed. However, the contrary is true. In a wooded dale just south of the west approach of the bridge are some 20 to 25 of these mounds, a rich motherlode of Indian lore. (News-Record Photo)

Newspaper photo showing Indian mounds in area of present day Fritse Park, circa 1960. *Appleton Post-Crescent*.

The French were only the short-termed victors, however, since the troubles with the Fox had, over the years, diverted French trade into the Ohio River Valley, placing it in direct conflict with westward expanding English interests. These conflicts, in part, led to the French and Indian War and finally to the end of French occupation in America.

By 1836 the area of Winnebago County as part of the Wisconsin territory had seen British control come and go, and the territory became a part of the United States. The last Indian resistance to white acquisition of their lands was ended in 1832 when the Sauk Indians, led by Chief Black Hawk met their defeat at the hands of American troops. By 1836 the Winnebago and Menominee Indian tribes had ceded all their lands bounded by the Fox and Wolf Rivers and Lake

Winnebago to the U.S. Government. James Doty, who lived on what is now Doty Island, was appointed territorial governor and white settlers were coming into the area in greater numbers.

By 1840, trading posts had already been established at Oshkosh, Omro, Butte des Morts and Winneconne. The first sawmill had been built in Neenah and as the lumbering camps opened up the north woods, more sawmills were built up and down the valley including Oshkosh, Neenah, and Menasha. In time Oshkosh became one of the largest and most prosperous lumbering towns in the state, having over 45 sawmills alone.

SOURCES: *'Town of Menasha 1856 – 1981' booklet*
'The Emerging Cities' Menasha Register June 1998

Where did we get our names?

In a letter published in the November 8, 1855 edition of *Menasha Advocate*, Governor Doty, who was known for extensive knowledge of the Indian language, explains how the area's different communities and waterways received their names.

Neenah and *Menasha* both get their names from the Indian language. *Menasha* comes from *Menashay*, the Ho-Chunk term for "settlement on the island." *Neenah* is said to have been named when Governor Doty scooped up some water from the river and asked a Menominee Indian for the river's name. The Indian replied "Neenah", the Menominee word for water, thinking that is what he meant.

Little Lake Butte des Morts is actually a widening of the Fox River. It gets its name from the Fox massacre described in the beginning of this book. *Butte des Morts* is the French term for "hill of the dead."

Winnebago is derived from an Indian word meaning "impure, dirty or polluted waters." The Menominee word *Winnibego* expresses the meaning 'dirty water people'.

Outagamie refers to the band of Chippewa Indians that inhabited the area around Green Bay and east of the Fox River.

Waushara is name for another band of Indians inhabiting another area of the Fox River.

The Fox River derives itself from the French word *Les Reynards*, which the French called the Indians inhabiting this area. *Les Reynards* translates to English as "the fox." Originally, this river was to be called "Neenah" so as not to

confuse it with its counterpart, the Illinois Fox River. Neenah never took with the river and it continued to be referred to as 'the Fox'.

Calumet is a long standing Indian tradition of safety and protection. A calumet is a pipe, approximately two feet long, made of red stone and polished like marble. It is generally decorated with different colored feathers, each color representing what the pipe is intended for such as war, peace and safeguarding one's voyage.

Government arrives.

In 1831, the United States Government bought 2.5 million acres of land from Indians by treaty which included the land of the town and surrounding area. In 1835, the federal government began an effort to "civilize" the Indians of this territory. Men were sent in to build a grist mill, a saw mill and a dam for water power in what is now the City of Menasha. Twenty or thirty houses, known as government block houses, were built on the mainland. A blacksmith's shop was erected and the government paid wages as much as \$800 per year to teach American methods of agriculture to the Indians. A row of these block houses once stood in the area of present day Fritse park going towards the south, along the west shore of Little Lake Butte des Morts.

The mission was generally acknowledged to be a failure. Houses had been built for the Indians to live in, but they preferred to stable their horses there or use the floorboards to erect tents. To top it off, nearly one-third of the Indians died in an epidemic of smallpox.

Once settlers had come to the area, they saw the fertility of the surrounding land and the possibilities of development. In 1840, the Territorial Legislature set Winnebago County off from Brown County. The laws of 1836 declared each County one township to be governed by a chairman and two supervisors. Winnebago County was then known as the Town of Winnebago. The area of present day Neenah and Menasha was known as Winnebago Rapids, presumably after the rushing waters of the Fox River in between Lake Winnebago and Little Lake Butte des Morts. In 1843, the population of the Town of Winnebago consisted of 143 people. An election was held to do business, with 23 people present to fill 21 offices. At this same meeting the Town Board voted to raise \$50 to cover the expense of the town for the next year. In 1844 the Town of Winnebago had grown and the population was 187.

**SOURCES: 'Town of Menasha 1856 – 1981' booklet
Appleton Post-Crescent**

First settlers in Town of Menasha

The first settler in what is now known as the Town of Menasha was James Ladd. A native of Vermont, he moved to Menasha into one of the government block houses originally intended for the Indians. In 1849 Mr. Ladd constructed a lime-kiln on his farm (west side of Little Lake Butte des Morts), from which he supplied this entire section of country with brick, made from the rich red clay and limestone found in this area. This brick was used for the construction of Lawrence University in Appleton.

Other early pioneers were Jourdanian Ladd (unknown relation), who operated a blacksmith's shop; Michael Kerwin, who helped to make the first canal improvements on the Fox River; and Philip Verbeck, an early town chairman.

First marriage in the Town of Menasha

The first marriage in the Town of Menasha was celebrated on October 27, 1848, between L.S. Wheatley and Caroline Northrup, daughter of Cornelius Northrup, a pioneer in both Neenah and Menasha.

First death in the Town of Menasha

The first death in the town was that of a Danish man named Jenson, who died September 5, 1846, in one of the government block houses on the west side of the lake.

First birth in the Town of Menasha

The first birth was that of Delos Haight, the son of Moses Haight, who was born in the spring of 1847.

SOURCE: 'Town of Menasha 1856-1981' booklet

Town of Neenah is formed.

In 1847, the Town of Neenah was formed by an act of the Territorial Legislature. At that time the Town of Neenah included the present day Cities of Neenah and Menasha and the Towns of Neenah, Menasha, Vinland and Clayton.

