CHAPTER XV

WISCONSIN RAPIDS

Wisconsin Rapids, the county seat of Wood County, is situated in Town 22 N, Ranges 5 and 6 E. The city is a consolidation of the two early towns of Grand Rapids and Centralia, the former lying on the east side of the river and the latter on the west. The consolidation was effected in the spring of 1900 and the city subsequently bore the name of Grand Rapids until 1920, when its name was changed on account of freight and mail intended for it being frequently sent by mistake to Grand Rapids, Mich. The river is here interspersed with a number of small islands, and in passing the city has a descent of about 45 feet over an irregular and rocky bed. It furnishes a splendid waterpower which is utilized to good advantage by the large paper mills located here. Both above and below the city it presents many picturesque scenes. The Indians gave to this place the name of Ah-dah-wah-gam, meaning the "Two-sided Rapids," as the rapids here were divided into two by a great boulder. In its more condensed spelling of "Ahdawagam" the name has been given several other local applications, as,—the (former) Ahdawagam Furniture Co., and "The Ahdawagam," an annual review of high school work and activities, prepared and published by the senior high school class.

Wisconsin Rapids is situated on four railways: the Chicago, Milwaukee & St. Paul, the Chicago & Northwestern, the Green Bay & Western, and the Minneapolis, St. Paul & Sault Ste. Marie, commonly called the "Soo." It is also on State Trunk Highways Nos. 13, 66 and 73, which connect with other highways to practically every part of the state. The city had a total population in 1920 of 7,243, or, according to wards, as follows: Ward 1—660; Ward 2—1,099; Ward 3—762; Ward 4—1,035; Ward 5—1,126; Ward 6—991; Ward 7—862; Ward 8—708. It lies in the heart of the paper manufacturing industry, having several large paper mills within the city and the surrounding territory, besides which, a number of other factories of various kinds give evidence of a strong industrial life. Situated, moreover, in a dairy, livestock raising and diversified farming community, and also near to extensive cranberry raising tracts, its commercial trade is drawn from a wide and rich area.

The first settler to make improvements of a permanent and progressive character was Nelson Strong, in 1838. As elsewhere stated (Chapter VII), Daniel Whitney of Green Bay, about 1831 established the first saw mill in the county under a permit from the United States War Department. In 1838 Strong obtained a similar permit and secured in connection with A. B. Sampson, (who with David R. Whitney, nephew of Daniel Whitney, was at this time running Whitney's Mills at Whitney's Rapids) the mill site at Grand Rapids. Sampson disposed of the claim to Strong, who associated himself with R. Bloomer, who arrived about that time on a prospecting trip. During that year these two men built the mill and manufactured the first lumber turned out in Grand Rapids. George Kline, Jr.,
another prospector, arrived late in the same year and went to work for Strong & Bloomer. The latter had at first some little trouble in finding workmen, but a treaty having recently been made with the Indians, new settlers began to arrive, some of whom Strong & Bloomer succeeded in securing, and the mill was in successful operation for some time. The first lumber turned out by it was used by Mr. Strong to build a house for his family. This was in 1838 and it was the first frame house in the county, and the second of any description in Grand Rapids. The first house in Grand Rapids was erected by H. McCutcheon, cook for the men at Strong & Bloomer's mill, and was a small log structure. From that time on there were quite a number of frame and log houses erected and Grand Rapids began to assume the appearance of a busy, thriving village. David R. Whitney died in 1838 and Sampson had sole charge of the mills at Whitney's Rapids until 1840. George Kline, Sr., had arrived in 1836-7, and in 1837 Moses Ver Bunker located in Port Edwards. A number of French settlers came down from Canada from about 1840 to 1843.

The first marriage of Grand Rapids folks occurred in 1839 at A. B. Sampson's house at Whitney's Rapids, the contracting parties being George Kline, Jr., of Grand Rapids, and Mrs. Maria Whitney, widow of David R., of Whitney's Rapids. The knot was tied by S. R. Merrill, J. P. In the following year, 1840, Mr. Sampson gave up his position of superintendent of the mills at Whitney's Rapids and moved with his family to the village of Grand Rapids, of which he was a resident for many years thereafter.

Catholic services were held here by visiting priests as early as 1837, and 1842 the Rev. J. S. Hurlbut began his labors here as a Methodist missionary in the county and labored earnestly to turn the settler's thoughts toward religion. In the following year a hotel was erected by Nelson Strong, who in a short time sold it to A. B. Sampson and by the latter it was conducted for many years, being the only public house in the county. Mrs. Sampson was one of the energetic and fearless women of the early settlement, and was not at all afraid of the Indians. On one occasion, after having served three of Oshkosh's hand with food, one of them acted in so insolent a manner that she reproved him, whereupon he threatened her with his gun. She ran into another room where she secured a stick of wood, in the meanwhile having closed the door behind her. On the Indian pursuing her, she suddenly opened the door, rushed upon him and belabored him so vigorously that he lost his courage and fled, leaving his gun behind.

In 1844 J. B. Hasbrouck set up the first blacksmith's shop, which he continued to operate for many years subsequently. In the same year came John Tabor Kingston, who was born in St. Clair County, Ill., Jan. 31, 1819. He subsequently spent two years at Plover, Wis., then the county seat of Portage County, in which county Grand Rapids was then situated. While living in Plover he was clerk of the board of supervisors, register of deeds and county surveyor, also clerk of the court and postmaster. In 1848 he settled at Necedah, Wis.

Another notable settler was E. S. Miner, who arrived in 1845 and opened a general store. In the same year the Grand Rapids post office was established, with Mr. Miner as postmaster, he appointing as deputy his partner, John Warner. There was at this time only one mail each week, and that did not amount to more than a dozen or thirteen letters and two or three papers. Ira Purdy came April 1,
1846, and in 1845 arrived L. Kromer, one of the first merchants, and for many years one of the most prominent, but who later gave up mercantile business to accept a position as agent for the Adams Express Company. A few other settlers came in the same year, and in 1851 William J. Balderston established the first shoe store here.

Dr. G. W. Whitney, who came in 1855, and who was the first resident physician in Wood County, found practice at an early day extremely laborious, as he often had to be not only physician, but nurse and watchman as well.

A detailed description of Grand Rapids and vicinity as it looked in 1846 was written about 1912 by Capt. J. L. Coty, now deceased, but in his day a well known pioneer, related to some of the prominent families of the county. With some slight editorial changes, made chiefly for the purpose of condensation, it is here given, for the most part in Capt. Coty's own words:

"Starting at the lower end of the village at the slough which runs, passes and divides Mr. J. D. LaBreche's and Mr. G. W. Baker's places of business at the present time, there was then a temporary slab bridge over the slough, and on the right after having passed the bridge, going up the river, stood a frame barn; following in the same direction stood three frame buildings, one and a half stories high, the gable end to the river. The first two were connected and were occupied as a boarding-house by a Mr. Strong, those buildings having been erected by Messrs. Strong and A. B. Sampson in 1845. The third department of the triple structure was occupied by E. S. Miner and John Warner, who kept a general merchandise store, handling some drugs, with Dr. D. Jaynes's patent medicines. In front of the building above described, near the edge of the river, stood a fine row of pine trees, extending up to the point above the present Witter House. These trees were most beautiful and picturesque and added to the charm of our new village.

Next came two small frame houses of the same size and style, one occupied by A. B. Sampson and family, and the other by Tim Hurley and family; when Mr. Hurley left, the house was re-occupied by Mr. Joseph Gill, who had married a full-blooded Indian woman of the Chippewa tribe. These buildings were located on the east side of a small creek, where, or near where the First National Bank now stands, (the bank has since moved to a larger building on the west side.—Ed.) and were owned and built by Mr. A. B. Sampson. Opposite these houses across the road or street now known as Water Street, stood Mr. Sampson's barn. Next came another frame house one and one half stories high and built lengthwise of the street, it being Mr. E. S. Minor's family residence, and located on the vacant lots at present owned by the John Arpin Estate, on the east side of the Arpin building, lately occupied by Mr. Norton as a second-hand store.

"After came a two-story frame building with the gable end to the street, and next to the river, and attached to this structure on the east side was a ball alley also built by Messrs. Sampson & Strong during the summer of 1846. This property was rented to Messrs. Jerome Breisclair and F. Biron for two years. The identical location of this ball alley is where Mr. De Veters' store now stands (where Amusement Hall is now located.—Ed.). Next came a one-story building built and occupied by Mr. F. Biron as a supply store. This was built crosswise between or at the fork of the present Water Street and the Court House Street, about 100 feet west from the present City Hall."
"Now we come to the slough, which headed about 100 feet above or towards the river from Mr. Biron's store, the same slough I have started on, which separates the territory I have just described from the main land which forms an island of the principal business part of the city. The above described is all that was in existence on the island at that period—eight houses and three barns.

"Now, you have to come up the hill as it was then called. By the way, on a little plateau about five rods west of the present location of the Congregational Church, could be seen the remains of an old log shanty which had been built in 1835 by a fur trader named Louis LesLond, who died two years later. Having ascended the hill, about 50 feet west of the Arpin residence, stood another two-story building, built and occupied by Messrs. Maxime LaBreche and Homer Drake as a grocery and boarding house. There was also a ball alley attached to the main building.

"Now, as I have mentioned the name "grocery," many may not perhaps comprehend its real meaning. A "grocery" at that time, was a place of liquor traffic; the name "saloon" for such places was not then in vogue. It was either tavern, grocery, or blue refreshment. It was a place where "Goodhue's Best" was sold. This Goodhue's was rotgut whiskey obtained from Mr. Goodhue's distillery on Rock River, with which he supplied the pinery men; at that time there were very few men that did not carry a 'little brown jug,' so Mr. Goodhue had a very profitable business.

"Next, going up from the last place described, on the corner of the now Drake Street and Water Street where Mr. Dennis McCarthy's residence now stands, was another frame house occupied by two families, those of Frank Degarette and E. Anthony. Further came two large log houses located where Mr. Jake Lutz's residence now stands—one of those houses was for the families that boarded the mill men and lodgers, and the other for the working men in general. Those log buildings stood right opposite the Clinton Saw Mill, which operated a double or two up-and-down saws; there were no gauge, rotary, or band saws in those days, this mill having been built in 1838 by J. J. and George Cruikshank and Robert Bloomer, of Galena, Illinois, and in 1840 sold to H. Clinton and Ben Single. Shortly after, Mr. Single sold his share to Mr. Clinton, who was running it in 1846. This mill stood about five rods above the present Pioneer Pulp Mill (where the swimming pool is now located.—Ed.)

"Next came Mr. Martin Herrin's shingle shanty, which stood on the identical spot where Mr. M. J. McRaith's residence now stands (in front of the Catholic Church.—Ed.). After that we came to a long log house, built and occupied by Messrs. George Neeves and William Roe, who were logging for the Clinton Mill. This building stood on an elevation next to the bank of the Mill Pond right opposite the present Pariseau residence. This was the last of the upper end of the village.

"Now, returning south and to the east of the present Arpin homestead (Mrs. Clarissa Arpin), there was a road running east to a ravine in the hill by which we ascended the hill, and the only way. Going up the hill on the right ascending were two graves; one was Mr. LesLond's, and the other that of a man employed as canoeist by the Rev. Bishop Lavenchey, who was ascending the Wisconsin River from Prairie du Chien on his way to Apostle Island in Lake Superior. The
Bishop also consecrated that piece or point of land where those graves stood, for a future burying ground, and it was used for that purpose for many years; in fact until 1849, when J. J. Cruikshank donated to the town one acre of land for the purpose of a burial ground, which is situated north and joining F. J. Wood’s residence. The first person buried in this cemetery was a Mr. Johnson, who fell by the hand of an enemy on February 6, 1850.

“Now, returning to the ravine from which I have wandered, having ascended the hill, about five or six rods east stood a large log house built and occupied by Francis Lemire as a stopping place for the traveling community on their way up the river to Stevens Point, Little and Big Bull. This last described station was the only one that existed on the hill at that time, and stood where Editor Fontaine’s residence now stands.

“Now I have described all that then constituted the village of Grand Rapids. In regard to the population, there were 130 males and 17 females. Our communication with the outside world was by receiving mail once a month. Alexander McDonald from Portage had the contract and E. S. Miner was postmaster. All supplies were hauled by wagon from Galena, Ill., a distance of 235 miles. It took an ox team three weeks on an average to make the trip, and a horse team from ten to twelve days; the heaviest load was twenty-five to thirty hundred. The road traveled from Galena was mostly the military road from Galena to Fort Winnebago. Starting from Galena, the places to stop were Hazel Green; next Benton; next Mineral Point; next Blue Mount; Clark’s Corner; next Widow Handspringer; next Decora and Portage, 170 miles. Now from Portage, we go north. The next station was Jerry Walworth, 16 miles. Jerry would never forget to say before going to supper, ‘Come, boys, take an appetizer, I have some of Goodhue’s damnedest,’ and on retiring, ‘Come, boys, take a night-cap and bid Goodhue goodnight;’ and in the morning, would say, ‘Come, boys, take an eye opener. I have some of the Devil’s eye water mixed with Goodhue’s damnedest.’

Next was Rocky Erie Station, 30 miles, kept by A. Grignon, a Frenchman and an affable and good man; but he did not keep Goodhue’s medicine. If a man told Mr. Grignon he had no money he would treat him as well as if he had a million; but for fun Mr. Grignon would say, ‘No money, you cauche in the bush’ (sleep in the brush).

“The next station was Robert Weakley’s place at Pointe Basse, 30 miles. He also kept the ‘Devil’s Eye Water,’ and a general good time was had. At last came Grand Rapids—10 miles. There was also a new road cut in 1846, east from the old road, which started from Jerry Walworth’s. On this road, there was only one station, 30 miles, kept by William Sylvester. The next was Grand Rapids, 40 miles. If you could not get to Grand Rapids in one day, you would have to ‘cauche in the bush.’ This new road was traveled entirely after the old road was abandoned.

“A new way of getting supplies from Galena was tried when, on the 27th day of August, 1846, Francis Biron went from Grand Rapids to Dubuque, Iowa, and there chartered a wood barge owned and commanded by Capt. F. Sanville, and Mr. Biron engaged ten men to manage the craft, and floated down the Mississippi to the mouth of the Fever River, and ascended this river to Galena, eight miles, and at this place Mr. Biron loaded the barge with groceries and provisions and lumbermen’s supplies, and started down Fever River to the Mississippi River, and
up this river by means of poles, oars, and cardells. A cardell is a half-inch line, from 100 to 200 feet long, of which one end is made fast to the barge and the other held by men on shore hauling up the craft. This was done when and wherever the banks of the stream would permit it; and by so doing, on the eighth day after leaving Galena, they arrived at Prairie du Chien, and at the mouth of the Wisconsin, a distance of 75 miles from Galena; and now they proceeded up the Wisconsin in the same manner as above described, passing Sauk Prairie, Portage, and through the Dells, and finally landed at Pointe Basse September 27, it being the twenty-second day of that eventful enterprise. The cargo was equal to 30 wagon loads. From Pointe Basse, Mr. Biron hauled his merchandise to this place in wagons. Thus ended the venture and enterprise of one of Grand Rapids' early pioneers.

"Now, in regard to the vicinity of Grand Rapids. We ascend the river four miles without any improvement, until reaching Widow Fay's saw mill, of one up-and-down saw, which was erected in 1839 by a Mr. Fay, who died in 1840; in 1841 Mrs. Fay sold the mill to Thos. Weston, Jess Helden, and John T. Kingston, and in 1846 Francis Biron bought the mill, which was located on the identical spot where the pulp grinders of the paper mill plant now stand at Biron. There was no road along the river as at present—only an Indian trail. The way to Biron corresponded closely with the line of the present railroad. I am sorry to say that I can recall but few names of the residents of Grand Rapids at that time. These are: Mrs. A. B. Sampson and her son Henry, the latter five years old at the time; Mrs. R. C. Lyons, Mrs. Werden, Mrs. C. Warren, Mrs. A. Eaton, Lemuel Kromer, Joseph Hasbrouck, Orlando and G. W. Baker, four and five years old respectively; Ira Purdy, Moses Verboncoeur, Frank Contara, Joseph L. Cotey, Eusebe LaVigne, Mrs. Thorne, Mrs. Mary Laramie, Miss Esther Baker and Charles Kline of Daly, this county.

"Now we have to cross to the west side of the river with our reminiscences. There was no Centralia at that time. Here stood one double up-and-down saw mill, which also contained a lath and picket saw, and one turning lathe. This was run at that time by George Kline. There were also three frame houses, used for the accommodation of the parties running the mill and men employed. Also there were two shingle shanties. This mill was built in 1836 by a Mr. Harris from St. Louis, Mo., and afterward sold to Mr. Daniel Whitney of Green Bay. That is all there was on the west of the river, with the exception of one block house which stood where Mrs. William Jackson's residence now stands, a little south of the Centralia Hardware Store. This block house was built by Mr. David Baker, and he occupied it with his family.

"Next, about one and a half miles down the river, stood Eusebe LaVigne's logging shanty. From this place no kind of improvement could be seen until you reached the Merrill Mill, four miles away. This is now called Port Edwards. This mill was built in 1838 by Mr. Grignon, and afterward sold to Sam Merrill, who was running the same at the time referred to.

"Next, down the river about three quarters of a mile, at the mouth of the slough on which the Merrill mill was built, stood a log house which was the home of Francis Brown, who died in 1845. He was the father of the late Frank Brown, who died at the Soldiers Home one year ago, and whom J. H. Compton had raised.
Next, half a mile farther down the river, stood four board shanties occupied by as many families, which were those of George, J. B., and Abraham Haule, three brothers, and Peter Senee, who were engaged in making shave shingles. This last described was called French Town. Following down the river on the east side, stood the Whitney Mill, having been built in 1832 by Mr. Daniel Whitney of Green Bay, and at the time managed and run by Mr. A. B. Sampson. Next, two miles down the river, stood Mr. Robert Weakley's station, which I have already mentioned. Opposite this place on the west side was to be seen an Indian village of about 100 all told, including papooses, and seven miles below on the same side of the river, another Indian village occupied by the Young Oshkosh band of Menominees. Still further down was A. Grignon's farm of about 40 acres, which has now disappeared by the washing of the river.

