

## WHITING AIRPORT

The invention of the airplane in the early part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century proved to be quite successful. Air travel was booming and the uses of airplanes in other ventures were starting to take notice. The businessmen in the Fox Valley were no strangers to this concept. They felt that with an airport in their own backyard, they could access the air mail delivery and increase their abilities to do business around the country and world.

Noonan industrialist George A. Whiting was one of the businessmen that saw this opportunity. He donated \$5,000 to finance the construction of an airport on the condition that it is named after him. In 1925, 100 acres of farm land was leased from Michael Wilmann, located on the corner of present day Appleton Rd. and Airport Rd. The airport was officially named George A. Whiting Field but was also known as Wilmann Airport.

## LANDMARKS

***SOME ARE GONE, SOME HAVE CHANGED, AND SOME  
HAVE REMAINED, HOWEVER THEIR MEMORIES LIVE ON  
FOREVER.....***

Whiting Airport. Hangar built as an addition to the current K&N & Well Hardware Store. Manager's office is nearby.

The airport's runway is built on a sandy, sloping hillside and the land is not level. Originally the runways were left as grass, but they were later covered with gravel and asphalt. In winter, when the snow was too deep, pilots would have to take off and land on the gravel and

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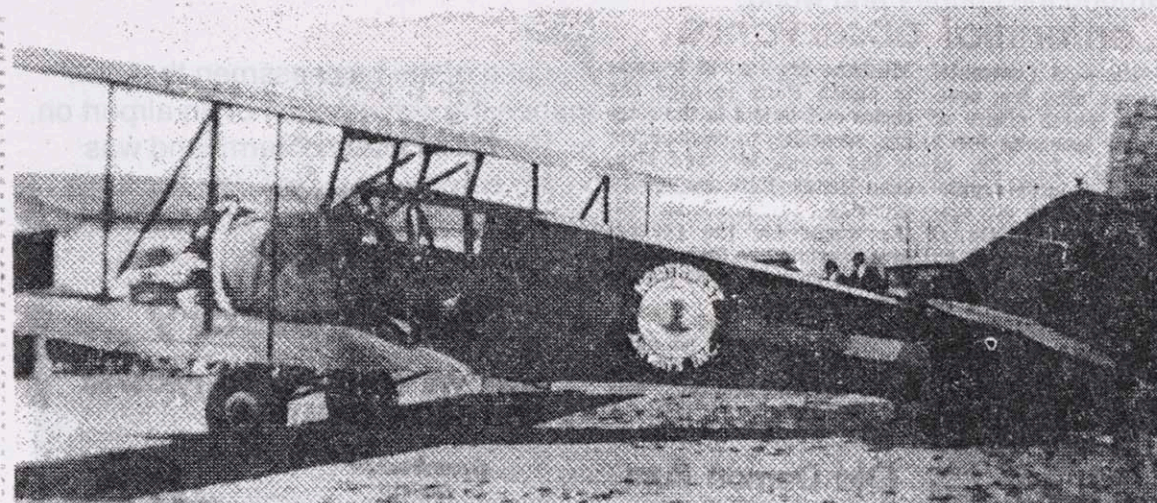


**Whiting Airport.** Hangar building on bottom right is part of the current Kitz & Pfeil Hardware Store. *Menasha Public Library.*

The airport's runways faced all four directions, allowing planes to take off and land regardless of wind direction. Originally the runways were left as grass, but they were later covered with gravel and cinder. In wintertime, when the snow was too deep, planes were directed to Lake Winnebago where they landed and took off on the lake's frozen surface.

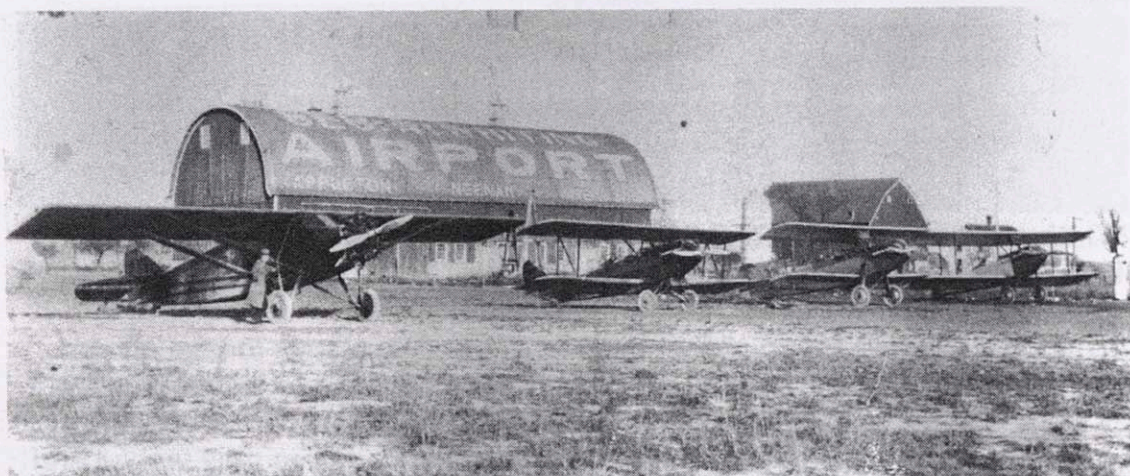


As it was built for airmail service, delivery started on December 15, 1928. The airport was located on U.S. Airmail Route 9, which ran between Chicago and Green Bay, with stops in Milwaukee and Oshkosh. Delivery service was provided by Northwest Airways Inc. and all mail was taken to the Appleton Post Office where it was sorted. Mail destined for Neenah and Menasha were then delivered by mail messenger.



**Northwest Airways Inc. airmail plane. *Menasha Public Library.***

The airport became busier, and at one time there were 15 airplanes based out of here. The first airplane delivered was the "Pride of Appleton." The wingspan was so large, it had to be anchored behind the Wittmann family barn. A flight school was based at the airport, and in June 1929, the first class graduated consisting of six pilots and four mechanics. Flights from Whiting Airport were increasing with regular flights bound for Milwaukee, Chicago and the Dakotas.

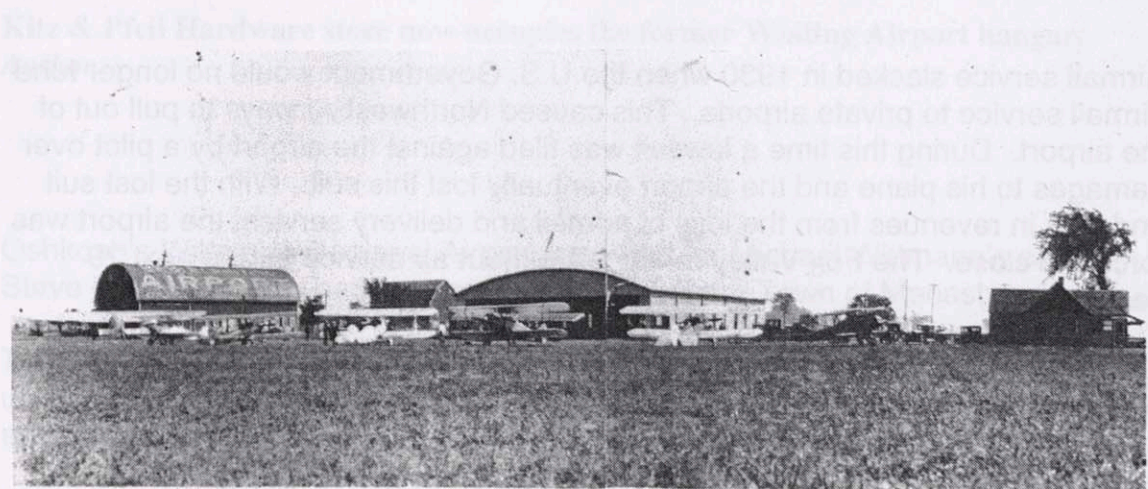


**Planes in front of Wittmann barn. *Menasha Public Library.***





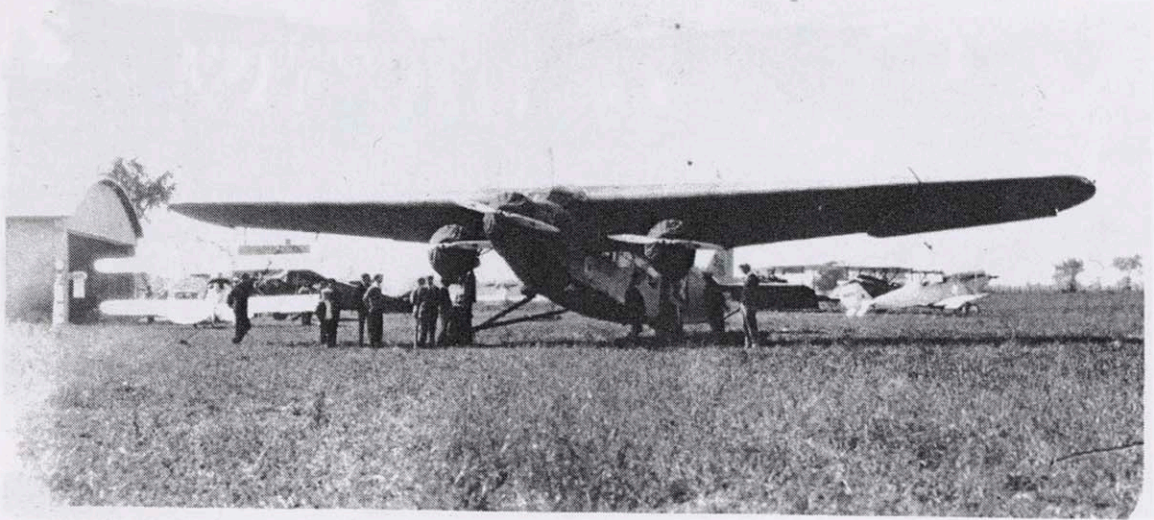
**"Pride of Appleton".** *Menasha Public Library.*



**Airplanes and hangar.** *Menasha Public Library.*



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**"Pride of Appleton." Menasha Public Library.**

This airport became busier, and at one time there were 15 airplanes based out of here. The first airplane delivered was the "Pride of Appleton." The wingspan was so large, it had to be anchored behind the Wittmann family barn. A flight

Airmail service slacked in 1930 when the U.S. Government would no longer fund airmail service to private airports. This caused Northwest Airways to pull out of the airport. During this time a lawsuit was filed against the airport by a pilot over damages to his plane and the airport eventually lost this suit. With the lost suit and loss in revenues from the loss of airmail and delivery service, the airport was forced to close. The Fox Valley remained without air service for the next 29 years.

Andy Wittmann, son of Michael Wittmann, recalls a story that Amelia Earhart, the famed female pilot, made a brief appearance at an air show held at the airport.

*Plane in front of Wittmann barn. Menasha Public Library.*



## BRIGHTON BEACH AND WAVERLY BEACH



**Kitz & Pfeil Hardware store now occupies the former Whiting Airport hangar.**

*Author.*

Oshkosh's Wittmann Regional Airport is named for Michael Wittmann's cousin Steve Wittmann, who had previously flown out of the Town of Menasha airport.

Today, Kitz & Pfeil Hardware Store stands on the site of the former airport utilizing the old hangar as part of the store. The old hangar is visible as you approach Kitz & Pfeil from the west on Airport Rd.

**SOURCES:** *Appleton Post-Crescent*  
*Menasha Record*  
Andrew Wittmann







## **BRIGHTON BEACH AND WAVERLY BEACH RESORTS AND CINDERELLA BALLROOM**

*Note: Although neither resort was actually located within the Town of Menasha, both resorts were very close by and served many town residents. These resorts have such a neat history and it was decided to include them in this book.*



BRIGHTON BEACH HOTEL, MENASHA, WIS.

The Waverly Beach resort was developed by Peter Massonnett in 1886. This was located along the north shore of Lake Winnebago just to the east of the Town of Menasha. A year later, in 1887, Curtis Reed built the Brighton Beach resort along the Lake Winnebago shore just to the west of the Town of Menasha.