On November 9, 1847, at one of the first town meetings, a committee of three was sent to Madison to help draw up the Constitution of the State of Wisconsin. They also appointed a committee of two men to find a burial ground for the town. This committee reported back to the next town meeting in 1848 and said that the only ground they could find suitable was "across the slough past the wooded area" for \$10 per acre. They were instructed to buy four acres and build a fence around it. The land belonged to Mr. James Ladd, and he demanded a grave plot be reserved for his family. This parcel can be seen today in the northeast corner of Oak Hill Cemetery, which is claimed to be the second oldest municipal cemetery in the United States. St. Patrick's Cemetery on N. Green Bay Rd. was established not too long afterward, sometime before 1858.

SOURCE: 'Town of Menasha 1856 – 1981' booklet

Neenah-Menasha rivalry starts

In 1849, the Towns of Clayton and Vinland were set off from the Town of Neenah by an act of legislature. The Town of Neenah now comprised the area of both present day Cities and Towns of Neenah and Menasha. Although this was supposed to be one town, a rivalry had sprung up, very naturally, between the two sides of the river. Both communities fought over the placement of a government-built canal, along with friction over roads, school funding, county board representation and polling and meeting sites. The place of holding town elections had long prior to this date been established by an act of legislature at Neenah. The Menasha area had for some time agitated the subject and claimed that the election should be held alternately in each area. These elections were held each year to approve public improvements and setting the tax rate for such improvements.

While both communities fought over which area would get these improvements, as a single taxing authority these projects could be financed at a much lower tax rate. In 1854, the Menasha area wanted improvements to the railroad system in their community, Neenah residents didn't feel a need for these projects and to avoid paying for this, they petitioned the county board for a division.

Menasha objected to this division because of a fear that the county would impose greater taxes. At the time, taxation came through the county and funds were

then disbursed to the various townships. Menasha, for years, had been raising its own fees for services and did not feel that it should be taxed twice. However, with this division, Menasha would gain equal numbers on the county board, which addressed concerns of lack of representation.

This division has carried on throughout the years, most notably in the mid-to-late 20th century, as annexations took its toll on the Town of Menasha. We will discuss that later in the book. In the early part of the 21st century, we are starting to see increased levels of cooperation among the cities and townships, ironically over what was one of the concerns 150 years ago: taxation!

SOURCE: *"Town of Menasha 1856 – 1981" booklet*
Appleton Post-Crescent

Town of Menasha organizes.

On April 3, 1855, Menasha held an organization election at the Decker house in Menasha. Cornelius Northrup was elected moderator; Elias Bates and George Fay, inspectors; and L.S. Fisher, clerk.

Town officers elected were Jeremiah Hunt, chairman; Issac Hough and Wells E. Blair, supervisors; Eldridge Smith, clerk; George W. Fay, treasurer; Charles Whipple, supt. of schools; A.K. Sperry, Samuel Neff, and Edmund Freeman, assessors; Elias Bates, Israel Naricong and George Watson; justices. W.E. Blair failed to qualify as a supervisor and the board met on May 5th and appointed Cleveland Bachleder to fill the vacancy.

The town was not pleased to be "evicted" from the Town of Neenah, and one of first orders of business seems to have been the adoption of a preamble and resolution, setting forth the illegality of the division of the Town of Neenah, and the organization of the Town of Menasha, contrary to the expressed wishes of three-fourths of the voters of the old town and of every voter of the new town, and protesting against such division.

Whereas:

The Board of Supervisors of the County of Winnebago did at their last session pass an order providing for a division of the Town of Neenah and for the organization of the Town of Menasha.

Therefore:

Resolved, that said order was adopted contrary to law and in opposition to the known wishes of at least three quarters of the voters of the original Town of Neenah and to the wishes of every voter of the proposed Town of Menasha.

Be it Further Resolved:

That in organizing the Town of Menasha we do not admit the legality or the propriety of the said act of the Board of Supervisors, but submit to the act for the time being, under protest, relying on legal and proper tribunal to do us justice.

Some kind of harmony between the two communities was restored the following year when the Town of Neenah gave the Town of Menasha the book of town records, the order book, and the desk for preserving the town papers.

SOURCE: 'Town of Menasha 1856-1981' booklet

ANNUAL REPORT

Of the Board of Supervisors, of the Town of MENASHA, for the year, ending Mar. 30 A. D. 1886.

CONTINGENT FUND.

Cash rec'd from L. Teal, former Treasurer,	\$ 16.35
Voted by Town meeting from special fund,	250.00
Returned from road Dist. No. 6 for Mon- eys advanced by town,	15.84
Returned from road Dist. No. 5 for do,	8.57
County Order,	10.10
	<u>\$ 295.86</u>

Outstanding Orders paid and cancelled during the year,

Order No. 18 A. D. Page, supplies furnished to County Pauper,	\$ 10.10
" " 15 W. P. Rounds, error in Ass't. roll,	6.04
" " 16 L. Teal, time and expense to Oshkosh,	3.00
" " 17 M. J. Crendon, services as Supervisor,	4.00
" " 18 A. D. Page, serv. as Supervisor,	4.00
" " 19 P. Verbeck, serv. as Supervisor,	4.00
" " 20 T. B. Blair, services as Clerk and Postage,	7.42
" " 21 P. Gerughty, services as Election Clerk,	2.00
" " 22 Lavel Stowe, rent of office for election,	5.00
" " 23 J. N. Stone, printing blanks and report,	4.00

Orders Issued paid and cancelled by the present board,

Order No. 23 1/2 T. L. Utley, material and labor on bridge,	\$ 20.00
" " 24 Henry Sherry, bill of lumber,	3.00
" " 25 John Strange, bill of lumber,	18.87
" " 26 C. Rasmussen, money adv. on delinquent road tax,	10.27
" " 27 Fox River Sewerpipe Co., culvert pipe,	3.50
" " 28 Wildie and Gleason, stationery,	1.97
" " 29 Patrick Hayes, timber for repairs on Mud Creek bridge,	7.50
" " 30 T. L. Utley, repairing abut. of Mud Creek bridge,	10.50
" " 31 M. J. Crendon, services as Supervisor,	8.00
" " 32 S. C. Pinkerton, serv. as Supervisor,	7.00
" " 33 J. P. Lomas, serv. as Supervisor,	8.00
" " 34 Chas. Derby, services as Assessor,	30.00
" " 35 T. B. Blair, serv. as Clerk,	40.87
" " 36 J. Lienwander, error in Ass't. Roll,	4.06
" " 37 T. B. Blair, blank road warrants etc.	3.50

" " 38 T. L. Utley, mat. and labor on Mud Creek bridge,

	12.50
	<u>\$ 190.23</u>
Outstanding orders paid,	49.56
	<u>245.79</u>
Cash on hand,	50.07
	<u>\$ 295.86</u>

The Board recommend that the sum of two hundred and fifty dollars (\$250.00) be voted for contingent expenses the ensuing year, said sum to be levied in the tax roll of 1886.