"Now, I have given you a flying view on both sides of the Wisconsin River from Biron down to this place, a distance of 20 miles. As to how we obtained supplies for our oxen and horses, such as oats, corn, etc., we would load our wagons with shingles and cranberries, and go down to Sun and Columbus Prairies, and around Madison, and exchange our product for corn, oats, and feed in general. It would take five or six days for a trip. Our currency consisted mostly of gold. It was in the time of the genuine Gold Democrats, and the currency was mostly quarter, half, and full Eagle U. S. gold coins. There were also many sovereigns—British gold pieces worth then $4.90 U. S.; also some few doubloons, Spanish gold pieces valued at $16.00 U. S. gold, and a great circulation of French five-franc silver pieces then worth 95 cents U. S. money. There were no United States dollars. Occasionally one would come across a Mexican dollar, which was worth $1.10. U. S. copper cents were not admitted in Grand Rapids at that time, and if any one offered a cent it was thrown in the river. As regards the paper currency, there were at that time many "wild cats," but pinery men and miners accepted none, except one bank in this state, which was the Fire and Marine Insurance Company's bank at Milwaukee; they were also accepted by the Missouri State Bank at St. Louis.

"We had no capital at the start. All business was being carried on 'tick,' either borrowed money or merchandise, and when the obligations of that business became due, it had to be paid either at Galena or in New York; therefore, not one cent of that money ever returned to our baby city. Most all of our other supplies came from below, which also took our money and never returned any. Most all of the working men were paid once a year—sometimes once in two or three years or as soon as an opportunity presented itself to do down on the lumber of their employers to market, receiving their pay there. Eight out of ten of these would return dead broke. If the business men had only paid their men at home, we would have had a full-grown city at this present day. But now the eye-tooth is cut, and our city is thriving slowly but surely. All our commodities can be bought at home. All of the working men are paid at home, which leaves the money at home, and we are thriving."

J. L. Cotey.

The first tract of land in Grand Rapids to be platted into business and residential lots was a part of Government lots 7 and 8, Section 8, Town 22 north, Range 6 east, which is located in the First Ward, east of the Swimming Pool. The
survey and plat were made by B. G. Hurlbut in November, 1847, for John J. Cruikshank, owner of the land.

Joseph Wood, for whom the county was named, came to Grand Rapids in 1848 and subsequently held many offices of trust and honor in the county. The city enjoyed prosperous times from 1848 to 1857. In 1853 L. P. Powers made his appearance and established a law office, and until 1858 he was the only lawyer at the county seat. He became one of Grand Rapids most active citizens and from time to time held important county offices. Charles M. Webb, a native of Pennsylvania, came in 1858, and began the practice of law, having been admitted to the bar in the previous year in his native state. Grand Rapids then had a population of about 800. Mr. Webb subsequently became state senator and circuit judge, besides holding various other important offices, both here and elsewhere.

The first resident physician in the county was Dr. G. W. Whitney, who arrived in Grand Rapids in 1855, and who followed his profession here for many years. Up to March 29, 1856, all the territory that is now Wood County was the town of Grand Rapids, Portage County, the county seat being at Plover, but on the date mentioned the said town was detached from Portage County and organized as Wood County, with Grand Rapids as the county seat. For a short time, however, Grand Rapids still remained under town government.

One of the most prominent settlers here in 1859 was Dr. G. W. Witter. He was an indefatigable worker in every good cause and was especially active in building up the schools. He was followed in the new town in the same year by his cousin, Jeremiah D. Witter, who was for the rest of his life closely identified with the success and prosperity of the city and county. Another arrival in 1859 was T. C. St. Amour, who after working as clerk for I. L. Mosher for some ten years, opened a clothing store and a few years later launched out into a general mercantile business.

During the period from 1850 to 1861 local enterprise had more or less of a speculative tendency, business enterprises being started somewhat tentatively, though as time went on the lumber industry became more and more important, with other lines of business more or less dependent on it. Immigrants were constantly pouring in, some of whom settled on the west side of the river, which settlement later became the city of Centralia. (A brisk rivalry sprang up between the two settlements, and when the county seat was established, with the offices on the east side of the river, the west side felt very much chagrined. By 1869, however, a more sympathetic and co-operative feeling developed and the energy and industry of all classes were united in the common cause of progress.

Wood's Addition to the village of Grand Rapids was surveyed and platted by C. B. Jackson in May, 1856, for Joseph Wood, owner of the land, and was the northwest quarter of the northeast quarter of Section 17, Town 22 north, Range 6 east. It is bounded on the south by Saratoga street, on the north by Irving street, on the west by Eighth street north, and on the east by Twelfth street north. A number of other additions have since been made, which it is needless to specify. In November, 1857, the first newspaper in Wood County, the Wood County Reporter, was published by John N. Brundage. A piece of land for burial purposes was set aside at a very early date. The second cemetery in Wisconsin Rapids was donated to the town of Grand Rapids by John J. Cruikshank in April, 1856. The survey
and plat were made by C. B. Jackson. The piece of land was 264 feet long by 181 feet wide, and was located at the north end of Tenth street north, adjoining the Frank J. Wood homestead. The present Forest Hill cemetery was surveyed and platted by William E. Coats in August, 1874, for Franklin Joseph Wood, owner of the land.

In October, 1856, John Rablin, a native of England who had come to this country with his wife in 1837 and settled in Galena, Ill., and who had twice visited California, came with his family to Grand Rapids and engaged in the lumber business here, becoming a member of the firm of Howe & Rablin. The partners operated a saw mill located where the swimming pool now is and did a considerable business, the mill, after the introduction of modern machinery, turning out about 80,000 feet of lumber a day. Mr. Rablin also built the old hotel known as the Rablin House, platted the north side of the city of Grand Rapids, and for many years was one of the most active and useful citizens of the place, starting or helping to promote a number of important enterprises, including the foundry and machine shop which have since developed into the Grand Rapids Foundry Company's plant.

The Wisconsin Rapids Tribune has recently published the reminiscences of a number of early settlers, both men and women, several of which, as having descriptive and historical interest, will be reproduced in this chapter. One of the employees of the Howe & Rablin mill was Thomas Love, who came to Grand Rapids in the fall of 1864, and who helped to build the first court house, which was located on the Grand Rapids Brewery site. Speaking of the time when he arrived here, Mr. Love said: "The business men were Joseph Homier, a hardware and grocery merchant whose store building stood on the Wood County Bank building site; a little farther north the Belanger Brothers (Henry and Frank) had a grocery store. Next was Horace Sweeney's tailor shop, with a livery stable in the rear, while a little farther up was Ralph Worthington's general store. In the first block north the first building was occupied by a saloon, which still stands on the same location. The next north was the Roche & Scallon meat market and farther up still was the Wisconsin House, the Russell saloon, the post office and the Pierce & White meat market, while still farther up, where the Christian Science Church now stands, was a small bakery owned and operated by John Livernash."

With the breaking out of the Civil War the progress of the community was checked, many of the brave defenders of the Union never returning. Hundreds of the best men gave up their homes, wives and children to respond to the call for troops, and some of their families suffered hardships in the absence of the bread winner of the family. In August, 1861, the county board passed a resolution, to be in force for one year, allowing the wife of each volunteer $3 per month, and to each child of such volunteer, not over 12 years of age, $2 per month, but this order was first modified and then repealed in the following year, the repeal to take effect June 1. In January, 1863, a small amount ($200) was appropriated to assist the families of volunteers. Of the enlisted men accreditated to the county less than one half returned. The year 1865 was marked by a big fire which burned a portion of the business district where Wood County Bank now stands.
In 1886 there was a suggestion made by the residents that the village of Grand Rapids be incorporated, that they might receive all the advantages from which they were debarred while under town government. The question was agitated and finally culminated in a final meeting being held and votes cast to decide "whether the present village of Grand Rapids and county seat of Wood County should petition for a charter to incorporate said county seat as a village or appeal for a city charter." The majority were in favor of a city corporation, and the petition was forwarded to the proper authorities for consideration. It being favorably received, the charter incorporating the city of Grand Rapids was granted on Tuesday, April 6, 1869. The first council meeting was held April 13, 1869, Mayor L. P. Powers, presiding; city clerk C. O. Baker, and aldermen Stevenson, Ebert, Norton, Hastbrouck and Neeves.

In the following year, 1870 the population of Grand Rapids was 1,115. The United States mail for Grand Rapids then arrived every evening about six o'clock, barring bad weather and accidents. The mode of transportation was with the four-horse stage coach plying between Grand Rapids and New Lisbon, a distance of about 45 miles, over a very sandy road. New Lisbon was the nearest steam railroad point from 1857 up to November, 1871, when the Wisconsin Central Railway, now the “Soo” line, was built to Stevens Point. The Green Bay and Lake Pepin Railway (now Green Bay & Western) first arrived here from Green Bay in November, 1872. The Wisconsin Valley Railway, now the Chicago, Milwaukee & St. Paul, arrived from Tomah in June, 1873. The Port Edwards, Centralia & Northern, now the “Soo” line, arrived in 1890, and the Chicago & North Western in 1901.

Edward T. Bodette, who came to Grand Rapids in 1869 and engaged in the shoe business with James La Breche where Weisel’s store is now situated, thus describes the city as it was at that time:

"I lived at the Rablin Hotel, where the Library now stands, and which was considered at that time to be one of the best hotels in the state outside of Milwaukee. It was destroyed by fire in 1880, just two days previous to the big flood. The Reporter was the only newspaper here at that time. It was edited by James Ingraham, who had his office and printing-room in the upper story of a building which was located where the Gordon building now stands, and which was owned by C. W. White, who had a hardware store on the lower floor. W. S. Miller owned a general store where the Empire saloon stands, a part of which is the original building. Next to that was a row of buildings owned by John and Antoine Arpin. The only one remaining now is occupied by the Weeks Marble Works. Peter Vestefuille had a grocery store in the Huntington building near the Witter hotel. It was later enlarged and remodeled and still stands on the same ground. The little old Spafford frame building just south of the new armory stood on the opposite side of the street where the new Engine House No. 1 is located. A block of frame buildings, called the Red Block, because the buildings were all painted red, owned by George Neeves, extended from where the Mason saloon now is to Reiland’s butcher shop. The next block was occupied by the Wisconsin Hotel, built by George Neeves and managed by Henry Clinton. Next to that, on the east side of it was Joseph Homer’s general store, while next to that was H. B. Philleo’s
drug store on the ground floor, while the rooms on the second floor were used as a photographic gallery by Mr. Hall. J. D. Witter had an Exchange Bank in a small building where Beardsley's grocery now stands. A building where the old Pourrier barber shop stands, next to Daly's drug store, was occupied by Steve Snyder for a meat market on the lower floor, while the second floor was occupied by a dress-making shop conducted by Miss M. G. Gordon. Charles Frisby owned a building where F. S. Gill's paint store now is, which he used and occupied as a furniture and undertaking shop. Abner Atwood occupied a building just to the east as a barber shop, and just beyond was a wagon shop run by Lucian Berard, Sr. I. L. Mosher occupied the building in which Brandt now (until recently) has his meat market, where he conducted a general store. The small building next to Loock's grocery store now used as a barber shop, was occupied by Horace Sweeney for a tailor shop, and who also had a livery stable in the rear of the building. Just north of this was Henry Belanger's saloon, while in the building now occupied by the Penny Company was the Worthington Bank on the ground floor, and the Music Hall above."

Mrs. Clarice Arpin, whose maiden name was Clarice Cotey, and who was married to John Baptiste Arpin in 1859, came to Grand Rapids about the time of her marriage. She described it as being in those days "a rough lumbering town, filled with lumberjacks who engaged in many drunken brawls, and Indians, who when they had an over-supply of firewater yelled and danced in the middle of the streets." At one time a band of more than a thousand Indians passed their house on Drake street journeying south. It took them nearly two hours to pass one house. The squaws would come upon the porch and peer into the windows and it was a great relief when the last red man had passed. At that time the land all around where the Howe school is located was a dense forest thickly wooded with poplars, and for two seasons great flocks of pigeons flew here and roosted in the trees. Mrs. Arpin said that many people would go and shake down young squabs by the wagon load and take them home and keep them in barns or sheds and kill them whenever they wished a feast. These pigeons flew in great flocks all over the state. This region was also visited by a curse one season when swarms of locusts flew over the town in such numbers that they formed a dense cloud which entirely shut out the sunlight. They totally destroyed all the season's crops, and prayers were offered in all the churches for relief from the pests. They remained but a short time and the city has never been visited by the locusts since. Mrs. Arpin was the proud possessor of the first baby carriage ever brought here, which was bought at the Peter Vestefulile store in 1852. She also owned the first sewing machine used here, a Wilcox & Gibbs chain-stitch machine which was run by hand.

Frank Wagner, another Grand Rapids pioneer, recalls the Indian scare of 1863, when the inhabitants were greatly frightened by reports that great bands of Indians were coming to massacre the whites. The neighboring women and children took refuge in the Wagner home, located on Eleventh street north, while the men, armed with pitchforks, stood guard outside. Happily these fears were not realized, though it was about this time that the Indian massacres at New Ulm and other towns in Minnesota were perpetrated. In the latter sixties a small frame school house stood on the ground now occupied by the Howe high school. It was subsequently removed to the Fair Ground (now the Lincoln High school grounds) to
make way for the Howe school, and a few years later burned down. One of the early teachers was Mrs. Knapp, who afterwards went to Colorado to teach the Indians, where she was stabbed to death by an Indian pupil. In very early days the Worthington Hall, which occupied the site of the Daly flat buildings, and which burned down, was used for all public amusements, and was the scene of many a merry gathering, as well as some tragedies. One of the latter was the death of Michael Miscoll, who on trying to gain entrance to a dance, was pushed backward by some unknown person and fell down two flights of stairs, the fall resulting in lockjaw, from which he died. In November, 1872, Mr. Wagner, with two other boys walked eight miles to the Half Way House, now Meehan Station to see the first locomotive and train (the first he ever saw) that came here over the Green Bay & Winona (Green Bay & Lake Pepin) Railway; the tracks at that time being laid only as far as that point. A week later the tracks reached Grand Rapids and a great crowd of people gathered at the station to see the train pull in.

When Mrs. Adelia Corriveau (wife of George A. Corriveau) came to Wood County from Canada in 1854 at the age of 11, the school in Grand Rapids, which she attended, was taught by Susan Compton, who afterward married Ralph C. Worthington, then one of the leading merchants here. In those days merchandise was scarce, and the rivermen who piloted the lumber rafts to southern markets always brought back with them the latest feminine wearing apparel, their return being eagerly looked for by the ladies, who on the following Sunday were seen on their way to church decked out in their newly acquired finery. At that time the nearest bank was at Stevens Point. In the summer of 1855 the first circus that ever showed in Grand Rapids—a one-ring affair—arrived from Portage and was a wonder to the people who attended. About that time, or perhaps a little later, there was a ferry across the river opposite the site of the present Commercial House. The boat was propelled by pike poles and was managed by one man. On one occasion when Mrs. Corriveau was a passenger the water was very high and the boat almost unmanageable, the passengers being in great danger. After this occurrence an iron cable was stretched across the river from the Lefebre building to the building which stood on the site of the present Herschlek bakery and pulleys were attached to the ferry to prevent further possibility of accident. In 1854 there was no butcher shop in Grand Rapids and the meat supply was furnished by John Schnibley, who used to kill a beef every week and peddle the meat from door to door.

Mrs. Catherine Townsend, who came to Grand Rapids in the fall of 1857 with her brother Compton, relates that there was then no church edifice in the little town and that all religious services were held in the dance halls, either in the old Magnolia Hall, the Witter's Hall in Grand Rapids, or the Garrison Hall in Centralia. When word was received of the coming of a minister a committee was appointed to solicit donations, this committee being usually composed of the Misses Lou Buck, Grace Land and Elizabeth. As money was often scarce, they accepted anything they could get in the shape of merchandise, which was put up at auction and sold to the highest bidder and the proceeds given to the minister. On some of these occasions a supper and dance were held after the meeting, the minister gracefully retiring before the dance, which usually lasted till early morning, the fiddlers being Seth Spafford, M. L. Bensley, R. C. Worthington and Louis
Livermash, with R. W. Lyon on the clarinet. The dance usually opened with "Ike" Mosher leading the Lavander girl. Other graceful dancers were Mr. and Mrs. Robert Grace, whose combined weight was more than 700 pounds; Mr. and Mrs. George Neeves, their daughter and son-in-law; Mr. and Mrs. Thomas B. Scott, and their granddaughter, Miss Cassie Scott. Dancing was the most popular amusement, though later church socials were often held. A very dangerous pastime often engaged in by many men and a few women was riding over the rapids on rafts.

Centralia, it is said, was named by Henry W. Jackson, who had arrived here (or at Grand Rapids) with his wife and infant daughter in January, 1854, and who was the first postmaster and first surveyor of the settlement. About 1839–40 George Kline, Sr., built a mill here and the first dam was thrown across the river, near the present Green Bay railroad bridge, in 1843, extending to an island in the middle of the river. Thereafter the settlement had a steady development, somewhat slower at first than that of Grand Rapids, but gathering momentum with the progress of time.

Francis Pamatier, who located in Centralia in December, 1855, when in his twenty-ninth year, said that at that time there was one general store, a small wooden structure, located on the site of the present Nash hardware store. Another small wooden building, conducted as a tavern by Louis Meunier, stood on the ground now occupied by the Commercial Hotel. Tallow dips lighted the house, wood fire provided the heat, and the guests all used a tin wash basin for their daily ablutions, and all wiped on a big coarse linen roll towel. Emanuel Dutruet kept boarders. Mr. Pamatier built the fourth lumber dwelling house in Centralia, which was erected on the grounds where the new Consolidated sulphite mill now stands. It was later moved to Third avenue north, just opposite the St. John's Episcopal Church, where it still remains. Other structures which were built on the ground now owned by the Consolidated Water Power & Paper Company were the Whitney saw mill, which was torn down in 1861 to make way for the Lyon saw mill; the George Weller grist mill and the P. Garrison gang saw mill. The Garrisons, Whitneys, Lyons, Jacksons, Browns, Dutruets, Worthingtons, Corriveaus, Rossiers, Kipps, Hugh Burns, Volney Kromer, Tim Hurley, Charles and John Schanock, and a few French families and Indians comprised most of the population. At the time of the Indian scare in 1863 the Weller grist mill was converted into a fort where women and children were sheltered while the men stood guard outside ready to kill any red man in defense of their loved ones.

The store mentioned as located on the site of the present Nash hardware store was for several years the only one in Centralia. One account attributes its origin to Orestes Garrison, who came to Wood County in 1854; another says it was built by George A. Corriveau, who later moved it one door south, where it may still be seen, being now used as a storehouse by the Nash concern. A third account says that the first store building in Centralia was erected by the mercantile and lumber firm of Jackson, Garrison & Worthington, who also bought and operated the old Marcott mill, one of the first saw mills erected on the site of the city. Mr. Corriveau in 1879 moved his business to a location on Grand Avenue, diagonally across from the present site of the First National Bank. Later he and Frank Garrison (son of
Orestes) were associated together at the same location until Mr. Corriveau’s death, when the business was absorbed by the Johnson-Hill Company.