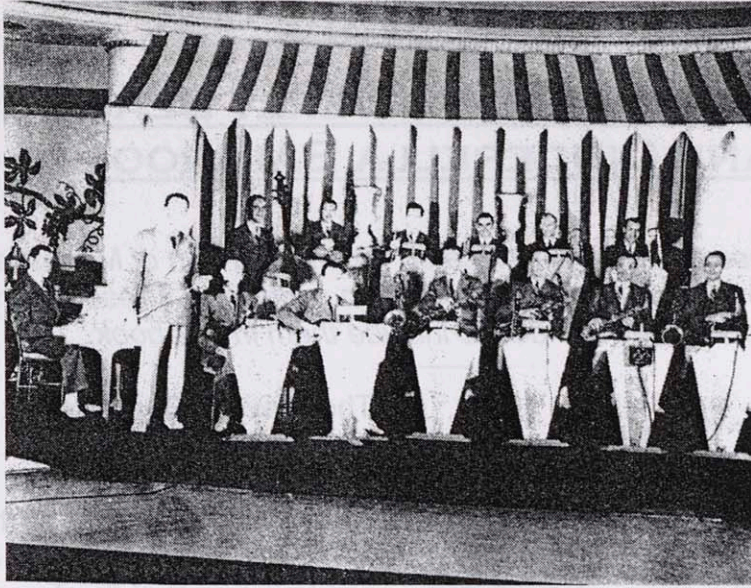
**Brighton Beach Hotel postcard. *Menasha Public Library.***

Both resorts proved very popular among local residents and out of state visitors. People were attracted by the good fishing and cool temperatures the lake had to offer, in addition to the swimming and diving platforms and slides into Lake Winnebago. Sandbars also stretched out for miles from the shore. Both resorts were on the route of the Fox Valley Electric Railway, allowing for locals to catch the streetcar out to the resorts. With fares of 10 cents each way and admission prices ranging from free to 50 cents, depending on the band, it was a relatively inexpensive form of entertainment.



**Brighton Beach, circa 1900. *Menasha Public Library.***



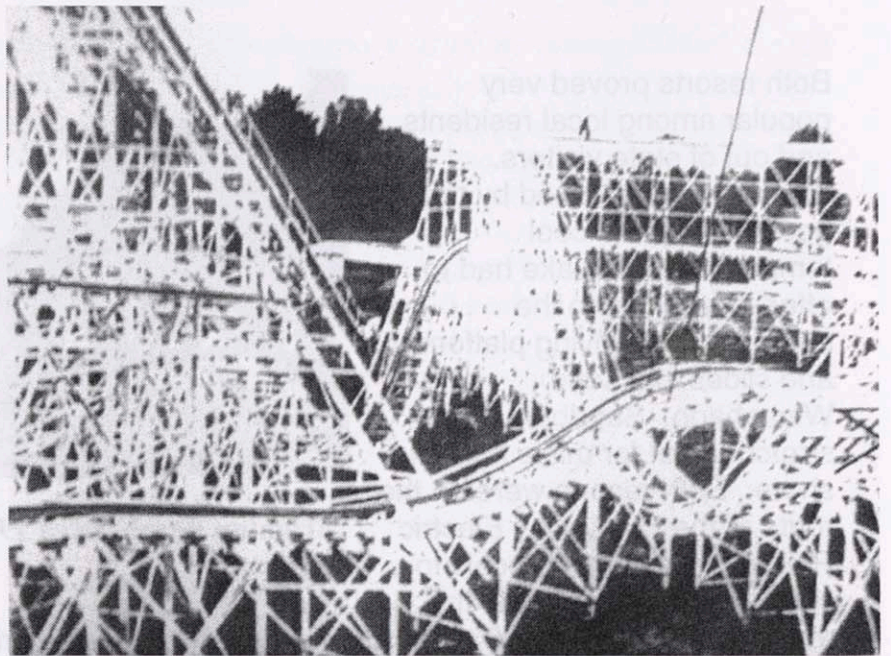


**Bob Crosby Dixieland Jazz Band playing at Waverly Beach. *Appleton Post-Crescent***

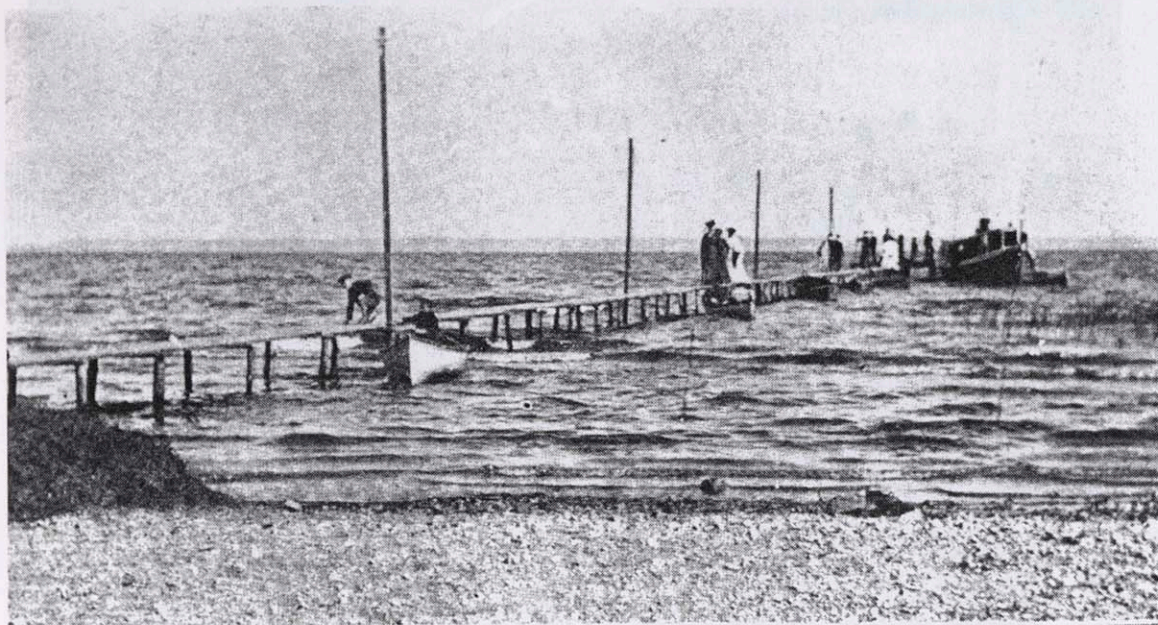
Both resorts featured top notch entertainment. Big bands from around the country stopped at Waverly and Brighton on their tours. Bands included the famous Guy Lombardo, Harry James, Benny Goodman and Tommy Dorsey. Waverly offered more amenities than its neighbor.

Waverly was home to the Jackrabbit, a wooden rollercoaster that stretched through the park. There was also a zoo featuring monkeys and a penny arcade and a shooting gallery.

**“Jack Rabbit” roller coaster at Waverly Beach. *Waverly Beach.***







**Brighton Beach landing, circa 1910. *Menasha Public Library.***



**Zoo at Waverly  
Beach. *Waverly  
Beach.***





**Milk dump” of 1934. Farmers protested over rising milk prices and brought their product to “dump” at Cinderella Ballroom. Photo is of children present to catch the milk with their containers. *Edie Hess.***

In 1925, Charles Maloney, who had worked at both Waverly Beach and Brighton Beach, built the Cinderella Ballroom on S. Oneida St. According to Ed Maloney, his father had a passion for big bands and dancing and wanted his own place to offer both. Ed believes the name Cinderella came from the movie by the same name, as a reference to the ball dance at the end of the movie. Charles ran the ballroom until 1981, when it was taken over by his son Ed Maloney. The original Cinderella Ballroom remained on S. Oneida St. until it was torn down in 1987. A newer, smaller building was constructed on the same location and operated as a tavern until the business was moved to the former McGlinn’s tavern on Valley Rd. where it remains today.



**Cinderella just before demolition, 1987. *Edie Hess.***

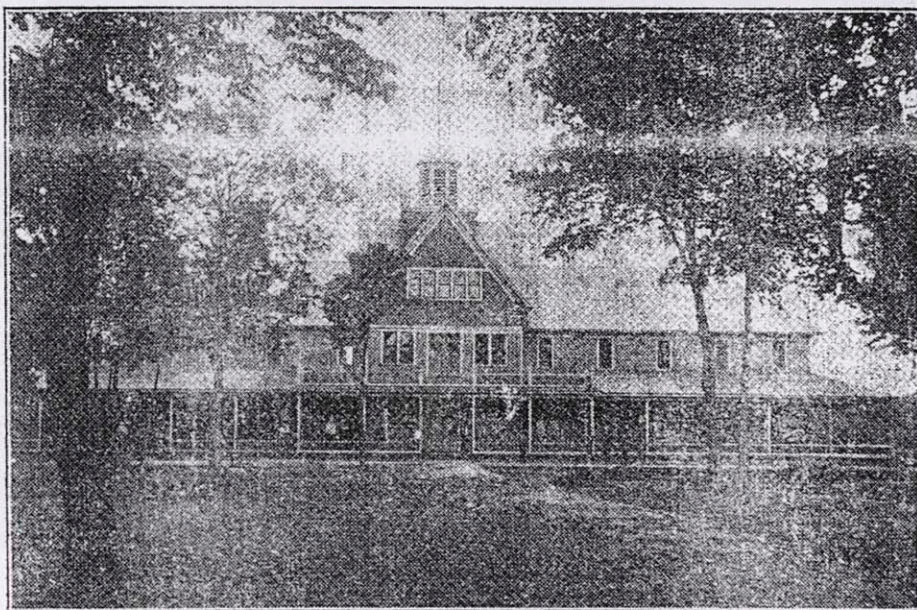


**"The Summer Resort De Luxe"**  
**BRIGHTON BEACH**

On Delightful Winnebago Lake

The Finest Beach----The Best Fishing----The Most Accessible Resort

IN THE STATE OF WISCONSIN  
FINE STEAMBOAT LANDING



**5c Fare to Menasha, Neenah and Appleton**

Half Hourly Electric Service in Each Direction, making  
Direct Connections with

C. & N. W., C., M. & St. P. and Soo Line R. R's

Furnished Cottages to Rent, with Electric Light, Water Works and Telephone.

CABARET, DANCING, MUSIC and a Score of Other ENTERTAINMENTS

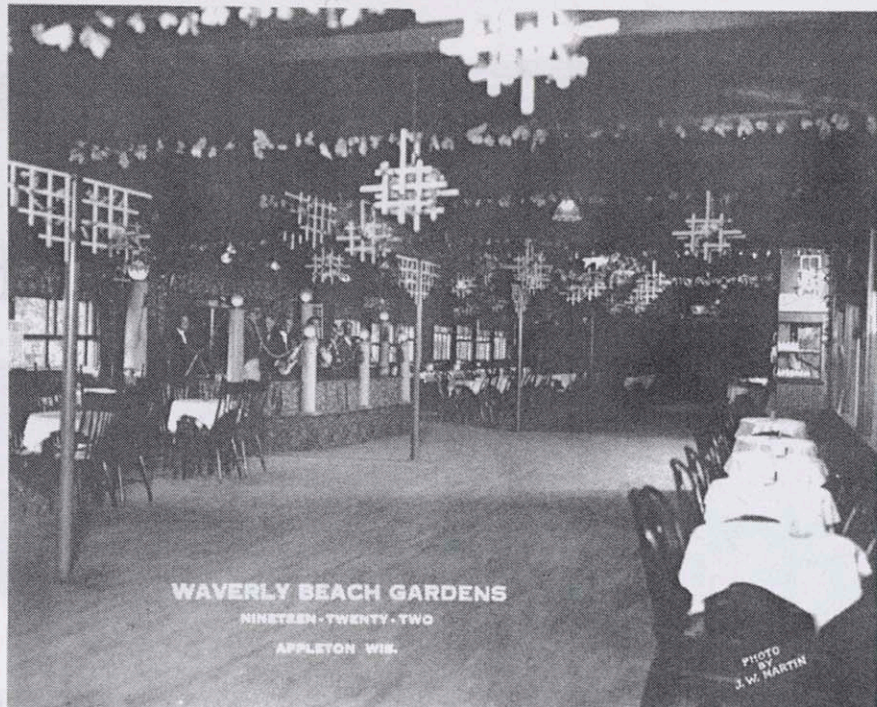
Write for Reservations, Etc.

P. O. Address, Menasha, Wis.

**STEIDL BROS., Props. and M-**

Brighton Beach advertisement. Note the streetcar fares. Menasha Public Library.