The Board further recommend that provision be made for the prompt payment of the old indebtedness of the town, such as the judgment and costs in the pauper suit with the city of Menasha amounting to \$74.33 and the costs (not yet taxed) in the suit recently decided with the Wisconsin Central R. R. estimated by Mr. Hooper at \$75 to \$125.

M. J. Crendon.
J. P. Lomas.
S. C. Pinkerton.
Supervisors.

ANNUAL REPORT.

of Wm. Sill, Treasurer of the town of Menasha for the year ending March 30th 1886.

RECEIPTS.

Cash on hand from last year,	\$2,404.30
State School Funds,	74.00
Interest on Bank Certificate,	65.77
Tax Certificates No's 584 and 50,	26.69
Tax Roll for 1885,	2,108.12
County order,	10.10
	<u>4,088.98</u>

DISBURSEMENTS.

Paid Town Orders as per Voucher,	\$245.79
School Dist. Orders " " "	839.34
Road " " " "	67.42
Paid Co Treas. " " "	1,223.50
Total Disbursements,	\$2,376.14
Bank Certificate,	\$1,094.10
Tax Certificates No's 584 and 50,	26.69
Cash in hand,	592.05
	<u>\$4,088.98</u>

STATEMENT OF INDEBTEDNESS, of the TOWN OF MENASHA, March 30th 1886.

Mil. & N. R. R. Bonds — (1/2 of \$4,000)	\$1,000.00
Accrued Interest to June 1 1886,	68.00
Wis. Cen. R. R. Bonds 1/2 of \$10,000,	4,000.00
Accrued Interest to June 1 1886,	1,680.00
Total Bonded Debt,	<u>\$7,348.00</u>

JUDGMENTS.

City of Menasha pauper suit,	\$24.33
" " " costs in same,	3.00
Accrued Interest,	1.00
	<u>\$7.33</u>

Wis. Cen. R. R. Costs in Suit for damages Hooper's Estimate \$75 to \$125,
Bill of Moses Hooper Legal services in above suit,

\$300.00

Annual Report of the Board of Supervisors, Town of Menasha, May 30, 1886. Town of Menasha.

Where does Menasha begin and Neenah end?

Boundaries were set up by dividing Doty Island in half, present day Nicolet Blvd. This imaginary line was carried across to the west side of Little Lake Butte des Morts. The western most boundaries met up with the Town of Clayton, and the northern and eastern boundaries followed the county lines.

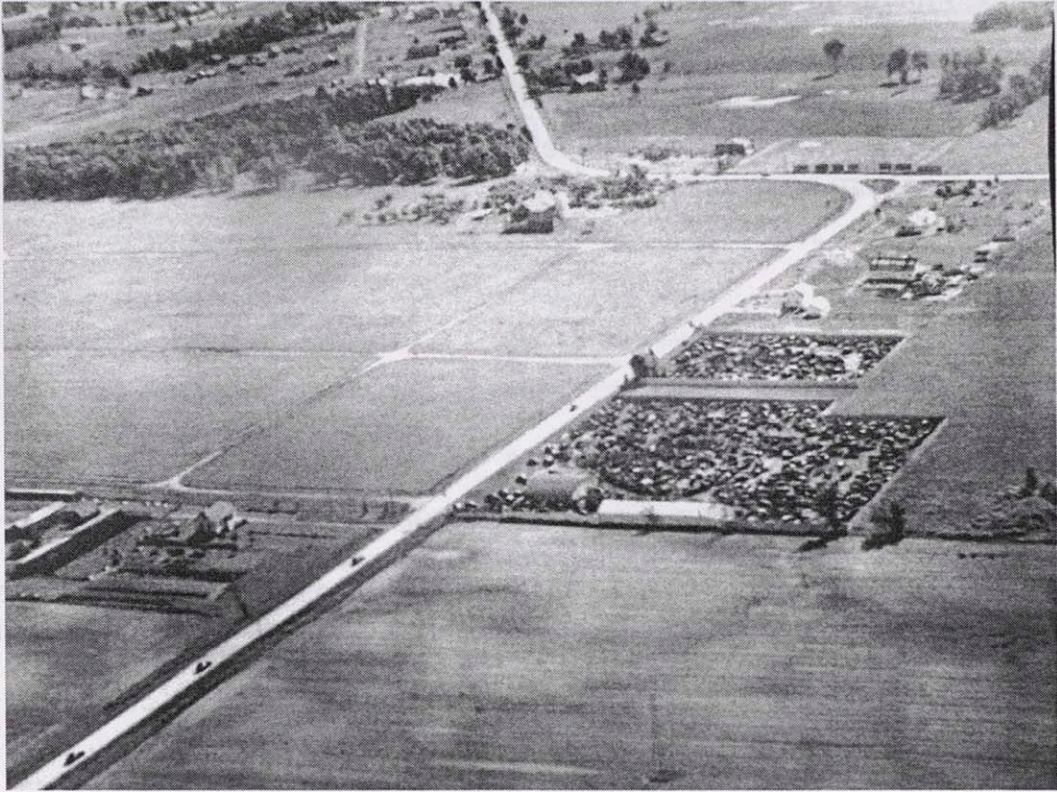
Transportation starts to take off

A road was constructed out of wood planks through the Town of Menasha in the 1850s through the efforts of Captain L.B. Mackinnon. The wood planks were thought to provide a better surface for the teams of horses and wagons to travel upon. The road brought more people and traffic through the town than had been seen up to that time. This road was in the area of the present day Plank Rd., hence the name.

In 1917, the Wisconsin Legislature enacted a law creating a "numbered" system for highways and roads. This was the first such system in the world! In this same year, the State Highway Commission had 3,000 miles of numbered state trunk lines and all of the signing was erected the following year.



