

Life by the Lake

STORIES OF FOND DU LAC

Daphne Lemke
Research by Tracy Reinhardt

Published by Fond du Lac Public Library

Printed by Action Printing

Copyright 2025

If you don't give back to the community, don't share your stories, don't tell the community why we are here, who we are, what we are, how are they going to know? You have to meet halfway. We have to be willing to share that, so that they come in to learn that, and so that we know each other better.

- Ger Xiong, 2024

Contents

Author's Note	5
Land Formations	7
Indigenous People.....	11
Early Pioneers	17
Community Growth	25
Transportation	34
Industry	38
Communication.....	47
Education	54
Churches	63
Medicine	66
First Responders and Disasters.....	72
Events and Recreation	77
The Arts.....	85
Acknowledgements.....	95
Bibliography	97
Photo credits	103

Author's Note

As a lifelong Fond du Lac citizen, it has been an honor to embark on this journey cataloging these pieces of local history.

This book expands on the work of Cindy Barden, who wrote “Foot of the Lake: An Early History of Fond du Lac, Wisconsin” in 1998. Tracy Reinhardt and I have taken every effort to accurately build this collection of facts and stories of Fond du Lac, including the modern history we have been living in for the 26 years after the initial book.

We could spend a year full-time on this project, present a brick-sized book, and still miss vital people and moments of Fond du Lac's past. Many people are named in this book, but I know many, many others have helped shaped Fond du Lac as a community.

That includes you.

I'd like to dedicate this book to every past, present, and future citizen of Fond du Lac and the surrounding area, as they continue to impact the community and shape its future.

Daphne Lemke

Land Formations

If you take away all of Fond du Lac's buildings, roads, and people, the land left behind tells a story in itself.

Fond du Lac sits famously at the base of Lake Winnebago, a position that offers several aesthetic and agricultural advantages.

Beyond the lake, the county has several rivers, fountains, and marshes. A rolling landscape is most recognizable in the eastern half.



Lake Winnebago from the Columbia Park tower in Fond du Lac County

Glaciers carved out the land in Fond du Lac

Thousands of years ago, Wisconsin was in its last Ice Age and was covered in glaciers. Up to two miles thick, these giant sheets of ice and snow were capable of carving out the land as they moved.

They pushed aside gravel, sand, and other sediment in their path to form ridges. Then, they melted to form bodies of water.

By the time all the glaciers melted, they had greatly reshaped the land. Fond du Lac was left with hills, valleys, and flat plains, as well as lakes, rivers, and streams.

Lake Winnebago attracted settlements after the Ice Age



One of the lakes the glaciers left behind was Lake Winnebago, the largest lake in Wisconsin.

From end to end, it spans 32 miles and is 21 feet at its deepest point.

Native Americans were the first people to settle around the lake area after the Ice Age ended. Eventually white settlers came to the lake, developing the communities of Fond du Lac, Oshkosh, Appleton, and more.

The lake itself is home to fish such as walleye, catfish, bass, musky, and northern pike. Many people flock to the lake for a couple weeks in the winter to spearfish sturgeon, a large species of fish that has lurked at the bottom of lakes ever since the dinosaurs last roamed the earth.

The Menominee Nation had revered sturgeon and perfected the spearfishing techniques that carried on to the present day. While some European settlers disregarded sturgeon as a nuisance, others followed the winter harvesting tradition. To prevent overharvesting, a regulated spearfishing season started in 1932.

The Niagara Escarpment was a sacred place for Native Americans

The Niagara Escarpment is often called “The Ledge” because it’s a series of exposed cliffs that stretches across Wisconsin’s landscape.

It’s most visible from Dodge County north to Fond du Lac, then along the east side of Lake Winnebago and up the western side of Door County. The escarpment follows the islands away from Wisconsin across the Great Lakes, through Michigan’s Upper Peninsula and Canada until it reaches the Niagara area of New York, where it got its name.

It was formed as glaciers moved through the Great Lakes area and forced two types of rock against each other: dolomite scooped away the softer shale rock. What was left was the steep face of what’s called a cuesta, a ridge with a gentle slope on one side.

Unique snail, salamander, frog, fern, and orchid species grow in the escarpment area, among other organisms such as the rare Dwarf Lake iris and Hines Emerald dragonfly.

The escarpment also has grass that can survive Wisconsin's extreme conditions, from freezing winters to drought-filled summers, and white cedar trees that can root directly in the bare rock of the cliffs.



Kieckhafer Park is part of the Niagara Escarpment

Underground, the dolomite opens into caves that many people have explored northeast of Fond du Lac.

The area was known to have been a sacred place for Native Americans. Organizations such as the Niagara Escarpment Resource Network believe this may have been because it was useful for settlement, a guide for traveling, and an outlet for religious purposes.

Ancient carvings and man-made rock formations, as well as prehistoric burial mounds, have been found along the escarpment.

White settlers were also influenced by the rock formations, as other sites of importance include slightly more modern cemeteries, churches, and kilns for heating limestone.

DID YOU KNOW?

Fond du Lac had the nickname "Fountain City" after the discovery of several artesian wells. The first discovery was during construction of the Badger Hotel on Main Street and Western Avenue in the 1840s, after J.C. Lewis and R.L. Morris hired a well driller for construction.

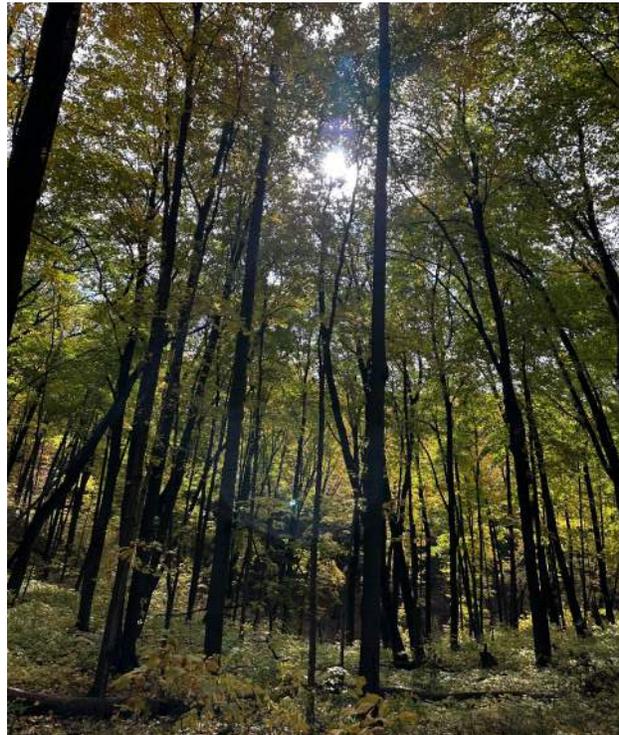
Kettle Moraine State Forest has several examples of glacial formations

Other unique land formations left behind by the glaciers can still be found south of Fond du Lac.

As a glacier moved, it pushed sediment in its path. If it stopped and melted back, a sediment ridge called a terminal moraine was left behind.

Blocks of ice broke off melting glaciers and were buried under melting water sediments. The buried ice melted, and the sediments on top collapsed with the lack of support, forming a kettle. These kettles filled with water to form lakes.

The Kettle Moraine State Forest- Northern Unit in Fond du Lac County has several kettle lakes, including Forest Lake and Lake Seven. Two of its most popular lakes for swimming and fishing, Long Lake and Mauthe Lake, are impoundments of the East Branch of the Milwaukee River.



While kettles are holes in the ground, kames are hills made of sand and other sediment that collected in craters in the ice and were left behind once the glaciers melted away. Dundee Mountain in the Kettle Moraine State Forest is an example of a kame.

Another glacier-formed hill is a drumlin, which looks like a teardrop from above because sediment was trapped under a moving glacier—the tip of the teardrop shape shows which direction the glacier was moving in.

A.D. Sutherland

In the 1920s, A.D. Sutherland contributed to much of Fond du Lac's present-day outdoor recreation opportunities.

While he was president of the Fond du Lac Chamber of Commerce, he helped create a planning commission for growing the city and forming local parks, including McDermott Park, Adelaide Park, Second Street Park, and Fruth Field.

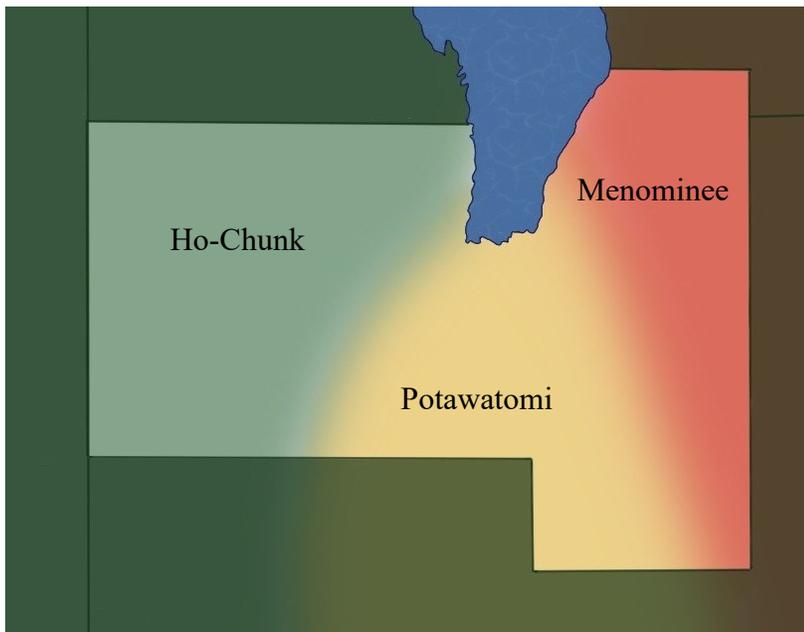
He also helped establish Eldorado Marsh and the Kettle Moraine State Forest, as well as Calumet Harbor and Horicon Marsh. Because of this, he was inducted into the Wisconsin Conservationist Hall of Fame and the United States Conservationist Hall of Fame.

Indigenous People

Following the latest Ice Age, Native Americans were the first to settle near the south shore of Lake Winnebago.

Some of the earliest-known settlers were hunters that followed herds of animals south from Canada, including saber-toothed cats and mammoths, as well as horses, antelope, and caribou. Some other settlers from thousands of years ago were known for building sacred mounds in the shapes of panthers, birds, bears, and other animals.

By the 19th century, the main communities in the Fond du Lac area were built by the Ho-Chunk, Menominee, and Potawatomi communities. These are the people the first European settlers would have encountered as they immigrated to the territory.



Approximate tribal lands circa approx. 1800
(Based on information from Wisconsin First Nations)

Ho-Chunk

A neighboring tribe had given the Ho-Chunk people the name “Winnebago,” and white settlers adopted the name for them as well. But the community has always called themselves Ho-Chunk, which means, in their own language, “People of the Sacred Voice.”

With a new constitution in 1994, the nation reclaimed its original name, and “Winnebago” became a thing of the past.

Ho-Chunk history is told in an oral tradition, passed down through generations in storytelling rather than written down on paper. Their name is also stylized in different ways, including Hocąk and Ho-Chungra.

The Ho-Chunk were known as farmers who loved their land in Wisconsin, but starting in the 1820s, they were forced to negotiate land sales with white settlers. Many tribal members refused to leave the state or repeatedly returned to Wisconsin after attempts to remove them to Iowa in 1832, then Minnesota by 1846.

Those that moved to Minnesota were repeatedly raided by Lakota and Ojibwe people on either side of their reservation.

In each new settlement that followed, including South Dakota in 1863 and Nebraska in 1865, they were subject to smaller and poorer living conditions.

Throughout the years, many Ho-Chunk have returned to Wisconsin, though they had to re-purchase their land in the central and east-central portion of the state. Their administration center stands in Black River Falls.

Potawatomi and Menominee

Before Fond du Lac was a city, much of the land and the rest of present-day central Fond du Lac County would have been occupied by Potawatomi communities at the start of the 19th century.