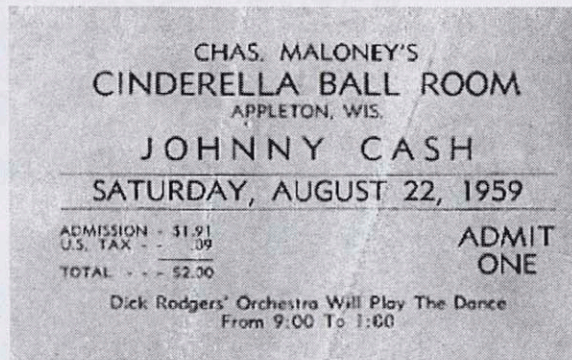
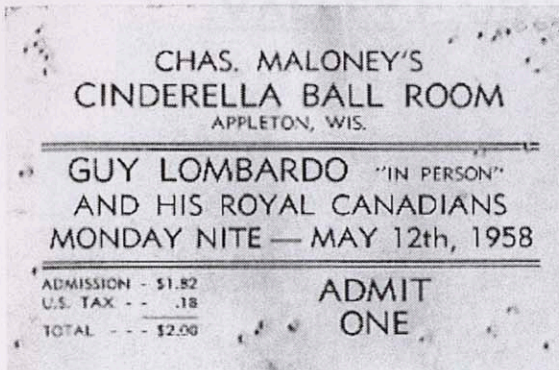


Waverly Beach ballroom, 1922. *Menasha Public Library.*



"New" Waverly Beach ballroom, circa 1960. *Appleton Post-Crescent.*





Tickets for performances at the Cinderella. Note prices, \$2! *Ed Maloney.*



Newspaper advertisement for Lawrence Welk and his Orchestra at the Cinderella, August 2, 1936. *Ed Maloney.*

Everly Brothers performed at the Cinderella on Wed. Feb. 12, 1958. *Appleton Post-Crescent.*







**Brighton Beach Hotel and Resort postcard. Neenah Public Library.**

Many people recall that there “was always something going on at one of the three”. “If Brighton and Waverly did not have a band, the Cinderella did,” recalls Alice Weber.

Brighton Beach closed in 1926, when John Sensenbrenner bought the land, demolishing the resort and building a home for his family. This home stood for many years and recently was demolished to make room for condominiums.



**Group in front of Brighton Beach, circa 1920. Neenah Public Library.**

The original Waverly Beach building was torn down in 1933 after the floor collapsed on the final night of a two week dance marathon. It was rebuilt the following year. Like the old building, it too continued to host bands such as the Bob Crosby (Bing’s brother) Dixieland and Jazz Band. The building also hosted dances, roller skating and wrestling matches. Lastly, it served as a marina until 1969 when a storm caused significant damage to the building resulting in its demolition.

The area still maintains its tradition as a Fox Valley gathering place and still holds a Waverly Beach Sports Bar and Banquet facility on the same land.

**SOURCES:** *Appleton Post-Crescent*  
*Twin City News-Record*  
 Ed Maloney



## VALLEY FAIR SHOPPING CENTER



Valley Fair sign, April 1963. *Hoffman LLC*

Valley Fair opened on August 11, 1954 with six stores: Krambo's, a grocery store billed as the largest north of Milwaukee; Badger Paint and Hardware; Donald's, a gift shop; Eddie's Self Service Liquor store; Mrs. Hamilton's Kitchen, a bakery; and the House of Cameras and Cards.

People flocked to Valley Fair. Shoppers liked the free, off-street parking. The parking lot allowed for 2,000 vehicles with the potential for 6,000. The mall's location and store hours also attracted the people. Store hours were 'till 9 pm, which was unheard of at the time.

Built in 1953 on 40 acres of land that originally was in the Town of Menasha, Valley Fair was the forefront of shopping malls today.

The mall was designed by Hoffman Construction Co. in Appleton as a way to protect shoppers from the weather. It was modeled after a shopping center in Chicago, but it enclosed and heated the mall area between the stores. This was to become the first enclosed shopping center in the United States. A contest held determined the name *Valley Fair*.



ON 50% OF THE FOX VALLEY  
BUSES. APRIL 1962 TO  
APRIL 1963

Advertisement on Valley Transit bus,  
April 1963. *Hoffman LLC*



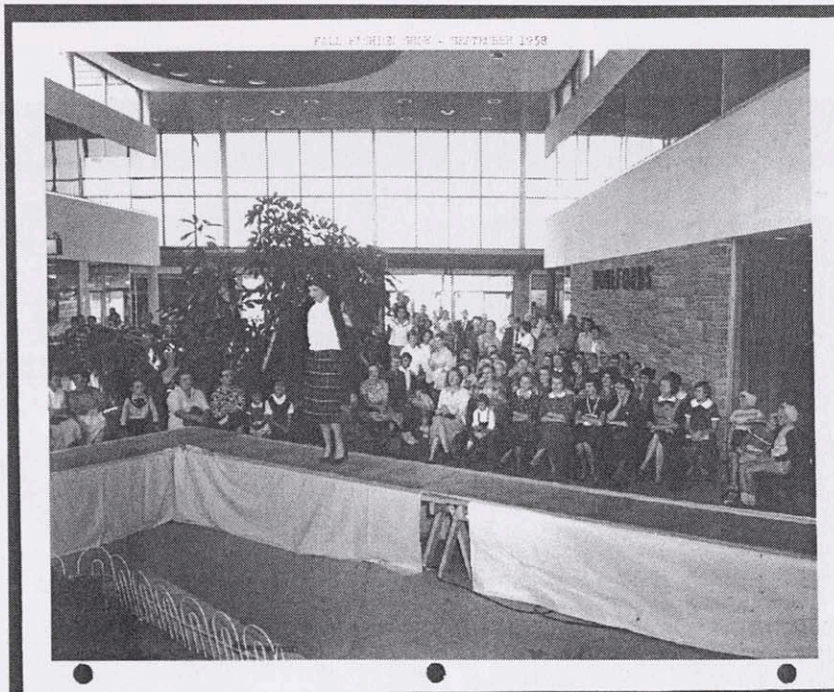


**Crowd on Valley Fair parking lot, circa 1960. Hoffman LLC.**

The mall continued to grow and expand, and it had about 20 stores for the grand opening in 1955. There were as many as 32 stores in the 1960s. Many national retailers joined the mall such as Walgreen's, Woolworth's, W.T. Grant, Three Sisters and Gambles. Valley Fair also was host to other events such as rummage sales, boat shows and also hosted a hula hoop contest that attracted so many people, it had to be moved outside to the parking lot.

Business at the mall started to decline in the 1970s. Several stores relocated to downtown Appleton, and several national retailers simply went out of business. Some of this was attributed to the introduction of the free standing "big box" retailers. A new owner emerged in the late 1970s. Money was invested in the mall to attract tenants and did work for awhile. Kohl's department store added a 100,000 square foot addition, and Marcus Theaters constructed a two screen theater, which was razed a year later and replaced with 30,000 square foot tri cinema.





Fall Fashion show, Sept. 1958. *Hoffman LLC.*



Santa Claus arrival via Town of Menasha fire truck. Nov. 1967. *Hoffman LLC*



JANUARY 1967



Mall foot traffic, Jan. 1967. Hoffman LLC

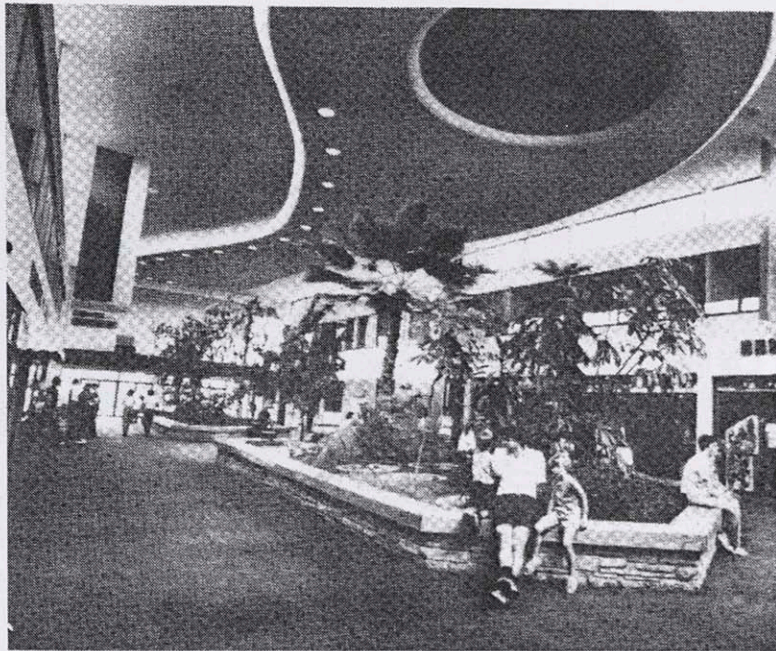


HOOPLA CONTEST - SEPTEMBER 1958



Hula Hoop contest in September 1958 was originally scheduled to take place inside of the mall. However too many people showed up, and it was moved outside to the parking lot. *Hoffman LLC*





**"Center Court", 1981. *Appleton Post-Crescent.***



**Gerald Hoffman. *Hoffman LLC***





movies. The drive-in, like others, featured a play

**Valley Fair as it looks in 2006, slated for demolition. The once busy parking lot and hallways are now desolate. *Author.***

Valley Fair changed ownership a few more times in the next two decades. The grocery store Mike's Town and Country moved to a larger and newer store in the 1980s. This was followed by a gradual decline in tenants and it lost Kohl's department store several years ago as they moved to the Darboy area.

Valley Fair again became on the forefront of the nation when a non-profit organization, Youth Futures, bought the mall with the intention of transforming it into a youth or teen mall in 2004. This venture lasted a little over a year and the mall again was sold to another group. This time, with the state of deterioration, the mall was scheduled for demolition in the summer of 2006. In an interview with the *Appleton Post-Crescent*, Paul Hoffman, son of builder Gerald Hoffman states, "The mall was probably the greatest distinguished accomplishment for my dad because of the innovation. Although it may have lost its function and vitality today, it will never lose its notoriety or the distinction of being the world's first enclosed shopping center."

**SOURCES:** *Appleton Post-Crescent*  
Hoffman LLC





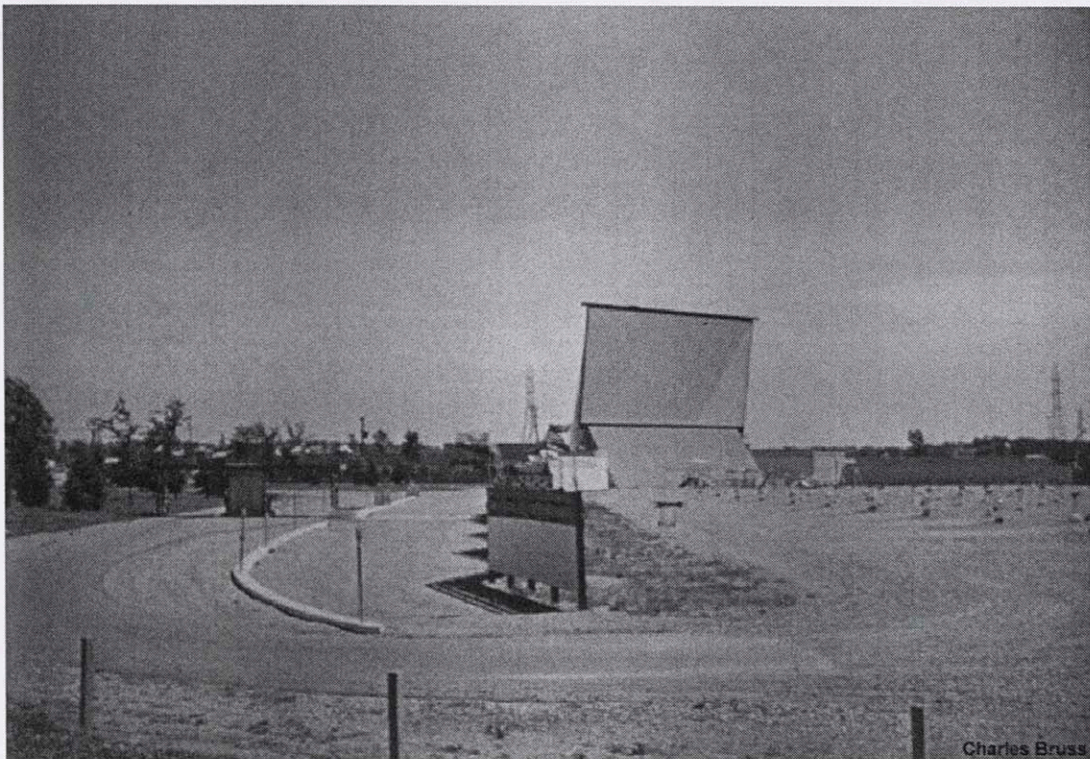


## 41 OUTDOOR THEATER

The 41 Outdoor drive-in theater was located on US Highway 41 just south of W. Prospect Ave, on the southern most edge of the current Pierce Manufacturing complex. Marcus Corporation built the theater and operated it for its entire span. The theater opened on April 30, 1949, showing the movie *Relentless*.