1915 photograph showing Appleton Rd. near Clovis Farm, between present day Ninth St. and Airport Rd. Menasha Public Library.



1935 photograph showing Valley Rd. running through picture, and Memorial Dr. would be in top of photo. Jahnke's Salvage yard in center of photo. This was Highway 41 at the time. *Ronald Jahnke.*

In 1919, the most traveled road in the county, the present route of Racine St. to Valley Rd. to Memorial Dr. became part of the state trunk system of highways, designated as Highway 41, and was paved with concrete. In 1941, Highway 41 was relocated to the west side of Little Lake Butte des Morts. It is a two lane highway that replaced a smaller road. Longtime resident, Arvin Sell, recalls that some of the fill for this new highway came from the Zeh farm that was located in the area of the present highway. That road was re-built into a new four lane highway. "Super-Highway 41", as it was referred as, went from southern Winnebago County, through the Town of Menasha to DePere.

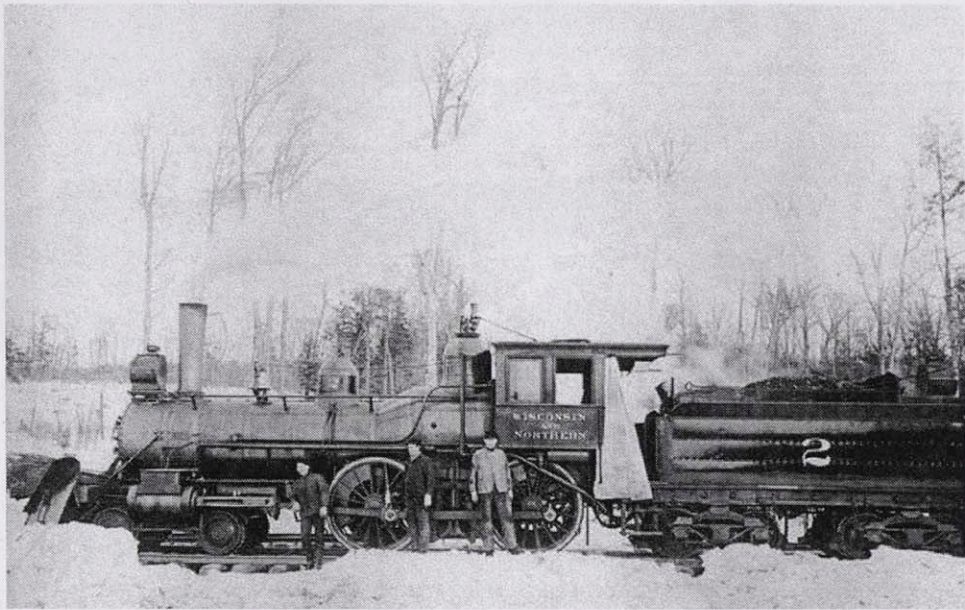
Several bridges also produced the same result. A mile-long pontoon bridge was erected across Little Lake Butte des Morts. It is uncertain of the exact date of construction. Some reports indicate it was built in 1850, some say 1853, and yet another as late as 1858. The bridge extended from near Whiting Paper Mill to County Trunk II on the west side of the lake. This bridge allowed the farmers from west of the lake to bring their logs to be sawed into lumber and their grain to be ground into flour in the mills of the Village of Menasha. The bridge was used for several years until it fell into disrepair. In 1861, a pile bridge was built which was wide enough for two wagons to pass safely, with four foot high railings, which cost \$6,365.92. The bridge was used for a number of years.



Photo from 1955 showing the old wood pilings that remained from the wagon bridge across Little Lake Butte des Morts. *Richard Mason.*

It was rammed by a steamboat at one time, and the town had to sue the boat company for \$500 for the repair. It was said that during the 1930 Depression the piles were cut off at the ice level for firewood. Some of the piles remained into the 1960s when a man from Neenah hit one with his motor boat. At that time there were 44 piles left in a somewhat submerged condition.

Railways have long been a part of the Town of Menasha. Three railroads served Neenah-Menasha and rolled prominently through the Town of Menasha. The railroads, Chicago & Northwestern, Wisconsin Central, and Milwaukee & Northern railroad all used railway in the Town of Menasha. The Chicago & Northwestern line, built in 1861, ran alongside the western shore of Little Lake Butte des Morts, missing the more populated areas on Doty Island. The railroad used the newly constructed pontoon bridge, described earlier, in having its freight moved across the lake. Shortly thereafter, a railway bridge was constructed across Little Lake Butte des Morts. That will be discussed in greater detail, later in the book. The other railroads reached an agreement with Chicago & Northwestern to use the newly constructed railway trestle bridge to reach points west.



Wisconsin & Northern Engine No. 2, circa 1910. *Neenah Public Library.*

The Fox River Valley Inter-Urban Electric Trolley Line from Menasha to Appleton crossed the eastern, more populated, part of the township, running along the east shore of Lake Winnebago. That is also discussed at greater length later in the book.