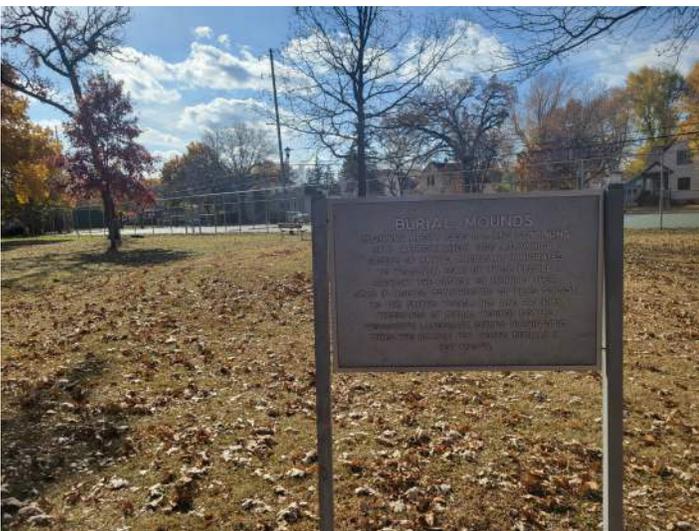
The nation held land across the Midwest and had signed 42 treaties with the U.S. government, the most treaties out of any tribe. The first treaty was signed in 1795 in Ohio.

Starting in 1830 with the Indian Removal Act, the Potawatomi were forced west of the Mississippi, then as far as Oklahoma—though many groups refused removal and fled to Wisconsin or further north.

One group settled in northern Wisconsin around 1880, creating the Forest County Potawatomi Community, which was officially recognized in 1913.

In 2001, the Forest County Potawatomi purchased 60 acres of land near Campbellsport in Fond du Lac County. Fifteen years earlier, the former landowner had uncovered the first of over 300 petroforms, which are designs on the ground made of strategically-placed stones. These include a 28-foot diameter medicine wheel, sundials, animal and human effigies, and more.

In northeast Wisconsin, Menominee nation land included the east side of Lake Winnebago by around 1800.



Taylor Park has ancient Native American burial mounds dated between approximately 1000 B.C. and 1200 A.D.

Their current reservation about 60 miles north of the lake was created in 1854 under treaty with the U.S. government.

During the 1950s, Congress terminated federal control of the reservation, and then the state government attempted to force the Menominee and other tribes to assimilate with American society.

The Menominee organized a non-profit in 1962 to preserve their name as they fought to regain tribal status for the next ten years. The Menominee Restoration Act was signed into law in 1973.

Brothertown community came to the area from New York

(Co-written with Phyllis Tousey, Chairwoman of the Brothertown Indian Nation Tribal Council)

Some communities moved west from their original homes in the eastern U.S. due to the growing pressure for land from white settlers.

People of the Brothertown Indian Nation (BIN) moved from New York to Wisconsin—northeast of Fond du Lac—around 1832. Several small communities on the east side of Lake Winnebago have Indian names, including the town of Brothertown. Just south of Brothertown, the old Perry School, which was used from 1918-1942 is now the BIN Cultural Center.

The Brothertown Indians are unique from many other tribes in another important way: they are the descendants of those coastal tribes that first made contact with the Europeans.

They are an amalgamated Tribe of Indians comprised of Mohegans, Eastern Pequots, Mashantucket Pequots, Niantic, Narragansett, Montauk, and Tunxis. These Tribes are the parent tribes of the present day Brothertown Indian Nation.

As a result of the Great Awakening, a religious movement in New England during the 1740s, many Indian people in Southern New England converted to Christianity, including many in the parent Tribes of the Brothertown Indians.



Logo courtesy of Brothertown Indian Nation

Samson Occom and Joseph Johnson, both Mohegan Indian scholars, were leaders in the planning and formation of a new community named Brothertown based upon Christian principles. Together, in planning the community's move from coastal New England to New York, they made an agreement with the Oneida Nation in 1774 to share a 10-mile strip of Oneida land.

DID YOU KNOW?

In 2020, the Brothertown Indian Nation established an annual Samson Occom day July 14 to honor its founder.

But in 1777, before they could move to their new home in Oneida, the Brothertown Indians were driven from their land by the British and forced to seek refuge with the Stockbridge Indians in Massachusetts until after the Revolutionary War.

On November 7, 1784 Samsom Occom named the new settlement in Oneida, “We now proceeded to form into a Body Politick. We named our town by the name of Brothertown, in Indian, Eeyamquittoowauconnuck”

In 1821, the Oneida, Stockbridge, and Brothertown Indians, often referred to historically as the New York Indians, signed treaties with the Menominee Nation for several million acres of land in Wisconsin, but the next year, the Menominee refused to honor the treaties because they determined they had been misled during the negotiations.



Spring Powwow, 2024

Photo courtesy of Brothertown Indian Nation

After years of dispute that followed, the federal government finally negotiated a new treaty. Ultimately, the Brothertown Indians were granted a reservation on the eastern shore of Lake Winnebago in what is now Calumet County in the Town of Brothertown.

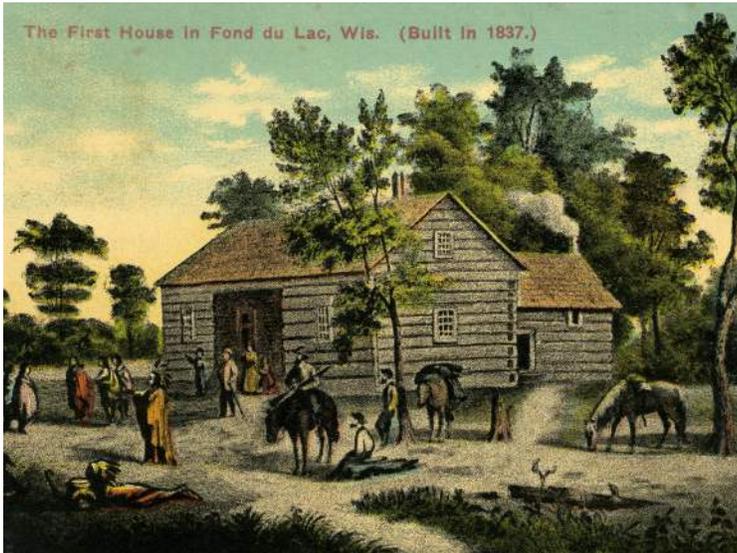
The Brothertown people settled in the area, clearing the wilderness and building the first grain mill along Lake Winnebago. They also built a communal building that served as a church, a meetinghouse, and a school, but later built a separate church. This became the first Methodist church in Wisconsin.

As white settlers continued to move west, the federal government attempted to remove the Brothertown Nation again, this time to Kansas. But the people decided they could protect their land the same way as the white settlers: through private ownership.

In 1839, the BIN requested United States citizenship, as well as individual land ownership, and the government granted the Nation's request. However, the Act of 1839 also included a clause that terminated the tribe's sovereignty, something the Nation did not request and did not want.

The Act terminated the government-to-government relationship between the Tribe and the federal government. The BIN continues to work towards federal recognition, stating that the government cannot terminate Indian tribal sovereignty, only the financial support and its obligation to protect Indian land. It notes that the Act that made all Indians U.S. citizens in 1924 did not terminate the tribal status of Indian Tribes.

The land lasted under individual Tribal ownership about 40 years, until much of it was lost to foreclosures, tax sales, economic hard times, and unscrupulous dealings by non-Indians. At that time, Indian people were not accustomed to owning land individually.



By then, many Brothertown people were living with friends on neighboring reservations, with some working labor jobs in white communities.

In these white communities, they became known for their mechanical and agricultural talents. They built the first steamboat to operate on Lake Winnebago, named "Manchester" after their township.

Then, they built the first house in Fond du Lac for the Fond du Lac Land Company.

The Nation endured through the 20th century, and in 1978, the federal government put forth guidelines for Indian nations to regain federal recognition. Two years later, in 1980, the BIN notified the government that it intended to apply for federal recognition.

After more than 30 years of submitting documents, legal research, and other materials to support their request for federal recognition, the United States Department of the Interior determined in 2012 that the BIN had been terminated by the Act of Congress in 1839 that granted Tribal members U.S. citizenship and allotted their land.

Therefore, since BIN was terminated by Congress, it could only be restored by Congress. The BIN is currently involved in restoration of its former status as a federally-recognized Indian Tribe.

"The government still retains forever in the National Archives every single letter, document etc that the BIN sent so we still won. Our story, our historical documents will be preserved for future generations."

- Retired Brothertown Genealogist and Historian Caroline Andler, 2024

Meanwhile, the State of Wisconsin recognized the Brothertown Nation’s importance to local history. This has included declaring the year 1982 as “The Year of the Brothertown” and honoring the Brothertown people with a historical marker on the original Brothertown Indian Nation Reservation in 1999.

In his Executive Order declaring Indigenous Peoples Day in Wisconsin, Governor Tony Evers acknowledged the “historic, cultural, and contemporary significance” of the Brothertown Indian Nation. The Nation has the support of Governor Evers, and in his letter of support for restoration, he refers to Brothertown as the 12th Tribe of Indians in Wisconsin.



After playing a vital role in developing the area, members of the Brothertown Nation continue to live in the area and across the Midwest. The Nation is governed by a nine member Tribal Council that meets every third Saturday of the month in Fond du Lac at the Tribal Headquarters.

The Brothertown Indians have maintained the Tribal Government headquarters in Fond du Lac since 1980.

Today, the Brothertown Indians Tribal Government and Community Center is located in Fond du Lac at 311 Winnebago Drive. Their Community Center houses a museum and a gift shop.

Their story is well-documented and interwoven with the histories of the Oneida Nation, the Stockbridge-Munsee Community and the Menominee Indian Nation, by the Wisconsin Historical Society (WHS), and by prominent historians and authors such as Patty Lowe.

Above: BIN council member Dawn Kraintz, secretary Melissa Kavonius, and Treasurer Michelle Wood

Right: Lake Winnebago Water Walk, putting out prayers for gratitude and healing of the waterways connected to and including Lake Winnebago

Photos courtesy of the Brothertown Indian Nation



Early Pioneers

Explorers learned about Wisconsin's best features in the 1800s, including Fond du Lac's rivers and the shores of Lake Winnebago. Soon, white settlers began to arrive.

Whenever a new resident or family arrived in Fond du Lac, other community members would help build houses, share their food, and offer other assistance that was needed.

The community built a wooden courthouse so the new settlers could record their purchase of land immediately. The building soon served other purposes, including a church, meeting house, and occasionally a dance hall.

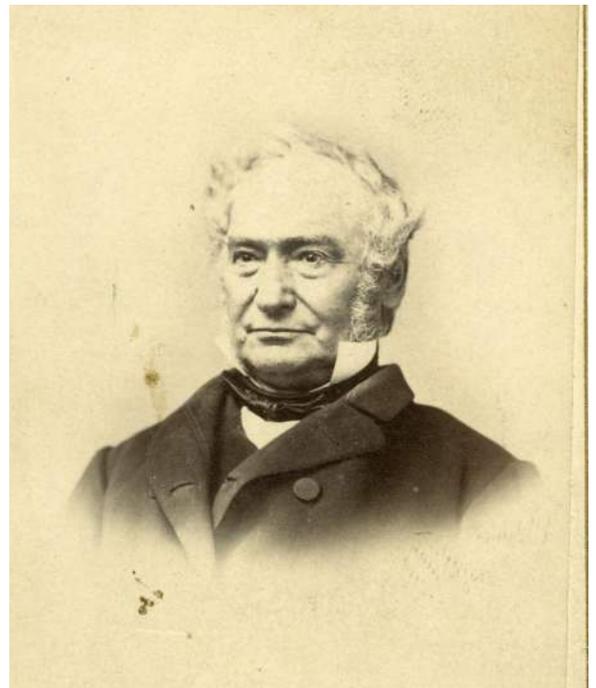
Separate churches were prioritized as Fond du Lac grew, even though the money for lumber began to run out.

James Doty explored Wisconsin before buying Fond du Lac land

James Duane Doty's story starts in Michigan in 1818, when he moved to Detroit as a lawyer. His career impressed the Michigan governor, who invited him two years later to join an exploratory expedition into "Michigan territory"—land that is now Wisconsin and Minnesota.

Doty recorded where the expedition went and what the crew discovered as they traveled. He spent many years exploring the land of what would become Wisconsin, and learned where the best rivers and lakes were located.

Just a few years into his travels, the Michigan territory began to attract settlers. U.S. President Monroe appointed Doty as Circuit Judge, holding annual court sessions in Prairie du Chien, Green Bay, and Mackinac to hear cases in those areas.