The original movie screen was constructed out of wood which caught fire in September 1959, prematurely ending the movie year. The screen was rebuilt out of steel and opened for business again the following year.

The 41 Outdoor was quite popular with families, often showing double and triple features of current hit movies, with cartoons for the kids before and in between movies. The drive-in, like others, featured a playground and concession stand.



41 Outdoor, circa 1965. *Charles Bruss*



# Grand Opening

★ TONIGHT 6:00 P.M. ★

3 COMPLETE SHOWS  
7:15 - 9:15 and  
MIDNITE SHOW  
AT 11:30

2 Miles So. of Appleton on Highway 41

## 41 OUTDOOR THEATRE

• OPENING PROGRAM •

TECHNICOLOR SMASH!

Color by TECHNICOLOR

ROBERT MONTGOMERY  
YOUNG · CHAPMAN  
**RELENTLESS**  
with WILLARD PARKER · ARLEN STARR

PLUS! SELECTED SHORT SUBJECTS

ADULTS 50c Plus Tax • Children Under 12 FREE

SAME PROGRAM SUNDAY  
SHOWS AT 7:15 - 9:15

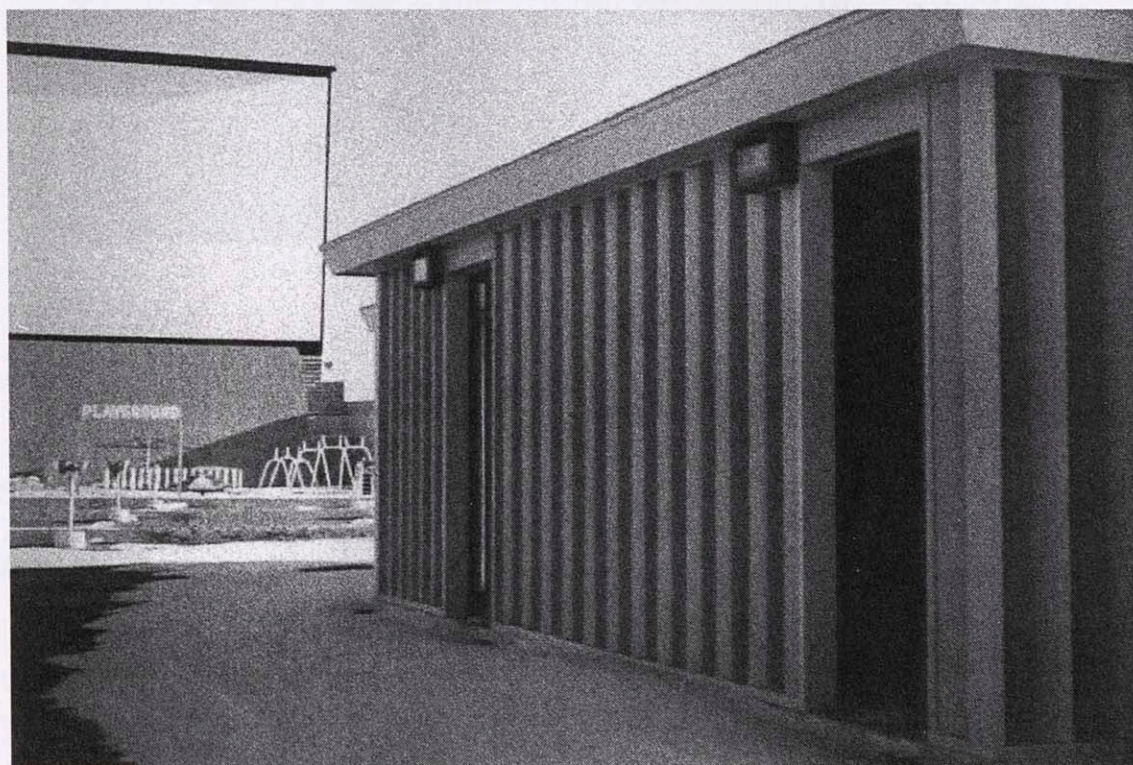


Grand opening advertisement, April 30, 1949. Charles Bruss.





Front gate, circa 1965. *Charles Bruss.*



Concession stand and playground, circa 1965. *Charles Bruss.*



**41 OUTDOOR THEATRE**  
ON U. S. HIGHWAY 41  
2 MILES S. OF APPLETON

**TONIGHT** AND FRI. • Open at 7 P. M.  
1st FEATURE 8 P. M.

**HIGHWAY 41 OPEN FOR THEATRE PATRONS**  
FOLLOW THESE ROUTES:  
• APPLETON AREA • Take 125 Out of Appleton  
• NEENAH & SOUTH • Take County Trunk PP Out of Neenah

Adults 50c Plus Tax  
• Kids Free!

BRING THE KIDS THEY'LL LOVE IT!

**DOUBLE TARZAN SHOW!**  
THE NEW ADVENTURES OF **TARZAN**  
FEATURING HERMAN BRIX

NOTE: Hwy. 41 Closed Until 6 P.M.

Not One, But **2** Thrill Hits!

**TARZAN and the GREEN GODDESS**

PLUS

Newspaper advertisement, July 1949. Charles Bruss.

**41 OUTDOOR**  
TONIGHT  
WYNE 2nd ANNUAL WORLD RECORD NITE  
GATES OPEN 6:00—SHOW AT DUSK

**"Smokey and the Bandit"**

"What we have here is a total lack of respect for the law!"

"'Smokey and the Bandit' is for everybody who is crazy about Burt Reynolds, crazy about cars, crazy about car chases, crazy about CB radios."  
— Gene Shalit, The Today Show

**Burt Reynolds**  
"Smokey and the Bandit"  
**Sally Field · Jerry Reed · Jackie Gleason**  
— SPECIAL BONUS —

Never Before So Much Entertainment at Regular Prices.  
Plus all the popcorn you can eat for \$2.00  
8,208 hotburgers & cheeseburgers!

Co-Feature  
"The Wild McCulloch's"

TONIGHT ONLY!  
SNEAK PREVIEW OF A NEW FEATURE

Newspaper advertisement, August 1977. Charles Bruss.

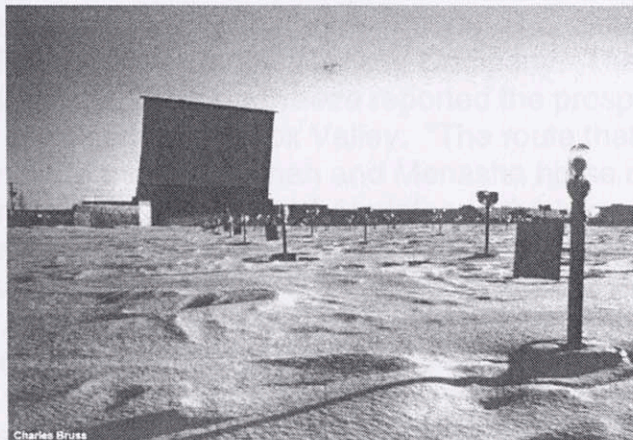


The drive-in was quite popular for many years; however, attendance and revenues started to decline in the late seventies and early eighties. Cars were being made much smaller than before, along with the introduction of the VCR and cable TV and it made it much more comfortable to watch television or movies in the home. Essentially, the novelty began to wear off.

Drive-in theaters also began showing adult oriented movies and horror movies, which began to attract a different type of clientele than before. This was evidenced by the last showing at the 41 Outdoor on Sunday September 25, 1983, showing a triple feature of: *Female Butcher*, *Body Snatchers from Hell* and *Bloody Pit of Horror*.

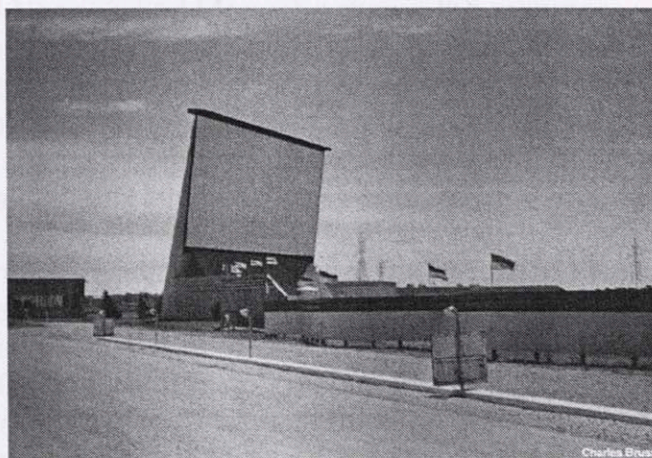
Shortly after its demise, Pierce Manufacturing purchased the property for future expansion.

**SOURCE:** Charles Bruss,



**Winter time at the drive-in, circa 1965. Charles Bruss.**

**Side view of the old 41 Outdoor Theater, circa 1965. Charles Bruss.**









## STREETCARS

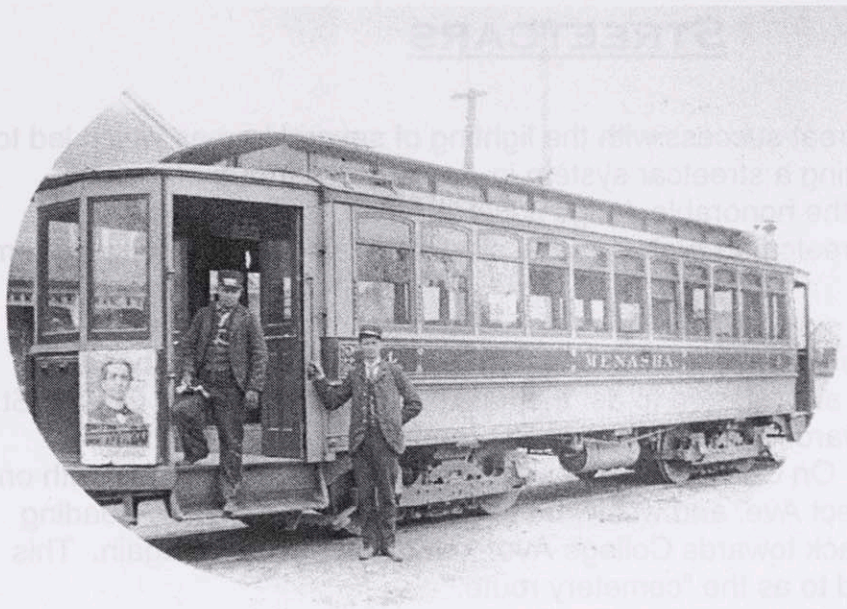
The Fox Valley had great success with the lighting of several homes which led to the idea of implementing a streetcar system in Appleton. A group of businessmen, led by the honorable Judge J.E. Harriman, had observed a demonstration of a streetcar in Alabama and started to raise funding for a system in Appleton in 1855.

The streetcar became operational in August 1886. The original route began on Oneida St. in an area still referred to as "the flats." The route went up Oneida St. to College Ave. eastward it went to Rankin St., turning north and ending at Riverside Cemetery. On College Ave., it went west to State St, turning south on State St. to W. Prospect Ave. and westward towards Mason St., finally heading north on Mason St. back towards College Ave. and downtown once again. This was generally referred to as the "cemetery route."

The streetcar system was expanded in 1896 to include the areas of Neenah, Menasha and Kaukauna on its routes. The system then became known as the Fox River Valley Electric Railway Company. The December 24, 1896 edition of the *Menasha Evening Breeze* reported the prospects of the proposed interurban railway system of the Fox Valley: "The route that will be covered by the new road will include the old Neenah and Menasha horse car line. The route will extend south from the city limits of Appleton to the lakeshore and pass through certain streets in the Fourth Ward. While it is intended to connect with Kaukauna ultimately, nothing will be attempted in this direction until possibly later in the year." The route to Menasha from Appleton went along Oneida St. through nothing but farmland in the Town of Menasha. This was a direct route out to the lake where the Waverly Beach and Brighton Beach resorts stood. The same issue of the *Menasha Evening Breeze* reported, "The advantage that will accrue to the residents of Appleton and Neenah and Menasha during the summer season in opening the lake resorts to them can hardly be estimated. Waverly Beach is the natural summer resort, play and picnic ground for the residents of the entire valley, and there is no doubt whatever, but what the road will be liberally patronized by pleasure seekers during the summer season in going to and from a resort that will unquestionably become very popular."