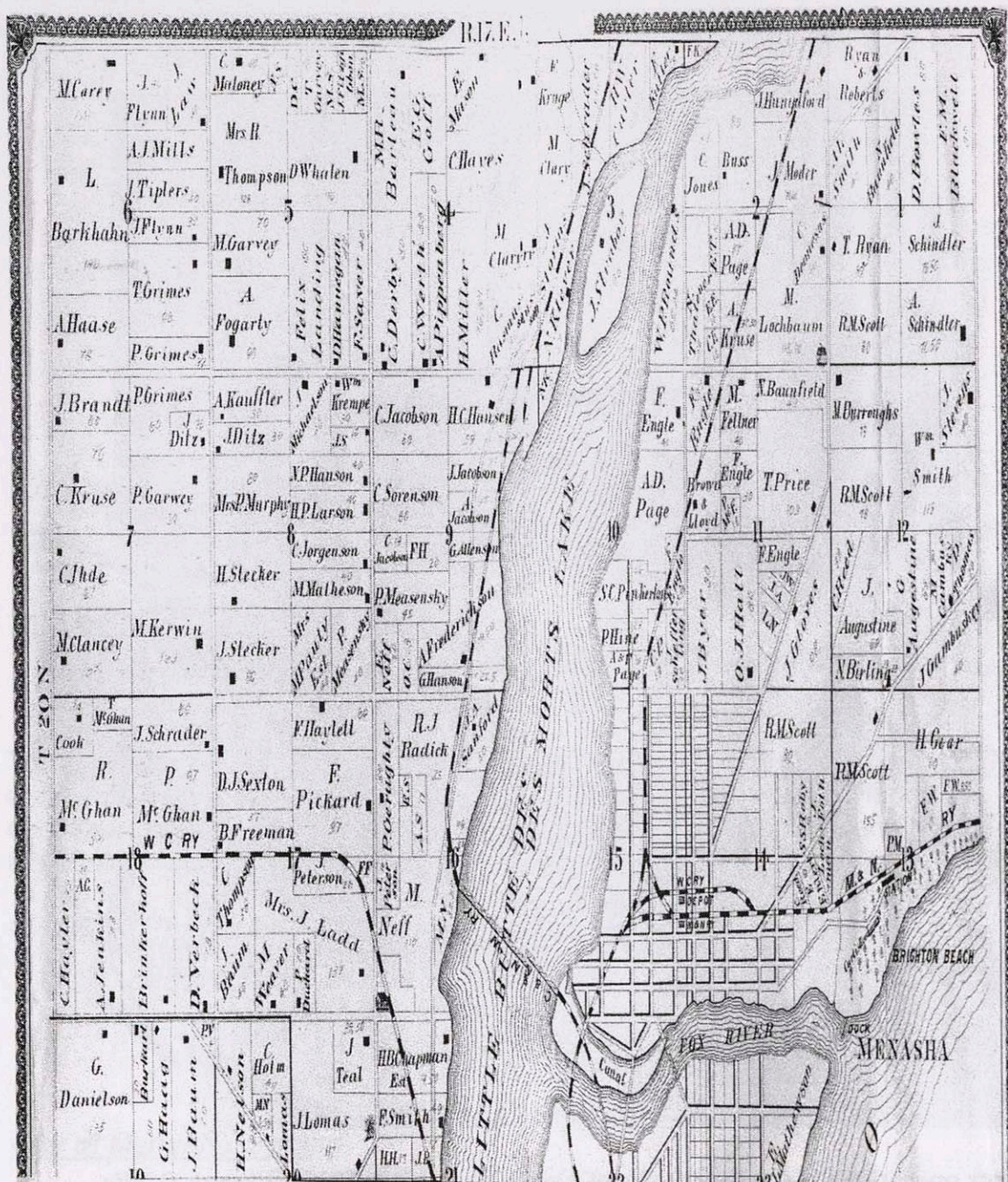
SOURCES: 'Town of Menasha 1856-1981' booklet
 'In this Century' book by Winnebago County
 State of Wisconsin records

City of Menasha created

The more populous area of the town received its city charter in 1874. It is believed that this area of the Town of Menasha, that around the downtown, would all be incorporated as the "City of Menasha", leaving all of the rural or country area as the "Town of Menasha". It is uncertain as to exactly why a portion of Menasha incorporated as a city, but it is speculated that a "city status" would carry more political power than remaining a township.



Quarry operations at the future site of Fritse Park, circa 1915. *Neenah Public Library.*



1889 plat maps from State of Wisconsin Historical Archives, depicting land owners alongside Little Lake Butte des Morts.

Residents start to discover the Town of Menasha

As reported in *The Post-Crescent*, June 15, 1976.

"Since its inception in the middle 19th century, the Town of Menasha had been occupied almost exclusively by farms. It was not until a sudden spurt of growth in the 1940s that the Town began to become more urbanized. Between 1940 and 1950, the population of the town increased 142% to nearly 3,000. The increase was attributed to the town's location between two cities, Appleton and Menasha, which made it a natural site for suburban homes. The Town of Menasha saw the forthcoming change to their once quiet small farming community and started to make improvements to the land and area. Once a sewage and water system were created, more and more homes were built and business soon arrived."

SOURCE: *Appleton Post-Crescent*

The war on annexation

As reported in *The Post-Crescent*, June 17, 1976.



"It was 1953; the City of Menasha files a petition to annex an area of the Town of Menasha. A mere seven lots were brought in from an area north of Ninth Street between London and Grove Streets. The city council also approved the addition of a vacant 21 acre parcel donated by Alva Grove in memory of his mother, Melissa Clovis. That land ultimately became the site of Clovis Grove School.

**Clovis Farm that stood in the area of present day
Clovis Grove Elementary School, circa 1912.
*Neenah Public Library.***

For the next dozen years Menasha continued to annex town land while the town's other two neighbors, Neenah and Appleton, expanded with annexations in different towns. The annexation that created a huge 'turf war' was the 71 acre Schwarzbauer annexation which is the present day area of the UW-Fox Valley. This was by far the largest single annexation to date.

The town, up until this time, had been reluctant to step into the annexations but rose to the occasion this time. Led by Town Chairman Roland Kampo, the town took the city to court to have the annexation invalidated. This succeeded in delaying the annexation but not overturning it. This produced some bizarre moments. Residents of this area didn't know who would be collecting their taxes, as both municipalities claimed that right. Similar confusion arose over who would provide services to the area, such as police and fire protection, while the case was being litigated.

During this time, the city was preparing for another annexation, this time the area of Midway near the present day George Banta Co. In 1967, what was known to become the Banta annexation, the city became 303 acres larger and obtained an industry valued at the time of \$2.7 million. Naturally, the town contested this annexation also.

In 1969, the annexation lawsuits reached the Wisconsin State Supreme Court. The court issued a ruling upholding both annexations. The city continued with annexations of the town. In 1970, 96 acres in an area of where present day Shopko is located on Appleton Rd., along with more area behind the Banta annexation, taking land up to the south side of Valley Rd. In the following year, another 43 acres was annexed taking the area of Maplewood School.

The annexations seemed to slow down for a few years until 1978. Developer Ken Syring petitioned for an area of 51 acres of what was to be the city's far northwest side to be annexed to the city. Syring said he wanted to build a subdivision in the area and argued that the town would not be able to adequately provide him with the services he required. With a new town chairman in place, Esther Walling, the town filed a lawsuit in Winnebago County court to block the annexation. While this case was proceeding, the city took the Gambsky annexation in 1979 which added 85 acres, extending the city's eastern boundaries to S. Oneida St. Appleton joined in on the annexation front and took a 28 acre Pennings-Van Dinter annexation along S. Oneida St near Wilson Ave.