James Duane Doty

(Photo courtesy of Wisconsin Historical Society)

He was later appointed commissioner, and oversaw construction of a road between Prairie du Chien, Portage, and Green Bay. This road crossed what would become Fond du Lac, at the "farthest end" of Lake Winnebago. In 1835, Doty formed Fond du Lac Land Company with his friends to purchase large areas of land.

The Piers were the first white settlers in Fond du Lac

Colwert and Oscar Pier, brothers from Vermont, first met Doty in Green Bay while looking for a place to settle. A third brother, Edward, was on his second trip exploring possible settlements.

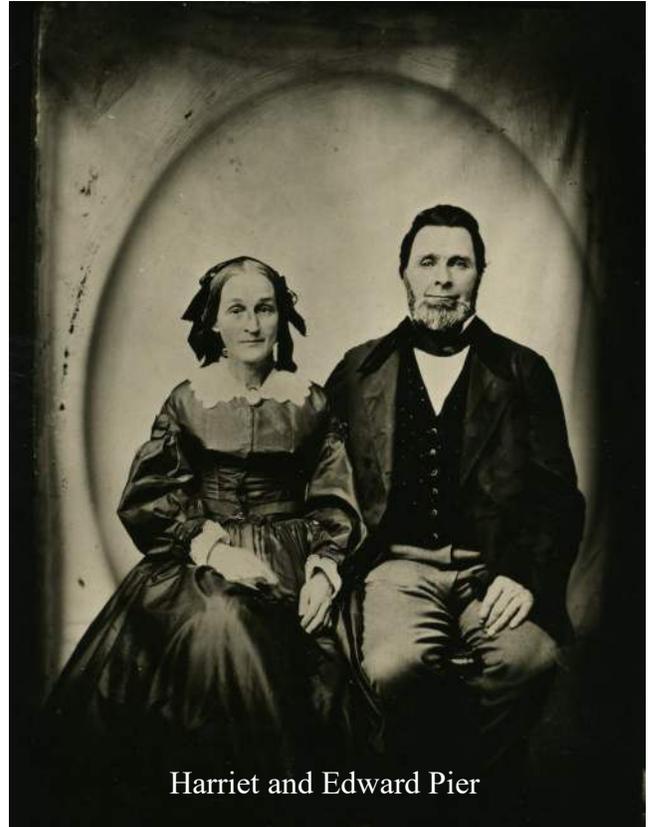
Doty suggested Fond du Lac with the hope that they would support more prospective settlers. He offered Colwert and Edward each 160 acres of land, right next to each other, if they would operate the city's first hotel, called the Fond du Lac House. Doty added another 160 acres for their father.

Edward and Colwert checked out the Fond du Lac land together, and after they decided they liked the land, Colwert was the first to settle.

Colwert's wife, Fanna, followed behind with all their possessions. The date she arrived—June 12, 1836—is considered Fond du Lac's birthday.

For several months, Edward stayed behind in Green Bay until the birth of his second child. His wife, Harriet, and the rest of the family arrived in Fond du Lac in February 1837. The other Pier families also followed.

Colwert and Fanna ran the Fond du Lac house for a little while, but Fanna soon became ill and later died. Edward and his wife then took on running the house.



Harriet and Edward Pier

DID YOU KNOW?

In 1840, there were only 139 people in Fond du Lac County, which was established as a county the previous year.

Dr. Mason Darling was the “Father of Fond du Lac”

Sometime after Fanna Pier's death, Doty began to search for a doctor, hoping to persuade one to move to Fond du Lac.

He found Dr. Mason Darling, who bought land next to the growing village. Out of the 80 acres he bought, he divided some of it into plots to sell to settlers. He sold one lot for a dollar, on the condition it would only be used to build a courthouse.

Though Fond du Lac started with the Fond du Lac Land Company in the northern part of current-day Fond du Lac, that land was marshy. The “heart” of Fond du Lac soon developed on Darling’s property instead.

Not only was Darling the first doctor in Fond du Lac, he was involved in state and local politics. He was elected to Congress when Wisconsin became a state in 1848, and was also the first mayor of Fond du Lac when the community became a city in 1852.

DID YOU KNOW?

Fond du Lac was led by a mayor until 1957, when citizens voted for a new city charter and adopted a new form of government, led by a City Manager and City Council. Victor P. Capelle was the city’s final mayor, and Robert H. McManus was the first City Manager.

Nathaniel Tallmadge settled near Fond du Lac before he became governor

Nathaniel Tallmadge, a U.S. Senator from New York, grew tired of national politics and moved west, settling in Fond du Lac in 1844. As one of nine children, he brought many of his siblings with him to the town of Empire, just east of Fond du Lac’s city boundary.



Nathaniel Tallmadge

(Photo courtesy of Wisconsin Historical Society)

He chose Wisconsin because new lands were available for sale, and he communicated with James Doty ahead of time about the territory.

Tallmadge and his wife, Abby, had nine children of their own by that time, between the ages of 4 and 20, so moving the entire family was a large undertaking.

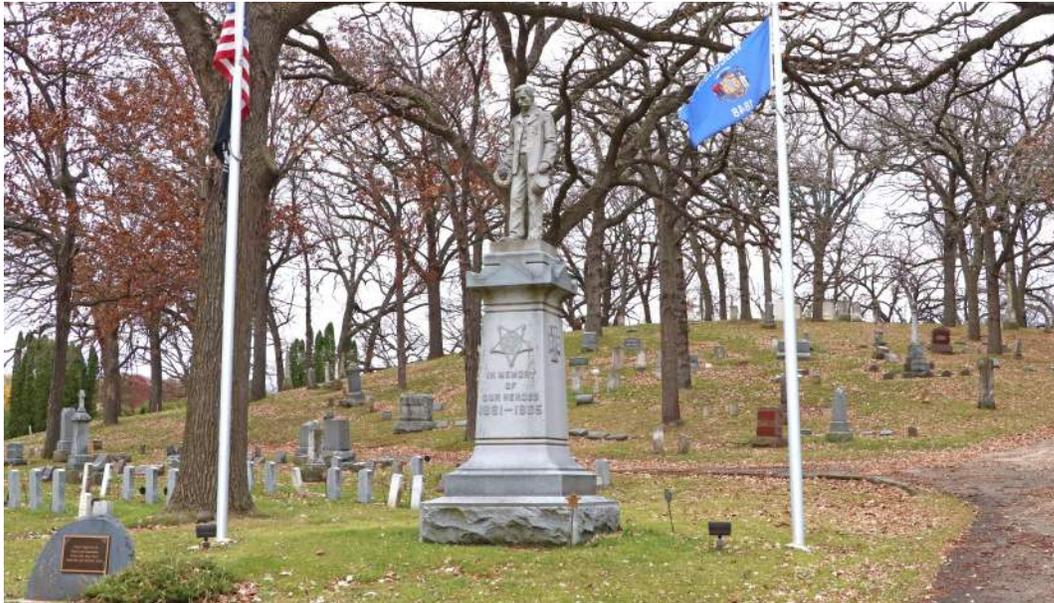
Tallmadge became governor of the Wisconsin Territory in 1844, and stayed in his Fond du Lac home to conduct most of the state business. This lasted less than a year: he was replaced with Henry Dodge when James K. Polk became president.

After his time as governor, he did not pursue another official role in politics, but he had a second home in Washington, DC. He traveled frequently as an unofficial ambassador for Wisconsin to the federal government, lobbying for his interests.

When the family had first moved to the area, Tallmadge's son, William, was away at college, but he came to visit the next summer. During that time, he was seriously injured.

While bedridden, William could see a hill on the property out the window, and he told his family he wanted to be buried there when he died. He requested the hill be called Rienzi.

The family did just that after William died, and Tallmadge donated the eight acres surrounding the hill as a public cemetery—the beginning of Rienzi Cemetery. William's was the first grave in the cemetery.



Rienzi Cemetery

DID YOU KNOW?

Nathaniel Tallmadge became known as a spiritual person after an experience inspecting a warship, where he stood right behind a large cannon during a demonstration. He felt an irresistible urge to leave, and right after he left, the gun exploded.

Convinced an afterlife existed, he became active in the Spiritual movement that was sweeping communities. He attended seances, where people attempted to talk to the dead.

The Galloways

The Galloway name is ever present in Fond du Lac, honoring a family that was well known in local industry and government.

Edwin H. Galloway first arrived in Fond du Lac from New York in 1848, eventually bringing his bride, Maria Adams Galloway, along with him. They started their first home in a small house and later moved to a small farmhouse.

Over the next few decades, the family's wealth grew large enough to renovate the house into a grand mansion in 1880. However, Edwin H. died in 1876 and it was his son, Edwin A. who completed the renovations. The finished result was the 30-room house with an attic and cellar.

During his life, Edwin H. was prominent in farming, lumber, and other industries, work that included running Melrose Farm on his homestead and raising prized Brown Swiss cows.

He was also a politician, serving as city treasurer, chairman of the Fond du Lac County Board of Supervisors, and city mayor before he was elected to the Wisconsin State Assembly in 1861.

His son, Edwin A. Galloway, founded Fond du Lac Cold Storage Co. in the early 1900s and partnered with Walter West to form the Galloway-West Co. creamery in 1910.

The third generation Galloway, Edwin P. Galloway, took over both the farm and Galloway-West Co.



Galloway House and grounds

(Photo courtesy of Wisconsin Historical Society)

Edwin P. retired in the 1950s, selling his herd of cattle and donating the Galloway home, carriage house, and land to the Fond du Lac County Historical Society in 1955.

The historical society, which had only formed seven years previously, restored the mansion to its 19th century state and preserved it in the years since. Several historical buildings from across Fond du Lac County were gradually added to the grounds, including a schoolhouse, a general store, and a town hall. These make up the Galloway House & Village.

Kate Pier

Kate Pier was born into the Hamilton family in Vermont in 1845, but became known as a successful Fond du Lac businesswoman and a pioneering lawyer before women were even granted the right to vote.

She came to Fond du Lac at 8 years old and eventually married lawyer Colwert K. Pier—Edward and Harriet Pier’s son—in 1866. Together, they raised their daughters Kate H., Caroline, and Harriet Hamilton Pier. A fourth daughter, Mary, died young.

From a young age, Kate Pier had learned of business life from her father, John Hamilton, and accompanied him on his work as a real estate agent. When he died in 1871, she took over his business.

As she ran the business, her daughters started their education. Soon, her oldest was ready for college. Kate H. decided to study law, and Kate Pier made the decision to enroll with her: she didn’t want her daughter to study alone in Madison, and also felt a law degree would be helpful in her business career.

Kate Pier and daughter Kate H. graduated together with high honors on June 22, 1887, Kate Pier’s 42nd birthday. They joined Colwert at Pier Law Office.

The family moved to Milwaukee the next year, but they kept the family home in Fond du Lac as a summer gathering place. In 1891, Caroline and Harriet earned their own law degrees and joined the family firm. At that time, only eight women in the state were lawyers.

The family firm was vital to two state laws that benefited women: one enabled women to act as legal assignees and the other enabled women attorneys to be court commissioners.

Kate Pier then became the first woman in the country appointed to a court position in 1893. She served as a Circuit Court commissioner for Milwaukee County.

That same year, daughter Kate H. became the first woman to argue a case in the Wisconsin Supreme Court, which she won.

Their accomplishments didn’t end at law, as Kate Pier also became the first woman to vote in Fond du Lac County, according to her obituary.

Kate Pier celebrated her 80th birthday among family in the Fond du Lac Pier home on June 22, 1925. She died in her sleep the next morning, 30 years after her husband.