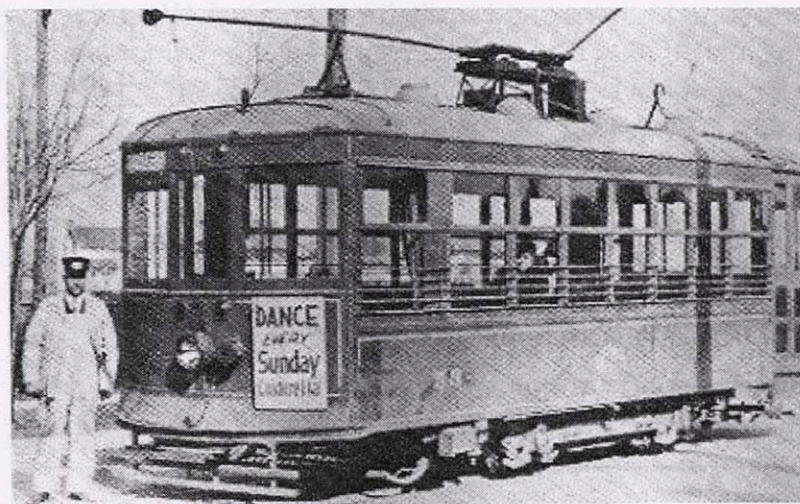
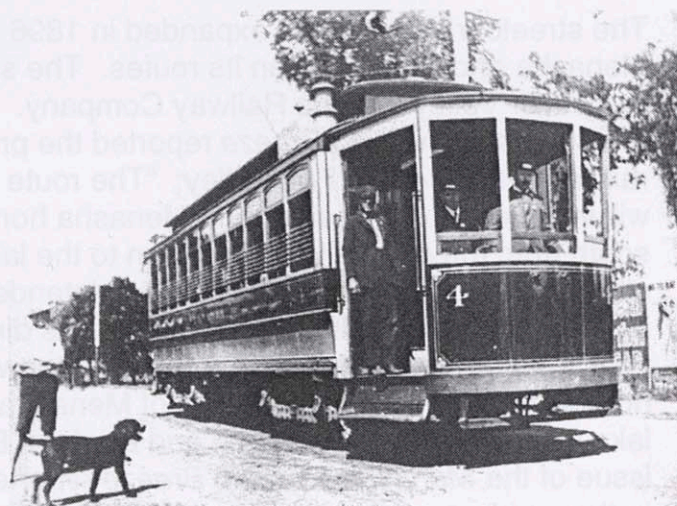
The streetcar was very important to local businesses who built along the line. Ed Maloney, whose father operated the Cinderella Ballroom for six decades, recalls that there was talk of moving the streetcar line from S. Oneida St. to the busier Memorial Dr. area. At the time Ed's father had contemplated moving his entire building through the field to Memorial Dr. to remain on the streetcar line. The line never changed routes, the automobile started to become more common, and the Cinderella Ballroom remained on S. Oneida St.





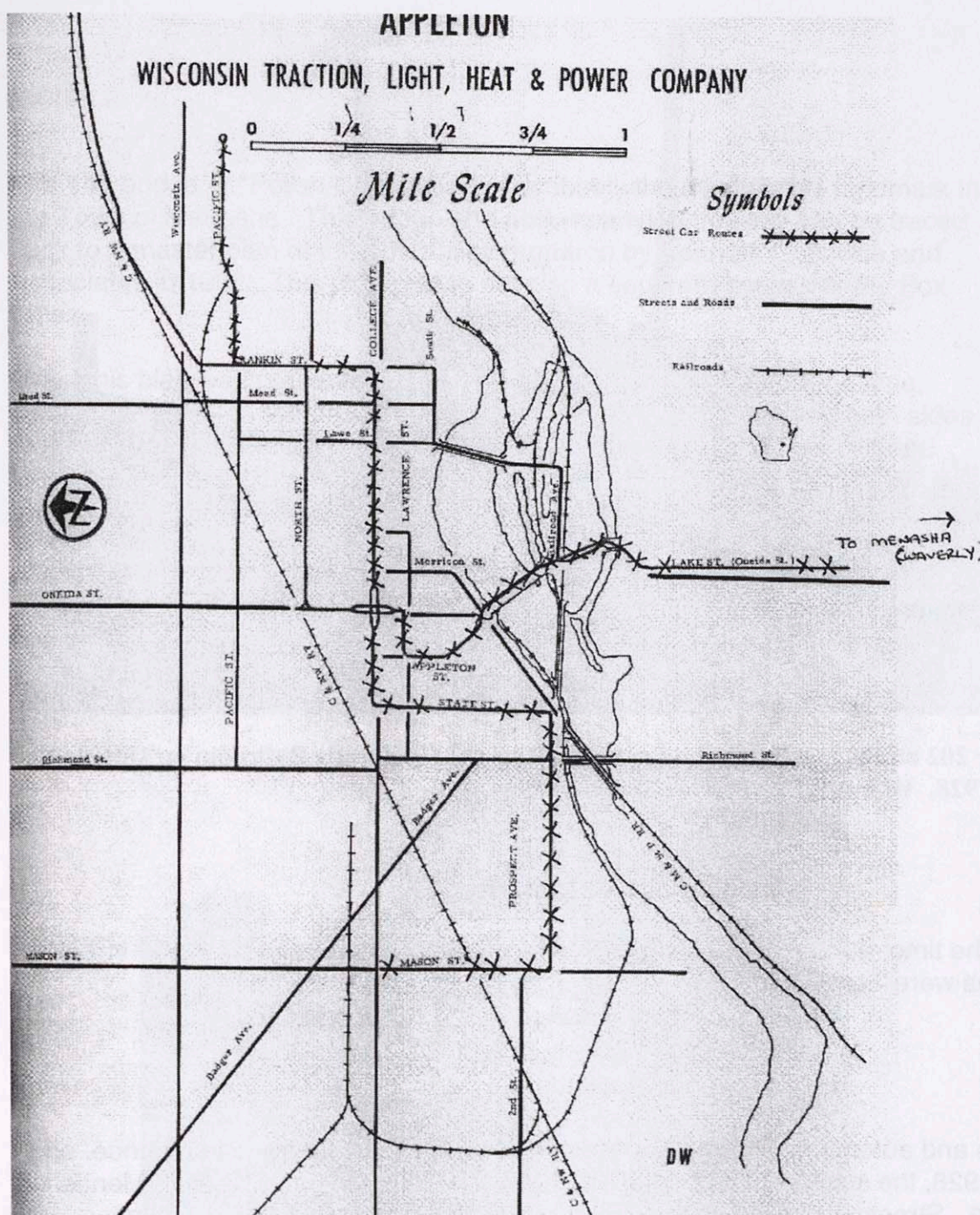
**Streetcar**  
**"Menasha", circa**  
**1915. Menasha**  
**Public Library.**

**Streetcar, circa 1920. Neenah Public**  
**Library.**



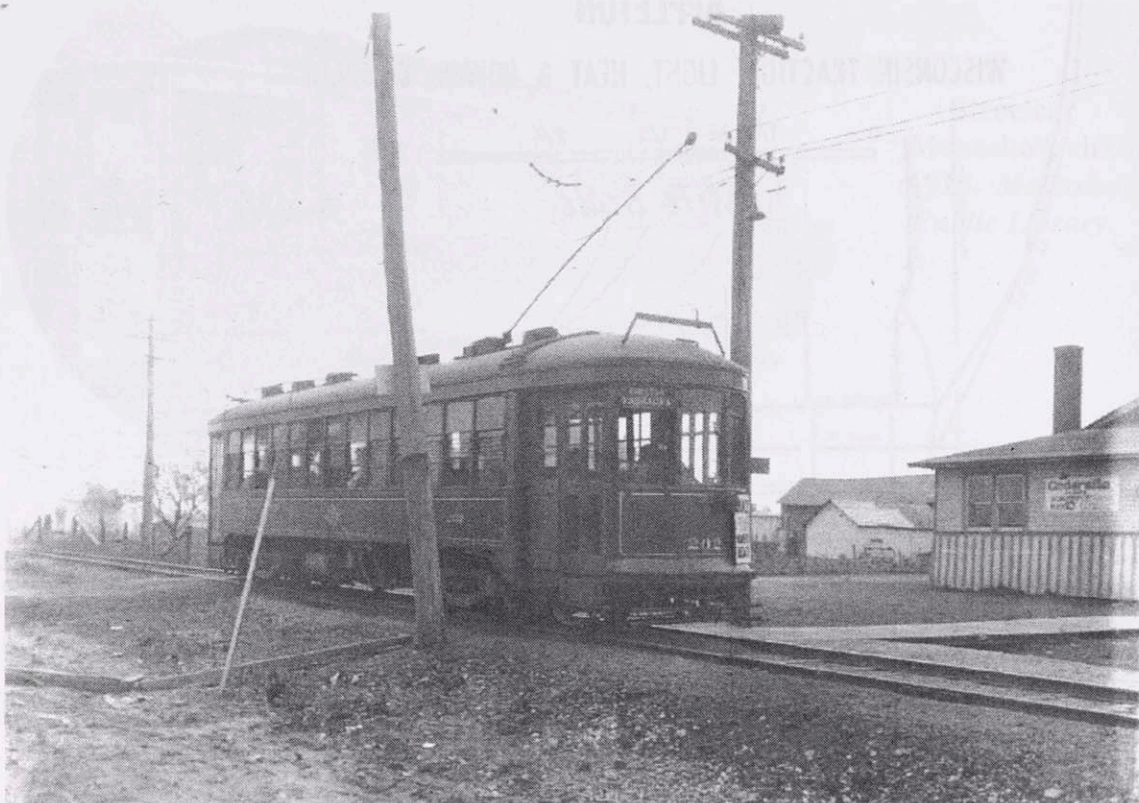
**Streetcar with**  
**advertisement for**  
**Cinderella ballroom.**  
**Ed Maloney.**





Route map of streetcar lines in Appleton. Circa 1915. George Dearborn.





**Car 202 on the last interurban run goes past the Cinderella Ballroom on Oneida St. in 1928. Wisconsin State Historical Society.**

At the time, a trip from Neenah to Appleton lasted 39 minutes. Fees for streetcar rides were

- Neenah to Menasha 5 cents
- Neenah to Waverly Beach 10 cents
- Neenah to Appleton 15 cents

Bus and automobile competition was causing a downward trend in revenue, and in 1928, the streetcar stopped operating to the Kaukauna and Neenah/Menasha area. Streetcar service ended with a last ride on Sunday May 6, 1930 in Appleton, ironically on the same original "cemetery route."

**SOURCES:** *Menasha Evening Breeze*  
Trolleycar '86 Incorporated



## TRI-COUNTY EXPRESSWAY

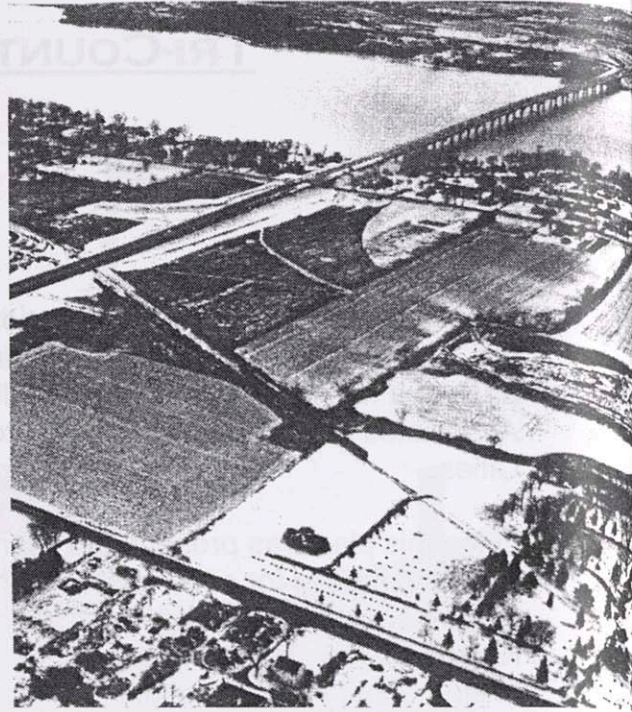
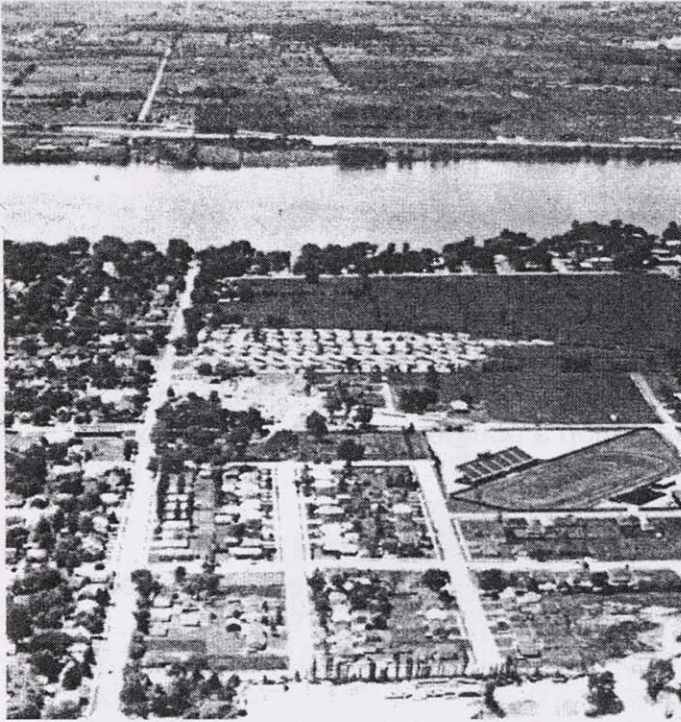
The 441 bridge or "Polish Connection" is probably the most visible landmark in the Town of Menasha. This bridge and accompanying freeway can be traced back to a master plan of the Fox Valley prepared by Kenneth L. Shellie and Associates in 1962. This plan was to develop a southern bypass of the Fox Cities.

