



This is a

Menasha History
Change Over Time

RESOURCE

Guide for Teachers

Main Street Through the Years

Sanborn Maps™

Fire insurance maps were developed around the time of the Civil War to give insurance companies information on the relative risk to a building they were insuring. The Sanborn-Paris Company developed into the industry leader to the extent that “Sanborn Map” is commonly used to mean any such map, the way Kleenex is used for facial tissue. For Menasha, the only fire insurance maps known to exist actually are Sanborn Maps™. These maps have a scale of 50 feet to an inch. They show whether a building is of wood, brick, or stone construction. The shape of the building shown on the map is the outline of the roof. D stands for dwelling; the uses of commercial buildings are also indicated. Architectural historians use these maps to determine the age of buildings.

For further information and explanations of Sanborn Maps™ and their uses see:
<http://www.wisconsinhistory.org/localhistory/articles/sanborn.asp>
<http://www.wisconsinhistory.org/libraryarchives/maps/sanborn.asp>

Overview Maps

1884 Map, East Section: “Upper Main” from the Square to Racine St.

Points of Interest

Block 43: being built, pigpen, lock up [jail].

Lake View House, previously (and again later) named the Fox River House, was a farmers’ hotel, with the large stable and yard in back for the horses and wagons.

Tin shop (behind the hardware store at 613 Main) and cabinet shop are made of metal or stone to reduce risk of fire. Tin would be heated for making into objects; cabinet making would involve sawdust and flammable varnish.

Block 44: brick oven in wooden bakery building, P. O. (Post Office).

Block 2: wind mill, ice house. Covered walk (dotted lines) to W.C. (water closet/privy). All these serve the National Hotel.

National Hotel was the main hotel for business travelers. They would be brought from the railroad station by a “transfer line.” Individuals would have ice delivered to their homes regularly, but the Hotel would use enough to have its own icehouse. The windmill also belonged to the Hotel and was used to pump water.

Types of businesses which no longer exist or have changed:

Millinery: A business which “makes and sells bonnets and hats for women.” (Encyclopaedia Britannica 1911) They would also sell ribbons and other items which women might use to change the trimmings on bonnets they already had.

Livery: “an establishment where horses and carriages are kept or let out for hire.” (EB 1911) A stable where you could rent a horse. “Boarding stable” meant that a horse owner could rent a stall for the horse, and the stable workers would feed and care for it. Since a horse must be fed, watered and exercised even on days when the owners do not need it, this was a way a busy family could be sure the horse received good care.

Harness: the collar and straps used to attach a horse to a carriage, wagon or farm machinery. There are metal pieces, particularly for fasteners, but most of the harness is made of leather.

Drugs & Stat’y: Stationery is paper and envelopes for writing letters. Telephones were still very new. They were invented by Alexander Graham Bell in 1876 and reached Menasha in 1882. Businesses usually got telephones before private homes. So people wrote lots of letters. A child might be sent to the nearest grocery store with a list of items to pick up or have delivered.

Meat market: Meat markets were common because of poor quality home refrigeration; people bought often, but for only day or two at a time.

Dry goods: clothing, cloth, and sewing supplies (people sewed their own clothing more than now).

Wallpaper & Paint. Although we still have these stores, people repapered room often in those days because the smoke and soot from wood stoves made it dirty fast.

Cobblers: This covered shoe making, sales and repair. People walked a lot, and wore out shoes.

Saloons: Many of these served a lunch, and are referred to in ads as a “buffet.”

1884 map west section: “Lower Main” between Tayco and the Square

Points of Interest

Block 3 (from Tayco east): Hand engine no. 2 is a fire station, but the water would be pumped by hand rather than the steam engine.

Plow shop. Note brick tempering oven, coal shed.

Blacksmith is next to livery because the horses will need horseshoeing services.

Woodenware factory on south side of channel—note “Oil house” made of brick on posts in the pond to reduce risk of fire.

Block 2 (continuing east): Menasha House Boarding. Probably long-term residents rather than overnight or short-term guests. Meals would be included (at set hours, not restaurant style), and perhaps laundry service.

Block 7 (north side of Main street): Eagle Ho. is Eagle House, a hotel

Store Who=wholesale;

IOOF Hall would be the meeting place of the IOOF, a club, on second floor.