“Kate Pier” photo by University of Wisconsin Law School Digital Repository Alumni Photos collection , licensed under CC BY-SA 4.0

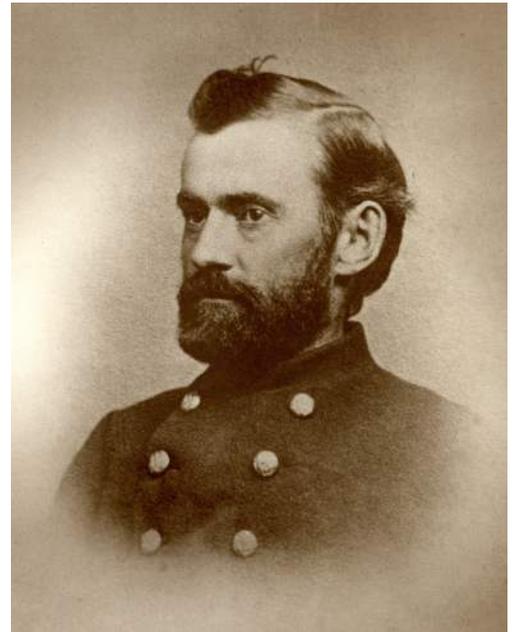
Fond du Lac goes off to war: Facts about local soldiers

The Civil War (1861-1865)

Colwert K. Pier, son of Fond du Lac's first family Edward and Harriet Pier, was the first man in Fond du Lac to volunteer for the Union Army in 1861. Company 1, comprised of 88 "Badger Boys," left on May 2, 1861, and six more groups of Fond du Lac County volunteers departed in the next few days.

Soldiers trained locally, at Camp Hamilton—later Camp Wood—near Bell Street on Fond du Lac's west side.

About 2,200 Fond du Lac-area men fought in the Civil War, including General Edward S. Bragg, the city's most well-known Civil War hero. He survived the war and served several terms in Congress before retiring in Fond du Lac.



General Bragg

World War I (1914-1918)

Over 3,200 Fond du Lac County soldiers served in World War I, and 99 of them died fighting. However, a total of 177 Fond du Lac County service members died from the war, whether on the battlefield, from wounds they received in service, in accidents, or from disease.

Service members included nurses, with at least a dozen women from Fond du Lac County. Genevieve Dyer of Fond du Lac had already gone to Europe with the Red Cross in 1914, long before the U.S. entered the war in 1917.

While the war officially ended in 1918, many local soldiers didn't return home until 1919.

World War II (1939-1945)

About 130 Fond du Lac County soldiers are recorded to have died in combat during World War II.

One of the men that returned a hero was James Megellas, a well-decorated veteran that served in the U.S. Army as a paratrooper and commissioned officer in the 82nd Airborne Division. His most celebrated heroic feat was in Herresbach, Belgium, on Jan. 25, 1945. He disabled a German tank with a hand grenade, then climbed on top to throw a second grenade into the tank's crew compartment.

Back home, the Fond du Lac County Fairgrounds held a camp of German prisoners of war (POWs).

Korean War (1950-1953)

Often known as the “Forgotten War,” the Korean War led to the deaths of 18 Fond du Lac County soldiers by 1953.

They were honored with a ceremony 50 years later, during which the community came together at Veterans Park to celebrate the lives of the fallen and their service. The event included a ceremonial tree planting in the park, with a plaque reading: “VFW Post 1904. In memory of our fallen comrades for Fond du Lac County during the Korean War. Dedicated August 17, 2003.”

Vietnam War (1955-1975)

The day the Vietnam War ended in 1975, the front page of The Reporter newspaper read: “Residents of Fond du Lac did little to mark the day except, perhaps, to allow the mind to flash back to headlines about local fatalities, to horrifying pictures of a nation and a people waylaid by modern warfare. . . And at home today are hundreds of veterans of the conflict, some carrying scars of wounds, all with varying memories about their days of service in a far-off land.”

The height of the U.S.’s involvement in the war lasted from the mid 1960s to 1973, so local veterans had already returned home. Among the fallen in the conflict were 30 soldiers from Fond du Lac County.

Wars in the Middle East

Since the 1970s, the U.S. has had an all-volunteer military force. This included soldiers fighting in what many have called the Global War on Terror, with several conflicts in Iraq, Afghanistan, and other countries.

Between 2001 and 2021, three soldiers listed in Fond du Lac County died overseas. Pfc. Rachel Bosveld, 19, died in 2003 in Iraq during a mortar attack on a Baghdad police station. US Army Spc. John Tollefson, 22, died in 2005 in Iraq from an improvised explosion device that detonated near his vehicle. Captain Derek A. Dobogai, 26, died in 2007 in Iraq from a helicopter crash.

Prior to these conflicts, one local casualty of the 1990-91 Gulf War was Pvt. Michael Fitz, 18, who died in Kuwait in an artillery barrage hours before U.S. President George Bush declared a ceasefire.

In 2000, an Al-Qaeda attack on the USS Cole in Yemen killed 17 soldiers, including Fond du Lac’s own Marc I. Nieto, 24, who was two weeks away from finishing his Navy service.

Today’s veterans receive support from the Fond du Lac County Veterans Service Office, as well as organizations such as Salute the Troops, which provides resources for service members, veterans, and their families.

Community Growth

Fond du Lac's first immigrants were white settlers, many of them German or occasionally Irish, in the mid-1800s. After the first settlers came, those that followed often relied on letters and handbooks from people who had already visited the land.

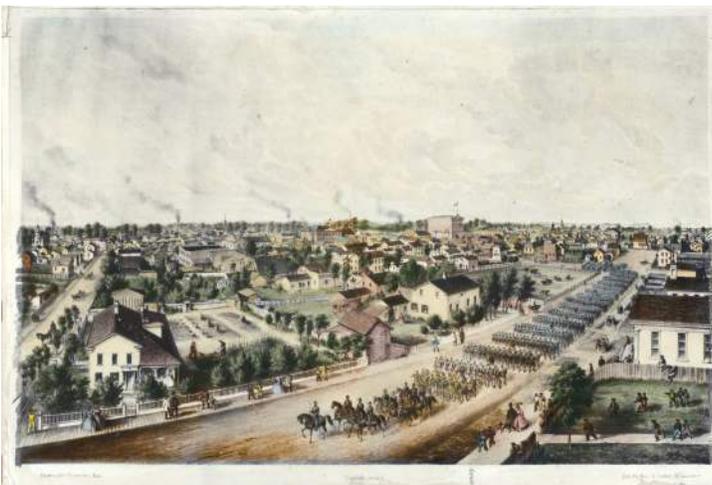
Coming to Fond du Lac—and America in general—as the years went on was often necessary for families' safety or wellbeing.

Often having little money and resources to start with, many new residents found support among the Fond du Lac community. Some of the quickest people to offer support were members of the local churches, whether they took families and their children shopping for clothes in their earliest days in the city, or secretly left them gifts outside their homes at Christmas.

Anytime Fond du Lac welcomed new migrants or immigrants, these residents and families went through an adjustment period, adapting to the customs of the region, and often even learning an entirely new language.

In today's community, as of the 2020 Census, about 5.5% of the county's population speaks a language other than English. Within that percentage, Spanish is the most common language spoken. Others included different Indo-European languages, Asian or Pacific Islander languages, or other "unlisted" languages.

Many formerly enslaved people came during the Civil War



Wisconsin Civil War regiment on parade in Fond du Lac in 1862
(Photo courtesy of Wisconsin Historical Society)

A group of enslaved people seeking refuge in Fond du Lac arrived in the middle of the night October 20, 1862, during the American Civil War. This group, and many other freedom-seekers across the country, were at the center of the movement aimed to abolish slavery.

There were 75 people in the train car that arrived in Fond du Lac that night, and most were coming from Alabama, tired and hungry.

The plantation owners in Alabama had abandoned them when Union troops got too close, and these enslaved people sought help from the Union Army.

Running out of resources, Union Army chaplains started writing to their hometowns to ask for shelter.

The chaplain that wrote home to Fond du Lac was Rev. James. B. Rogers, a Baptist Clergyman from Fond du Lac who was the Army Chaplain for Company A of the 14th Wisconsin Volunteers.

Back in Fond du Lac, Joshua Goss was an underground agent of the movement to free enslaved people. He built cabins for the new Fond du Lac residents, helped to ensure they were fed and clothed, and aided them in finding jobs.

Word spread quickly, and though some people threw rocks at their windows their first night in town, many others came by the next morning to welcome them.

The work they did was reportedly menial, and many of them remained illiterate with no one willing to teach them how to read or write—at the time, it was illegal to do so.

Some Black citizens stayed in Fond du Lac, sending for their families to join them by the turn of the century, while others moved on elsewhere in Wisconsin or beyond.

Even before the influx of people in the 1860s, other new Black residents had already settled down in Fond du Lac, including John Reily, who had opened the city's first barber-shop in 1848.

Abraham Lincoln signed the Emancipation Proclamation in 1863, declaring that enslaved people in several rebellious areas of the U.S. were free, though it didn't immediately abolish slavery.

Two years later, on June 19, 1865, about 2,000 Union troops arrived in Galveston Bay, Texas and announced that the final 250,000 enslaved Black people in the state were free by executive decree.

This is the origin of the holiday Juneteenth, which is celebrated today not only in Fond du Lac, but also nationwide. Local organization Ebony Vision started an annual public celebration in Fond du Lac in 2008, just before Wisconsin became the 34th state to recognize and celebrate Juneteenth in 2009. Juneteenth became a national holiday in the United States in 2021.



Fond du Lac children celebrate Juneteenth in 2015.
(Photo by Doug Raflik, courtesy of The Reporter)

Agriculture and other industry relied on migrant workers

In 1917, 16-year-old Joseph Ramirez followed his father's orders and left Mexico for the United States to avoid the Mexican Revolution.

He met his wife, Marie, a few years later in Oklahoma. She traveled with him as he looked for railroad, mining, and other work. While on the road, they even had to sleep in a boxcar for two weeks, a tale she would tell her son, Tom, over ironing chores years later. It was better than sleeping on the ground, she said.

They traveled from worksite to worksite, finding themselves as far north as Minnesota for the sugar beet harvest. Eventually, railroad work brought them to Fond du Lac, and it was here the two found a permanent home.

“Jobs kept closing down; (my parents) were always on the run. Things were tough everywhere. Especially since Daddy didn't know much English. (Ma) helped where she could. Hard to believe—she was only a kid herself.”

- Thomas Ramirez, *That Wonderful Mexican Band*

Agriculture is one industry in Wisconsin that received a boost from the work of migrant families throughout the 20th century, despite low pay, poor living conditions, and community discrimination.

Many of them were born in Texas of Mexican descent, and called themselves Tejanos. By the 1950s, Fond du Lac County and the surrounding counties relied on over 10,000 Tejano migrant workers every year to plant, harvest, and process potatoes, lettuce, carrots, onions, cucumbers, peppers and sugar beets—particularly for the use of canning.

Some area community members discriminated against the workers and their families, including denying access to county amenities. Others fought for these families' rights to enjoy the same privileges as local families, since they were also American citizens.

Regionally, workers started organizing themselves into a labor union for the entire Great Lakes region called Obreros Unidos, or Workers United, to fight for change on their own terms in the 1960s.

In 1966, Obreros Unidos marched 80 miles over five days from their camps to the Wisconsin capital, referring to the protest as a “march for respectability for Tejano migrants.”

The fight didn't end there; since then, the agriculture industry has grown to include a robust dairy industry and continues to rely on migrant and immigrant workers advocating for the right to work and prosper in Wisconsin.



Fond du Lac's agricultural landscape
(Photo by Patrick Flood)

Starting around 2004, the state's annual milk production started increasing every year, which pressured family dairy farmers to keep up with year-round demand or lose their business. With farms' rural locations, the hard work involved, and the little pay those farms can afford, it was hard for these farms to find workers.

Migrant and immigrant workers came forward for the chance to provide for themselves and their families, doing work that was difficult and risky.

Fond du Lac's industry is still supported by Hispanic and Latino workers and their descendants, from employees to business owners.

DID YOU KNOW?

As of the 2020 Census, the Hispanic population is the fastest growing minority population in Fond du Lac, and multiracial residents tripled between 2010 and 2020.

Hmong immigrants arrived after the Vietnam war

The Vietnam War left over 1,000,000 refugees by the end of the United States' involvement in 1975. In addition to Vietnamese people, there were also Hmong, a group of indigenous people from East and Southeast Asia.

As a result of the war and other conflicts that stemmed from it, many Hmong people left their homes for refugee camps for several years. In such camps, their families grew. This includes the family of Ger Xiong, who was born in Ban Vinai, a refugee camp in Thailand.

When it came time to leave the refugee camps, many people had two choices: return home or move to the United States. The first option often risked their safety, especially if they had family members who fought in alliance with the United States.