Emil B. Rossier, who came to Wood County in 1858 (see biography of Frank Garrison) was also a pioneer merchant of Centralia, opening a general store soon after his arrival, which he conducted for several years, also serving as postmaster. He was also editor of the Centralia Enterprise from 1880 until his death in 1893.

Orestes Garrison owned several hundred acres of timber land, and operated a small water-mill located on a spot at the east end of the present “Consolidated” mill buildings. It was equipped with a perpendicular saw which cut about 6,000 feet of logs a day. This mill was then considered the best in this section of country, but Mr. Garrison later built a gang-saw mill which must have been still better, for it is said that it “eclipsed any mill on the Wisconsin River.” This latter mill would cut 7,500 feet of lumber a day, and soon after he built it he added a rotary saw to its equipment. He also constructed piers, booms and other improvements, and had the boomsage of the natural islands from Grand Rapids to within half a mile of the Biron mill. A boarding-house was also erected by him where the electric plant now stands.

Frank Garrison entered into mercantile business in Centralia in 1876, his store being located just north of where August Otto’s drug store is now. He sold the business in 1887 to J. D. Witter and was afterwards partner for awhile with Geo. A. Corriveau, as previously mentioned.

Eli W. Taylor, who about 1856 or 1857 settled with his widowed mother on a farm about three miles west of Centralia, says that at that time “Centralia was a small island consisting of about 100 acres of dry land. It was bounded on the east by the Wisconsin River and on the other three sides by swamp lands. A stretch of land from where the L. M. Nash homestead and the B. R. Goggins home now stand to the mainland was almost impassable; the only way of crossing was by walking on logs. Another stretch of land, which was even worse, ran along the west side of Centralia from the site of the homestead lately occupied by the G. W. Paulus family and extended further beyond the present location of the St. Paul station to the marsh. Cows and hogs would often go down into the mire to such a depth that they would have to be pulled out.” The business places in the late fifties, as remembered by Mr. Taylor, consisted of the I. L. Mosher general store, the John Compton store, the J. Homer store and the Neaves hotel. There were also several saloons on either side of the river. The residence portion consisted of four log houses; one owned by J. P. Marcotte and located just west of the site of the Northwestern railway station; a log hut owned by Joseph Fortier on the grounds of the present Moore wagon shop; another owned by Joseph Sanville and brother which stood on the site of the present B. R. Goggins’ residence, and the fourth owned by Henry Jackson and on the site of the present Normandy Bros.’ laundry office. There was also several crude shacks built of waste and refuse lumber. Plyn Dutton was the first blacksmith in the village, and the shop in which he plied his trade is now a barn on the premises of Mrs. Julia Denis. “Billy” Bowman, an early settler, built and managed a hotel on River street on the present L. M. Nash property. Other early settlers were the LePevres and Fontains, who lived in the little shacks above mentioned. Another shack was built on what is now the Nash premises by Asa Chaney, who ran the first ferry boat across the
Wisconsin River, the ferry being owned by Besebe Lavigne. The Taylors owned the first horses here, using them for teaming. They often went as far as Janesville with four horses and two wagons loaded with cranberries, which were so plentiful that thousands of bushels rotted on the ground each season, and other trips were made by them to New Lisbon and Gill's Landing.

Dr. Patrick Hurley, the father of Mrs. John Collier, was the first physician who settled here to practice his profession. He made his professional calls on horseback with his surgical instruments and medicines carried in saddlesacks. The journeys were tedious and tiresome, there being no roads, and as he had to go through dense forests at times, it took many hours to reach the bedside of his patients. Later on when roads were cut through, and streets made, he bought the first buggy and sulky ever used here. It was made by the late George A. Corriveau. The only way to reach Frenchtown from this city was by a narrow path along the river bank. Dr. Hurley and family lived two years in Hurleytown (South Centralia) and then moved to Centralia. His daughter, Mary Ann (Mrs. John Collier) at one time wished to purchase calico for a dress, and went first to Garrison's dry goods store in Centralia, where she found they had only one piece in stock. She then crossed the river to try Kromer & Lunt's dry goods store in Grand Rapids, and there found the same amount of stock to select from, there being but one piece in each store. She often saw ice jams on the river when the ice would pile up as high as the house tops.

In 1880 the population of Grand Rapids was 1,367, which was an increase of but 252 in ten years.

The “Town of Centralia”, then including Port Edwards, Seneca and adjacent territory, was incorporated in 1856 with a population of 800, this action having been taken, it is said, because of the fact that Grand Rapids threatened to annex the community, as provided for under the law at that time.

Centralia was incorporated as a city after the April election of 1874. R. C. Moore was the first mayor and R. J. Huston the first city clerk. The aldermen were E. R. Ostrander, H. Charles Garrison, H. W. Jackson, G. A. Corriveau, Reuben C. Lyon and Erick McKay.

Reuben C. Lyon, who was a prominent figure in Centralia during early days was a native of Cattaraugus County, New York, a son of Jonathan H. Lyon. When 21 years old he took a western trip through Ohio, Indiana and Michigan, and about a year later went down the Allegheny and Ohio, and up the Mississippi to Galena, Ill. After remaining there a few months, he came in May, 1846, to Grand Rapids and Centralia, worked two years as a carpenter and millwright, and then, with A. B. Sampson, in 1849-50 built a saw mill, which, after operating it for seven years, he sold to T. Hurley. In 1861 he bought the Whitney mill on the Centralia side of the river and erected the first shingle and planing mill here. The latter he sold in 1880. He was one of the incorporators of the Wisconsin Valley Railroad and a member of the construction company that built it. After selling his planing mill he lived retired. He was married in January, 1849, to Esther J. Hill of Illinois, and had six children.

In course of time the exhaustion of pine timber in the neighborhood of Grand Rapids caused the saw mills there to be closed up, while new manufacturers developed in Centralia and the largest manufacturing interests are today on the west
side of the river, including the mammoth pulp and paper mills of the Consolidated
Water Power & Paper Company.

The chief manufacturing interests in Centralia about 1880 or 1881 were the
machine shops, which had been started on the Grand Rapids side of the river by
A. J. Robb in 1869 and moved to Centralia in 1870; the hardwood manufacturing
plant of Mackinnon & Griffith started in 1879 and engaged in the manufacture of
spokes, hubs and wagon stock; the planing mill of Wharton Bros. (W. G. and J. H.
Wharton), manufacturing pine lumber; the chair factory of F. Haertel, started in
the late seventies, which was formerly a shingle mill; the machine shop and foundry
of F. W. Bremmer; the flouring mill of Coleman, Jackson & Co., having a capacity
of 150 to 200 barrels a day; the wagon works of J. F. Moore, and the mill or factory
of Lyon Bros., manufacturers of and dealers in pine shingles, and also wood turn-
ers. There were two hotels: the Landry House, kept by John Landry, and the
New Star House, the proprietor of which was Alf. Noiseux. There were also sev-
eral mercantile establishments and a restaurant. The physicians then practicing
in Centralia were George DeMarr, C. W. Whitney and P. Hurley. E. B. Rossier
was practicing law, being a member of the law firm of Rossier & Baker. Judge
Henry Hayden had previously been the head of the firm, but was killed Oct. 9,
In 1881 there was living in Centralia an old Frenchman named John Mascotte (or
Mascotte), who claimed to be 105 years old. He spoke but little English and
resided in the log house which he had built when he came to this locality among
the first settlers. The census of 1880 gave Centralia a population of 800. The prin-
cipal merchants about that time and later were: Garrison & Whittlesey, general
merchandise; Joe Lamadeleine, fancy groceries, tobacco, etc.; G. A. Corriveau,
dry goods, clothing and hardware; R. O. Worthington, groceries, drugs, flour and
feed, and McCarthy & Daily, meat market.

It was in South Centralia that in 1887 a pulp mill was built that was the first
direct step in the development of the paper-making industry on the Wisconsin
River. A paper mill was added to it and the concern became the Centralia Pulp
& Paper Co. The paper mill burned down some ten years ago, but the pulp mill
continued to make pulp until four or five years ago, since which time it has been
a power house, furnishing power to the Port Edwards mill and to the street railway.

The flood of 1880—from an account in the Grand Rapids Tribune, issue of
June 19, 1880.—In 1847 and again in 1864 the Wisconsin River rose to an immense
height, and in June, 1880, another flood occurred which is still remembered by the
older residents of this region who are still surviving. On June 12 the water rose
to a height unparalleled for several years previously, but had receded, when on
the following Friday it was noticed that it was again on the rise, and on Saturday
it had risen to the mark of a week previous. A fire which had occurred on Friday
night had caused many of the people of Grand Rapids to lose their rest, and they
slept so soundly that they knew nothing of their impending danger. The night
watchman, Mr. Bell, was instructed to warn business men when, in his judgment,
their property was in danger. Accordingly, about three o'clock in the morning
he went to the residences of Brundage & Ferguson, hardware dealers, and gave
them warning. They went immediately to their store and immediately began
moving from the rear end the tools used in the manufacture of tinware, and a
portion of their general stock which had been stored there out of the way. They had been at work but a few minutes when the building was swept from its foundations with Messrs. Brundage and Ferguson in it. The former escaped but the latter went down with the sinking building. On the lower side of the room were piled a lot of stoves, and with the rush of water against the upper side, it is supposed that the building tipped and that the stoves rolled over on him. Mr. Brundage had an almost miraculous escape. Being near the door opening from the tin shop to the main store, he made a jump for the latter, but jumped in the river. By the merest chance he caught on a large rock and crawled into the store. His cries for help brought a number of men to the scene, who made unavailing efforts to find and rescue his partner, George Ferguson, whose untimely death cast a gloom over the whole city. H. W. Lord had taken the precaution on the previous evening to move his stock and tools away from his place of business to where they would be safe, and in the morning D. P. Morrill followed his example, moving his stock of meats. Similar measures were taken with the stock of J. E. Ingraham & Co., general merchants, and some of the goods of Brundage & Ferguson were also saved before the building gave way and fell to the rocks below. This building, and also others that were in danger of floating away, were secured by ropes.

During the afternoon the rear end of Spafford & Cole's store, which was packed to the ceiling with goods, was swept away and borne down on the raging waters. When this occurred all eyes were turned toward the Wood county bridge, in the expectation of seeing it hoisted from its piers, but these fears were not realized, as the moment the building struck the bridge it was carried under by the current and ground into a thousand fragments. Miss M. A. Gordon's millinery stock was taken to the rooms over Spafford & Cole's store, as were the goods and appurtenances from Cleveland's restaurant to the room next door to John Hamm's. H. H. Compton's stock of general merchandise was moved across the street. Messrs. Powers & Briggs, who had thought the building occupied by them perfectly safe, became frightened at the threatening condition of the water and moved their law library to Jere Klein's saloon. The printing material of the Tribune was taken to Bizaillon & Peterson's blacksmith shop to await the receding of the water. Still the river kept rising and it was seen that more damage must ensue. The buildings of Spafford & Cole and Ingraham & Witter being now threatened, the goods in the former were removed to Odd Fellows' Hall, and those in the latter to Masonic Hall. Warren's furniture was removed to the second floor of Music Hall building.

The water came in from the river at the upper eddy, and coming down through the swamp, washed out 60 to 80 feet of the Green Bay railroad bed and on down near Morrill's tannery and Wagner's old furniture factory swept off two of the city's bridges and washed away the embankment. On its way down it joined the waters coming in from the river near the Rablin House site, rushing down the back slough with all the fury of a mountain torrent, carrying before it barns, outhouses and everything not extremely well secured. It washed the underpinning from W. S. Miller's store building for nearly half the distance across the front. The store of Spafford & Cole was undermined until scarcely enough of the stone foundation remained to keep it from falling over. Nearly the whole wall on one side of Jere Klein's saloon building was washed away, and had not the water commenced to
recede just when it did, the earth would have been washed out from under it. Music
Hall building was at one time seriously threatened and would also have been under-
minded had it not been for the timely receding of the water.

The streets and sidewalks were washed away and gullied in a fearful manner,
the damage to the city amounting to some $5,000. The heaviest losers among
the city’s business men, or firms, in damage to goods or buildings, were Spafford
& Cole, E. S. Jaffrey & Co., Brundage & Ferguson, Nick Wenkle, J. D. Witter,
M. C. Warren, T. C. St. Amour and George A. Neeves. Others who suffered losses
ranging from $500 down, were J. E. Ingraham & Co., E. T. Bodett, Jo. Closuit,
D. P. Morrill, R. W. Lyon, Henry Martine, John Wagner, F. J. Wood, M. Hun-
ington, Geo. Zenior, Mrs. Grace Ponce, Antoine Arpin, Miss H. A. Gordon, Mrs.
Fraser Johnson, M. J. McRaith and William S. Miller. The loss to Centralla
was small owing to the bank of the river being higher on that side, and amounted
to only about $1,400.

There were considerable losses outside the city. At Mosinee the mill and
boomage of Joseph Dessert were carried off, together with a large number of logs,
tannery, office and office furniture, Mr. Dessert’s loss amounting to not far short
of $60,000. Messrs. Scott & Edwards estimated their loss of logs at $1,000,000, a
large majority of them being very valuable, they having been offered $12 per 1000
for them at Stevens Point. Daly & Sampson’s boom in Garrison’s Slough gave
way and let their logs down on the piling that formed the G. B. & M. bridge across
the slough and threatened to sweep that structure out, but by strenuous exertions
it was saved. This flood extended all over the Northwestern States and millions
of dollars’ worth of property were swept away.

This misfortune, however, was only a temporary setback in the growth of the
communities on each side of the river. New enterprises were started from time
to time, schools and churches were built and societies organized. Financial panics
and hard times were felt here, as elsewhere, but were succeeded by periods of re-
newed prosperity. The state census of 1895 gave Grand Rapids a population of
1,702 and Centralia of 1,435.

The first bridge across the river at Grand Rapids was built by the Wood County
Bridge Company at a date prior to May, 1866. In March, 1873, it was resolved
by the county board that the bridge be bought by the county and donated to the
cities of Grand Rapids and Centralia. In 1876 the bridge was posted as being
dangerous and the question of building a new one was discussed. Instead of doing
so, however, the old one was remodeled and strengthened, and was in service sub-
sequently until April, 1888, when it was swept away by a flood. Then, as a tem-
porary expedient Lawrence M. Nash, W. H. Cochrane and W. F. Jones built a ferry
boat, which was put in operation in less than a week. In 1889 a new iron bridge
was erected at a cost of $17,400, and was in use over 30 years, or until the building
of the present fine concrete structure, which was started in August, 1921, and
completed in the fall of 1922 at a cost of $200,000, of which $140,000 will be paid
by the state and county.

For 40 years or more the two communities of Grand Rapids and Centralia had
grown up practically side by side, each doing its best in a spirit of rivalry to out
strip the other, but with interests essentially the same. At last each had become
so big that it was felt by most of the best citizens on each side of the river that
co-operation might well supplant competition, and in the fall of 1899 a proposition for consolidation was presented before the two councils. On March 31, 1900, in spite of some opposition, this question was decided in the affirmative, and the consolidation went into legal effect in the month of April following. The special charters the two cities possessed were then surrendered and a general charter received from the state. The new municipality took the name of Grand Rapids. At that time the population of the east side (the old Grand Rapids) was 1,702, and that of Centralia 1,425, making a combined population (with additional territory taken in) of 4,493. B. R. Goggins was the first mayor elected after the consolidation.

In 1920 the city of Grand Rapids changed its name to Wisconsin Rapids, a petition asking for the change, and signed by 1,008 voters, having been presented to the council. There was some slight opposition, but the ordinance providing for the change of name was passed by a unanimous vote of the council August 3, and took effect on the following Wednesday, August 4. This action was taken because of the fact that a considerable quantity of mail matter and quite a number of freight shipments intended for this city had been missent to Grand Rapids, Mich., causing serious delay in delivery and much inconvenience to local residents and business men. The slight opposition to the measure was due to sentimental reasons which gave way before the practical arguments presented on the floor of the council chamber.

The outline sketch of the early history of the community must now be supplemented by a more individual account of its development along certain important lines of progress, such as public utilities, manufacturing and financial enterprise, education, religion and social organizations. To avoid needless repetition, the account of the mercantile interests during the modern period has been placed in the biographical part of this volume, being largely contained in the personal sketches of the merchants who are herein represented.

The Grand Rapids post office was established in 1845, and E. S. Miner, who had arrived here in that year, and had opened a general store, was appointed postmaster, his business partner, John Warner, becoming his assistant or deputy. The latter official seemed hardly necessary, as at that time the mail arrived only once a week, and that did not amount to more than a dozen letters and two or three papers. Among those who are mentioned as among the early postmasters are Joseph Wood, Euzeb La Vigne and Dr. G. F. Witter, the last mentioned serving several terms; while among the later ones J. N. and E. B. Brundage are mentioned. Frederick W. Burt, who had previously served for two periods as assistant, was appointed postmaster in 1890 and served till January, 1894, being succeeded by E. R. Brundage. Then Peter Camley had the office, being appointed Jan. 13, 1886, under Cleveland’s first administration. The office at that time was kept in the building now occupied by the Beardsley grocery store, on First street north, near the present Witter hotel. Under President McKinley Albert L. Fontaine was appointed and served in all nearly 12 years, or nominally three terms of four years each, though he held but two commissions, his terms of service lapping over so considerably owing to political wire-pulling by others who desired the office and which, being competitive, delayed Presidential action. Mr. Fontaine was
finally succeeded by R. A. McDonald, a Republican, who served two terms. In
July, 1913, under the Wilson administration, Robert L. Nash was appointed, and
served nearly two terms, his death occurring Nov. 28, 1921. After that event
there was no postmaster until March 1, 1922, the work being done by assistants
until Albert L. Fontaine took it again. The office is now one of the second class,
but is practically ready to graduate into the first class, as the amount of business
done for the fiscal year ending June 30, 1922, was over $40,500. Six city carriers
are employed, one parcel post carrier, and six clerks, and there are eight rural free
delivery routes. The assistant postmaster is Martin Panter.

The Centralia post office, established at an early day, was operated until the
consolidation of the two cities in 1900. In 1880 or 1881 it did a business of about
one hundred dollars a month. Pigeon-hole boxes were rented for 25 cents a year
and lock boxes for one dollar.