Blacksmith—made of stone to avoid fire risk. Iron needed to be hot for shaping.

Steam Fire House brick lined is a fire station.

Undertaker with furniture: This was common, as caskets also involve wood and upholstery.

In the River: Mapper’s initials and date: K.H. S. 10.10.84

1900 Map Overview:

Points of Interest

Street numbers:

On Broad St., the house numbers are all mixed up: from left: 501, 502, 503, 105, 505, 101. One set gets bigger as you go east, the other gets smaller.

On this section of Main, the numbers go from 601 to 624 on the north side of the street, then begin with 625 (which comes right after 210!) and go to 649

Block 43, starting at top left:

Houses face Broad St.; this area is now a parking lot.

Many buildings are marked "ven'd" which means veneered. That is, brick outside for looks, but really built of wood.

Main Street:

604 City Meat Market was wooden in 1884; it burned in 1894 and new building was built of brick. This market was operated by Nick Beck. Note the small building in back labeled smoke house.

608-609 new buildings in brick.

620-621 Lake View House becomes Fox River House. Stable is smaller. Pig pen is gone.

622 "lock up" is gone, replaced by one attached to City Hall.

624 Building on corner, which was a grocery, is now the Menasha Breeze, a newspaper. The small building at back along lot line is iron clad for fireproof storage of paper.

Block 44

633 B & S is boots and shoes. There was a shoe store on this corner for 80 years.

641-649 Two major fires destroyed the wood frame buildings which show on the 1884 map. A city ordinance required that they be rebuilt in brick. The buildings numbered 647-649 were built to replace those burned in 1890. Those numbered 642-644 replaced those burned in June of 1892 in a fire which spread from the Wooden Ware barn on Water Street.

In December 1894, some of the building owners erected a windmill to pump water to a rooftop reservoir, both to provide water for daily use and to help in any future fire. The mill shows on this map but was removed by the 1913 map, as the city built a municipal waterworks in 1905-6.

Bicycle shop: Bicycles had become popular during this time.

Elisha D. Smith Library. The new library was a source of pride. It was named for the owner of the Menasha Woodenware Company, who gave money for its construction. See "City Departments" section.

Block 2:

628 Postal Telegraph. Western Union sign visible in 1910 photo; gone by 1913.

544-545 Grocery store and house attached. The family could go back and forth between the two. Frequently a bell would be attached to the door of the grocery so the owners could hear when a customer came in.

Fox Street becomes Clay St. between blocks 2 and 3

Block 3:

Fire house on Tayco Street has become a grocery. The new fire station in City Hall replaced this location.

Block 7 (north side of Main Street):

City Hall interior is laid out in detail. The left side is for the hose and ladder truck, the right for the fire engine, that is, a steam pumper. Behind that is the stable area, marked 6 horses, 3 300 foot hoses, 2 hose carts, etc. Behind this is the “lock up” or jail.

Upstairs were offices and a meeting room for council meetings.

1913 overview

Lower Main still has a large number of dwellings, while Upper Main is all businesses at the first floor level, although some owners live on the second floor.

Block 2

113 Bath House. This establishment would offer regular and steam baths.

151 Bakery has expanded; the blacksmith shop which was next door is gone.

Block 7 (north side of Main Street):

City Hall now has a “jail” not “lock-up”

Livery next door to City Hall is now a Garage, meaning auto service station. Lettering at side says “250 gallon gasoline tank underground.”

Onward Manufacturing Co. has moved into the former blacksmith shop.

Both these changes indicate the move from horse-drawn vehicles to automobiles.

Main Street Interactive Map 1884

Click on the camera to see a photo taken from that location. Click on a key for an interior photo. Click on a newspaper for an article or advertisement.

Main Street: (from left to right)

Image 1: Upper Main St. looking east from the public square

Note horsedrawn trolley, wagons, and unpaved street.

On the left side of street, the gargoyles at gable peaks are no longer there, but the rest of the building is. Big boot hanging in front of cobbler shop—see ad. National Hotel burned in fall, 1901.

Image ID#87-5324_15_1887

Image 2: National Hotel, ca. 1871.

The National Hotel was built in 1870; it burned in October 1901 and was replaced by the Hotel Menasha. See illustration on bird's-eye map as well.

Image ID#nationalhotel

Image 3: City Meat Market, late 1880s.