“We had a painting of Laos and a painting of the United States and all these tall buildings, but we’d never seen an actual picture. Laos, we know what it looks like because my dad, they were born there. They came from Laos. But, ‘either you go back to Laos, or you go to the United States,’ we’d never seen what the United States looks like. And for how traumatizing, I mean, we were kids at the time, but imagine for parents trying to relocate their family, their children, in a country that they totally have no knowledge of, right?”

- Ger Xiong, 2024



Kathern Vang represented the Hmong culture at Marian University’s Multicultural Day in 2014.

(Photo by Patrick Flood, courtesy of The Reporter)

The first 25 Hmong families arrived in Fond du Lac in 1986, with more to follow over the next several years.

These families adjusted to life here, learning to speak English, drive, and manage their money—of which they had little American currency to start with.

Their children grew up Hmong American, learning Hmong culture from their parents and American culture from their community.

First-generation children often learned English at school. Some had difficulty getting help on homework from their non-English speaking parents and found other avenues for help.

For instance, Ger went to school early to ask her teachers questions about the schoolwork or participate in programs such as the Foster Grandparent Program through ADVOCAP, a local community action agency. In this program, grandparents help local children with things such as reading, math, and writing.

The Hmong American community in Fond du Lac remains significant, and welcomes the public to local events such as Hmong New Year and community picnics.

Local minority populations have shaped modern-day Fond du Lac

Over the years, many people in Fond du Lac have faced racism and discrimination, and have worked to promote a more inclusive community for each present and future generation.

Ebony Vision formed in 2004 as a result of a group's conversation discussing ways they could support each other through advocacy and community resources. As of 2024, Daisy Frazier has served as president of Ebony Vision for 20 years.



Photos by Ebony Vision, 2016

The organization became a voice for the Black community in Fond du Lac, educating the public, sharing their culture, and maintaining visibility in the community through volunteering and events—on top of supporting Black citizens and other people of color.

In 2015, Ebony Vision introduced the mentor program Men of Vision, connecting area youth with community mentors. This encourages building self esteem and challenges mentees to live lives of responsible action and make a meaningful impact on the world.



After a group called Latinos Unidos formed in Green Bay in the late 1990s, Hiram Rabadan and his family worked with the local UW Extension office to form Latinos Unidos en Fond du Lac with a goal of uniting and supporting the Latino community.

Fond du Lac first celebrated a Sabor a Méxican Festival in 2021, featuring authentic Mexican food, dance and live music. This went along with activities such as jalapeño-eating contests and El Grito, a shouting contest tributed to "Grito des Delores," the battle cry that was said to have started the Mexican War of Independence against Spain in September 1810.

Holy Family Catholic Community also began hosting an annual Latin Flavor Carnival in 2022, showcasing games, live music, and dancing, in addition to a variety of food such as tacos, quesabirria, nachos con carne, duritos, and pupusas.



Photos courtesy of Holy Family Catholic Community

United for Diversity is another example of community peace efforts

In 2001, a local group came together and created the organization Peacefest, hosting its first community event a month later with food, games, and entertainment.

Peacefest stemmed from an event Ishamon Harris and his wife, Barbara, held after a 1996 attack on Ishamon Harris's oldest son, Ian. They wanted to respond to the violent act in a peaceful way, and several members of the Fond du Lac community reached out to support the event. The city's first community-wide peace rally, "Witness Day," took place in Lakeside Park on August 9, 1996.

After its founding, Peacefest's next event was in 2003, called "Together We Sing" at Buttermilk Creek Park, featuring an afternoon full of music. That year, the organization also changed its name to United for Diversity to avoid confusion about the group's mission in light of the Iraq war.

The group fostered other initiatives. One such initiative in 2004, called “We Welcome Diversity,” encouraged local businesses to sign a covenant, post a plaque and a window sticker to show their support for diversity. Many such stickers continued to be on display in participating businesses two decades later.

In 2008, United for Diversity held its first CELEBRATE commUNITY event, with booths representing over 30 countries sharing their food and culture with nearly 1,500 visitors for free.



CELEBRATE CommUNITY 2017 (Photo by Doug Raflik, The Reporter)

It has continued annually ever since, funded by a small admission to the event and community donations. The group attributes much of the event’s success to event chairperson Georgiann Froemke for her grant writing and pleas to local businesses for donations.

United for Diversity continues to work to uphold its vision for Fond du Lac: a community of caring people who work to create a healthy, safe, and secure place for people of all geographic, ethnic, economic, religious, sexual identity, age, ability, and other backgrounds to live, work, raise their children, and age with dignity.

DID YOU KNOW?

In addition to racial equity and inclusion, United for Diversity has supported the LGBTQ+ community and is a member of the Wisconsin LGBT Chamber of Commerce.

Other ways Fond du Lac has celebrated the LGBTQ+ community include an annual Pride Picnic since 2019. The family-friendly picnic has included food trucks, music, vendors, and community resources.

Blia Choua Vang

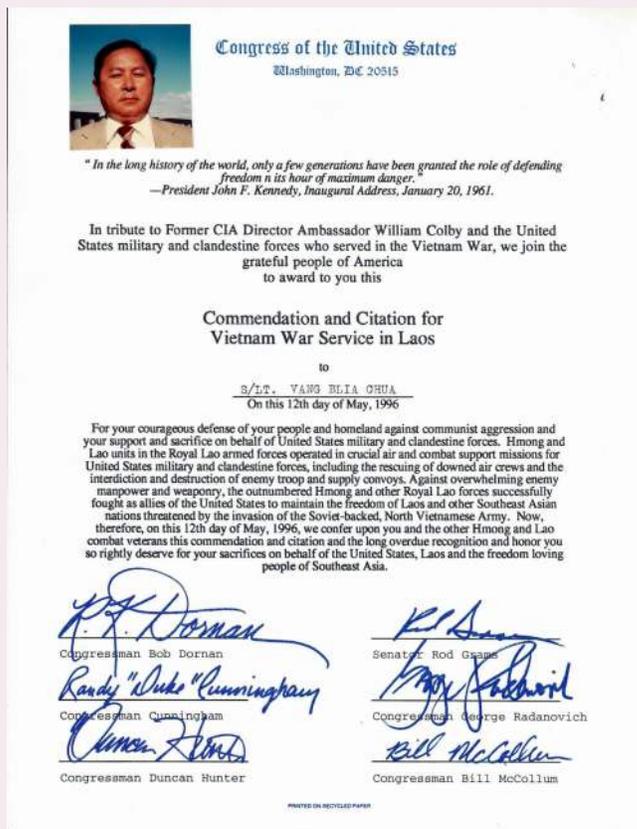
Born in Laos on June 15, 1940, Blia Choua Vang fought in the CIA's Special Guerrilla Unit in the Secret War in Laos from 1963 to 1975. In 1978, he took his family and crossed the Mekong River into Thailand to flee Communist persecution.

These facts from his obituary are a fraction of what he and fellow soldiers went through in the war and after, experiences he took with him when he immigrated to the United States in 1992. He became a proud naturalized U.S. citizen in 2001.

In Fond du Lac, Blia Choua had a passion for helping the Hmong community and was one of the leaders in the local Hmong community. He also loved playing the qeej, a bamboo reed instrument, and was renowned as a grandmaster qeej player in the Hmong community.

But his family and loved ones also remember him as a kind, loving husband and a devoted father, grandfather, and friend to many.

He died of pneumonia in 2018 after a struggle with kidney failure.



“You know, I've been through so many events where it could have killed me and it didn't. And I'm so lucky to be here and to see this country where there's no killing, there's no war, but yet I'm dying. It's my time, because there's so many bullets that one could have hit me back when I was at the camp, but I survived. So you just have to, you guys have to let me go. And you know, you know, I think it's my time.”

- Ger Xiong, quoting her father before he died

Transportation



The first people to sail into or ride through Fond du Lac on horse and wagon may not have ever dreamed of a future that included not only railroads, but vehicles and aircraft as well.

Land owners developed Fond du Lac's early roads themselves and then charged a toll for travelers to cross them. The fee was one cent for a rider on horseback, and two cents for anyone using a carriage, sled, or similar vehicle.

Transportation evolved steadily throughout Fond du Lac's history, and Fond du Lac became a crossroads for other major cities in Wisconsin, sitting between Sheboygan and Madison to the east and west, and between Green Bay and Milwaukee to the north and south.

From boats...

With the many rivers and lakes in Wisconsin, early settlers were no strangers to boat travel whenever possible, though walking and riding horses were still popular modes of transportation.

In 1842, Peter Hotaling sailed into Green Bay on a steamboat from New York. He tried to continue on to Lake Winnebago, but rough water at Kaukauna halted his voyage.

Instead of giving up, he took the boat apart and hired members of the Brothertown Indian Nation to sail all the pieces to a spot on Lake Winnebago, where they then rebuilt it over one winter. By spring 1844, the Manchester Steam Boat was in operation, the only steamboat on Lake Winnebago for six years.

With the steamboat, settlers could transport their household possessions, and store owners could get their supplies more quickly.

However, rough waters were not only risky to Hotaling, but also to anyone else trying to travel by boat on the rivers and lakes. A boat could sink from hitting unseen underwater obstacles.

... to railroads...

As Fond du Lac grew, so did the demand for transportation options. The next step: railroads.

Construction on Fond du Lac's first railroad started in 1850. The contractor brought with him all of his men; their shovels, picks and wheelbarrows; and 160 horses. They spent two years building fifteen miles of railroad track.

The rails came from Green Bay, but the first railroad engine was shipped through Lake Michigan to Sheboygan before it was brought to Fond du Lac. The second engine took six weeks to arrive at Fond du Lac from Sheboygan, with 14 pairs of oxen and seven teams of horses.



Nine years after the first tracks were laid, Fond du Lac was officially connected to Chicago by railroad, thanks to the Chicago & Northwestern Railroad Company.

A thousand people came to Fond du Lac on a special train in celebration, such a large crowd that Fond du Lac didn't have enough hotels to host them. Many women stayed at the Lewis House hotel, while the men stayed in churches, the armory, and a few private homes.

DID YOU KNOW?

At the height of the railroad industry, Fond du Lac had 46 passenger trains and 54 freight trains arrive or depart daily.

Railroading grew over the years, connecting major cities together, and in 1888, Fond du Lac began to use street railways and trolley cars. At first, mules pulled cars along the track, but by the second year of operation, the cars could move on electricity.

The trolley went down Main Street from Lakeside Park to 16th Street before turning to the fairgrounds. A spur line, or secondary track, would also move along Forest Avenue, connecting the railroad depot to Main Street.

A trolley line extended to North Fond du Lac in 1899, when railroad shops began to open, and mostly carried people to work and back. Over the next several years, the trolley line extended further, first to Oshkosh, and eventually to Green Bay.

The use of trains as a method of travel ended in Fond du Lac in 1965, when the last passenger train left the Fond du Lac station.



William A. Titus's family was the first in Fond du Lac County to purchase a Model T Ford automobile.

(1909 photo courtesy of Wisconsin Historical Society)

...to cars...

Cars began as “horseless carriages,” but were very limited in their early years during the late 19th century. Few people could afford them, and they were mostly used only in the summer, as they weren’t equipped with lights or heaters.

They were also open to the air, allowing dust and dirt to blow inside. Women had to buy special coats to wear over their dresses to keep them clean on car trips.

Eventually, Henry Ford created the assembly line to streamline how cars would be built, making them much more affordable to the general public.

DID YOU KNOW?

When Firestone initially “rubberized” the wooden tire, the very first businessman to purchase these tires was blacksmith Herman Michler of Fond du Lac’s Michler Company.

With these newfound novelties, people formed car clubs, mapped out sight-seeing routes, and centered events around cars, including Sunday drives around Lake Winnebago.

Thomas W. Meiklejohn Sr. founded the car dealership Service Motors in 1911, the first Ford dealership in Fond du Lac. He once drove a Model T car up the steps of the county courthouse to promote his business.

...to planes

The Wright brothers took to the skies on their first flight in 1903 in North Carolina, starting a new era of transportation.

Fond du Lac's first airport was on the city's east side, after the City of Fond du Lac leased 125 acres at the city boundary in 1928.

A few years prior, Steve Wittman learned to fly in Fond du Lac, and started a small flying service from a farm in Byron in 1925 until the airport opened.