The present city hall, a fine and attractive looking building located on the
West Side, was built in 1917, at a cost of $30,000. Previous to the consolidation
of the two cities the city hall of Grand Rapids was the building the second floor
of which is now occupied by the public library, and in which the library was then
allowed four rooms. The Centralia city offices were on the second floor of the
building which stands in the rear of the present city hall, the Centralia fire depart-
ment being on the first floor. For some time before the erection of the present
building, however, there being insufficient provision for the offices of the city
government, some of them were located in various buildings about the city. The
present building, constructed of brick, with two stories and basement, was there-
fore a much needed addition to the city.

The police and fire departments since 1910 have been under the commissioner
system, whereby a commission of five members appointed by the mayor is the
controlling body. This commission appoints members of the two departments
after examination, and acts as a trial board, under the State Civil Service Law.
Police protection, before the consolidation of Centralia and Grand Rapids, was
afforded by a marshall and night watchman in each city; the system was the same
after the consolidation except that the members were policemen instead of
marshalls. There are four members of the present police department, including
the chief. The first chief to be appointed under the commissioner system in 1910
was James Gibson, who had been with the department for many years before this
system was instituted and had acted as marshall, chief, etc.; he was retired on
pension in June, 1917, and the present chief, Roland S. Payne, was appointed.

Both cities had volunteer fire companies from early date; but these were at
first very loosely organized. A formal organization, with regularly appointed
officers, was effected on the west side of the river in 1887. W. H. Carey being
one of its most active promoters. The company then had hand hose-trucks and
chemical apparatus. Complete records of this organization are not available.
On the east side, formal organization was effected in 1888, the first meeting being
held Jan. 18, that year, when the following officers were appointed: E. I. Philleeo,
president; T. A. Taylor, vice president; E. T. Bodette, foreman; D. Kammeron,
assistant foreman, and W. L. Wood, treasurer. This company, besides the hook
and ladder and chemical apparatus, had a steam pumping-engine, which the
company across the river lacked for many years, and was hence called to fires
of any serious proportions on either side of the river. The present paid fire department, furnishing protection for both sides of the river, was organized in October, 1920, at which time A. C. Miller was made chief and has remained in this capacity to the present time. Besides the chief there are six members. The apparatus consists of one La France 750-gallon combination (carrying a pump, a 40-gallon chemical apparatus, and 1500 feet of hose), 1 Reo truck with a 70-gallon chemical apparatus and 1200 feet of hose, one steam pumping-engine, and one 40-gallon chemical truck.

During the city administration of Chas. E. Briere, 1918-1922, a drain ditch was constructed to relieve the Fifth and Sixth wards from water which filled basements of all buildings each spring, and a number of additional streets were paved.

The first electric service enjoyed by the city of Grand Rapids was in 1890, when a dynamo was installed in the John Arpin residence on the East Side. This dynamo was also used to supply the Pioneer pulp mill operated by George E. Hoskinson and located opposite the Arpin residence, the site being now occupied by the swimming pool. In 1894 Mack & Spencer, who had a pulp mill on the west side of the river, were granted a franchise for an electric light plant designed for public utility, and it was operated by that firm for five or six years. The service not proving satisfactory, however, a company was formed in 1899 under the name of the Electric & Water Company, of which E. P. Arpin was the first president, J. A. Gaynor secretary, and John Schnabel, Sr., treasurer. Mr. Schnabel was later president for a time, and other changes took place in the official board and board of directors. In 1899 the company purchased the essential parts of a steam electric plant in Chicago, which was a unit of the Commonwealth-Edison Company, brought them to Grand Rapids, and installed them on the west side of the river where the present plant is located. Mack & Spencer were paid about $3,000 for their property, and the additional equipment purchased in Chicago brought the total cost of the plant up to $14,559.44. The new company gave the city good service. In 1909 a reorganization took place, the lines of the plant were rebuilt under Engineer Simmons, and bonds were issued to the amount of $24,000. The company's name was later changed to the Grand Rapids Electric Company. The net income reported for the year 1914 was $3,102.00. A 12 per cent dividend to stockholders was paid notwithstanding the fact that a 20 per cent discount was allowed on all bills paid when due. In the meanwhile a sentiment had developed among some of the people in favor of municipal ownership, which, owing to local political changes in 1912 found expression on the board of aldermen, and in 1913 the city voted to take over the plant. The company had been asked to sell at a price quoted previous to remodeling the plant, but had refused. Subsequently appraisers were appointed by the State Railroad Commission to determine the value of the plant, it being expected by the members of the city government that they would name a lower figure. The result, however, proved a surprise to them, as the property was appraised at $80,000, a sum which the city finally paid, taking over the plant. Bonds were issued Jan. 2, 1915, to the amount of about $96,000. The engine was junked and the city now buys its electric power from the Consolidated Water Power and Paper Company. Power is furnished at 110 volts pressure, both single and three phase; a maximum load of 700 kilowatts can be carried. There are 1,989 consumers and in 1921, 1,726,789
kilowatt-hours were used. The water plant which is operated in conjunction, has two centrifugal and two triplex pumps, all motor-driven, with a total capacity of 2,500 gallons per minute. Water is furnished to 1,061 services, and in 1921 a total of 14,596,000 gallons was pumped. There are 24.8 miles of pipe in the city, and the plant supplies pressure at 163 fire hydrants. A standpipe located on the East Side and maintained as part of the plant has a capacity of 168,000 gallons. The supply is of an excellent quality, obtained from natural springs.

The Wood County Telephone Company, which provides telephone service for Wisconsin Rapids and surrounding territory, having switch boards at Wisconsin Rapids, Nekoosa and Port Edwards, is an independent, co-operative company, organized on a charter dated May 13, 1895. The Company was founded by John A. Gaynor with the idea of furnishing service at the least possible cost, and its stock is owned by its subscribers. Previous to its organization service was furnished by the Bell Telephone Company, which made a desperate effort to retain control, even offering to give subscribers three years' free service contracts in order to put the new company out of business, but Mr. Gaynor, without hope of pecuniary reward, personally fought out with each telephone patron the question of the ultimate effect of entering into such contracts, and the result was that the old company was eliminated from the local exchange business in this city. A modern brick building to serve as office and station, was built in 1917, on Second street. The company now has 675 miles of lines in the county, with 40 miles of pole line and 14 miles of cable. It has 1695 telephones in Wisconsin Rapids, 100 in Port Edwards, 226 in Nekoosa, and 300 rural. There are 31 employees and 15,000 calls a day are handled.

The picturesque scenery along the river has been taken advantage of in the laying out of two miles of river-bank parks. Lyon Park, located on the southern outskirts of the city, on the west bank of the river, became the property of the city Oct. 16, 1909, half of the territory included having been purchased and the other half donated by the Lyon Land Company, an association of the heirs of R. C. Lyon. The park was opened to tourists as a camping ground in 1921 and has proved a factor in making the city attractive to this rapidly growing class. A smaller but no less attractive piece of ground for rest purposes is the ornamental little park on the West Side planned and laid out by the Consolidated Water Power & Paper Company, and in which their offices are located.

Another summer attraction is the municipal swimming-pool, which was the first to be built in this section of the country and has been a matter of wide interest. It was built by popular subscription in 1913, the movement having been set on foot by John Arpin. Previous to its construction there had been an average of two deaths by drowning each year in the city and adjacent territory, but these disasters have been practically eliminated by the installation of the pool. Located on the east bank of the river, north of the main section of the city, it is so arranged that the water is kept fresh by supply from the river, and it is frequented by a large number of bathers each season.

The T. B. Scott Library was established in Wisconsin Rapids in 1889 through the benevolence of Thomas B. Scott, a pioneer of the city but at the time of his death a resident of Merrill. His will set aside the sum of five thousand dollars from his estate to be used in establishing a library, and provided that the city must within two years time furnish proper housing for the library in order to
make valid the terms of the bequest. The trustees of the estate approved as temporary quarters the upper floors in the building opposite the Hotel Witter, occupying the space between the old First National Bank building and what was then the Central Hotel. These floors were rented to the city and were furnished and equipped through the proceeds of a "Paper Carnival" held by the young ladies of the city for this purpose. The library was opened to the city March 22, 1890, and continued in those quarters for about two years, at the end of which time it was moved to the then newly completed city hall building, in which four rooms had been set aside for the library in the planning of the building. The entire upper floor in this building was granted to the library when, upon the consolidation of the cities, the headquarters of the city government was moved from the building to the west side quarters, back of the present city hall. In February, 1892, Mr. J. D. Witter made it possible to extend the scope of the library by his gift of five thousand dollars to its finances, accompanied by the following statement: "I deliver this money as a donation to your library fund and ask that the money be accepted and held by you and your successors as a nucleus for a permanent fund for the purchase of reading matter, and that only the interest thereon be used." The library was moved to its present quarters, near the County Court House, in July, 1892. From this time the city began to pay the janitor and furnish light and heat; it also borrowed three thousand dollars at six per cent of the Scott Library money to furnish the present library building, and a short time later acted favorably upon the request of the Board of Trustees for an annual appropriation of five hundred dollars for the purpose of the library. Some years later the city's annual appropriation was increased to one thousand dollars; in each of the years 1919 and 1920, $1800 was granted; in 1921 $3,000, and in 1922 $4,000. In 1902 Mr. J. D. Witter died and left five thousand dollars more to the library, and mention of this sum brings the history of the library's finances up to date. Mrs. John E. Daly was the first librarian and is today secretary of the Board of Trustees; F. J. Wood has served on this board since the library was founded, and is at this writing its president. E. P. Arpin, vice president, has served on the board for 32 years. Other members of the board are: I. P. Witter, who was appointed in the place resigned by his father, J. D. Witter, in 1900, and is still serving as treasurer; Mrs. G. J. Kaudy, a member since 1912; Ben Hanson; and E. G. Doudna. The present librarian is Miss Ruth Rutzen; there are two assistant librarians, Miss Hortense Metzger and Miss Esther Erdmann. A branch library has been established on the west side and is operated by the staff of the main library with the assistance of students of the library course in the high school. A branch was also opened in Nekoosa, and when it had been well established was taken over by the club women of that city; it is now operated under the State Library Commission and the City of Nekoosa makes an annual appropriation for its maintenance. A good collection of books is maintained at Biron by the T. B. Scott library here, and books are provided for the local hospitals, mills, and other institutions. Figures on the circulation for the year 1921 show a total number of 4,153 books issued; of these 1952 were books of fiction and 1639 were juvenile books. The next largest class of books issued comprised those on literature, poetry and drama, and next in order was the Useful Arts classification. The four years from 1918 to 1922 showed an increase in circulation
of 87 per cent, a splendid development. The J. D. Witter Traveling Libraries, governed by the same board of trustees as the T. B. Scott Library, were originated by J. D. Witter during his lifetime and since his death are sponsored by his son, I. P. Witter. There are about 41 of these libraries, each composed of about 42 books. They are placed in rural schools, post offices, country stores or homes, wherever asked for, staying from four to six months in a place. Headquarters for the libraries is in the T. B. Scott library building in Wisconsin Rapids, and they are cared for by the librarian of that institution when they are not in circulation through the rural district. Their value to the community is inestimable.

Riverview Hospital is one of the notable features of Wisconsin Rapids. Until 1904 the only available hospital service was that provided by Dr. J. W. Rockwell, located over the Otto Drug Store; consisting of only four or five beds; this was very inadequate to the needs of the city. Recognizing the need for more extensive facilities, Dr. F. D. Humphrey in 1904 prevailed upon Mr. D. R. Evans, who had come here from Wautoma, Wis., and was preparing to erect a home, to change the plans for his building so as to make it suitable for a hospital but convertible into a residence if the hospital experiment proved unsuccessful. When completed, this property was operated by Mr. Evans as a hospital until 1908. On June 24 that year it was sold to Guy Babcock, who sold it in September, 1908, to the Grand Rapids Hospital Association, an organization of the physicians of the city. They operated it until Jan. 16, 1912, when it was turned over to the Riverview Hospital Association, who now conduct it. The building was only a frame structure, and while a great improvement over the previous facilities, was still incommensurate with the needs of the growing city. The bequest of $10,000 by Mrs. Emily Witter for hospital uses was therefore a very welcome one. Fifteen thousand dollars was added to this sum by popular subscription, and in 1916 the present excellent building was erected. It is a brick structure, modern in every respect, located on Third Street, just at the south edge of the city and commanding a beautiful view overlooking the river. It contains thirty beds and has excellent surgical facilities. The institution is an accredited hospital and nurses with the proper prerequisite training become registered nurses after serving a specified time in it. It has an enviable record in its practice and a notably low death rate. The present board of directors of the association is made up of George W. Mead, Father William Reding, Rev. C. A. Meilicke, Otto Siewert, Henry Demitz, and Dr. J. K. Goodrich.

The Wisconsin Rapids Press:—

The Wood County Reporter was established in Grand Rapids Nov. 28, 1857, by J. N. Brundage, who had settled here in about that year. The paper was Republican in politics and thoroughly en rapport with the spirit of progress then existing. The editor in his salutatory said: "I this day publish the first number of the Wood County Reporter. I trust that the citizens will rally around the first paper published in Wood County. This, the initial sheet, will in the course of time be a curiosity as the first paper published in Wood County and the future city of Grand Rapids." The initial number was a well printed, creditable sheet, full of vigor and vigilance for those days. Its contents were well selected and calculated to ensure interest. Brundage continued to edit the Reporter until 1864, when he went into the army. The paper was then published by J. E.
Ingraham, who continued its publication with C. M. Webb as editor. In 1869 Ingraham associated himself with H. B. Phillee, who subsequently had full editorial control. Then Ingraham sold to H. B. Phillee & Son (H. B. and I. E. Phillee), by whom the Reporter was conducted until April, 1880, when it was purchased by Paul and Albert Fontaine, and Fontaine Bros. were the proprietors and editors until 1886, when Paul Fontaine sold out to his brother, Albert L., and went to Minneapolis, since which time Albert L. Fontaine has continued to publish the paper.

In 1903 Albert L. Fontaine started the Daily Reporter and conducted it subsequently for 11 years, at the end of which time he sold the subscription and advertising lists of the daily to John F. Cooley, then owner and publisher of the Daily Leader, of Grand Rapids, who discontinued the issue of the Daily Reporter.

The Centralia Enterprise was established May 22, 1879, by C. H. Clark, and was conducted by him until Sept. 27 the same year, when he disposed of his entire interest in it to Judge Henry Hayden. On Oct. 9, that year, Judge Hayden was killed and the Enterprise was subsequently conducted by his widow, Mrs. Harriet S. Hayden, until Jan. 1, 1880, when it was sold to E. B. Rossier and C. O. Baker. Just one year later Mr. Baker disposed of his interest to Mr. Rossier, but remained with the paper for awhile as associate editor. The Enterprise at that time was conducted as a Greenback paper, issued weekly, and claimed a circulation of 500. In 1888 the proprietors were E. B. Rossier and J. N. Brundage, Jr., after which Mr. Rossier went out of the firm and A. A. Brundage came in. The next change occurred about a year later when A. A. Brundage retired from the concern, his place being taken by W. H. Lueher. Its ownership by this time had become identical with that of the Tribune, and its further history, which was short, may be found under that head.

The Grand Rapids Tribune was founded by J. N. Brundage in April, 1873. He associated himself with L. P. Powers, who acted as political editor. Early in July the office took fire and all was destroyed. In 1879 it was again burned, it was supposed by an incendiary mob. Notwithstanding these severe reverses the plucky editor again started his office, and in April, 1880, gave it in charge of his son, A. A. Brundage. The latter operated it for a year, after which it was taken over by E. B. Rossier and E. B. Brundage, who conducted it until about 1889, when E. B. Rossier sold his interest to his partner and A. A. Brundage came in. About a year or so later the firm became Lueher & Brundage, its members being E. B. Brundage and W. H. Lueher, A. A. Brundage retiring from the firm, and the paper was consolidated with the Centralia Enterprise under the title of the Centralia Enterprise & Tribune. On December 28, 1895, J. N. Brundage, Jr., took Mr. Lueher's place, and Brundage Brothers—J. N. Jr., and E. B.—were again proprietors. The paper was continued under the name of the Centralia Enterprise and Tribune until April 14, 1900, when, the two cities having been consolidated, the Enterprise was dropped and it became the Grand Rapids Tribune. From the beginning it had been published as a Democratic weekly. In May, 1900, the Tribune was sold by E. B. Brundage, who had in the meanwhile become sole proprietor, to W. A. Drumb and A. B. Sutor, who, under the firm name of Drumb & Sutor, conducted it until March 1, 1920, when they sold out to William F. Huffman, the transfer including the building on the West Side which Drumb & Sutor
had erected, and which the Tribune now occupies. Mr. Huffman, who had in October, 1919, bought the daily and weekly Leader from J. F. Cooley, discontinued those papers on buying the Tribune, and now issues a daily and weekly in the form of the Wisconsin Rapids Daily Tribune and the Wood County Weekly Tribune. In 1922 he bought out the Neosho Tribune and discontinued it.

The Wisconsin Valley Leader was started March 6, 1902, by J. F. Cooley and M. E. Emmons under the firm name of Cooley & Emmons, and was issued as a weekly. From Feb. 12, 1903, owing to private family reasons, it was published under the name of Mrs. N. E. Emmons, Mr. Cooley, however, being the real or chief proprietor. Mrs. Emmons’ name appears on the files for the last time in the issue of Dec. 19, 1907. On March 25, 1914, a daily issue of the Leader appeared, with J. F. Cooley as editor, S. V. McElroy city editor and M. E. Cooley society editor. On Oct. 6, 1919, Mr. Cooley sold both the Daily and Weekly Leader to William F. Huffman, together with the plant, who continued to publish both editions until March 1, 1920, when, having bought the Grand Rapids Tribune (then a weekly) and its plant from Drumb & Sutor, he discontinued the Leader, both daily and weekly.

In 1897 there was published in Wisconsin Rapids, by Frank Martina, a German weekly independent paper called the Wisconsin National Zeitung, but it seems to have been short lived, as but one reference to it has been found.

The first meeting of the Grand Rapids Street Railroad Company was held in the city of Grand Rapids, Wis., March 27, 1909, Neal Brown of Wausau, Wis., acting as chairman and E. P. Arpin of Grand Rapids as secretary. The articles of organization were filed with the secretary of the state of Wisconsin Feb. 17, 1909. The company capitalized at $125,000. The first duly elected officers were: Neal Brown, president; L. M. Nash, vice president; G. M. Hill, secretary; F. J. Wood, treasurer; B. F. Wilson, M. C. Ewing and G. D Jones. The company has eight miles of track running from Wisconsin Rapids (formerly Grand Rapids) through South Centralia, Port Edwards and Nekoosa. In 1910 the company built a large pavilion at Moccasin Creek, one and a half miles north of Nekoosa, and it has since been one of the most popular dancing resorts in this section of the state. In February, 1921, the company changed its name to the Wisconsin Rapids Street Railroad Company, because the city of Grand Rapids had changed its name to Wisconsin Rapids. The present officers of the company are: L. M. Nash, president; W. F. Kellogg, vice president; G. M. Hill, secretary; F. J. Wood, treasurer; A. J. Hasbrouck, A. U. Marvin and A. B. Sutor. N. E. Nash is manager. In the summer of 1922 the company extended their line over the new bridge and the cars now start on the east side of the river, whereas before the west end of the bridge was the terminal.