Once this plan was presented, Roland Kampo, town chairman at the time, strongly pushed for construction of the bridge which would connect both sides of the growing town. According to a *Post-Crescent* article at the time, Roland Kampo states, "Either we are going to have a bridge or we are going to stop talking about it." During this time, the town chairman was an automatic member of the county board. Kampo politicked with the other county board members to persuade them to spend county money and use the county buying power to go with the idea of a bridge on the north end of the county. Despite objections from both Neenah and Menasha, Kampo was able to get the county to commit \$100,000 for the engineering.



Posted sign announcing bridge construction. *Appleton Post-Crescent*.



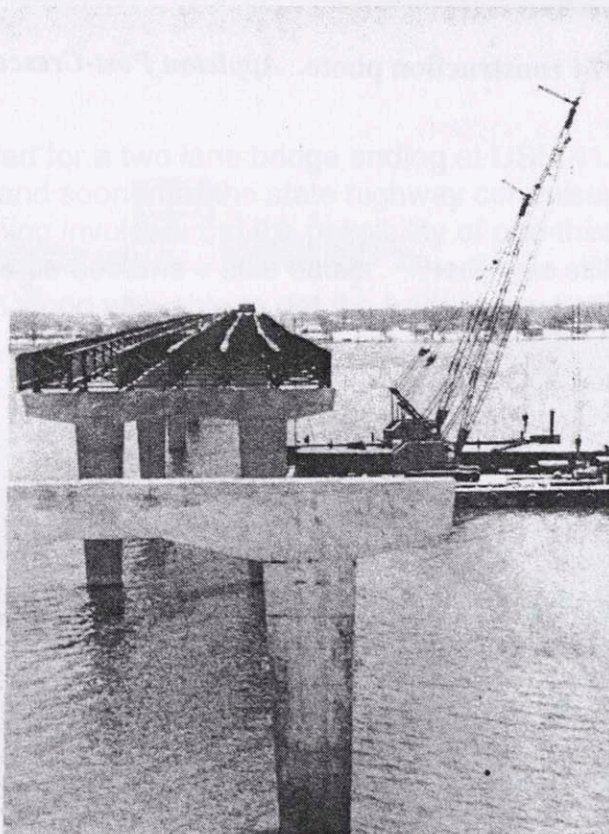
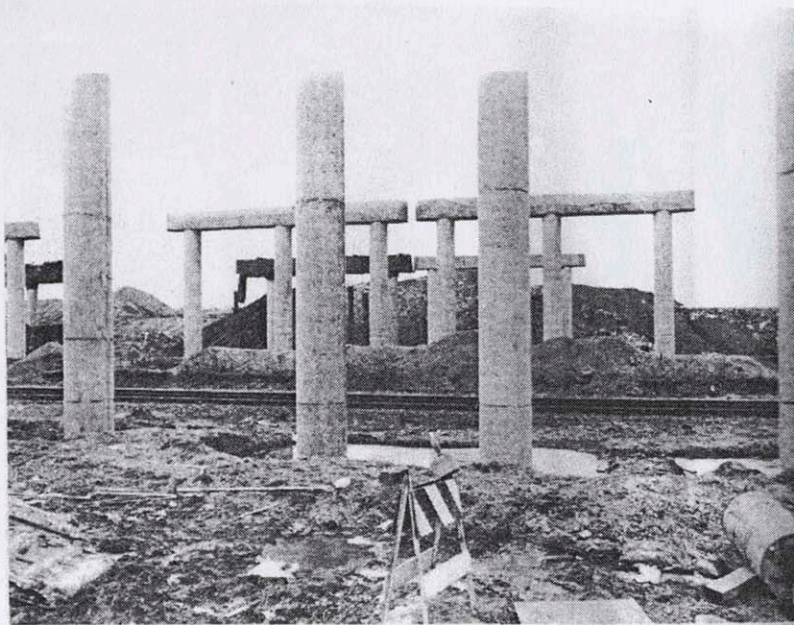


Before and after photos of Little Lake Butte des Morts. *Appleton Post-Crescent*.



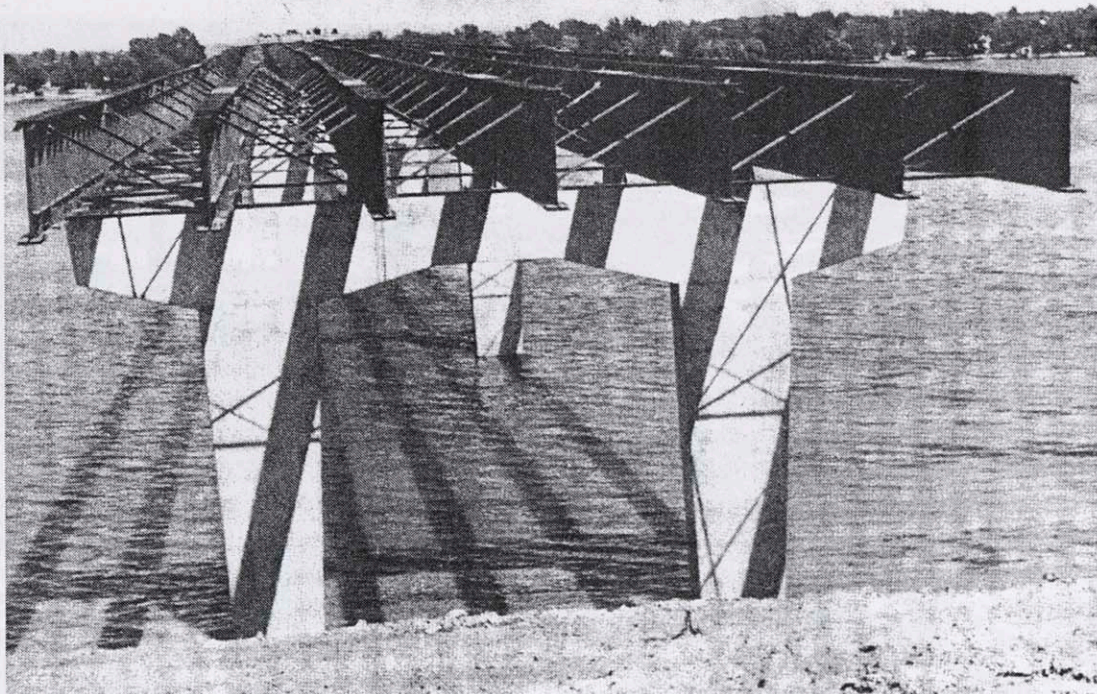
Town Chairman Roland Kampo. *Appleton Post-Crescent*.





**Construction photos of bridge. *Appleton Post-Crescent.***





1974 construction photo. *Appleton Post-Crescent*.



Workers expanding 441 bridge at the Tayco St. overpass, circa 1991. *Menasha Public Library*.





**Opening day traffic. *Menasha Public Library.***

The original plan called for a two lane bridge ending at USH 41. Kampo called the idea “ridiculous” and soon after the state highway commission got involved. With the state becoming involved and the possibility of one-third being paid for by the state, Kampo’s battle became a little easier. There was still resistance to be overcome, though. Kampo was able to get the bridge vote tied to several other projects vying for county funding, including a new airport terminal in Oshkosh, which was a favorite of the large Oshkosh delegation on the board. As a result, the bridge resolution passed with only a single dissenter.

With the county bonding approved, Kampo now needed the City and Town of Menasha to approve posting referendums for the citizens to vote on. Kampo was able to sell the idea of the bridge and the benefits thereof to both boards, and the referendums were held which were ultimately passed in both municipalities.

Work started on the bridge on July 2, 1973 and was completed almost 2 ½ years later. Although it was to be a crucial part in the future state highway system, the bridge was designated County Highway Q and affectionately known as the “Polish Connection”, making reference to the large Menasha Polish community.

The Tri-County Expressway was now under way. The original plan was to go from USH 41 at Little Lake Butte des Morts through Calumet County, turning north and connecting with USH 41 again near French Rd. in Outagamie County.

Fortunately, when this was being planned in the 1960s, each county had the forethought to purchase right-of-way along the planned route to preserve it for future use.



Development of the expressway took the next 15 years and was constructed in phases. Phase I, or that stretch from the bridge to S. Oneida St. opened in the fall of 1991. Phase II and III, opened in 1993, which completed the highway to USH 41 in Outagamie County.

The highway proved very successful and the usage exceeded preliminary figures. Development took place along the highway and soon there were plans to extend the highway westward through the Town of Menasha. The state planned to re-route USH 10 through the new westward extension. This was also completed in phases with the first phase, from the bridge to the former USH 45, completed in 1996. This was also tied to the completion of the new west side arterial (CTH CB), which crossed the town in a north-south direction.

Development has been progressing in the last 10 years along both the new USH 10 and CTH CB in the Town of Menasha. The town relocated its municipal offices along CTH CB shortly after the opening of the route. There have been several more large commercial and retail areas coming to life with more anticipated in the future.

**SOURCE:** *Appleton Post-Crescent*



**Workers putting final touches on the expanded STH 441, November 1991. *Appleton Post-Crescent*.**



## TRESTLE BRIDGE

*As submitted by Larry Easton.*

On Saturday, August 27, 2005, the new Fox Cities Trestle-Friendship Trail across Little Lake Butte des Morts was dedicated and opened for public use. After almost ten years of planning and work, the former C & NW bridge was added to the trail system, completing the vital link between the Menasha lock on the east side and Fritse Park on the west side of the lake. The \$1.6 million project was the result of the Town of Menasha, City of Menasha, Department of Natural Resources, Department of Transportation and private supporters working together.

The bridge, which is about 1600 feet in length, is the longest pedestrian bridge in the state. Improvements include four fishing pier/observation decks, a large central pavilion, a long board walk on the east end and a lift bridge across the channel at the Menasha lock. The bridge was acquired from Canadian National Railroad after train traffic was discontinued and the rails removed. The Friendship trail will eventually connect Manitowoc to Stevens Point. Walking or biking across the former railroad trestle is an exciting experience that outdoor adventurers of all ages will enjoy.

### **Early Wagon Bridges**

Little Lake Butte des Morts and the Fox River divided the Town of Menasha into two distinctly different areas. East of the river was the City of Menasha with its mainly industrial and residential base, while on the west side of the waterway, farming and rural surroundings dominated. In the early 1850s, this span of water made it difficult to transport materials and goods between the two ends of the town. What was needed was a bridge. In the summer of 1853, a float bridge was authorized to be built across the lake by the town fathers. The *Appleton Crescent* commented, "It will draw considerable country trade away from Oshkosh and Neenah."