Wittman operated the airport for its first few years, until he moved to Oshkosh and later became the namesake for the Wittman Regional Airport there.

He was also a test pilot for the Pheasant Aircraft factory in Fond du Lac. Many of his accomplishments and his impact on local aviation have been showcased at the EAA Museum in Oshkosh.

The airport, Fond du Lac Skyport, moved to the city's west side in 1957, under operation of the county. In the modern day, its services include scenic flights, charter flights, aircraft rentals, flight instruction, and maintenance.



Steve Wittman, left, gives flight tips to Arden Hjelle before he flew the plane Arden built.

(photo by The Commonwealth Reporter, 1965)

Industry

Agriculture was the first and continues to be a significant industry in Fond du Lac. The area's first merchants were members of the Brothertown Indian Nation, supplying incoming settlers with food, such as venison, fish, and maple sugar.

As production farms grew, wheat, rye, corn, and oats were the main crops, as well as vegetables such as cucumbers, onions, cabbage, carrots, and sugar beets.

Livestock also rose in number throughout the 19th century, used for meat, eggs, wool, and dairy. By 1910, livestock well outnumbered the 51,610 people in Fond du Lac: there were 73,470 cattle; 59,202 pigs; 34,241 sheep; and 253,535 poultry.



Katie Grinstead at Vir-Clar Farm (courtesy of Patrick Flood)

Dairy farms became—and still are—the biggest mode of agriculture in the area, leading to a number of cheese and other dairy factories.

When Edwin H. Galloway came to Fond du Lac, he started a dairy farm on his property, which became the Galloway House & Village. His son, Edwin A. Galloway, then co-founded a creamery in 1910.

The creamery, Galloway-West Co., produced sweetened condensed milk, and also helped make candy bars, Girl Scout cookies, and more.

Today, well over half of Fond du Lac County's land is dedicated to agriculture, most of which is occupied by family farms. Milk is the largest production, followed by grain, cattle, vegetables, and then hay and other crops.

DID YOU KNOW?

In Galloway-West Co.'s early years without electricity, the dairy products needed to ship without spoiling. Ice chopped from Lake Winnebago was covered in sawdust and kept in storage to keep from melting, making ice available to use and sell in the warmer months.

Some of Fond du Lac's earliest businesses were leather and lumber

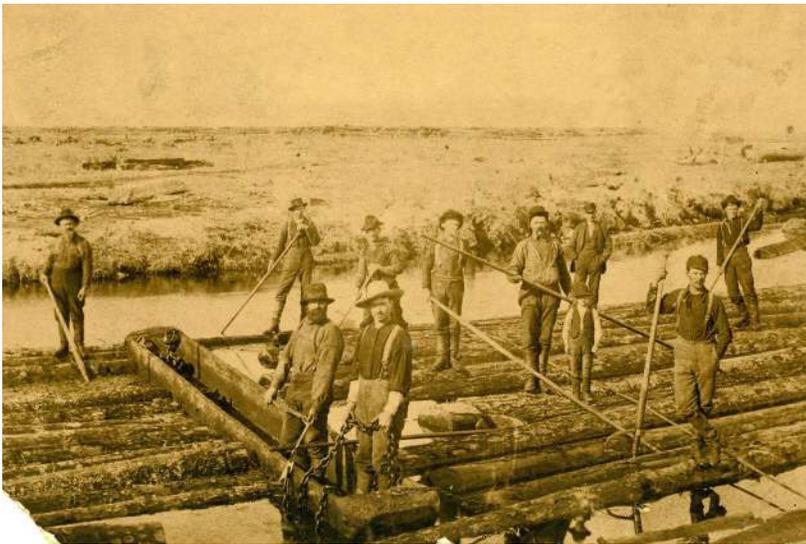
By the late 1800s, Fond du Lac had businesses such as grocery stores, saloons, carriage factories, and shoemakers, but the city's position on Lake Winnebago had an early effect on which regional industries would thrive.

Rough waters deterred tanneries from forming to make leather. They needed hemlock bark to color the leather reddish-brown, but it was too difficult to transport from Green Bay.

This didn't stop William Rueping from opening Rueping Tannery with his sons in 1854.

Local butchers, farmers, and hunters would sell their hides to the tannery, which the Ruepings treated into leather for shoes, gloves, aprons, harnesses, and more. If they faced a shortage of hides, William Rueping would find some himself, traveling as far as Oshkosh by horse and wagon.

The business became the Fred Rueping Leather Co. in 1894 after William's son earned full ownership. It remained a vital Fond du Lac employer until 1985, when it ran into financial hardship and closed.



Another industry that became successful was lumber, but this time, Lake Winnebago gave Fond du Lac a large advantage.

More new residents meant more houses, prompting a need for more building supplies. Logs could come down the Wolf River, across Lake Winnebago, and into the Fond du Lac River. Sawmills along the river would cut the logs into beams, planks, and other lumber.

When the railroad was in operation, logs were able to come into the city even when winter froze the waterways, and lumber could be transported out of the city to factories in larger cities.

The sawmill district became known as "Lower Town," with constant noise and activity as the saws did their job—loudly.

The most successful sawmill was the Moore & Galloway Lumber Co., which opened in 1866. For the most part, the lumber industry didn't make it in Fond du Lac past the early 1900s due to fire hazards.

Business ups and downs were sometimes marked by the railroad industry

The first business downfall for Fond du Lac was around 1875, when many companies started getting lured away from the area.

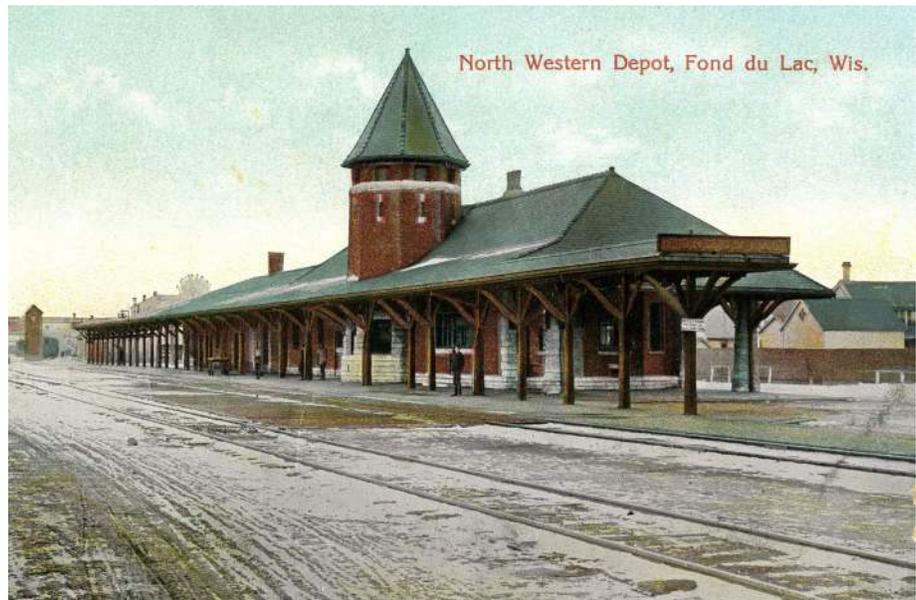
Railroad shops and the city's largest sash-and-door factory moved to Chicago. La Belle Wagon Works moved to Superior. A threshing machine factory for farming equipment moved to Minnesota.

Many people lost their jobs, remaining businesses struggled to stay open, and while Fond du Lac's population decreased, surrounding cities continued to grow.

Things started looking up again in 1899, when Henry Whitcomb convinced the Wisconsin Central Railroad to move its shops to North Fond du Lac.

Fond du Lac became a "hub" of Wisconsin railroading, with another boost from the growth of railroad company Chicago & Northwestern.

After overcoming its own financial difficulties in the mid-1800s, Chicago & Northwestern became the most important railroad for the Fond du Lac area by the turn of the century.



Chicago & North Western Railway Depot on Forest Avenue

Industry also paused in the early and mid-20th century, during World War I and II. Young working men were called to serve, and companies such as Giddings & Lewis also started making supplies for the wars—including bombshells—instead of their usual products.

The Jacob Brenner Company, which normally specialized in residential heating and ornamental sheet metal, built mine-sweeper tanks and ship parts during World War II.

Yet another company that aided the government in World War II efforts was playground equipment company BCI Burke, though back in the 1940s, it was called the J.E. Burke Company.

In 1941, founder J.E. Burke invented the Paracrate, a self-contained munitions cart that could be parachuted down to soldiers. It was built to contain a 75-MM Howitzer machine gun, but could also deliver food, medical supplies, and other supplies.

One of the biggest hurdles Fond du Lac went through was between the wars, during the Great Depression. Some banks closed, and many people lost both their jobs and their savings.

People struggled across the country from 1929 to 1939. Everyone who could find jobs did, even children like Thomas Ramirez, who collected scrap metal from behind local businesses to sell to junkers—though he admitted he often spent his hard-earned dime to catch a movie at the Retlaw Theatre.

However, business leaders like Charles D. Smith didn't lose their determination during the Great Depression. He created the construction company C.D. Smith in 1936, headquartered in land that once belonged to the airport on the city's east side. While it started with a focus on water treatment plants and other labor-intensive jobs, the family business would eventually be known for high-profile construction projects across Fond du Lac and beyond.

Following World War II, the city developed an industrial park to attract businesses. First came Kiekhaefer Mercury, followed by International Paper Company, Ralston Purina Company, and Florence Eisman, Inc.

DID YOU KNOW?

In 1964, Mercury Outboards created an advertisement for a new 90-horsepower engine, depicting a boat with the new motor pulling an elephant on water skis. The tagline was, "Pulls an elephant, runs on peanuts."

Modern business included Main Street stores, then a shopping mall



By 1900, Fond du Lac's Main Street was bustling with activity, filled with churches, banks, performance theaters, and taverns. There were also shops, including dime stores that sold a number of necessities and featured lunch counters with soda and ice cream that only cost a few cents.

Some other stores included department stores Sears Roebuck & Co. and J.C. Penney—though both eventually moved to Fond du Lac's west side.

A Sheboygan-based store called Prange Way opened on the west side, considered to be the outskirts of the city, in 1966. It drew other businesses toward it for the next few years, and by 1973, a shopping mall appeared nearby.

J.C. Penney was one of the first stores to commit to a spot in Forest Mall before it was built. When the mall opened, it also had an ice cream shop, a music store, a bookstore, a jewelry shop, a movie theater, and more.

Forest Mall had an opening theme of “The Enchanted Forest Mall,” and went without a traditional ribbon-cutting. Instead, mall officials pulled a version of the sword Excalibur from a stone, just like the legend of King Arthur.



Forest Mall in 2014 (Photo courtesy of The Reporter)

After so many stores left Main Street in the 1960s and ‘70s, downtown Fond du Lac had to get creative to refresh its vibrancy. The city created a Downtown Redevelopment program in the 1980s to bring in new buildings and businesses.

In 1999, a local business council created a Business Improvement District, and named an organization to promote it—the Downtown Fond du Lac Partnership—in 2000.



Since then, the district has garnered recognition for drawing in and supporting businesses, keeping up with the beautification of its buildings, and promoting regular attractions such as the farmers market and Fondue Fest.

While many stores came to Forest Mall when it first opened, the mall’s popularity declined after the 2000s. Most stores closed between 2014 and 2019, and a large portion of the mall was torn down in 2020.

Hotel Retlaw

Much of downtown Fond du Lac's ups and downs were reflected in the hotel that stood right in the heart of Main Street.

In 1923, Walter Schroeder spared no expense once he saw Fond du Lac fit to build his vision: one of the finest hotels in the state. The eight-story, 200-room hotel opened as the Hotel Retlaw—his own name backwards.

Famous visitors during this era of the hotel included Eleanor Roosevelt in 1937, who stayed in one of the suites and held a press conference speaking on peace and education, but also hot dogs. John F. Kennedy followed in 1960 and held a speech in the hotel's Crystal Ballroom during his presidential campaign.

The Retlaw began to change names in 1988, after the owners at the time declared bankruptcy, first changing to the Clarion Hotel, then the Sheraton Hotel in 1990 and the Ramada Hotel in 1994.

It became the Retlaw again in 2013, but closed abruptly two years later, affecting the nearby businesses' stability.