It was in the latter eighties and early nineties that a number of new and important enterprises were started, this growth being especially noticeable in the nineties. Some of these have undergone subsequent changes of ownership, or the plants remodeled for other uses, and some are now defunct. Among those which flourished for a number of years but which is now non-existent was the Grand Rapids Brick Company, the plant of which was located two miles north on the Wisconsin Central Railway. It was established about 1898 and manufactured in large quantities a red sand brick from clay mined a short distance from the yard.
The introduction of vitrified brick and other patented competing material, however, finally caused its abandonment about eight years ago.

Grand Rapids Foundry Co.—This concern was first started by Robb & Rablin in 1872, who operated it until 1876, when it was taken over by Patrick & Mahoney. In 1894 it was sold to King Bros. Two years later, in 1896, Edmund Roeniuss entered the firm as secretary and treasurer, the other partners being Benjamin and Julian King, of whom the latter was the first president. The first plant of the concern was on the site now occupied by the municipal swimming pool. In 1898 the Kings sold their interests to Mr. Roeniuss, and the latter's son, Otto R. Roeniuss, entered the firm, which was then capitalized at $10,000. The business at that time consisted chiefly of repair work for saw mills throughout this section, and the company also did work for the first paper mills on the Wisconsin River. When taken over by Mr. Roeniuss the plant and business were in a run-down condition, and it was his task to install new machinery, improve the product, enlarge his market, and reconquer prosperity for the concern, all of which, with the assistance of his son, he successfully accomplished. Edmund Roeniuss was made president in 1898, and in 1899 F. A. Roeniuss, the younger son, became a member of the firm. On July 26, 1904, the capital stock was increased to $20,000, and Oscar E. Uehling entered the firm, acting in the capacity of treasurer and director. In 1905 the company purchased the present site of their plant on the west side of the river, near the "Soo" tracks, on High street and Seventh avenue north. They erected a new machine shop, 190 by 60 feet in ground dimensions, and two and a half stories in height; and a foundry 120 by 60 feet, with a reenforced concrete roof and floors, it being at that time one of the first buildings of its kind in the state. All the machinery in the plant is operated by electric power. In 1907 a subsidiary company was organized as the Wisconsin Ice Machine Co., for the purpose of marketing what was known as the carbonic safety system of refrigerator machine. The incorporators of this company were Edmund Roeniuss, Otto R. Roeniuss, Fred A. Roeniuss, O. E. Uehling, O. C. Uehling and Frank Felbinger. A contract was entered into at that time by the Grand Rapids Foundry Co. to manufacture the ice machine. The growth of this company has been slow but steady. On June 24, 1912, it was voted to change the name to American Carbonic Machinery Co., at which time the interests of Frank Felbinger and O. C. Uehling were taken over by the renamed company. On the reorganization Edmund Roeniuss was made president; Fred A. Roeniuss, vice president; Otto R. Roeniuss, secretary and manager; and O. E. Uehling, treasurer. In the fall of 1914, Otto A. Labus joined the company as chief and consulting engineer.

The F. MacKinnon Manufacturing Co. had its origin in 1879 when F. MacKinnon and John Schnabel, Sr., established themselves in the hub and spoke business here. In 1892 then began the manufacture of wagons, not with the view of competing directly with the large wagon shops of the country, but to put on the market an entirely different wagon from anything then made. The axles of their wagons are built out of maple timber and steel plate. Their hub is entirely weatherproof. Their many improvements over the common wagon has built up a business for them that is taxing the capacity of their shop to the utmost. Besides their regular wagon business they manufacture and ship from some 60,000 sets of hubs a year and 20,000 sets of spokes. They also manufacture about 1,200 wagons
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a year, each of which has plainly printed on it its capacity, and being fully guaranteed. In 1918 the company established a mill at Rice Lake, Barron County, Wis., where they turn out 60,000 sets of hubs and 20,000 of spokes. The officers of the company are: P. MacKinnon, president; John Schnabel, Sr., vice president; J. W. Jenkins, second vice president; and R. M. MacKinnon, secretary.

The Jackson Milling Company, one of the largest and most important manufacturing concerns in Wisconsin Rapids, had its origin in 1873 in the “stone” flour mill of Trow, Coleman & Co., which two years later was converted into a combination of stone and roller mill. Subsequently the interest of Mr. Trow was bought by J. D. Witter and the concern became the Coleman-Jackson Co. Then Mr. Coleman went to Stevens Point and bought the plant there, and Gilbert J. Jackson became manager of the Centralia mill, Mr. Coleman taking charge of the Stevens Point mill. Two or three years later the Amherst mill was purchased, which the company still owns. When the Consolidated Water Power & Paper Company in 1901 bought up the various water powers here,—namely those of the George Weller flour mill, the old Garrison saw mill, and the Reuben Lyon shingle mill on the west side, and those of the old Rablin foundry and Rablin saw mill on the east side,—the Jackson Milling Co., by which the name concern was now known, sold their power to the “Consolidated,” retaining a certain amount of power, which J. D. Witter and John Horton made use of in organizing the Grand Rapids Milling Co., which continued until July 1, 1921, when the Grand Rapids Milling Co. again became the Jackson Milling Co. Mr. Coleman severed his connection with the concern and went to New York. The present officers of the Jackson Milling Co. are: I. P. Witter, president; D. R. Mead, vice president; George W. Mead, secretary; and Carl Haertel, treasurer.

The history of the Consolidated Water Power and Paper Company is one of considerable interest. J. D. Witter and Nels Johnson, after some years of effort, succeeded in consolidating all the water powers operating on the river in this vicinity into one company, with the name of The Consolidated Water Power Co. During these operations the idea of a paper mill was not definitely in mind, merely a consolidation of the water powers being contemplated; but in 1902 the paper mill project was decided upon. While this enterprise was struggling to get its start, a small independent company in a strongly competitive industry, both its principals died and the entire responsibility was suddenly thrust upon the shoulders of George W. Mead, who had at that time no experience in or knowledge of the paper-making industry. With his brother he was operating a furniture store in Rockford, Ill., when the untimely death of his father-in-law, Mr. J. D. Witter, called him to Wisconsin Rapids to temporarily assist in the management of the mill, in 1902; while he was so assisting, Nels Johnson, who had been Mr. Witter’s partner in the whole operation, also died, leaving Mr. Mead alone to answer for the success or failure of the struggling enterprise. The place held by the mill today among the foremost paper manufacturing plants of the nation tells the results of his efforts. At its inception the mill consisted of two paper machines and 14 grinders, with a water-power installation of 11,000 horse-power and a steam plant of 900 horse-power; 3,000 horse-power of this was available in electrical form. The total output of the mill was 50 tons per day. The output now is 325 tons of paper and 50 tons of sulphite daily, and 2,000 people are employed in the four large mills.
owned by the company, at Wisconsin Rapids, Biron, Appleton, and Stevens Point respectively. The company owns several large timber tracts in northern Wisconsin, in Minnesota, and in Canada, and owns the Newaygo Co., Ltd., a timber holding concern in Port Arthur, Ont., together with the Newaygo Tug Line, operating the largest tug on the Great Lakes.

In the Wisconsin Rapids plant there are four paper machines and 24 grinders. Their steam equipment has a capacity of 2,700 horse-power in addition to the water power available from a 1,707 foot dam with an average head of approximately 32 feet. Full utilization of the water power available at this dam would produce about 12,000 horse-power. They produce their own sulphite, a mill for this purpose having been built in 1920. Their business is conducted in one of the most beautifully appointed offices in the country, located apart from the main buildings of the plant, in the midst of a beautiful park maintained by the company for the use of the public. The name of Wisconsin Rapids became known in all parts of the world when, in 1921, the company installed in its Wisconsin Rapids plant one of the fastest paper machines ever built, a machine capable of running 1,200 feet of news-print paper per minute and producing approximately 100 tons daily. Some conception of the importance of this installation in the history of paper-making can be gained by a few figures from that history. Weeks, in his "History of Paper Manufacturing in the United States," quotes in his chapter on "Modern Expansion" an authority who remarks, in 1872, upon the fact that while the ordinary speed of the Fourdrinier was from 60 to 80 feet per minute, there was one machine running 175 feet per minute, producing 25 tons of paper weekly. In 1880 one was built running 200 feet. An English writer in 1897 said, "A modern machine will produce a piece of paper 300 to 400 feet long and 120 inches wide in one minute and will turn out about 55 tons of paper per week." Another writer about the same time doubting the report that machines in the United States were running at 500 feet per minute, said, "It may some day happen that construction of paper machines will be so improved as to enable paper makers to work with advantage at this high speed; but I think I am right in saying that the general consensus of opinion is strongly against such high pressure for profitable work." It took less than 20 years for the Americans to confound these Doubting Thomases across the ocean with machines with a speed of 600 and 650 feet per minute, and early in 1921 a speed of 1,000 feet was attained at the plant of the Wausau Sulphite Fibre Co., Mosinee, Wis., on a machine built by the Bagley & Sewall Co. Considerable progress along this line had also been made in Germany, and it is doubtful if the machine at Wausau was not preceded in attaining the thousand foot mark by a German machine; but there is no question but that the Consolidated Water Power & Paper Co.'s machine at Wisconsin Rapids is the pioneer in the field above that figure; and this was the fact that carried the name of Wisconsin Rapids around the globe when the machine was put into successful operation, July 5, 1921. The machine was built by the Beloit Iron Works, of Beloit, Wis., it is 325 feet long and weighs 1,230 tons. It is driven by 61 electric motors, having a total of 1,462 horse-power. Forty-four railroad cars were required for its transportation from Beloit, besides three cars for accessory machinery, and eight cars for the electrical machinery operated in conjunction. In its installation 46 carloads of stone were used; 100 cars of sand; 32 cars of cement; 61 cars of brick; 11 cars of concrete reinforcing;
2 cars of glass; 14 cars of tile; and 3 tons of putty. The "Consolidated" manufactures newsprint, wall paper, heavy wrapping-paper, chip board paper, tissue towels, fruit wrappers, paper napkins, a fine grade of tissue for waxing, and Mitscherlick sulphite. In 1911 it took over and improved the Biron mill, previously owned by the Grand Rapids Pulp & Paper. In the fall of 1917 a dam and hydro-electric power plant were started at Stevens Point, and a paper and pulp mill in the summer of 1918, the power plant being built under the name of the Jackson Milling Co., who owned the power at the time, and the paper mill under the name of the Oneida Paper Co. Serious difficulties were encountered but were finally surmounted and the combined plants absorbed by the "Consolidated" company. The power plant has a transmission line to the plants in this city and also to the electric plants of Wausau and Merrill. This enterprise was put through during a strenuous period in the history of the nation when few private enterprises had a chance to get started, and it was expected that if the war continued the power plant might be taken over for government purposes. The paper mill was an after consideration. It was started with two paper machines that had been ordered by the Interlake Paper & Pulp Co., of Appleton, but the delivery of which, owing to the war had been delayed, the Appleton mill of that company being absorbed by the "Consolidated" in the year 1916. Some improvements have since been made in the plant. The present officers of the concern are: George W. Mead, president; George P. Berkey and R. L. Kraus, vice presidents; Isaac P. Witter, treasurer; and E. B. Redford, secretary. The directors are: George W. Mead, Isaac P. Witter, R. L. Kraus, George P. Berkey and Theodore W. Brazeau.

The Prentiss-Wabers Manufacturing Co., of Wisconsin Rapids, was started as the Prentiss-Wabers Stove Co. in 1915, with T. A. Taylor as president, G. N. Prentiss, secretary, and C. W. Rood, treasurer. Their products consisted of what was known as the Collapsible Gasoline Camp Stove and kitchenettes, which were a convenient combination of cooking utensils for camp purposes. In 1919 the company was reorganized as the Prentiss-Wabers Manufacturing Co. The manufacture of the kitchenettes was given up and some considerable improvements made in the stove which is now quite different from the original model and 100 per cent more perfect. It is known as the "Auto Kook Kamp Kit," and is sold in several different models and sizes, equipped and unequipped. It is a high grade outing stove burning low grade gasoline outdoors, and will burn in any wind providing a hot blue flame free from soot and smoke. It is so arranged as to be packed up with equipment in suit case form. It has proved very popular and has a large distribution all over the United States and Canada, an export office having also been established in New York. The present officers of the company are: T. A. Taylor, president; A. J. Hasbrouck, vice president; and D. B. Phileo, secretary and treasurer.

In 1891 Henry A. Sampson, John Daly and E. Oberbeck, the last mentioned from Chicago, organized a concern known as the Oberback Bros.' Manufacturing Company, which engaged in the manufacture of bedroom furniture, a large plant being built on the West Side. The product was sold in nearly all parts of the country. Mr. Oberbeck finally severed his connection with the concern and it became the Ahdawagam Furniture Co., with George F. LaBour as manager. Mr.
LaBour later resigned and the plant came under the control of the Consolidated Water Power & Paper Co., which uses it as a paper converting plant.

The Ellis Lumber Company is a later development of the Stange-Ellis Co., which built a large plant in 1907 that has since undergone some changes. Besides doing a general lumber business, the company makes boxes, sashes and doors, etc. R. M. Rogers is now manager of the business, having become so in 1921, Mr. Stange having taken up his residence in Merrill and E. W. Ellis gone to Eagle River, Wis.

The Badger Box & Lumber Co., which for some years had a flourishing existence, had their plant destroyed by fire in 1918 and have not resumed business here.

The firm of Mott & Wood, located on First avenue south, is a reorganization, effected in 1916, of the Mott Produce Co., which owned the building just west of the Chambers Creamery. In 1920 Mott & Wood bought the latter concern out and put the two buildings together. They have three branch houses, one in the town of Sigel, another in the town of Rudolph, and a third in Junction City. They are making about 300,000 pounds of butter and 60,000 pounds of cheese per month.

The Fisher Bros.' Creamery left in 1921, removing to Nekoosa, where the plant burned down in the following year.

The Grand Rapids Brewing Company was incorporated in 1905 and flourished until the national prohibition law went into effect.

The Sampson Canning Company, now occupying the old plant of the Grand Rapids Brewing Co., was started in 1921 as the Grand Rapids Canning Co., and was taken over in 1922 by H. A. Sampson. The concern is engaged in the canning of beans, beets and kraut and for the year 1922 figures on an output of 20,000 cases.

On April 4, 1901, a co-operative pickling station was started in Wisconsin Rapids by a number of the most prominent business men of the city under contract with Alert & McGuire of New York who agreed to pay $3.00 per acre for as many acres as the farmers would put in, as a sinking fund to pay for the outlay. The concern was called the Citizens Factory Co. To start the project the business men interested borrowed on a note which was signed by E. P. Arpin, Daly & Sampson, F. J. Wood, Jacob Lutz, Jr., Spafford, Cole & Co., the Johnson-Hill Co., F. McKinnon, William Scott, Nick Reiland, Charles Briere, E. T. Harmon, John E. Daly, the Centralia Hardware Co., F. L. Steib & Co., J. A. Cohen and John Farrish. The balance on the note was paid in April, 1906, by Alert & McGuire and the property deeded to them by the committee. The pickling station has furnished the farmers in this vicinity a good market for their cucumbers, which product was sent to the bottling works at Green Bay for distribution. Owing to financial reasons no business was done by the station during the season of 1922.

The Blommer Ice Cream Co., operating plants in Milwaukee, Kenosha, Wisconsin Rapids, and Stevens Point, was founded by Conrad Blommer, who was born and reared in Milwaukee, and there entered into the wholesale candy business, which he successfully operated until 1905. He then began the manufacture of ice cream on a small scale, gradually extending the sphere of his operations, and in 1910 he built a large factory in Milwaukee, which now turns out about one half million gallons annually. The company which he formed later built a branch factory in Kenosha, Wis., which is also doing a fine business. On May 1, 1919, they purchased the plant of the Chambers Creamery Co. in Wisconsin Rapids, which they have installed with a complete set of modern machinery, including the
Carbonic system of refrigeration, which was invented and developed in this city. This plant, which is managed by A. C. Blommer, is doing a large business. The officers of the company are: President, Conrad Blommer; vice president, A. C. Blommer; secretary, George C. Blommer, who is also manager of the Milwaukee plant; treasurer, William C. Blommer.

The foregoing list of what may be termed manufacturing enterprises, as differentiated from those lines of business that involve mere buying and selling, is not intended to be complete, as during the manifold ups and downs of industrial progress other concerns have from time to time appeared, flourished for awhile, and then disappeared; but those which are here mentioned deserve a place as typical of the progressive spirit and generally successful effort of the business men of this municipality.

The First National Bank of Wisconsin Rapids as it now exists is a consolidation, effected in October, 1921, of the previous First National Bank and the Bank of Grand Rapids, both of which were founded by the late Mr. J. D. Witter.

The earlier of these, the First National Bank, had its inception over 50 years ago, in 1871, when Mr. Witter received by stage coach a shipment of $5,000 in gold from New Lisbon. It flourished as a private bank during its first year, and June 18, 1872, it opened its doors as the First National Bank of Grand Rapids, with a capitalization of $50,000, the first bank in the county. Its first president was George A. Neeves, who served from the time of organization until Jan. 13, 1874, when T. B. Scott was made president; Mr. Scott was succeeded Feb. 7, 1882, by J. D. Witter, who was president until Jan. 13, 1902; from this date until July 5, 1905, E. T. Harmon was its president; on the latter date George W. Mead assumed the presidency and continued in it until the consolidation establishing the present bank was effected. During all these years the bank showed a steady, satisfying growth; the capitalization was increased to $100,000 on Jan. 31, 1913, and to $200,000 on Nov. 15, 1919. While the city of Wisconsin Rapids grew in population from 1,115 in 1871 to 7,243 in 1921, the deposits of the First National Bank increased as follows: June 18, 1876, $34,912.92; June 18, 1881, $110,351.32; June 18, 1886, $139,753.69; June 18, 1891, $222,967.75; June 18, 1901, $243,506.26; June 18, 1906, $282,304.17; June 18, 1911, $819,860.83; June 18, 1916, $1,114,398.60; June 18, 1921, $1,150,749.61. The bank was located at different times in two buildings on the east side of the river.

