

FOREWORD

EIGHTY YEARS AGO, a young man, G. A. Cunningham, published a book spanning the years between the coming of the first white man to this region and the year 1878. Cunningham was editor of the *Neenah Gazette*, and his book, "History of Neenah," was printed in his little print shop on the second floor of the Pettibone Block (site of the First National Bank).

Eight decades have come and gone since Cunningham signed off. It was at John Tolversen's suggestion that a committee came into being during the spring of 1955 to consider what might be done to record, for the benefit of posterity, the essential facts, happenings and movements of those 80 years. Names of that committee appear at the end of this foreword.

The committee began its work by listing the various fields and areas of community life to be explored, and delegating specific responsibilities to many citizens. The response was generous. A vast array of historical data from churches, lodges, societies, schools, municipal functions, sports, the professions and industry flowed in. Only 30% of Neenah's commercial enterprises responded.

It was obvious at the outset that our problem was more complex than Cunningham faced in the 1870's. He could keep Neenah quite single in his thinking, whereas now life in the Twin Cities is intertwined, industrially, socially, economically and religiously—one Community Chest, one Chamber of Commerce, one sewage disposal plant, to mention but three of the many factors that bring not only Menasha, but Appleton, into any historical study of Neenah.

We make no apologies for the fact that this is the work of amateurs. On the contrary, we invite the reader to share it with us. At the rear of each chapter of Part I will be found blank pages on which we hope readers will make note of anything that they feel would add to the value of the volume.

We particularly urge our readers to note any inaccuracies.

The above comment is made in the consciousness that Neenah will recognize her centennial of cityhood in 1973. As that event looms up

over the horizon, it may well be that some more competent historians will desire to add to, or re-do these pages.

To this end we suggest that all comments and criticisms be passed to an officer of the Neenah Historical Society.

You will note that this volume is in two parts.

Part I takes a bird's eye view of the Cunningham era, evaluates the significance of the Fox waterway in the development of this area, and brings into view the many products of science, research and invention that have so profoundly altered the lives of our people, particularly since the turn of the century.

Part I then continues as a story, by decades, recording, in condensed form, the growth of Neenah from its crude beginnings to the robust and cultured community of 1958.

In Part II will be found a major portion of the source material that came in from interested citizens throughout the length and breadth of our Twin Cities.

Through use of the Table of Contents, reference may be made to specific subjects, as one scans the decade material and desires fuller information.

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