In 2018, it transformed again, taking inspiration from its 1920s roots with glitz and glamor, opening to the public the next year as a new destination spot for the city. Today, it retains its Hotel Retlaw name.



Hotel Retlaw as it stands in 2024

E.C. Kiekhaefer

Even in his childhood, Elmer Carl Kiekhaefer was known for his skills with mechanics, and he grew up to be a highly respected and dedicated businessman.

He was born June 4, 1906, the oldest child and only son on his family's farm near the city of Mequon.

At 8 years old, he received a mechanical erector set with a mini steam engine, which he liked to show his little sisters to teach them how the engine worked.

He excelled in education early, finishing his grade school studies by age 11, but his parents thought he was too young for high school for another two years. With a dream of becoming an electrical engineer, he kept studying after high school and even took night classes after he'd started working.

In 1939, with the help of his uncle, Carl purchased a failing outboard motor company in Cedarburg. Here, he rebuilt over 300 defective motors to sell to Montgomery Ward. This was the start to his success, encouraging a career that led to over 200 patents in his name.

He made small engines for the military during World War II, then revisited outboard motors when the war was over. However, he found himself short on space.

In searching for a new, larger factory, he found a large barn in a new industrial park in Fond du Lac in 1946, when he established the name Kiekhaefer Mercury.

Post-World War II, Carl had also found an interest in race cars, participating in the Mexican Road Race for two years before moving on to NASCAR. Starting in 1955, he brought his drivers to victory in the NASCAR championship two years in a row.

He quit NASCAR in 1957, but not before encouraging changes to the sport from then on: because of him, all team members wear uniforms and all cars have dry paper air filters.

Mercury Outboard Motors was the first major national sponsor in NASCAR that wasn't part of the automobile industry. It was also the first to scientifically test the oil in his race car motors to see what contaminants were affecting the performance of his motors.

The skills he learned with NASCAR also helped him develop the 100hp stern drive engine that became famous as the MerCruiser.

In 1969, Carl resigned as president of Kiekhaefer Mercury, and afterward, the business became known as Mercury Marine.

Fond du Lac industries through the years

1905

- American Chemical Co., 356 S. Main St.
- Badger Envelope Co., 596 S. Main St.
- Badger Sewing Co., 180 Ruggles St.
- Bloedel Fuel Co., 151 N. Main St.
- Bowen Manufacturing Co.
- Crofoot Lumber Co., 68 Western Ave.
- David Ahern & Son, 21 S. Main St.
- Eastern Wisconsin Railway & Light Co., Main and Rees
- Fond du Lac Canning Co., 1 W. Brooke St.
- Fred Rueping Leather Co., 96-98 Doty St.
- Helmer Milling Co., 14-18 Fourth St.
- Hubbard & Reynolds Bedding Co., 70-78 W. Scott St.
- Moore & Galloway Lumber Co., 69 N. Main St.
- Northern Brewing Co., 65 S. Main St.
- Northern Casket Co., 108 W. Division St.
- Northwestern Tea Co., 158 S. Main St.
- P.B. Haber Printing Co., 18 Forest Ave.
- Perry Book & Bindery Co., 17 Forest Ave.
- Scholl & Seeve, 115 S. Macy St. (carriage builders)
- Sessions Ice Cream Co., 33-35 W. Johnson St.
- Singer Manufacturing Co., 11 N. Main St. (sewing machines)
- Voell Music House, 104 S. Main St.
- Wadham's Oil Company, 83 S. Main St.
- Wagner Dry Goods Co., 123-124 S. Main St.

1955

- Badger Liquor Co., 11 W. Johnson St.
- Capelle Bros & Diedrich, 253 N. Hickory St.
- Charles D. Smith & Son Inc., Highway 23
- Damrow Brothers Co., 196-234 Western Ave.
- F.W. Diedrich & Co., 92 N. Main St.
- Fond du Lac Lumber Co., 154 McWilliams St.
- Fond du Lac Stage Equipment Co., 113 ½ S. Main St.
- Fond du Lac Stone Co., Highway 175
- Fred Rueping Leather Co., 96 Doty St.
- Galloway-West Co., 325 Tompkins St.
- Giddings & Lewis Machine Tool Co., 142 Doty St.
- Haber Printing Co., 18 Forest Ave.
- Huber Paint & Glass Inc., 216-218 S. Main St.
- Hutter Construction Co., 134 Western Ave.
- Immel Construction Co., 562 N. Main St.
- J.E. Burke Co., 660 Van Dyne Road
- J.F. Ahern Co., 55 N. Macy St.
- Jacob Brenner Co., 47 E. Third St.
- Kiekhaefer Aeromarine Motors Inc., 660 S. Hickory St.
- La Resista Corset Co., 101 Western Ave.
- Northern Casket Co., 108 W. Division St.
- Quicfrez Inc., 105 Oak Place
- Ray-O-Vac Co., 197 Forest Ave.
- Sears Roebuck & Co., 20-26 S. Main St.
- Shurclean Chemical Manufacturing Co., 148 N. Main St.
- Stout Music Center, 97 Forest Ave.
- The Berndt Printing Co., 31-37 S. Macy St.
- The Borden Co., 33-39 W. Johnson St.
- The J.E. Burke Co., 549 Van Dyne Road
- The Reporter Printing Co., 18-22 W. First St.
- West's Ice & Cold Storage, 110 S. Brooke St.
- Winnebago Cheese Co., 229 W. Division St.
- Wisconsin Power & Light Co., 13 N. Main St.
- Wright Bros. Paper Box Co., 21 W. Arndt St.

Fond du Lac industries through the years

2005

- Action Printing Co., N6637 Rolling Meadows Drive
- Ahern-Gross Inc., 218 S. Main St.
- Badger Liquor Co., 850 Morris St.
- BCI Burke Co., 660 Van Dyne Road
- C.D. Smith Construction Inc., 889 E. Johnson St.
- Capelle Brothers & Diedrich, 253 N. Hickory St.
- Combination Door Co., 1000 Morris St.
- D.E. Thome Electrical Contracting, N7627 Highway 149
- Fond du Lac Tent & Awning Co., 321 W. Scott St.
- Giddings & Lewis Machine Tools, 142 Doty St.
- Ideal Glass, 235 Winnebago Drive
- Integrity Glass & Paint, 689 Fond du Lac Ave.
- International Paper Co., 981 S. Hickory St.
- J.F. Ahern Co., 855 Morris St.
- M&M Haber Printing Inc., 18 Forest Ave.
- Mercury Marine, N7480 County Road UU
- Metal-Link Corp., 196 Western Ave.
- Northcentral Construction, 631 Hickory St.
- Northern Aluminum Foundry Co., 502 Van Dyne Road
- Ozburn-Hessey Logistics, 187 Kohlman Road
- R.J. Reynolds Tobacco Co., 268 W. 12th St.
- RB Royal Industries Inc., 1350 S. Hickory St.
- Sadoff & Rudoy Industries LLP, 240 W. Arndt St.
- Saputo Cheese USA Inc., 45 E. Scott St.
- Wright Brothers Paper Box Co., 800 Morris St.

2024

- Action Printing, N6637 Rolling Meadows Drive
- Ahern Gross, 218 S. Main St.
- Badger Liquor Co., 850 Morris St.
- BCI Burke Co., 660 Van Dyne Road
- C.D. Smith Construction Co., 125 Camelot Drive
- Capelle Brothers & Diedrich, 248 N. Hickory St.
- Faris Gourmet Popcorn, 770 W. Scott St
- Fives Giddings & Lewis, 142 Doty St.
- Ideal Glass Co., 235 Winnebago Drive
- Integrity Saw & Tool, Inc., 217 E. Larsen Drive
- International Paper Co., 981 S. Hickory St.
- J.F. Ahern Co., 855 Morris St.
- Marchant Schmidt, Inc., 24 W. Larsen Drive
- Mercury Marine, W6250 Pioneer Road
- Metal-Link Corp., 196 Western Ave.
- Northcentral Construction, 631 Hickory St.
- RB Royal Industries, Inc., 1350 S. Hickory St.
- Sadoff Iron & Metal Co., 240 W. Arndt St.
- Wabash, 450 Arlington Ave.
- Wells Vehicle Electronics, 385 W. Rolling Meadows Drive
- Wisconsin Lighting Lab, 308 N. Brooke St.

Communication

Another way Fond du Lac has evolved is in how its residents get information, from newspapers and books to radio and television.

The first telegraph service in the Fond du Lac area was installed in 1850 at a local weekly newspaper called *The Journal*. The first message to "the press of Fond du Lac" on February 22 came from the *Milwaukee Sentinel and Gazette*, reading, "We welcome you into the Mystic Range, and hope often to hob nob with you by lightning."

Telephones came in 1879, first installed at a local drugstore. For the next 80 or so years, residents weren't yet able to directly call who they wanted: they first had to dial an operator, who then dialed the number they wanted and connected the two callers. Direct dial service started in 1957.



The 1990s marked the "dot com era" when businesses, organizations, and households started connecting to the internet in waves, learning the ins and outs of the world wide web and email.

Wisconsin Networks—also called "wisnet"—became Fond du Lac's homegrown mentor early on in this new era, providing dial-up internet access and website design. Rick Kolstad founded the business in 1996, two years before Google was established.

DID YOU KNOW?

Pigeons used to send messages. Most often called homing pigeons or carrier pigeons, these birds were selectively bred and able to find their way back home from long distances. One of their uses in Fond du Lac was bringing the news from outside communities to the newspaper office, which kept their coops in the attic.

After their use for communication came to an end, many turned to racing these pigeons, including Gordon Schingen in Fond du Lac, who placed in a number of state and regional competitions in the 1980s and 1990s.

The Post Office started out of the city's first log cabin

The earliest record of postal service in Fond du Lac was in 1838, when Colwert Pier was considered the first postmaster and operated an office from the city's first house. A Native American man named Baptiste Lavigne delivered the very first letters to Pier on his route from village to village.

Back then, letters didn't need stamps in order to send, but Pier charged recipients anywhere from 10 to 25 cents to claim their mail.

A man named John Bannister took over the postmaster role soon after, followed by Dr. Mason Darling for a time.

Postal service continued to operate out of private homes, law offices, and even once a bank. It also operated on the corner of Forest Avenue and Macy Street until a new dedicated post office was built in 1905.

Fond du Lac needed a new post office by the 1930s, and the community had been excited for the opportunities for the old building—one of the possibilities was a new police station. However, the post office had few choices when it came to cheap land.



Post Office, Fond du Lac, Wis.

So, the 1905 building was torn down, and a new one was built right in its place on the corner of West First Street and South Macy Street, dedicated in 1937.

For the next few decades, the volume of mail that went through the post office steadily grew, and mail trucks were becoming bigger and more modern. By 1969, it was again time for a new building.

This time, the post office physically moved to West Second Street, with more space and indoor parking for the mail trucks. What made it one of the most modern post offices in the country for its time was a self-service unit with a line of equipment for weighing and posting mail and packages.

With the move, the post office also took the opportunity to change city and rural postal routes to accommodate the area's population and building growth.

The post office continues to operate at this location to this day.

Early Fond du Lac had many local newspapers



On Nov. 12, 1844, Fond du Lac's very first newspaper, a weekly paper called *The Fountain City*, hit the streets.

In the 19th century, the newspaper business was risky: it was easy to start a publication, but it was just as easy to go out of business. *The Fountain City* lasted until 1951, but many other papers only lasted a couple of years.

During the city's first several decades, there were about 30 newspapers.

Five were daily papers and the rest were weeklies. Nine were published entirely in German.

In 1870, Jerome A. Watrous started *The Fond du Lac Daily*, filled with editorial advice, world news, and the everyday life experiences of Fond du Lac people. It was one of the only papers that lasted well past the expected two years, even after Watrous changed the name to *The Daily Commonwealth*.