The Bank of Grand Rapids was organized May 1, 1888, with a capital of $5,000; I. E. Phillee was the first cashier. Jan. 1, 1892, the capital was increased to $15,000; Oct. 19, 1893, to $25,000; and Aug. 29, 1903, to $50,000. Its deposits mounted as follows: May 1, 1893, $141,393.27; May 1, 1898, $174,225.99; May 1, 1903, $399,609.63; May 1, 1903, $343,942.30; May 1, 1913, $469,094.08; May 1, 1918, $777,774.59; May 1, 1921, $788,780.03. This bank was located on Grand avenue. As one institution the merged banks now have a total capitalization of $200,000 and deposits of more than $2,000,000. Isaac P. Witter, son of J. D. Witter, is president of the merged bank, with W. J. Conway and E. B. Redford as vice presidents. W. J. Taylor is cashier, with Henry C. DeMitz and M. J. Cepress as assistant cashiers. The directors are as follows: W. J. Conway, P. C. Daly, R. P. Johnson, Dr. J. J. Loose, George W. Mead, E. B. Redford, C. D. Sears, W. J. Taylor, and Isaac P. Witter. The new home of the bank, into which it
moved Oct. 10, 1921, is on the west side of the Wisconsin River, on Grand avenue a finely designed building with a strikingly beautiful interior.

The Wood County National Bank opened its doors for the first time on Nov. 1, 1891, with the following officers: Frank Garrison, president; L. M. Alexander, vice president; F. J. Wood, cashier. The directors were Frank Garrison, L. M. Alexander, T. E. Nash, E. Roenius and F. J. Wood. The paid-in capital was $50,000, and at the end of the first day's business the deposits were $9,952.58. From this beginning the bank, sharing in the prosperity in which it was itself a factor, rapidly came to take its place among the leading financial institutions of the county. The capitalization was increased to $100,000, with an earned surplus of $100,000, and at the close of business June 30, 1922, the deposits were $1,471,592.34, an imposing figure. The bank's original quarters in the building now owned by the Wood County Realty Co., were supplanted in May, 1911, by the fine modern bank building which is now its home on the corner of Vine and Second streets, on which work was commenced following the annual meeting of the stockholders in January, 1909. It is characteristic of solid, well-founded institutions that their personnel remains, except as death intervenes, little changed by the years. Throughout the growth of the Wood County National Bank during the 30 years and more since it was founded, this condition is well illustrated. The original assistant cashier, D. B. Philleo, appointed a short time after the first opening of the bank, remained until 1911, when he resigned and was replaced by Warren G. Fisher. The latter, after serving some seven or eight years, died in January, 1919, and was succeeded by E. C. Whittig, the present incumbent of the office. The death of Frank Garrison in 1906 was followed by the promotion of F. J. Wood to the presidency and Guy O. Babcock was elected cashier. These few changes, with an increase in the number of directors and the appointment of L. E. Nash as director to succeed T. E. Nash, make the present list of officers and directors as follows: F. J. Wood, president; L. M. Alexander, vice president; Guy O. Babcock, cashier; E. C. Wittig, assistant cashier; directors—L. M. Alexander, E. Roenius, F. J. Wood, A. E. Bennett, Judson G. Rosebush, L. E. Nash, T. E. Mullen, O. R. Roenius and Guy O. Babcock.

The Citizens National Bank, of Wisconsin Rapids, was organized in 1912 with 160 stockholders by Joseph A. Cohen, who has been president of the institution ever since and has had much to do with its success. The bank opened its doors for business March 29, 1913, starting with a capital of $100,000.00 and a surplus of $10,000.00. The other officers, aside from Mr. Cohen, were: G. W. Paulus, vice president, and D. B. Philleo, cashier. The directors were J. A. Cohen, G. W. Paulus, Geo. P. Hambrecht, William H. Peters, Jacob Lutz, Nate Anderson and A. P. Hirzy. On July 17, 1917, the bank completed and occupied the substantial and convenient building that is now its home. The bank's report of condition at the close of business Sept. 15, 1922, showed a capital stock of $100,000.00; surplus, $16,000.00; undivided profits, $9,612.43; deposits, $659,189.21. The present officers and directors are: Officers—J. A. Cohen, president; Chas. E. Briere, vice president; D. B. Philleo, cashier; W. F. Herschel, assistant cashier; directors—A. P. Hirzy, Nate Anderson, William H. Peters, J. A. Staub, D. W. McKercher and Dr. O. N. Mortensen.
The hotels in Wisconsin Rapids are the Dixon Hotel, Witter House, Julien Hotel, Commercial House and Love House. There are seven department stores, one of which, the Johnson & Hill Co.'s store is one of the largest and best equipped to be found in any town of the size of Wisconsin Rapids in the Northwest.

The City Schools.—A former historian, writing for the "History of Northern Wisconsin," published in 1881 by the Western Historical Company, Chicago, states that the first school in Grand Rapids was established by Rev. J. S. Hurlbut in 1842, or 1843, and was held in a log house in Centralia. At that time, however, Centralia was not a part of Grand Rapids, and did not become so until 1890, when the two communities, which had developed into cities, were consolidated. If the story is true—and there seems no reason to doubt it—this school was the first in the territory now included within the limits of Wisconsin Rapids. The same historian says that, owing to Mr. Hurlburt's arduous labors as a missionary, he was able to teach it but a short time, being succeeded as teacher, in 1844, by John Warner. In the following year Mr. Warner engaged in mercantile business on the east side of the river (Grand Rapids), and the school was turned over to a Mrs. Searles. At that time it was attended by only eight pupils and was maintained by subscriptions from those who had children, being therefore to all intents and purposes a private school. Another school, held in a private house in Grand Rapids, was opened in 1846 by Miss Hannah Davis. The historian above quoted also mentions what he calls "a regular school," and says it was organized in 1850, and was held in the blacksmith's shop of J. B. Hasbrouck, which was purchased and fitted up for the purpose, and that Miss L. Compton was the first teacher therein, being succeeded in 1854 by a Miss Powers; also that this was the only school building in the city until 1861, when a new building was erected and the graded school system adopted with the beginning of the fall term. As this account cannot now be verified, it is here given for what it is worth, the information which follows, relating to the schools of Wisconsin Rapids (including the former Grand Rapids and Centralia) being derived for the most part from the actual school records furnished by the present superintendent, E. G. Doudna.

The first settlers in Grand Rapids (now Wisconsin Rapids), were firm believers in the doctrine of free public schools which Jefferson had written into the Ordinance of 1787. "Schools and the means of education shall forever be encouraged." One of the first acts of the new settlement here on the banks of the Wisconsin was the organization of a school.

On June 11, 1849, about a year after the admission of Wisconsin into the Union, the School District of Grand Rapids was set off from the town of Plover, Portage County. No immediate steps were taken to organize the new district, as the first annual school meeting was not held until Sept. 29, 1851. At that time Joseph Wood was chosen director; W. B. Naylor, treasurer, and John M. Compton, clerk. The meeting adjourned for two months, meeting again November 29 at the house of the clerk. The assembled citizens voted to fix the treasurer's bond at $300, to hire L. Kromer's house for a school for six months at $3 a month, and instructed the board to engage a teacher for six months on the best terms possible. To pay school expenses a tax of $183 was levied.

The board engaged Richard Compton as teacher for six months at $25 a month. A blackboard was purchased for $3. Evidently not all of the tax assessed could be
collected, as a special meeting was held April 2, 1852, and school ordered discontinued or adjourned as the board might decide. In a fit of extravagance they voted to pay Joseph Wood $3 a year for service as director, and John Compton $5 for services as clerk.

In 1852 the district purchased from Joseph and Matilda Wood its first property, agreeing to give for the house and one-half acre of land $450 in two installments, June 1, 1853 and June 1, 1854, “payment to be made in lumber and shingles at cash prices.”

Late in 1852 the school district was divided and that east of the river in the present city of Wisconsin Rapids was known as District No. 1. The annual meeting of 1853 levied a tax of $487.07. Evidently times were hard, as $176.64 was returned as delinquent. After much discussion it was voted to hire a man to teach the school for three months at a salary of $85.00. The board engaged William McPey, but then as now there were dissatisfied parents. On Jan. 2, 1854, a special meeting was held to hear complaints against the moral character and capabilities of the teacher. The meeting must have been a rather tame affair, as a resolution was adopted by a “clear vote” that there was no just cause of complaint. However, the following year saw Mary Powers teaching a three months’ winter term for $60.00 and Sarah Grant three months’ summer school for $40.00. This made a total school cost for the year of $100.00.

In 1855 a more expensive school was projected and $400.00 tax was levied, of which $225.00 was to pay a teacher, $50.00 for maps and library, and $125.00 for repairing the schoolhouse. At the meeting this year it was also voted to reimburse Joseph Wood $63.00 for a yoke of oxen which he had purchased at a delinquent tax sale and which it afterward appeared had been illegally sold.

By 1859 the school had outgrown its quarters and the annual meeting voted to purchase no less than a block of land for the erection of a schoolhouse. Several meetings were held to consider propositions from John Rablin and Joseph Wood, who were eager to have the school located in the portion of the village in which they were each interested. Wood hoped to see the town grow up on the hill, and Rablin wanted it to develop in the direction of the present Green Bay station. After much jockeying between these two business rivals, Wood’s proposition was accepted and Block 22 of Wood’s Addition was purchased.

It was then decided that a building 40 by 43 should be erected and bids were asked for. On March 26 Howe & Rablin offered to construct the schoolhouse for $2,150.00. Several more meetings were held and finally the project fell through. A tax of $1,200 for a building was however levied.

By the next year new developments had taken place. The school population had grown and it seemed best to have a two-department school. It was as difficult then as now to get an agreement of the public as to the best way to build. Meeting after meeting was held at intervals of a week or less and all sorts of proposals were considered. Finally District No. 3, south of what is now Oak street, united with District No. 1 and a tax of $1,200 was levied to furnish the school, build a fence and settle indebtedness.

The Civil War was now at its most critical period, but the school affairs were never allowed to take a minor place. But times had not changed, for there were still complaints against the teacher. A special meeting was called in July and a
motion made that Mr. Martin was not to be retained as principal. The motion was laid on the table and the meeting adjourned for two weeks. At this time a resolution calling upon all having charges to make against the principal to make them in writing and before July 25. No such complaints were received and the meeting adjourned without action. In October, however, a special meeting authorized the re-employment of Mr. Martin. An interesting item in the minutes of 1863 reads that Robert Blow was given a contract to remove stumps in the school yard at two dollars a stump, not to exceed 18.

The number of pupils was now increasing with a corresponding increase in tax levies. In 1864 the school tax was $1,500; in 1865, $1,650; in 1866, $2,050, and in 1867, $2,633.25. In November, 1867, the old school property was sold to Franz Harn for $285 cash. The school tax levied in 1868, when Grand Rapids had three departments, was $2,818.11. At a special meeting in August, 1869, it was voted to exclude non-residents. The school records also contain the entry, "Fixed tuition at one dollar per month in advance."

When the board met July 11, 1870, the tax levy for schools was placed at $3,000, and it was evident that much more would soon be needed, owing to the necessity for further expansion. The board adjourned for six weeks to consider the question of a new school building, and there is an item in the records which seems to show that a normal school building had also been proposed. In May, 1872, a special tax of $1,450 was levied to buy land of Witter & Worden, and in July the same year a high school was authorized, the building to be of stone or brick. The matter was placed in charge of a committee consisting of J. Q. Emery, T. W. Stevenson and Seth Reeves. It was voted that "the Howe fund of $10,000 be used for the purpose of erecting a schoolhouse." This fund was a matter that cut a considerable figure in school affairs for some years and was a source of much disappointment and disturbance, involving legal proceedings. It is a closed chapter in the city's history which it is useless now to reopen. Suffice it to say that the expectations of the school board with respect to this bequest were not realized, through no fault of the donor, and plans built upon it had to be recast or the money obtained from other sources.

In 1869 Grand Rapids had been incorporated as a city and received its charter, which, among various things, provided for an educational system. The adoption by the common council, in 1897, of the charter given in the General Charter Law did not include its educational provisions, the system embodied in the old city charter, outlined in Article IX, being retained. The most important parts of this article were as follows:

Section 1 provided that all that part of the county of Wood that was, or should thereafter be, included within the corporate limits of the city of Grand Rapids should constitute a separate school district. Section 2 provided for the election, on the third Monday of the following March, of one commissioner of common schools from each ward in the city who should hold his office for one year, and until his successor was elected and qualified; and also, on the same day, of another commissioner from each ward to serve two years. These commissioners, according to Section 3, were to be elected from their own number, at their first meeting, to be held on the second Saturday of April in each year, a president and treasurer, also a superintendent of schools, who should be ex-officio clerk of the board of
education of said city, each of these officials to hold his term for one year and until his successor should be elected and qualified. Section 4 referred to the taking of the oath of office by the superintendent. Section 5 provided that no person holding any office under the city government should be eligible to the office of commissioner of common schools, and that no commissioner should receive any compensation for his services as such commissioner or as a member of the board of education. According to Section 6, the commissioners, at their annual meeting (on the second Saturday in April) were to fix the salary of superintendent for the ensuing year, and also to fix the amount of the official bond of the treasurer, which bond should be executed with two sureties and approved by said commissioners before he entered upon the duties of his office. Section 7 provided for filling vacancies by the appointment of some suitable person from the ward to which the former occupant belonged, such person to serve until the next annual school election. Section 8 gave the board of education the power to remove from office the superintendent or treasurer for official misconduct or negligence, by a vote of two-thirds of its members exceeding (excluding) the vote of the party on trial; but that no member should be so removed without due notice and a full and impartial hearing. Section 9 reads in full, "The said commissioners of common schools with said superintendent shall be a body corporate by the name of the "Board of Education of the City of Grand Rapids" in relation to all powers and duties conferred upon them by virtue of this act, as well also as those conferred by any law of the state relating to common schools. A majority of the same shall constitute a quorum." Section 10 provided for the keeping of proper records by the clerk, and also that said clerk should cause to be taken, between the first and fifteenth days of July in each year, a census of all children residing in the district, between the ages of four and twenty years, and report the same to the state superintendent of public instruction; also that he should perform such other duties as the board might prescribe. He was to have power and authority to administer oaths and affirmations. Section 11 related to the paying of all school moneys to the treasurer, and his accountability therefor. Section 12 contained practically the same provisions as Section 6, with some additional details. Section 13 gave authority to the superintendent to publicly examine all teachers making application for schools, to grant certificates to such of the number as should be deemed by him and a majority of the board to be suitably qualified; also to carry into effect the ordinances of the common council and the rules and regulations of the board in reference to the common schools. He was specially charged with the care and custody of the several schoolhouses of the city, and, under the direction of the board, was to superintend the building, enlarging, improving, furnishing and repairing of all the schoolhouses ordered to be erected by them; and in addition to the foregoing duties he was to visit the common schools of the city at least three times during each term, and report their condition to the board, with such suggestions for their improvement as he might deem proper. The amount of his compensation was to be determined by the board of education. Section 14 related to a general report of conditions to be made by the superintendent in October each year and transmitted to the clerk of the board. Section 15 warned the board against spending more than the amount of money subject to their order for each current year, while Section 16 prescribed in detail the duties of the clerk with respect to the keeping of records, and that they should
at all times be available for inspection by the city council or any committee thereof. Section 17 prescribed or defined the powers of the city council with respect to raising money for school purposes by taxation, and its duties with respect to the purchase, lease or improvement of school sites and school houses; the providing of school appurtenances such as books, apparatus and furniture; the purchase of fuel and payment of teachers’ wages. No pupil was to be provided with free text books whose parents were able to purchase the same. Section 18 defined the powers and obligations of the board of education in regard to the matters mentioned above and a few others. Section 19 provided that the board should have the power to allow the children of persons not residing within the city to attend any of the schools in said city upon such terms as the board should prescribe. Section 20 provided that the board of education should be trustees of the district library in said city, with power to spend money in accordance with law for the purchase of school libraries, which they were to provide for such schools where such an adjunct was deemed necessary, with other powers relating to the same subject. The provisions of the remaining sections (from Section 23 to Section 32) may be briefly referred to without differentiation. They gave the board the power to employ teachers without any certificate of qualification of the county superintendent; defined the powers of the common council in passing such ordinances as the board of education might require; vested the title of schoolhouses and other school property in the board, and provided that such property, while so used, should not be subject to taxation; gave the board in its corporate capacity the power to receive hold and dispose of any real or personal estate transferred to it by gift, grant, bequest of devise for the use of the common schools of the city; provided that moneys received from the sale to school property should be paid to the treasurer and held by him at the disposal of the board; provided for the raising of funds and the appointment of trustees in connection with the building of the Howe High School; and also that the superintendent should not have the power to alter the limits of the district. There were also several other matters mentioned which are not pertinent to the present history. This act was approved March 13, 1873 and thereupon went into effect.

The financial panic of 1873, the effects of which were felt for several years, increased the difficulties of the school board, as it was impossible to raise tax levies, notes being given in payment instead of cash. The amount levied was $7,300, of which $5,000 was to be applied on the new schoolhouse. In July, J. Q. Emery resigned as principal. In June, 1874 school orders were selling for 85 cents on the dollar, and in May, 1875 the teachers were notified that the board was unable to pay them their wages. They were then paid (or supposed to be paid) $40 a month wages, while the salary of the principal, then J. A. Gaynor, was $125 a month. As a last straw added to the weight which the school board was already bearing, in August the same year the city treasurer, for some reason, the cause of which is not now clear, refused to pay over a sum of $998.36 due the board and attorneys were thereupon employed to collect it.

Other difficulties occurred in the following year, in addition to the ever present one of insufficient funds, due to complaints charging inefficiency against one or more of the teachers, but the accused party or parties were exonerated by a majority of votes. Such details, however, it is unnecessary to further enter into.
Those given belong to a time long since past and have no particular interest for anyone today, except as they serve to fill in a sketch of early conditions when the school system of our city was in its formative period. Such matters however, are not peculiar to that period, for to those who are concerned with school government each year brings its problems and difficulties, to publish all of which, except in official records, would be useless. Therefore only the broader aspects of the subject will be now noticed.

The construction of the high school building was begun in 1875, a loan of $10,000 having been negotiated from the state. It cost $32,000 and was completed and the school organized in 1877, the first school session being held with the beginning of the fall term. It was named the Howe Free High School and I. N. Stewart was the first principal. In the following year, 1878, school closed Feb. 28, owing to lack of funds. The teachers were allowed the use of the building, apparently so they might teach private school therein, receiving such pupils for whose tuition the parents could afford to pay. The tax levied that year was $4,345, of which it seems but $2,627 was collected, $1,718 being returned as (temporarily at least) uncollectable.