The town took both Appleton and Menasha to court and in both cases the results were the same: the town lost. The town went to the State Supreme Court again with the Syring and Gambsky, annexations and in December of 1980 those were upheld like the others."

Annexations came to an end in 1998, with border agreements being forged with the Cities of Neenah, Menasha and Appleton. The agreement with the City of Menasha states that town land north of STH 441 would be off limits to city annexation while the town would agree to not challenge city annexations south and east of the freeway as long as they meet certain criteria, key among them that “no town residents could be annexed without their consent.” Likewise, no city residents north or west of STH 441 could be detached to the town without their consent.

SOURCES: *Appleton Post-Crescent*
Town of Menasha records

Growth continues in spite of annexations

As reported in *The Post-Crescent*, June 16, 1976.

“In a typical year, the Town of Menasha was the fastest growing township in Winnebago County. Population in 1940 was 1,235; 1950 was 3,007; 1960 was 5,480; 1970 was 8,682. Because of the high population and industry, the Town of Menasha had invested in municipal services beyond the scope of most towns.

With all that growth, the Town of Menasha’s character had surely changed. It now had a population as diversified as any community. It ranged from farm communities on the rural west side who have been there for many years, to scores of young people living in apartment units in the more urban east side, to wealthy professional people living in the scenic Palisades area.

Equalized value for the entire town was just \$2.2 million in 1940 and had surpassed \$169 million in 1975. People were attracted to the town because of the historically low tax rates. During the 1950s to mid 1970s, the town was known as a “tax island.” At this time, Wisconsin’s shared tax formula was the main reason the town was able to maintain this status. The formula stated that 39% of corporate income taxes and 22% of personal income taxes were returned to the municipality of residence. Towns, unlike cities, didn’t have to pay for extensive services for residents. The only taxes assessed against property owners were for school districts and the vocational school.

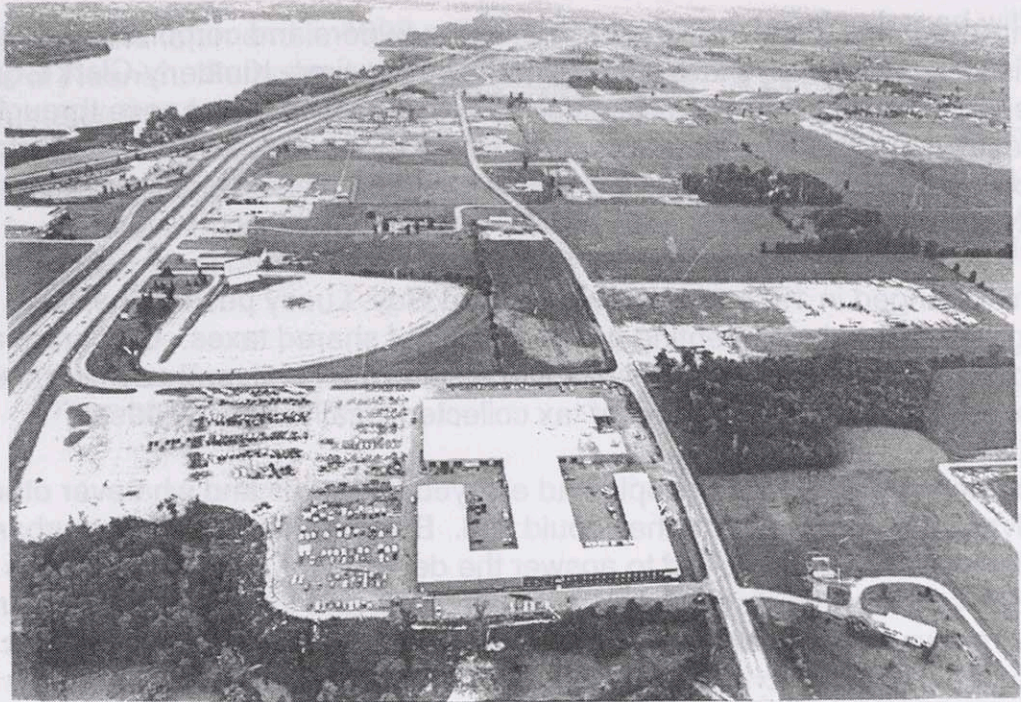
This made the town very attractive to homeowners and corporations. During this time, Wisconsin's largest corporation at the time, Kimberly-Clark Corp. headquartered in the town. Residential areas grew at a fast pace throughout the town, as homeowners reaped the rewards in taxes. In 1965, property taxes on a \$20,000 home in the town were \$260, compared to \$409 in the city.

This changed in 1971 when newly elected Gov. Lucey pushed the state legislature into implementing a new system of shared taxes. Corporate and individual income taxes now went into a statewide fund, and payments are based on population, amount of tax collected locally, and tax base."

The new breed of townspeople had enjoyed low taxes and whatever other advantages of town living they could find. But a majority were also urban-oriented, and the town had to answer the demand for adequate services. The water and sewage district utilities were formed, and the police department had grown from a part-time constable in the 1960s to include a chief, six officers and two secretaries by the mid 1970s. The town also had many employees serving part-time in capacities of the fire chief, treasurer, clerk, assessor and more during this time. This would ultimately start to increase the tax collected on residents. Historically, the Town of Menasha has maintained one of the lowest tax rates for the Fox Valley, despite turning into an urban municipality.

Since that time, the town workforce has grown tremendously and now includes 82 full-time employees, 62 part-time employees, and 43 seasonal employees, in addition to 50 paid on-call firefighters, as of 2006.