Of primitive design and more than a half mile in length, it consisted mostly of a series of pontoons connected with timbers and planks, yet it was strong enough to easily support a wagon and a team of horses. The bridge was built from the west end of River St. in Menasha to the foot of Winchester Rd. on the west shore. By the spring of 1856, the bridge needed major repairs. In July, Samuel Robinson was awarded a contract for \$2,500 to repair the bridge and add a new draw to allow boats to more easily access the Neenah lock and canal leading to Lake Winnebago. By March 1860, the bridge was again in need of repairs and a group of Menasha citizens petitioned the board to replace the float bridge with a "permanent bridge across Lake Butte des Morts ... to be put on piers and above the water." The board, after serious deliberation, passed a resolution asking the



Town of Menasha to assume ownership of the bridge and "make such repairs as the township officers hereafter determine to be necessary and proper." The Town of Menasha accepted ownership and decided to replace it with a more "permanent bridge built above the water" on white oak pilings with a sturdy plank roadway. It was not until the fall of 1860 that the Town took action to replace the old bridge. Construction of the new wagon bridge began in July 1861 with contracts awarded to Otis Cross for driving pilings, C.W. Watke for finishing the superstructure and E.L. Ward to superintend the work. The finished bridge which opened in November 1861 was 2733 feet in length and cost \$6365.92. The second bridge was built in the same location as the first bridge. The Chicago & North Western Railroad added a spur track near the west end of the bridge to accommodate the millers and manufacturers of Menasha. The *Menasha Manufacturer* prophesied, "When summer comes round, it will be one of the most pleasant and beautiful walks to be found in these parts." By 1873, the wagon bridge was in need of repair, but had outlived its usefulness. Improved roads and the railroad had made the bridge obsolete. In August the *Neenah Gazette* reported, "The effort made to rebuild the Menasha bridge across Lake Butte des Morts has come to naught. At the election called last Monday to vote the necessary funds, the farmers gathered in strong enough to adjourn *sine die*, and so the enterprise was killed. An effort will now be made to vacate the present bridge." In the 1880s the superstructure was removed and the lumber sold, leaving only rows of pilings stretching across the lake as a reminder of a different era.



**Wood pilings stretching across Little Lake Butte des Morts, 1955.**  
*Richard Mason.*



## The Railroad Bridge

# NOTICE to CONTRACTORS !!

**P**ROPOSALS will be received by the undersigned until Saturday, the 26th inst, at 7 o'clock, P.M., for doing the necessary **PILING** for the **RAILROAD BRIDGE** across Fox River, West from Menasha, on the line of the Chicago and Northwestern Railroad,

### For the Completion of said Bridge.

For the construction of the **BRIDGE** across the North Branch of said river.

Also, for doing the Earth Work on the line of said road, from the Depot Grounds on the Island, to the point of intersection with the present line of said road, west of Fox River.

Bids will be received on any portion of said work separately, and for one half or the whole of the Piling job.

All Material to be furnished by the undersigned.

Plans, Specifications, Terms of Payment, and time for completion of the Work, can be ascertained on application to either of the undersigned.

E. D. SMITH, }  
C. REED, } Committee  
CHAS. DOTY, }

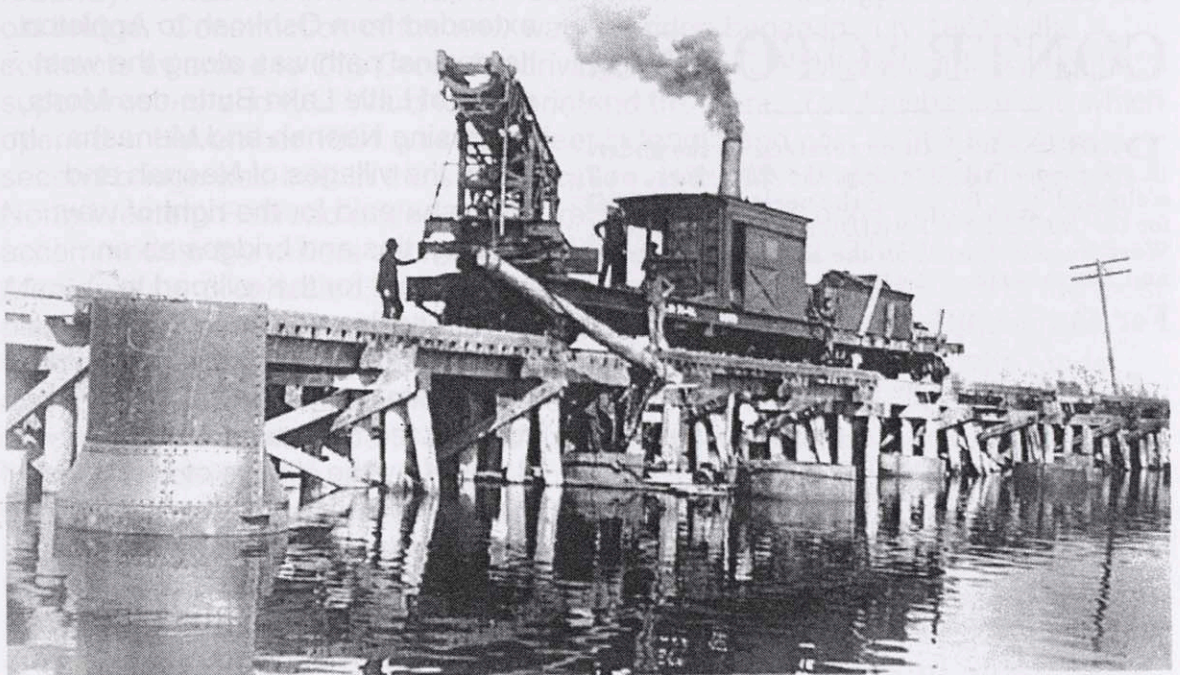
MENASHA, October 19th, 1861

Advertisement for construction of  
the first C & NW bridge from the  
*Menasha Weekly Manufacturer*,  
Oct. 19, 1861. Larry Easton.

In February 1861, the Chicago & North Western Railroad was extended from Oshkosh to Appleton. Its original path was along the west shore of Little Lake Butte des Morts, bypassing Neenah and Menasha. In 1862, the villages of Neenah and Menasha paid for the right of way, grading, ties and bridges as an inducement for the railroad to reroute its line across Doty Island. The first railroad bridge across Little Lake Butte des Morts was constructed that summer for the C & NW by the Village of Menasha. Built in the same manner as the second wagon bridge, the railroad bridge had 115 supports or bents spaced about 10 feet apart. Menasha provided \$12,000 in municipal bonds for the project. The wooden railroad bridge served until 1909 when the railroad announced it was going to double track the main line from Fond du Lac to Green Bay and that the bridges in Neenah and Menasha would have to be rebuilt using steel and concrete.

"The new bridging will not follow any new route, but will replace the old pile bridges which are falling into decay." Work on the bridge started in July 1909 and was completed early in 1910. The bridge has 33 steel spans, each 46' 4 1/2" long for a total length of 1530 feet. The *Menasha Record* commented upon its completion, "the new bridge is expected to last a lifetime."





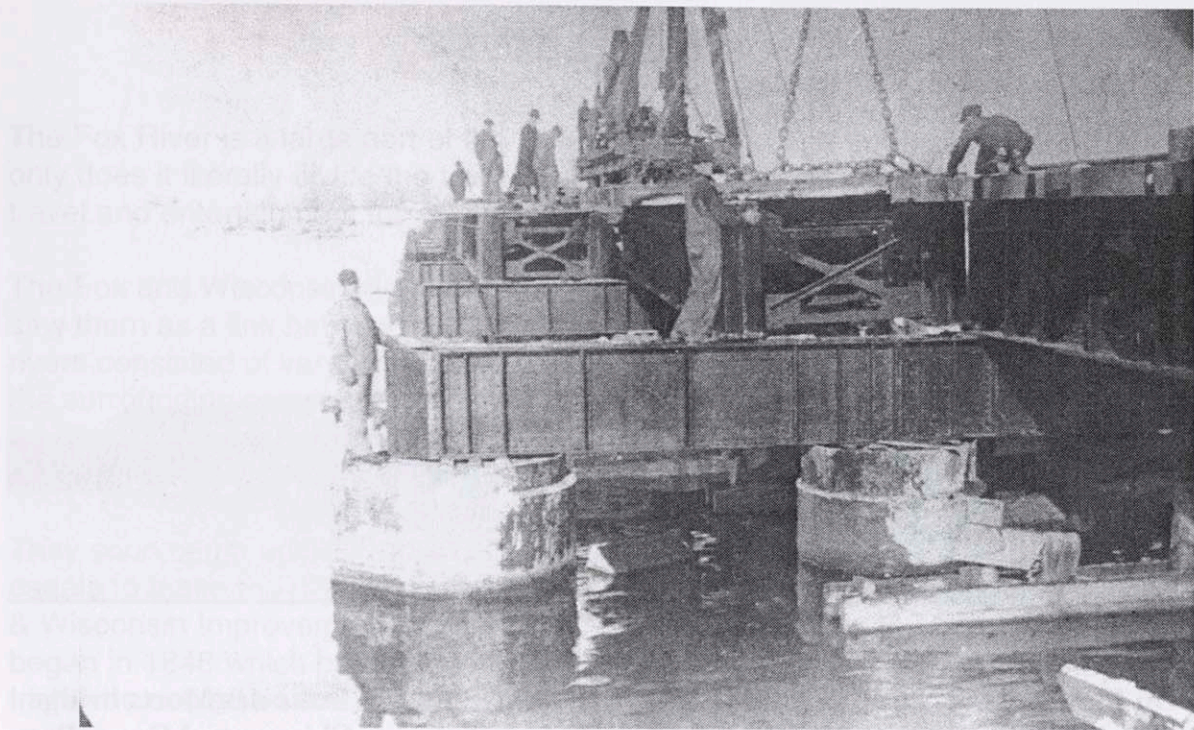
**In July 1909 work is well underway on the new steel bridge across Little Lake Butte des Morts. Caissons were being set up when this photo was taken. *Neenah Public Library.***

In August 1909, the railroad confessed that the plan to double track the bridge was being postponed, but the *Appleton Crescent* quoted a prominent railroad official, "The double track bridge ... was a sure indication that the long talked of and much desired double track would be a reality in the near future." But, it never happened ... Over the years, streamlined passenger trains with names like the "Valley 400," "Peninsula 400" and the "North Woods Fisherman" crossed the Lake Butte des Morts bridge and stopped at the Neenah – Menasha depot on Doty Island.

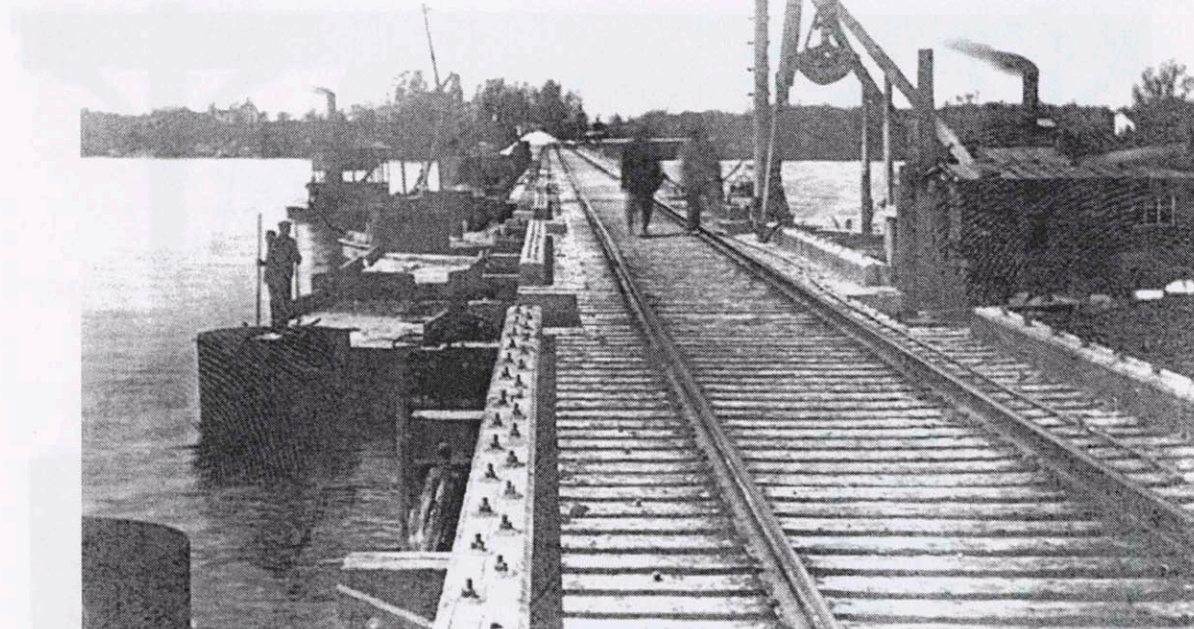
While those exciting railroad days are gone forever, the bridge will continue to serve the public as the prominent feature of the Trestle Trail.