Nicholas Beck bought this building in Sept. 1886; it burned in 1894. The photo was probably from 1886-7.

Note narrow stairs between buildings.

Store to right offers “Booth’s Oysters Today.” Booth’s Oysters were shipped to the midwest as early as 1873. Easterners who missed this ocean delicacy were delighted that railroads made the shipment of oysters possible in the cool months of the year.

Image ID#mpl_00469

Image 4: “Sign of the Big Boot” Ad; Nov. 15, 1890, Menasha Press

See boot in photo; the Sanborn map is marked cobbler.

Image ID#SignoftheBoot1890_11

Image 5: “Went Up In Smoke” Sept. 27, 1890, Menasha Press

Image ID#fire1890_09_27

Main Street Interactive Map 1900:

Image 1: Planner Block, 2112-214 Main St.

This building housed John Planner’s Dry Goods store, with meeting rooms on the second floor. Hats in left window, dresses center right. Mr. Planner built the building in 1884 and sold it in October 1913 to Trilling Hardware.

Image ID#: plannerbuildingnorthofmain

Image 2: Elisha D. Smith Public Library circa 1898-1900.

Note a lack of landscaping, so the building must still be new. The High School is visible over roof. The building to right of library served as a blacksmith shop, then a bicycle shop. St. Mary's church is visible at upper right. The bridge crossed at Mill St., and was later replaced by the Racine St. Bridge. Note dock area at the foot of Racine St., wooden porches on the back of the brick buildings facing Main St.

Image ID#: mpl_aerial98H-3

Image 3: Trilling Hardware, 208 Main, probably 1908.

Trilling built this store in 1887; plate glass windows were added in 1908. This picture may document that change. Vilas Brothers paints was founded around 1878. Trilling became the local dealer for this brand in 1892.

Image ID#: mpl_000657

Image 4: Menasha Hotel was built 1905-1906 to replace the National Hotel.

Image ID#: dover16

Image 5: Western Union Telegraph and Banta Printing Co., 1905-10.

Banta moved across the Fox River early in 1911.

Image ID#: mplss4855

Image 6: Typesetting Banta Publishing Company

Image ID#: dover45

Image 7: Main Street Looking West from Racine St., 1894-1897

A city crew cleans and smoothes the street. At that time Main Street was made of cedar blocks with a thin layer of dirt on top for cushioning. The tracks are for the horse-drawn streetcars.

Image ID#mainstreetlookingwestfromri

Main Street Interactive Map 1913:

Image 1: Upper Main looking east from the square, 1910-1915.

Between June 1910 and May 1915 when Foss Drugs replaced Barnett Drug Co. on corner of Milwaukee St. The arched lights were installed at the beginning of June 1910. The sign halfway down the street reads ice cream soda.

Image ID#: downtownlookingeast1910

Image 2: Fox River House, between 1905 and 1910.

From the Lucille Maurer Handler photo collection at the Menasha Historical Society. Lucille identified the girl as herself; she was born in 1901. Her family operated the hotel at that time; they sold the business in 1910. The photo dates from before the paving in May-June 1910.

The fence around the stable yard has been painted with advertising for a patent medicine. The brand name does not show, but it appears to be for a brand of celery tonic, which was supposed to be good for the nerves; although in this ad the words "Blood" and "lungs" are legible (possibly "liver" is the middle word?). You can still buy Dr. Brown's Cel-Ray soda in some parts of the U.S.

Image ID#: foxriverhousecirca1910

Image 3: Trilling Hardware Store interior.

This photo from 1913 shows the store at 212 Main from the back door looking forward. Note sleds on the floor, cooking stoves at right.

Image ID#: mplss2323

Image 4: Preserve Beauty of Main Street Triangle, May 13, 1910, Menasha Record

Image ID#: circle1910_05_13

Image 4.5: "Popcorn Man," March 29, 1913, Menasha Record

Not only was the beauty of the Triangle preserved, it became the location for many band concerts, and a place to meet and socialize. The popcorn wagon was a seasonal favorite.

Image ID#: PopcornMan1913_03_2

Image 5: Fox River House Picnic, July 28, 1913, Menasha Record

This article makes it clear that most of the residents of the Fox River House at this time were long-term boarders.

Image ID#:FRHousepicnic_1913_07_28