SOURCES: *Appleton Post-Crescent*
Town of Menasha records



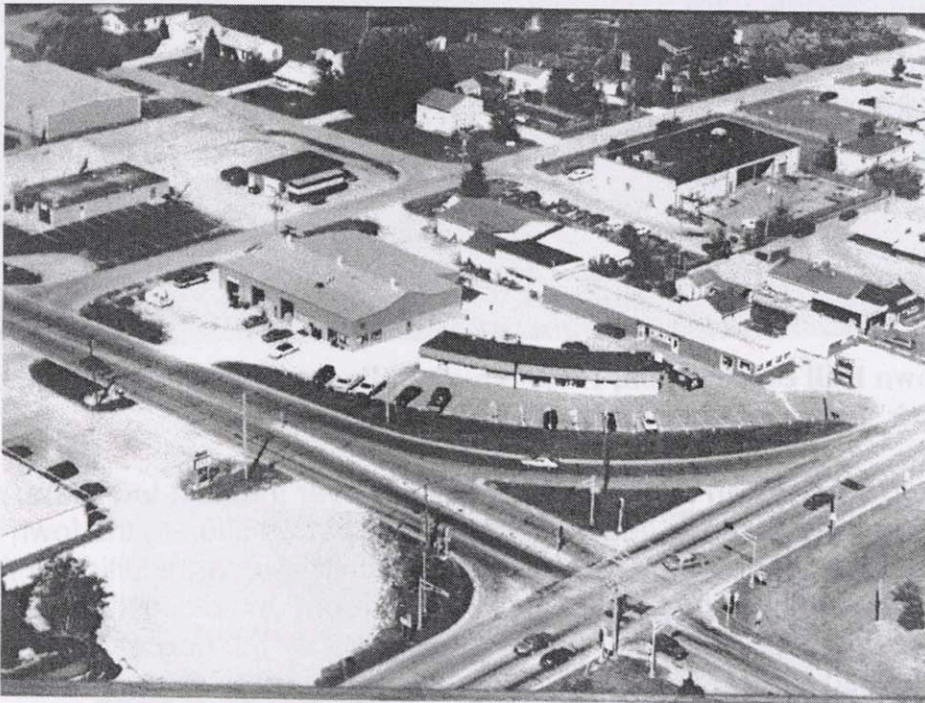
1981 photograph showing American Dr. and USH 41 looking south. Pierce Mfg. is at bottom and 41 Outdoor is next to it. Menasha Public Library.



1977 photograph showing Stroebe Island looking toward the southwest 441 bridge in top of photograph. Clyde Stephenson.



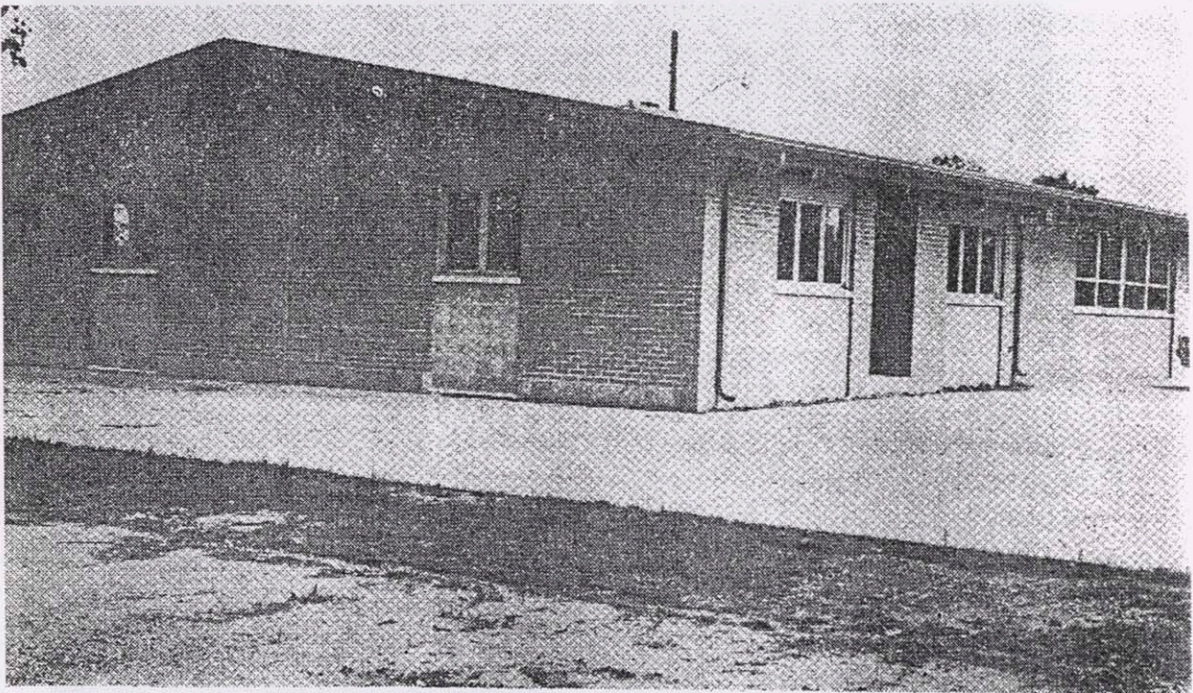
1981 photo showing the area around Valley Fair Mall. *Menasha Public Library.*



Intersection of Valley Rd. and Memorial Dr. Fox Tire is in the center of photo. Circa 1982. *Fox Tire.*

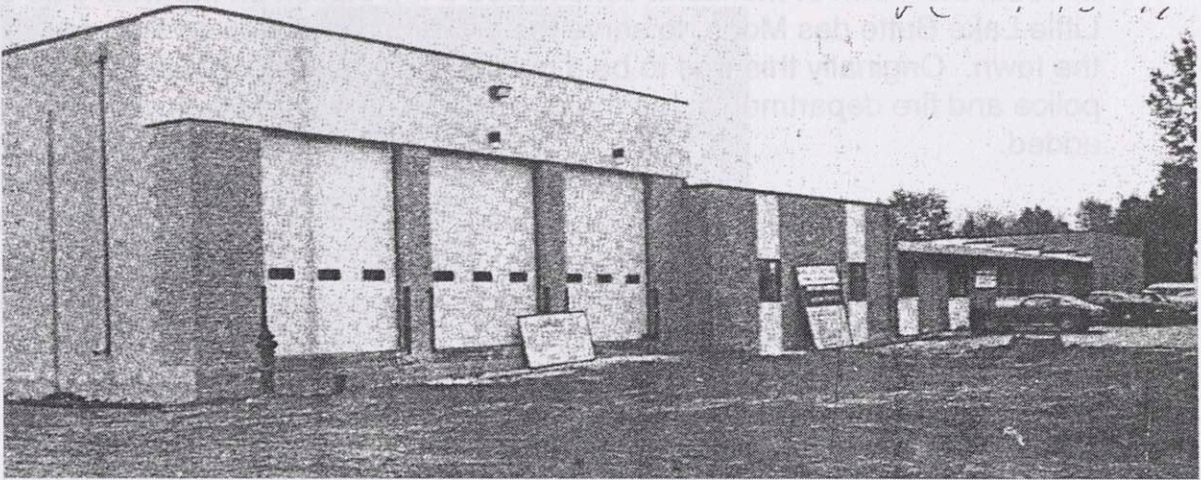
Town facilities need to meet demands of increasing population.