**SOURCE:** Larry Easton, Neenah Historical Society



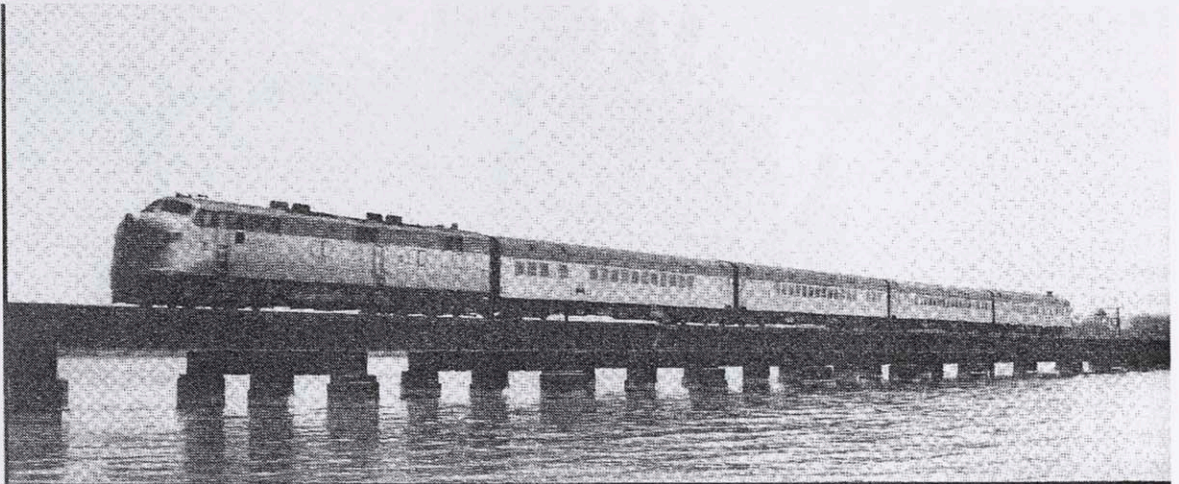


The decision of where to construct these locks was a controversial one for Neenah and Menasha. Both communities saw the benefits of having this constructed in their community and actively lobbied for the construction. The cost was set to be \$24,000 at all. The State Board of Public Works inspected both areas by boat. It is the best of both worlds and bottom in the Menasha channel, yet failed among the Neenah channel.



1910 photos showing the work progressing on the crossing. *Neenah Public Library.*





On May 1, 1966, No. 5019 A is heading over the Little Lake Butte des Morts bridge with the Valley 400. C & NW's Sunday only train between Chicago and Green Bay via the Fox Valley. *Larry Easton.*



View from the Town of Menasha looking eastward towards the City of Menasha on the new Trestle Trail walking bridge. *Larry Easton.*



## **FOX RIVER**

The Fox River is a large part of the Town of Menasha and surrounding area. Not only does it literally divide the town in half, it has provided a source of revenue, travel and entertainment for several centuries.

The Fox and Wisconsin rivers are two major rivers in the state. Early settlers saw them as a link between the Mississippi River and the Great Lakes. The rivers consisted of varying heights which created falls and rapids, particularly in the surrounding area of the lower Fox. This created a major obstacle in the fact that they were impassable by boat traffic. These settlers thought that if they could "tame" the river, it could be another Erie Canal.

They soon came up with a plan of constructing a series of locks, dams, and canals to make the river acceptable to boat traffic. This work, known as the Fox & Wisconsin Improvement Project, was funded by Congress in 1846. Work began in 1848 which brought many immigrants to the area. There were many Irish who settled on the west side of the Town of Menasha.

The decision of where to construct these locks and canals proved a major and controversial one for Neenah and Menasha. Both communities saw the benefits of having this constructed in their community and actively lobbied for the construction. The cost was set to be \$24,000 at either location. The State Board of Public Works inspected both areas by boat. It is said that the boat hit rocks and bottom in the Neenah channel, yet sailed smoothly in the Menasha channel. It was determined that Menasha would be the location of this development.



**Workers on locks, circa 1880. Alice Weber.**

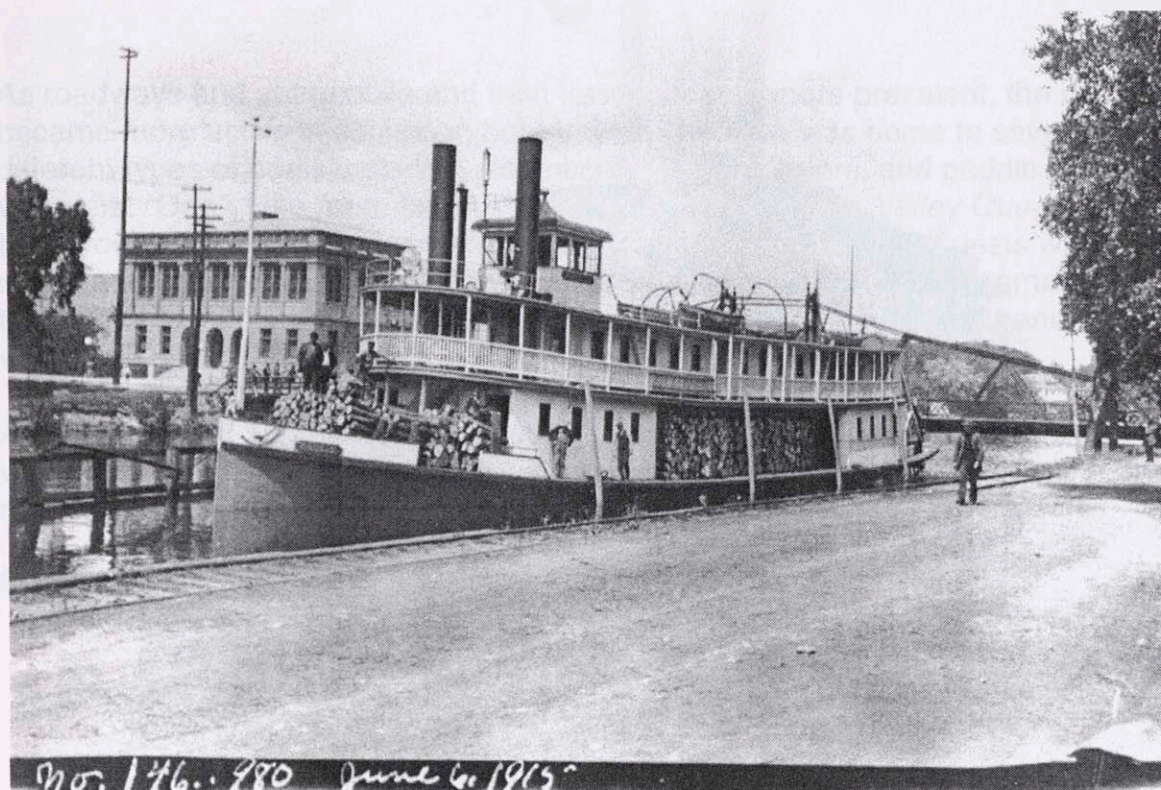




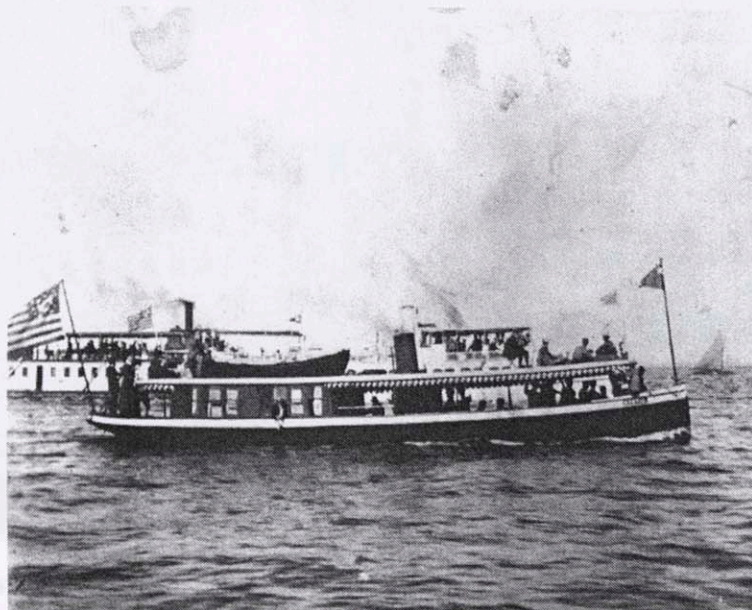
**Menasha Locks, circa 1910. *Menasha Public Library.***

The work was completed in 1856, and the first boat, a steamer named *Aquila*, passed the entire distance from the Mississippi River, up the Wisconsin River, through the upper and lower Fox River to Green Bay. This was a celebrated event, with people getting on board at each stop until it reached a large ceremony in Green Bay. The Fox River, along with Lake Winnebago, became an important and vital transportation route for goods and services. Steamboat business was very popular and several boats were constructed in the 1800s. Curtis Reed and Charles Doty built the *Menasha*, reputed to be the largest vessel that ever floated on Lake Winnebago. Initially, these boats were to be used almost exclusively for the transportation of goods which included coal and lumber along with various products.





*Paul L* steamer docked in Menasha. Original Menasha Public Library in background, behind *Paul L*, circa 1915. *Menasha Public Library*.

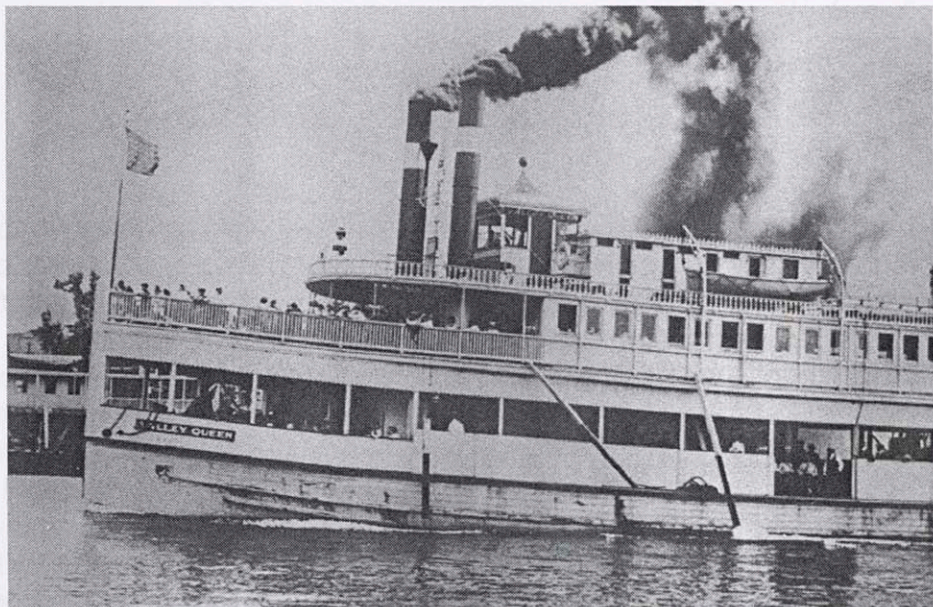


*Mystic* excursion boat on Lake Winnebago. *Menasha Public Library*.





***BF Carter excursion boat going through the locks. Menasha Public Library.***



***Valley Queen excursion steamboat. The Valley Queen would travel through Little Lake Butte des Morts as it traveled between the Appleton area and Lake Winnebago. Neenah Public Library.***



As roadways and automobile and train travel became more prevalent, the river became more active in excursion boat travel. The area was home to several different types of boats including steamboats, sternwheelers, and paddle wheelers. One of the more famous excursion boats was the *Valley Queen*. This boat would make its trip up and down the Fox River, entertaining guests with music and dancing. Many older residents recall this boat and fondly remember taking these boat trips. Some of these trips were to the Oshkosh area and others would include stops in the Town of Menasha at Stroebe's Island.

A revival of the excursion boats was attempted in the 1980s in the Fox Valley with the launch of the *Valley Queen II* and the *Spirit of the Fox*; however, that did not catch on quite as well as it did years ago.

**SOURCE:** *Menasha Register*



As ferries and automobiles and even travel became more prevalent, the river became more active in excursion boat travel. The area was home to several different types of boats including steamboats, tugboats, and paddle wheelers. One of the more famous was the Valley Queen. This boat would travel up and down the river, carrying passengers with music and dancing. Many older residents remember taking the Valley Queen and others would not.

A revival of the Valley Queen was attempted with the help of the local community. However, it did not catch on and the source of the river remains the same.

*At Carter excursion boat going through the lake. Menasha Public Library.*



The Valley Queen would travel through Little Apple Lake. The boat was built by the Appleton area and Lake Winnebago. Menasha Public Library.