



This is a

**Menasha History**  
Change Over Time

**RESOURCE**

### **READ FIRST: Background Information**

The Menasha History On-Line Website includes five units using primary sources. Primary sources used in these units include photographs, maps, news articles, postcards, schedules and other documents like time tables. The goal of this site and the lessons is to learn about the city of Menasha and its changes over time using these primary sources. The following paragraphs will give teachers valuable background information for each unit using primary sources to teach history using these types of artifacts. Students need to understand that the purpose of these lessons is to learn how Menasha has changed over time using primary resources.

#### **Main Street Through the Years**

**A community often evolved around its, “Main Street” during early development.**

**Main Street, represented the hub of economic and social features of ones community and can be used as a prime indicator of prosperity and forward thinking within an area and the understanding of the impacts of state, national, and global events and trends within a region.**

**From the trails of early Natives Americans (a series of five trails linking the lakes and communities from Appleton to Oshkosh and beyond) to first settlers of the area (Plank Road) and advances of the 21<sup>st</sup> century Main Street Menasha provides an insightful perspective to the theme of “change over time” in Menasha.**

**The years 1884, 1900, and 1913 offer a glimpse of our growing community as well as the world around it.**

## **City Departments Help Menasha**

**Every community attempts to address the basic needs of its residents and visitors through a range of public services. These services meet the ever changing demands for protection, quality of life, and intellectual growth of its people.**

**Fire protection was a major concern in every community due to the type of structures (primarily wood) and the fact especially in downtown areas many structures had “common” walls, thus fire spread rapidly to neighboring buildings resulting in significant property loss and potential loss of life.**

**As Menasha became more of an urban hub its downtown improvements were dependent upon continuous upgrades through “public works” projects that ultimately brought more commerce into the area and extended our involvement into global markets.**

**With a diverse population continuing as “life-long learners” one of the core centers became the library. Being “free”\* and also having works in the native language, (Polish and German) of the residents it became a popular site and represented the growing wealth of the region (\*Elisha D. Smith Library was donated through the philanthropy of her husband) along with the land for Smith Park on the “island”.**

## **Menasha Goes to Work**

**The vibrancy of a community depends on the opportunities for its residents to earn a living and acquire basic needs and wants.**

**Menasha had become an economic center rivaling the young city of Chicago to its south. Residents had progressive ventures in wooden ware, paper, and publishing as possibilities.**

**On Main Street one could find selections to meet their clothing, grocery, hardware, and medical needs, along with popular entertainment centers of the day.**

## **Getting Around Our Community**

**As the community grew improved methods of transportation and shipping became vital to the success and development of Menasha.**

**Steamboats transferred people along local waterways through a growing system of locks. Railroads merged in Menasha to meet desires of local residents going to Green Bay, Milwaukee, or Chicago and to address the state, national, and global demands of commerce.**

**Streetcars would come to link area communities of Appleton, Kaukauna, and Neenah with Menasha.**

**The Whiting Airport also vied for title as the regional airport with significant daily exchange. Its history can still be seen as you travel "Airport Road" or stop into Kitz and Pfeil Hardware for your weekend project (building served as the airports hanger).**

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