These financial embarrassments hampered the board for a number of years, and were only relieved as the passing years brought times of increased prosperity. The expense for education is always a large item in the financial budget of every civilized community and the people of Grand Rapids at times strained their resources for the maintenance of adequate schools. In 1881 Centralia, which nine years later was consolidated with Grand Rapids, had a remarkably fine brick schoolhouse, with good teachers, and the educational interests of the town were well cared for. By 1907 the City of Grand Rapids maintained six school buildings namely; five ward buildings—the Lowell, Emerson Garrison, Howe and Irving schools—and the Lincoln. The last mentioned, which had superseded the Howe as a high school, was erected in 1903 at a cost of $65,000. It provided for all the departments of a modern high school, such as manual training, a full commercial course, physical, chemical and biological laboratories, and had a gymnasium, 40 by 80 feet in floor dimensions, and 18 feet six inches high, with dressing-rooms, shower-bath, running-track and other necessary fittings. There were also four kindergartens being taught in the city, so that training of this kind was available for every young child. Manual training was given in the grades as well as in the high school, and included clay modeling, card-board work, weaving, basketry, wood and iron work and sewing. Music and drawing also formed a part of grade instruction, each being under the supervision of a special teacher.

The department of manual training in the grade and high schools was given up after this year, owing to the building of a special school for that purpose, rendered possible through the philanthropy of Jeremiah D. Witter, further details in regard to which as contained on the school records, are as follows:

At a special meeting of the Board of Education held March 25, 1907 a communication was received from the executors of the Jeremiah D. Witter estate, informing the board that the sum of $50,000 had been deposited to the credit of the board at the Bank of Grand Rapids. It was moved and unanimously carried that the following resolution be adopted:
“Whereas, the public schools of Grand Rapids have received from the estate of the late Jeremiah D. Witter a bequest of $50,000.

Whereas—This bequest makes it possible to provide educational advantages for the children of this city which are provided in but few cities in the country, this cannot fail to lead to a better and more prosperous citizenship.

Be it resolved—The Board of Education express to the executors of Jeremiah D. Witter estate their appreciation of the far-sighted generosity of the donor and their thanks for the prompt payment of the bequest.”

It was moved and carried that a manual training school to bear the name of J. D. Witter in some proper form be built the present year and that immediate steps be taken to that end. So also was a motion that a committee of five be appointed to procure plans for the proposed Manual Training and Domestic Science Building, the same to be reported back to the board for final action. The committee appointed consisted of I. P. Witter, T. A. Taylor, W. H. Reeves, W. F. Kellogg and J. W. Natwick. On April 1, 1907 the committee reported recommending that plans submitted by Chandler & Park be adopted by the board, and that the already existing committee should attend to the construction of the building. Mr Witter declined to serve on this committee and moved that the president of the board act as chairman of this special committee, which was authorized to procure plans and receive bids for the construction of the building.”

It met for the latter purpose on June 17, and the Geo. L. Smith Co., being the lowest bidders, were awarded the contract subject to the approval of the Board of Education. Their bid was $27,571.00. On July 15 it was moved and seconded that the bid of A. F. Billmeyer of $28,230.00 be accepted and that the president be authorized to sign contract in accordance with same. The resolution was carried unanimously, and the committee was instructed to procure bids on the plumbing and heating. The work was carried to a successful conclusion and resulted in the fine school and building in which the people of the county take a justifiable pride. (See county educational records.)

On April 29, 1907, it was recommended by the committee on Teachers and Text that, “Since the grades in this city are generally large in number, are likely to increase in size, and since music, drawing and manual training in some form are taught in each grade in the city, thus making the work of the schools of more than usual complexity, the committee recommends that in order to be eligible for a position with grades of the high school, any woman applicant must have had successful experience elsewhere.” This report was adopted.

The enrollment in all departments March 1, 1907, was 1250. That for March 1 in the following year (1908) was 1,424, thus showing an increase of 174. On May 29, 1908, there were 25 graduates from the Lincoln High School. The report of the state inspector, May 13, that year, was very complimentary.

On March 13, 1913 the report by schools showed enrollment and attendance as follows: Howe School - Enrollment; boys 171, girls 176, total 347; attendance; boys 159, girls 167, total 326. Irving School - Enrollment; boys 67, girls 61, total 128; attendance; boys 57, girls 51, total 108. Lowell School - Enrollment; boys 160, girls 125, total 285; attendance; boys 150, girls 119, total 269. Emerson School—Enrollment; boys 113, girls 90, total 203; attendance; boys 108, girls 86, total 194. For the Garrison and Lincoln schools the figures were not obtained
in full. The Lincoln School showed an enrollment as follows: boys 244, girls 245, total 889. On May 29, 1914, there were 13 graduates in the Manual Training Course.

As heretofore exemplified, it is not the purpose of this article to give a detailed record of each year of school history, as to do so would exceed reasonable space limits, but rather to show the educational progress of the city by comparing one period with another. The consolidation of the two cities of Centralia and Grand Rapids in the spring of 1900 placed all the schools on both sides of the river under one jurisdiction, and with the city’s change of name in 1920 they became the schools of Wisconsin Rapids. The report of the superintendent of city schools for the school year of 1921-22 contains the following information.

School population—boys 1365; girls 1256; total 2621. Estimated city population (ratio 3½) 9176. Enrollment in public schools—grades 1135; high school 558; Increase over previous year—grades 78; high school 40. Non-resident pupils enrolled in high school 111, which is a decrease of one pupil under the number enrolled the previous year. Resident pupils enrolled in high school 447, being an increase of 39 over the previous year. Number of pupils enrolled in summer school, 98. Average daily attendance, 1920-21, 70 per cent of enrollment. Average daily attendance, 1921-22, 84 per cent of enrollment, “remarkable improvement over the last three years.” Number of teachers in grades 35; in high school 23; total 58. Number of janitors and other employees 10. City school tax, $91,300. Tax rate 10 mills. Cost per pupil—high school, $103.55 (about state average); Cost per pupil in grades, $44.27 (slightly below the state average).

Though it goes somewhat beyond the general plan of this history to give a list of present principals and teachers, as subject to early and frequent changes, such information being at hand, it is here given in the hope that it may prove of interest in the future to those whose names are mentioned, or to others.


The Churches:—

The religious life of Wisconsin Rapids covers a period of 85 years, beginning in the year 1837, when Father Van Den Broeck, then of Green Bay, visited the embryo settlement and conducted Catholic services. Such services continued to be held at intervals, both by Father Van Den Broeck and other priests, his successors, and were the initial steps in the establishment of the Catholic Churches in this city. In 1842 the Rev. J. S. Hurlbut, a Methodist missionary, arrived, and three years later a Methodist Church was organized. These early religious efforts resulted in strong churches, and to them have since been added a number of others, of different denominations, the most recent being St. John's Evangelical, founded in 1915. There are now (Sept. 1922) fourteen church organizations in the city. An account of the two Catholic congregations may be found in the special article on the Catholic Church in Wood County, written by the Rev. William Reding, for this history. The respective histories of the other twelve may be found on the following pages.

The First Methodist Episcopal Church, Wisconsin Rapids, had its beginning in the Rock River conference in 1845, at which time the Rev. J. S. Hurlbut was appointed to the Wisconsin River Mission, the territory of which included what is now the parish of the First Methodist Episcopal Church of Wisconsin Rapids. He served this territory for two years, but after his departure it was for ten years without a regular pastor. In 1848 the conference territory was divided and a new conference known as the Wisconsin Annual Conference was instituted. Under its regime a regular minister was assigned to the territory in 1857, the first appointee being Rev. L. D. Tracy; the church was at this time a part of the Stevens Point district. It was during Rev. Tracy's pastorate that the church as it now exists was formally organized, with the following eight charter members: Jane Sampson, T. E. Whitman, Jane Whitman, Samuel Purdy, Mrs. Sherman, Hiram Davis, Mrs. Hiram Davis, and Mrs. Campbell. In 1863 the Rev. A. S. Tomkins became pastor and it was during his stay that work on the first church edifice was begun; the building was dedicated while Rev. W. J. Mitchell was pastor, he being appointed to succeed Rev. Tomkins in 1868 and remaining two years. In 1890 the Rev. James Churm was appointed pastor, and during his pastorate the present church building was erected. In 1894 Rev. John Reynolds became pastor and moved into the newly completed parsonage. The present pastor, Rev. A. A. Bennett, who came in the fall of 1920, is the thirty-third regularly appointed minister to fill the pulpit. The membership has grown steadily and now numbers 346. Auxiliary to the church are the Women's Foreign Missionary Society, a fully organized Sunday School with about 340 members, a thriving Epworth League, and a Ladies' Aid Society having three branches—the East Side Ladies' Aid, the West Side Ladies' Aid, and the Lincoln Circle.

The First Congregational Church of Wisconsin Rapids had its origin in 1856, when a few people of the Congregational faith, seeking pastoral ministrations, secured the services of the Rev. Jesse Edwards. His successor was apparently the Rev. Mr. Smith, who was succeeded in 1860 by the Rev. Mr. Freeman, the latter being followed a year later by the Rev. J. H. Harris. During Mr. Harris's
pastorate a church building was erected on what was then Water Street, services having previously been held in school houses and in Hurley’s Hall. The first parsonage was a small building erected just north of the church. Mr. Harris resigned in 1868, and the Rev. John Cameron came but remained only a few months. The church was then without a pastor until the following year, when it secured the services of the Rev. E. G. Carpenter. The latter was followed in 1871 by Rev. R. M. Webster, who remained until 1875. The next pastor was the Rev. J. S. Norris, who served the church from 1875 until 1882. Then, after a brief interim, the Rev. John Rowland came, and he was followed in 1886 by the Rev. A. L. P. Loomis. In the meanwhile Centralia, the town on the west side of the river, had, like Grand Rapids, been enjoying a steady growth and a considerable part of the congregation resided there, they in fact being in numbers and substance the stronger portion, the East Side (or Grand Rapids) members being unable alone to support a church. All, however, worshipped in the building on the East Side, already referred to, until April, 1888, when the bridge across the river was swept away by a flood and for some time there was no means of crossing except by boat. Thus left temporarily without a church home, the West Side members were thrown upon their own resources, and as a way out of the difficulty sought affiliation with the Methodists. Together they erected a building on Fourth Avenue South, which was called Unity Church and was served for several years thereafter by the Methodist and Congregationalist ministers who lived on the East Side. Then the two branches of Congregationalists, wishing to merge again, brought out the Methodists and continued to use Unity Church until after the completion of the present church edifice, when it was sold, in November, 1911, to the Masons and is now used as a Masonic Temple. The original church and parsonage on the East Side were sold in 1902 to the Christian Scientists. To resume the line of pastors, it should be stated that the Rev. A. L. P. Loomis was succeeded by the Rev. William Kilburne, who took charge in 1890 and remained until 1896, when he was in turn succeeded by Rev. Fred S. Wheeler, the latter serving as pastor until December, 1898. In July, 1899, the Rev. B. H. J. Shaw assumed charge and he remained until 1904, when he was succeeded by the Rev. Fred Staff, who served for nine years, and under whose pastorate the present church was built. The next pastor was the Rev. Robert Locke, and the latter’s successor was the present pastor, Rev. Noel J. Breed, who assumed charge in October, 1918.

The present church edifice, located at the corner of First and Birch streets, is a magnificent stone building of stately and imposing architecture, and was erected at a cost of $50,000. It was made possible by large gifts from some of the wealthy members, E. W. Ellis, George W. Mead, F. J. Wood and Mrs. Frank Garrison contributing $5,000 each, while the other members of the congregation, practically without exception, showed a spirit of self-sacrifice in contributing to the utmost limit of their means. One of the hardest workers for the church was the pastor, the Rev. Fred Staff, who became ill from the effects of over exertion of his mental and physical powers. In 1906 the Saul Preston residence on First Avenue South was purchased and has since been used as a parsonage. The membership of the church is now about 402. Its active societies, aside from the Sunday school, are the Women’s Association and various Boys and Girls Organizations.
The First Moravian Church of Wisconsin Rapids.—In 1888 the Rev. Christian Madsen came here as a home missionary and on Jan. 20, 1889 organized in what was then Centrailia the First Moravian Church, with a membership of eleven. The little society erected a building—now the Trinity Moravian Church—and held services there. Mr. Madsen was succeeded as pastor by Rev. A. Petterson, who built the present edifice on First Avenue South, a fine brick building completed in 1899, and served both Moravian churches for about seven years, being assisted one year by the Rev. Garhard Francke. The Rev. D. C. Helmich became pastor of the First Moravian Church in 1901 and the Rev. Franz Zeller in 1902. After serving a few months the latter had to relinquish the charge on account of illness and his place was supplied by Rev. Mr. Miller, who was in charge from October, 1902 to January, 1903. The society at this time was not in a flourishing condition, so little interest being manifested that it seemed problematical whether it would continue much longer to exist. But with the coming of the Rev. C. A. Meilicke on Jan. 30, 1903, who has since remained pastor, a new era began, marked by greater spirituality, more active work on the part of all, and material prosperity as an organization, so that the church now exerts a strong moral and spiritual influence in the town. Among its notable achievements was the putting over, without any committee or personal solicitation, a drive for $12,000 (over-subscribed $2,000) for the Larger Life Foundation of the general church, the interest to go to missions, schools and old folks’ homes, under the trusteeship of the general church. The present membership is about 450, of whom 340 are communicants. In 1904 the present parsonage was bought. The Christian Endeavor Society has been for many years the first Moravian society of the kind in the state in point of numbers. From this church started the Moravian churches at Rudolph, Kellner and Veedum, and two missions, the Saratoga Union Church and the Ten Mile Creek Mission.

Trinity Moravian Church, located at the corner of Third Avenue North and McKinley Street, Wisconsin Rapids, was started in 1897 as the Scandinavian Moravian Church; upon the erection of a new First Moravian Church, in 1899, the older edifice became the Scandinavian Moravian. The Rev. A. Petterson served both churches during his stay, but when he left separate ministers were secured for the two churches and the Rev. J. J. Groenfeldt came to the Scandinavian Moravian Church, now the Trinity Moravian. He was succeeded by the Rev. Mr. Johnson, whose successor, the Rev. Theodore Reineke, served three years till 1920, when the present pastor, Rev. H. Shoecburt came. He has made great improvements, having raised the church and put in a basement, built an addition and renovated the interior. The pastor of Trinity Moravian also serves the Moravian Church in Rudolph, and the Union Church in Saratoga Township, the latter arrangement having existed for twenty-five years or more. The present total membership is about 331; communicant membership, 140. The Church is a frame structure.

The Seventh Day Adventist Church in Wisconsin Rapids was founded about about 1890 by Mrs. Sarah Harp, a resident of the city who died in 1919. The society held services in the residences of the members (generally at Mrs. Harp’s house) until the erection of a church edifice in 1907. Since this building was sold, April 1, 1922, they have met at the home of Henry Horock, 213 Twelfth Street.
North. A new building was planned, funds for which were available, but at a recent conference it was decided to postpone such action until after making a drive for new members, the success of which will determine the size and cost of the church. In this drive they will be aided by the Seventh Day Adventists Church at large. At one time this church had about 60 members but its strength has since been reduced to about four families.

Evangelical Lutheran Zion Church situated at the corner of Fourth Avenue North and Roosevelt Street, Wisconsin Rapids, started in 1908 with about 25 members, by the Rev. C. A. Rosander, of Prentiss, Wis. The newly formed congregation bought the site of the present church and for about twelve years used as a chapel two rooms in the house which at that time stood on the property, the remainder of the house being rented for residence purposes. Services were held one Sunday in each month. Mr. Rosander was succeeded by the Rev. Mr. Rehner, who was the first resident pastor; he served only six months and was succeeded by Rev. J. A. Nordling. For most of the time until 1920 the church was in a pastorate of several churches. After Rev. Mr. Nordling left the Rev. A. E. Monell served as vice pastor until, the Rev. Fred G. Olson, took charge Oct. 1, 1919. Mr. Olson at once cleared away the standing debt of $650 and at the annual meeting of 1920 it was decided to build a new church. The work was started that spring, and the new building a fine brick structure was dedicated in Sept. 1920. The parsonage was built in 1921 and the total value of the property is now conservatively estimated at $25,000. In the last three years the society has increased in strength from about 80 souls to 184.

St. Paul's Lutheran Church, Wisconsin Rapids, was founded in the spring of 1899 by the Rev. G. Baum with about 18 families. The frame church edifice, situated at the corner of Ninth Avenue North and McKinley Street, was dedicated in December, 1899 and in 1901 a parsonage was built. The Rev. Mr. Baum was succeeded in 1907 by Rev. Wm. Nommersen, who served nine years, his successor being the present pastor, the Rev. G. N. Thurow. A fine brick school building was erected adjoining the church in 1910, and 95 pupils, distributed among the eight grades, are taught in this school by Prof. S. J. Bergemann and Miss Adeline Mittelstaedt. In 1921 a pipe organ costing $3,000 was installed in the church. The congregation now numbers 88 members, there is a Young Peoples' Society of about 70 members, a Ladies' Aid Society of 88 members and a Sunday School of about 150 members.

St. John's Evangelical Church.—This congregation held its first religious meeting April 25, 1915, the church being formally organized with a congregation of five families by the Rev. G. E. Paulowit at a meeting held May 23, 1915. Previous to the construction of the new church edifice at the corner of North Fourth and Oak Streets, which was started in 1920 and dedicated Sept. 25, 1921, services were held in the old G. A. R. Hall. There are now 110 communicant members; there is a Sunday school with 45 members, a Young People's Society with a membership of 21, and a Ladies' Aid Society numbering about 27. The church edifice is a fine brick structure conservatively valued at $15,000. It is provided with the only "direct shower lighting" system in the city, the lights being placed above the ceiling and the light being softened by passing through diamond-cut lenses. The Rev. G. E. Paulowit is still pastor and also serves St. John's Evangelical Church in Arpin.
St. John's Episcopal Church, Wisconsin Rapids, was started in the late 70's, and on Oct. 1879, Daniel Rezin, Thomas Rezin, John Albee, Emanuel Dutruit, and S. H. W. Lord as a building committee purchased from Ella R. Cochran and J. Wilbur Cochran the site at Third Avenue North and McKinley Street. Until about 1885 a priest came from Wausau, the first resident priest being Father Gardner. There were many changes in the ministry, and in 1916 the present pastor, Rev. Johannes Rockstroh came. A sanctuary, guild hall and rectory were built in 1898, a portion of the expense being met by the congregation and a part by Bishop Grafton personally, the small remaining indebtedness being cleared away three years later. A baptismal font was placed in the church in 1888, in memory of Lauchlau Alexander MacKinnon, child of a family in the church; and in 1902 Mr. J. D. Witter's bequest of $1,000 was used to purchase a pipe organ. In 1912 the church was thoroughly overhauled and redecorated and four years later the vicarage was enlarged and thoroughly overhauled.