Government in the town was operating out of homes of town board members or the town clerk. In 1963, plans were made to construct a combined park shelter and town office at Palisades Park. This building would include a 50 person meeting room. Growth continued, which necessitated more employees, forcing the town to outgrow the small 40' X 40' town hall. In 1967 a 24' X 40' addition was approved. This would add four rooms, to be used as the chairman's office, clerk's office, secretary, and an extra office to be rented out for the also growing Sanitary District #4.

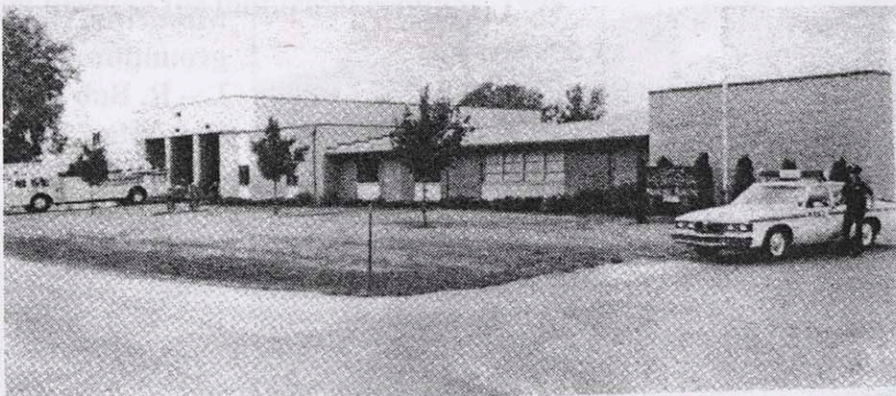


Town Hall construction, 1968. This building originally served as the Palisades Park shelter on Valley Rd. *Appleton Post-Crescent*.

The town's growth continued dramatically over the next ten years, reaching 10,238 in 1976, once again calling for another addition to the town hall. This time, it was to be a \$250,000 expansion, calling for an addition of the fire department, town hall chambers/meeting room and offices, and renovation of the original park shelter portion to be used by the police department to be completed in 1977. During these years, the town also constructed a small garage and offices on town property west of Little Lake Butte des Morts, for the street and park Departments.



Additions to Town Hall, 1976. *Appleton Post-Crescent.*



Town Hall, 1981. *Town of Menasha.*



Town Hall, 1981. *Town of Menasha.*

In 1980, the Town of Menasha constructed a fire station on the west side of Little Lake Butte des Morts, to serve the growing population on that side of the town. Originally this was to be a public safety building, housing both police and fire departments, but the police department addition was never added.

This facility, with minor renovations, served the Town of Menasha for the next 20 years. Population continued to swell, reaching close to 16,000, and the town opted for a new, much larger facility to be constructed on the west side of Little Lake Butte des Morts in 1996. This new building would include offices for administration, police, street and park Departments. This building would receive a large addition to the street and park department area to house town vehicles and equipment.



**Municipal complex
groundbreaking. 1995.**
L – R, Bob Sprague
Bob Vitas, Nancy
McFadden, Jerry Finch,
Jerry Jurgenson,
and Arden Tews. *Town of
Menasha.*



**Employees at
groundbreaking, 1995.**
Town of Menasha.



Demolition blasting for municipal complex, 1995.
Town of Menasha.



Municipal complex site, June 1995. *Town of Menasha.*



Municipal complex, November 21, 1995. *Town of Menasha.*

The town retained the old town hall on Valley Rd. still to be utilized as an east side fire station and later renovated the former administrative and police offices to a community center in 2000.

Presently, with the population reaching 17,000, the town residents approved additions to both fire stations and community center to be completed in 2006.



Former town hall on Valley Rd. now houses the east side fire station and a community center. *Author.*



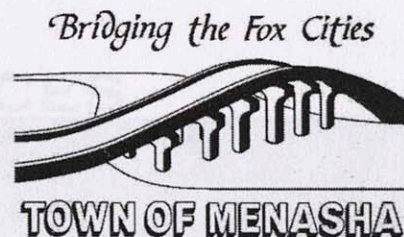
Town of Menasha Municipal Complex, housing administrative, police, park and recreation and street departments

Town of Menasha Municipal Complex behind the entrance sign. *Author.*



Town of Menasha, where is that?

Despite the town's growth into a full-fledged community, the Town of Menasha has an identity crisis. It's not that the town wants to keep a low profile, but political boundaries are so blurred, and the town is so expansive, that it's hard to have an identity. A person traveling between Appleton and Neenah or Menasha, has no idea that they travel through the Town of Menasha.



Various logos used throughout the years. *Town of Menasha.*

The identity crisis is fueled by the fact that residents send their children to three different school districts; Neenah and Menasha and a few to Appleton. The town has no post office, sharing zip codes in Appleton, Neenah and Menasha. The town also doesn't support its own library. Residents have been confused in requesting services, such as police and fire, oftentimes calling the City of Neenah or Menasha respectively.

The town has tried to address this issue several times by proposing name changes. In 1979, the issue came up in case the town was to ever become a village. At that time, the name *Bridgeview* was proposed, however it never went any further than this discussion. The town once again brought up the subject in 2002, again looking at the name *Bridgeview*. This was defeated in a referendum.

SOURCES: *Appleton Post-Crescent*
Town of Menasha records

Where do we go from here?

Growth continues in the town to this day. In the late 1990s, the town developed an area on the west side of Little Lake Butte des Morts referred to as "Gateway." This area is to be a mix of single family residential homes, multi-family apartments and a retail/business area. The residential area has grown tremendously in the past ten years, with the retail/business area starting to grow presently. The town has also seen major corporations move their headquarters and office complexes here such as Miron Construction, SCA Tissue and McMahon and Associates. Commercial and retail developments are also starting to take hold on the west side of the Town of Menasha.



New subdivisions "creeping" towards old farmsteads on the west side. *Author.*