The First Baptist Church, located at Second and Maple Streets, Wisconsin Rapids, was organized by the Rev. C. H. Rust at a meeting held in the Chapel Car "Glad Tidings", June 15, 1903. Rev. D. W. Hurlburt of the Wisconsin State Baptist Convention, conducted the work of the chapel car, and he and Rev. E. B. Edmonds, Wisconsin Sunday School Missionary, a member of the chapel cars organization, assisted the Rev. Mr. Rust in the organization of the church. Mr. Rust remained to further organize the work, and was in charge of it for some time. Services were at first held in rooms rented for the purpose in the downtown district, but in 1905, under the pastorage of Rev. A. L. Putnam, the present beautiful church structure was erected, overlooking the river. The first elected minister after Rev. Mr. Putnam was the Rev. William Barstow, who came in 1908, and was succeeded in 1909 by Rev. M. B. Milne, who remained three years. Substitute ministers then filled the pulpit until 1914, when the Rev. J. F. Dew was elected; he was succeeded in 1916 by Rev. T. C. Hanson, who was followed in the spring of 1919 by the present pastor, Rev. John De Vries. The present membership is about 145, twenty of whom were organized in 1916 as a Polish mission and joined the church at that time. The church has a well attended Sunday School, a Ladies' Aid Society, a Baptist Young Peoples Union, and a branch of the World-Wide Guild, a young ladies' missionary society.

Immanuel Evangelical Lutheran Church in Wisconsin Rapids originated about 1873 when it was founded with eight members by Rev. F. Leyhe, of Kellner, Mr. Leyhe served the congregation until 1886, when he was succeeded by the Rev. J. F. Bittner, who remained nineteen years. The Rev. H. Maack served the church after this until 1912, when he was followed by Rev. R. F. W. Pautz, who remained until the present pastor, Rev. F. H. Kretzschmar took charge in 1920. The church now has 600 communicant members. The auxiliary societies are the Walther League, both Senior and Junior departments, with approximately 90 active members, a Ladies' Aid Society with about 85 members, and a parochial school whose enrollment last year was 110 pupils. Therefore the school has been conducted in the basement of the church building, which was equipped for that purpose, but starting with the next school year it will be housed in the building that was formerly the Seventh Day Adventist Church and that has recently been
purchased by the Immanuel congregation. Mr. E. H. Voskamp is principal of the school, in which the full eight grades are taught, and is also superintendent of the Sunday school, which has an enrollment of 80. The present fine brick church building at Prospect and North Eighth streets was built in 1909. The membership of the church has experienced a very gratifying increase during the last five years.

A Christian Science congregation was organized in Wisconsin Rapids in or about 1904 and has since held meetings in the old Congregational church. In 1915 they remodeled the building, which is located on the East Side, north of the public library.

Fraternal and other social organizations have existed in Wisconsin Rapids since an early period of its history and there are now many such in the city, some belonging to well established orders of national scope, and others being merely local clubs formed for purposes of recreation. A few also, formerly established, have died out. It is designed here to give a brief account only of the more important societies.

It is said that the Masons established a Blue Lodge in Grand Rapids in 1848, but their early records were destroyed by fire and authentic information in regard to the lodge is unavailable. The present Grand Rapids Lodge, No. 128, was organized under dispensation in June, 1861, the petitioners being S. J. Carpenter, Jesse H. Lang, A. Pierce, A. Lamb, Henry Glinton, Robert Farrish, Thomas Barbour, S. H. Pearson and J. Stanley Rood. The lodge obtained its charter in July, 1862, and the first officers were: S. J. Carpenter, W. M.; Jesse H. Land, S. W.; S. H. Pearson, J. W.; J. Stanley Rood, S. D.; Thomas Barbour, J. D.; Robert Farrish, Sec'y; Abijah Pierce, Treas. In 1867 fire destroyed the then existing records.

Wisconsin Rapids Chapter No. 89, Royal Arch Masons, is now about seven years old, its charter being dated Feb. 16, 1916. It had 32 charter members, its present membership being 102.

Rainbow Chapter No. 87, Order of the Eastern Star, was established early in 1897, its charter being the date of February 17 that year.

Grand Rapids Lodge No. 91, I. O. O. F., was instituted March 11, 1873, and received its charter Dec. 5, 1873, the charter members being C. L. Powers, F. W. Burt, Oscar Taylor, L. Kromer, Seth Reeves and Jos. L. Cotey. The first officers were: Oscar Taylor, N. G.; C. L. Powers, V. G.; F. W. Burt, Sec'y; and Seth Reeves, Treas. The present membership of the lodge is about 100. Meetings are held in a fine two-story brick building, built in 1911 and owned by the lodge, the lower floor being occupied by the W. G. Henke Co.'s general store and the second floor devoted to fraternal uses.

Riverside Rebekah Lodge No. 12, the woman's auxiliary to the Odd Fellows, was organized with a charter dated June 7, 1898, and is still holding regular meetings.

Oak Camp No. 10, Modern Woodmen of the World, was founded in February, 1894, its charter being issued April 4 that year. It has now 138 members who hold occasional meetings in Odd Fellows' Hall.
Oak Grove Circle No. 12, Woodmen Circle (the woman's auxiliary branch of Woodmen of the World), holds a charter dated March 21, 1903.


Maple Leaf Camp No. 1015, Royal Neighbors of America (auxiliary to the M. W. A.), was instituted May 5, 1898, with 22 members and its charter is dated June 6, 1898.

Wisconsin Rapids Lodge No. 693, Benevolent and Protective Order of Elks, was instituted April 21, 1921, as Grand Rapids Lodge No. 693. The original officers were: W. J. Conway, E. I.; A. G. Miller, E. L. K.; O. R. Rogenius, L. K.; J. C. Coniff, Lec. K.; J. A. Jaeger, Secy.; I. P. Witter, Treas.; Sam Church, T.; A. L. Ridgman, E.; W. G. Scott, I. G.; L. M. Schatterer, Chap.; trustees, O. T. Hougen, Ernest Oberbeck, W. H. Carey. The charter changing the name to Wisconsin Rapids Lodge No. 693, is dated Dec. 5, 1920. The lodge has a very beautiful building on Second street, which was dedicated April 17, 1915. During the war the building was thrown open to the ladies of the Red Cross, the whole second and third floors being utilized for home war work purposes.

Wisconsin Rapids Aerie, Fraternal Order of Eagles, No. 373, was founded April 30, 1903, with 73 charter members, since which time the membership has increased to 252. The state convention of the order, held at Wisconsin Rapids, June 20-23, 1916, brought about 4,000 visitors to the city.

Grand Rapids Wisconsin Lodge, Loyal Order of Moose, No. 1611, was organized in 1921 with 60 charter members. There are now 70 members and weekly meetings are held.

The Beavers, Equitable Fraternal Union and Mystic Workers of the World also have local organizations and there is a Woman's Benefit Association of the Maccabees, which has the name of Wisconsin Rapids Review No. 103.

Grand Rapids Branch No. 104, Catholic Knights of Wisconsin was organized March 3, 1890, with 15 charter members; it now has a membership of 50.

Wisconsin Rapids Council No. 1558, Knights of Columbus, was organized in 1911 with 60 charter members. The first officers were: D. D. Conway, G. K.; A. P. Mulroy, D. G. K.; C. E. Boles, Rec. Secy.; J. L. Reinhart, Fin. Secy.; F. S. Brazeau, Treas.; W. H. Carey, Chan.; F. M. Schmabel, W.; John Carrigan, Adv.; R. F. Johnson, I. G.; C. M. Nash, O. G.; and H. E. Pitch, J. J. Loose and J. L. Nash, trustees. J. L. Reinhart is still serving as financial secretary. Since the council was organized D. D. Conway, W. H. Carey, Arthur Mulroy, Charles Boles, John Nash, Louis Larson and M. L. Carey have served as grand knights. The present membership is 229. The council has engaged in many useful civic undertakings and can always be found in the van when important work is to be done. The members have made their strong christian influence felt everywhere, and have engaged earnestly in both religious and social work. They are pledged to fight all expressions of extreme radicalism tending to bolshevism or anarchy, and have-
willingly joined the national movement to carry on an offensive warfare against economic disorders by putting into effect a nation-wide educational program. The K. C. state convention was held in Wisconsin Rapids in 1921, starting on May 24.

Federation of Women’s Clubs.—On March 17, 1906, the ladies’ clubs of Wisconsin Rapids usually classified as study clubs, were organized as a unit of the state federation. Although called study clubs these organizations have extended their sphere of usefulness aside from the primary one of self culture, which is evidenced by the committees through which the Federation works, which are: Civic Improvement, Library, Art, Schools, Entertainment, Relief, Hospital, Child Welfare, Charity, etc. The work is divided and taken in rotation during the year by the different clubs each of which provides the best available speaker conversant with its work. The Civic Improvement Committee creates sentiment for or against such features as tend to beautify or mar the appearance or healthfulness of the city, and through the efforts of the organization a Park Commission was appointed and a park system projected which has accomplished satisfactory results. The Library Committee co-operates with the librarian of the T. B. Scott Public Library in various ways tending to increase the usefulness of the institution. The School Committee visits all school buildings, noting sanitation, lighting, interior decoration and playgrounds. Unfavorable conditions are reported and corrected. The Art Committee provides each year one or more exhibitions of pictures with accompanying lectures and musical program, and with the proceeds pictures are purchased for the schools. It also strives to create an art atmosphere by bringing art not only into the homes and public buildings but into the street and urges a style of architecture suited to locality and in harmony with the neighboring structures. The Entertainment Committee fills the treasury and arranges for high class lectures and musical entertainments, while the other committees function according to their respective names. The clubs or societies composing the Federation are: the Woman’s Club, organized in 1898; the Travel Class, 1898; the Entremenos Club, 1902; the Sunrise Club, 1919; the Beacon Light Club; the Historical and Literary Club, and the Needlework Guild of America. The presidents of the Federation from the beginning have been as follows: Mrs. Isaac P. Witter, 1906-1907; Mrs. Earl M. Pease, 1907-1908; Mrs. William F. Kellogg, 1908-1909; Mrs. John H. Rockwell, 1905-1910; Mrs. George M. Hill, 1910-1911; Mrs. William J. Conway, 1911-1912; Mrs. Edward N. Brundage, 1912-1913; Mrs. Guy O. Babcock, 1913-1914; Mrs. Guy Nash, 1914-1915; Mrs. Burton L. Brown, 1915-1916; Mrs. John Roberts, 1916-1917; Mrs. Charles E. Boles, 1917-1918; Mrs. Louis Reichel, 1918-1919; Mrs. George W. Mead, 1919-1920; Mrs. Lee Schlatterer, 1920-1921; Mrs. Rogers J. Mott, 1921-1922.

The Ah-dah-wa-gam Chapter, Daughters of the American Revolution, was authorized and organized April 17, 1909, and was granted a charter Oct. 15 that year. There were 14 charter members and the first officers were: Mrs. Emily Phelps Witter, Regent; Mrs. Caroline K. Hoskinson, V. Reg.; Mrs. Kate Barrows Hambrecht, Rec. Secy.; Mrs. Mae Vaughan, Registrar; Mrs. Louise K. MacKinnon, Treas.; and Mrs. Cecelia K. Gibson, Historian. The chapter now has 37 members and meets once a month during the period from September to June.

Wood County Post No. 22, Dept. of Wis., G. A. R., was formed under a charter dated Dec. 9, 1881, There were 27 charter members, while the present member-

The Woman's Relief Corps No. 55 was organized soon after the G. A. R. Post. It has now about 60 members. Mrs. W. H. Getts was the first president.

Post No. 9, Wisconsin Department of the American Legion, was established July 9, 1919, with 30 charter members. The Post was named after Corporal Charles Hagerstrom, who was the first man killed in action in France from Wisconsin Rapids. His record in brief is as follows: Enlisted as a private at Wisconsin Rapids, June 28, 1917; left with Troop G contingent of National Guards that summer and was mustered into the National service in Texas. He subsequently went overseas; was engaged on the Haute-Alsace Sector, June 9-22, 1918, and was in the Aisne-Marne offensive between Aug. 1 and Aug. 6, 1918, where he received injuries from which he died Aug. 9, 1918. The first commander of Post No. 9 was R. M. Gibson, who served one year. He was succeeded by Frank Noel, who served a few months—from July, 1920, to Oct. 27, 1920; Dr. Frank N. Pomainville serving out the remainder of the term. The next commander was James Jenkins, July 27, 1921, to March 22, 1922, since which time H. W. Goggins has been commander. The Post, which now has 175 members, meets in the National Guard Armory twice a month.

Post No. 4, World War Veterans, was formed under a charter dated Oct. 20, 1921, and is in active existence.

In honor of the men from Wisconsin Rapids and vicinity who died in the service during the late war, there has been set apart a piece of ground known as Legion Park, which was dedicated May 30, 1922. The land is city property and was parked partly at Legion expense, although the main expense was borne by the Wisconsin Rapids Park Commission. It was then named by Charles Hagerstrom Post No. 9, American Legion, and dedicated. The park contains a concrete swimming-pool with bath (dressing) houses for men and women. Forty trees have been respectively and permanently marked with the names of the honored dead. These names are as follows: Fred Bruderli, Charles Bulgrin, Frederick Case, Gustav Closuit, John A. Fosch, Charles R. Hagerstrom, Archie Hamel, Carl H. Lindstrom, Henry Lipsitz, Paul Manz, Harry Palmer, Corp. Paul Pazourck, Ole Petersen, Edward Semenski, Eugene C. Timlin, Marvin Weingarden, Lawrence J. Akey, Ignace G. Brostowitz, George Babcock, Lieut. John Buckley, Julius A. Budde, Lucius Boltwood, Robert Coates, Max Gewanski, Alex Grundkowski, Robert Huggins, Lucius Jakan, William Kallman, Edward Langer, Harold K. Larson, Alvil E. Miller, Lieut. Francis Potts, (Lieut.) Valentine Weber, Edw. Preston, Henry Podawitz, George Stocking, Kenneth Stocking, Will Metzger, Curtis Barber, and Anthony Minta.

Battery E of the 120th Field Artillery, located at Wisconsin Rapids, was recognized April 18, 1921, and takes the place of the previous organization, which was mustered out to enter the federal service in 1917. William Kraske is captain, C. J. Severance, first lieutenant, and H. H. Stark, second lieutenant. The battery has its headquarters in their armory on First street north.

Wisconsin Rapids Council of Boy Scouts of America—The first effort to establish a Boy Scout organization in Wisconsin Rapids took place in 1917 under the leadership of L. F. Kinnister. This resulted in the establishment of a Boy Scout camp that summer, B. R. Goggins being president of the temporary organization, and enough interest was developed among the boys to make possible the founding of the present council, which was organized in the spring of 1920 by a representative of the National Council of Boy Scouts of America, and the membership of which (including the members at Nekoosa, Port Edwards and Biron), is 215 (June, 1922). In 1920 a joint camp was held with the Stevens Point Council at Sunset Lake, Portage County, lasting six weeks or more in the months of July and August and plans were made to hold camp every year. The Council has permanent offices in the Public Library building, Wisconsin Rapids. The officers for 1922, all representative business or professional men, are: C. D. Searls, president; G. F. LaBour vice president; F. H. Eberhardt, vice-president, Biron; J. E. Rohr, vice president, Nekoosa; G. M. Hafenbrack, vice president, Port Edwards; F. H. Muehlstein, treasurer; Guy Nash, scout Com.; E. H. Justice, executive. Chairmen of Committees: W. F. Kellogg, Camp; T. W. Brazeau, Finance; T. M. Mills, Activity; E. G. Doudna, Education; W. H. Reeves, Auditing; R. J. Mott, Program; M. H. Jackson, Vocational-guidance; Guy Nash, Court of Honor. The boys have shown much interest in the organization and have profited by its training. One life was saved at the swimming pool in June, 1922, by a member of the Council, Rogers Garrison, aged 13, whose prompt and successful action was due to his scout training.

The Wisconsin Rapids Rotary Club, No. 501, was organized in May, 1919, with 25 members. There are now 52 members and the club meets every Wednesday in the Masonic Hall. Edgar C. Doudner is president and Earl B. Smart secretary. The first president was Charles Kellogg, and the first secretary L. Horton.

The Bullseye Country Club of Wisconsin Rapids was organized in the summer of 1922. The club’s existence was brought about largely through the public spirit of George W. Mead, who bought a tract of over 100 acres on the Wisconsin River two miles below the city, turned it into an excellent golf course, and offered to lease it to a country club, if one should be organized, for $1 per year, this sum being merely for the purpose of maintaining intact his title to the land. The club was formed as a result of this offer, and built a $5,000 club house which was formally opened Aug. 26, 1922. There are now about 100 members; Roy Rogers is president and W. J. Taylor secretary and treasurer. The club took its name from
the old time rivermen’s name for the tract of land which now forms the club grounds Bullseye Bluff. The fine golf course built by Mr. Mead is equipped with pipes and pumping engines so arranged that all the greens and even the fairways can be watered and so kept in perfect condition. The course has nine holes and has a total length of 2,664 yards.

The Retailers Association of Wisconsin Rapids was organized in December of 1921 and has at present 60 members; its membership is not restricted to retailers but is open to all who care to join, and includes professional men and others. It is a very active organization; besides the ordinary functions of a Retailers Association it carries on the work ordinarily cared for by a municipal Chamber of Commerce, the local body formed for that purpose not being operative at present. The list of officers of the Retailers Association has remained unchanged since its organization and is as follows: president, C. E. Kruger; secretary and treasurer, T. P. Peerenboom; directors, Ray Johnson, F. E. Kruger, Meyer Fridstein, Ferdinand Link, William F. Glueue, August Gottschalk, and F. J. Benkowski, the last named director having been particularly active in promoting the work of the association.

The Old Settlers Association, formed of the pioneer residents of Wisconsin Rapids, was organized in 1882. On account of depletion of its ranks by death, its surviving members have not held regular meetings for some years past, but during the years of its active existence it performed a most useful function in the life of the community. Among the active workers of the early years of the association may be mentioned the families of J. D. Witter, E. B. Rossier, I. L. Mosher, R. E. McFarland, J. Jackson, R. C. Worthington, L. P. Powers, and F. J. Wood.

The United States census of 1920 gives the population of Wisconsin Rapids as 7,243.