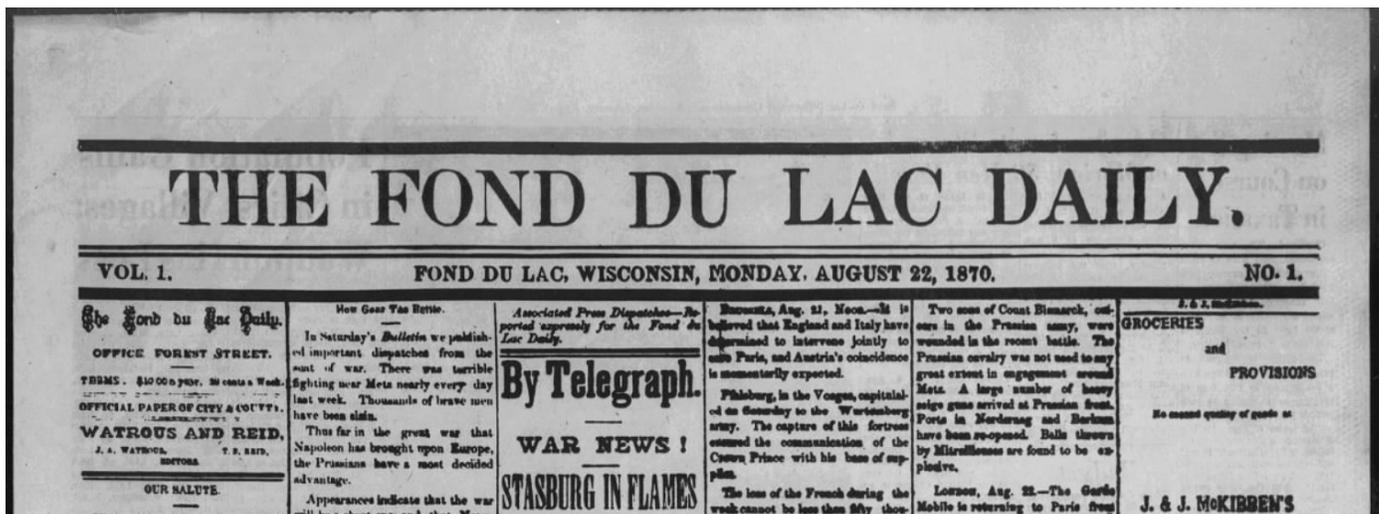
"With lifted cap, and pleasant smile we greet you. With nails all set, and pennon flying, we launch our little craft on the sea of public favor — anxious for success."

—Editor J.A. Watrous's introduction in the first issue of *The Fond Du Lac Daily* Aug. 22, 1870

Thirteen years after the launch of Watrous's paper, Louie A. Lange took the risk of starting another daily newspaper, believing that in 1883, Fond du Lac was big enough for both of them.

Lange called his paper *The Daily Reporter*, and also started his own printing company and held fast against competing papers for circulation, news, and advertising.

He ended his time as editor in 1917, turning the paper over to his nephew, A. H. Lange, as well as Emery Martin and Charles Coffman.



In 1926, the three of them absorbed the newspaper Watrous had started, and created one large, daily newspaper, called the *Fond du Lac Commonwealth Reporter*.

Thomson Newspapers bought the company in 1972. That year, the name was simplified to *The Fond du Lac Reporter*, then *The Reporter* in 1977.

In 2000, Gannett Co. acquired *The Reporter*, and over time, it became part of Gannett's USA TODAY NETWORK-Wisconsin, alongside the neighboring *Oshkosh Northwestern*, *Appleton Post-Crescent*, *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*, and several other daily newspapers.

By 2023, the newspaper shared an editor with the *Oshkosh Northwestern*, *Sheboygan Press*, and the *Herald Times Reporter* in Manitowoc.

Local radio developed as a side gig

The oldest commercial radio station in Wisconsin, KFIZ AM first hit airwaves in 1922, when Oscar Huelsman came up with a way to get people to buy his radios—though his main business was automobiles.

The station was born in a tiny studio near the Huelsman's Auto Showroom, broadcasting experimentally a few hours a day with news, records, and a little bit of "chatter."

KFIZ stopped being experimental and became commercial in 1931, when the Reporter Printing Co. established a new studio for the hosts in the Commonwealth Reporter building. Al Triggs officially became the first station manager.

The station hosted local talent in its programs, including the organ player Mrs. Fairbanks, sports announcer Fahey Flynn, a local orchestra, and the children's hour "Mites of the Mike," hosted by Uncle Al.

During the Great Depression, the radio offered vital news and entertainment. In 1933, it first provided Christmas services, with a Midnight Mass broadcast from St. Joseph's Church. A member of the St. Joseph's Boy's Choir opened the program with the song "Silent Night."

As KFIZ continued to grow and eventually separated from the local newspaper offices, another station called WFON started airing on the FM dial in 1967 under station president Loula Beckman.



WFON was most famous for an annual Halloween party Beckman started in 1974: with trick-or-treating moving to a daytime schedule, Loula encouraged kids to go right home after trick-or-treating for the special radio program, just in case they got a call from the "Pumpkin Lady" saying they've won a prize.

To be eligible for a prize like a new bike or a trip to Disney World, children had to submit a form pledging they would follow safe trick-or-treating guidelines: to not go trick-or-treating alone, to only go in their own neighborhood, to only do it during the designated hours, and to not damage other people's property.

KFIZ and WFON started sharing a building in 1988. Loula resigned from WFON, which then switched to a music-intensive and eventually automated format, rather than running with DJs.

In 1993, WFON officially became KFIZ FM, later known as 107.1 The Bull. KFIZ continued the Halloween party tradition, and also sponsors the annual Christmas parade.

DID YOU KNOW?

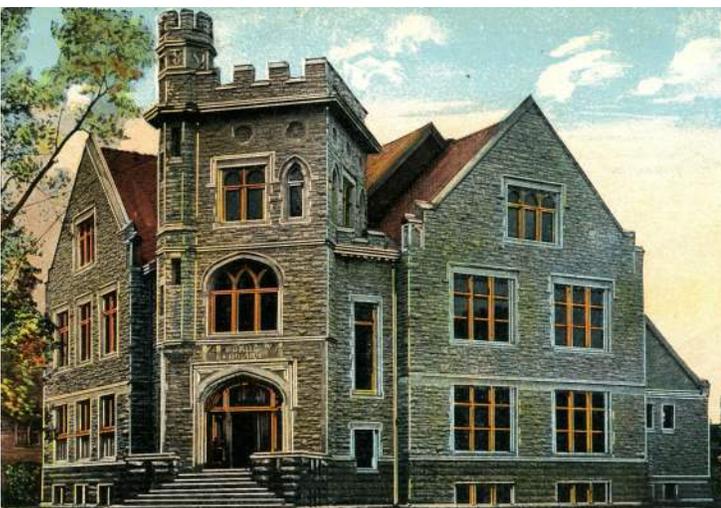
Huelsman and his business partners named KFIZ before national regulations had states east of the Mississippi River start their call letters with "W" and states west of the river start their call letters with "K." When WFON changed to KFIZ, it was the first FM station in this part of the country to get approval to start its call letters with "K."

What the letters KFIZ stood for—if they stood for anything—is unknown.

The library adapted to Fond du Lac's needs for over 150 years

What started as a vital reference resource, Fond du Lac's public library grew for nearly 150 years as a source of information, entertainment, and local programming.

The first free public library opened in 1877 with Miss Augusta Ball as librarian, and by 1894 included a children's department and 13,000 volumes.



Andrew Carnegie helped fund a new library, built on Sheboygan Street in 1904, at the request of the Fond du Lac Women's Club once space became an issue.

After their success securing Carnegie's donation, the club requested that women have the right to serve on the library board. Mayor L.A. Bishop granted the request, appointing his wife to the board because she'd received the donation letter. He also appointed beloved educator Elizabeth Waters.

The early 1920s were considered some of the most successful library years of this era.

For example, in 1921, cardholders checked out an average of 16 books per person. The library had a total circulation of 189,152.

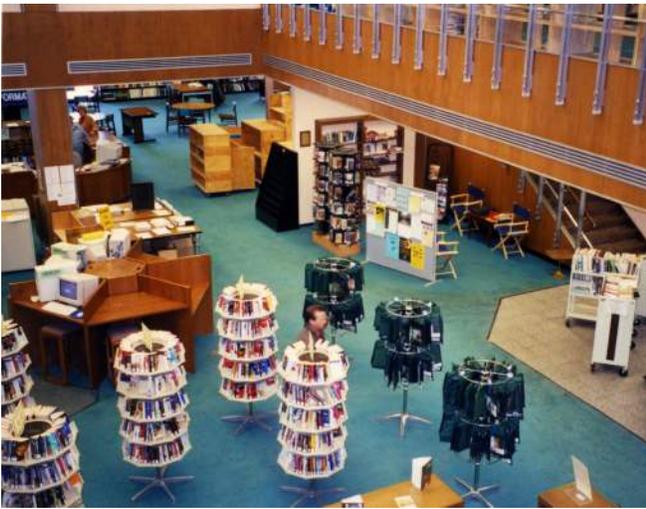
In the 1960s, the library physically couldn't support the books it had, and the board sought locations for a new library. Eventually, the board decided the land it already occupied on Sheboygan Street was best.

The city went to work tearing down the old library to replace it with a new, more modern structure. Many historic artifacts the library had displayed were moved to the Fond du Lac County Historical Society, and the library itself operated in temporary quarters on Portland Street during construction.

The new library finished in 1968 and was dedicated with a declaration of "May this library with its hundreds of volumes always look to the future and stimulate the minds and enrich the lives of the people of this city."

From then on, the Fond du Lac Public Library continued to modernize alongside Fond du Lac, including replacing manual circulation with an automated system in 1993, and implementing a computerized catalog instead of a card catalog. Staff used to spend much of their time filing, and with the new system, they had more time to help patrons.

In 2004, the library was remodeled and expanded, with more flexibility for new technology—including CDs and DVDs—a larger children’s section, and a brighter atmosphere.



The library prior to 2004 expansion



The library in 2024

For many years, the library also had a miniature traveling library: the Bookmobile traveled throughout the county with scheduled stops, carrying fiction, non-fiction, and other materials.

In 2010, the Art in Action project invited 30 middle school students from the Boys and Girls Club to paint the Bookmobile in images that represented literacy, Fond du Lac, and anything else that interested them.

The Bookmobile retired in 2011, after demand waned and the bus showed its age. It suffered from rust holes, and had difficulties keeping visitors from freezing during the winter and overheating during the summer.

Another Bookmobile that was parked on the east side of town, in front of Festival Foods, also closed. However, this one was replaced in the same shopping center by the library’s first branch location, FDLPL Express.

The branch was renamed the Allen J. Buechel Branch in 2023 to honor the late Fond du Lac County executive, who had been in his position for decades and who was a fierce supporter of literacy and libraries.



Education



After the first settlers arrived in Fond du Lac, children were being taught at home, sometimes educated by very few books. Once the churches were built, schools were next.

Fond du Lac County's first schools were small wooden buildings with only enough space for one room. Children had class in winter and early spring, as farms needed the local boys for the rest of the year.

Lessons in early schoolhouses included reading and arithmetic

As soon as school children of the 20th century reported for classes in one of the small, one-room schoolhouses, the first thing they would do was hang their coat up in a small cloak-room. Their lunch, packed from home in a tin pail, would go on a shelf above their coats until it was time to eat.

Children would sit at their desks to begin their lessons, but with only one room available, grade levels through eighth grade were all taught in the same space—this took a lot of co-operation to make sure students were getting the most out of their studies.

If the students weren't advanced enough in writing yet for expensive paper, they would first have to practice with chalk on slate boards.

The teacher conducted reading, arithmetic, and other lessons from the front blackboard. They were often unmarried women. At the time, there were laws against married women holding jobs like teaching and clerical work.



As of 2025, one of the oldest current elementary schools is Waters Elementary School, built in 1950 and named after Elizabeth Waters, one of the top educators of Fond du Lac's history. Pier Elementary School followed in 1954, named after the Pier pioneer family.

When Chegwin Elementary School was built in 1970, it introduced a new concept: each classroom actually held three classrooms, allowing for either three separate classes at once or one giant group instruction.

In 1976, Lakeshore Elementary School opened its doors for students from several rural schools: Luco School, Liberty School, Taft School, Tay-Cal-Mar School, Bragg School, Fourth Street School and a kindergarten class at Pier.



Chegwin Elementary School
(Photo by Fond du Lac School District, 2024)

Other examples of schools that were built to replace old schools included Parkside Elementary School in 1973 and Riverside Elementary School in 2002.

Local figures have been vital to Fond du Lac’s education

As new schools were built in Fond du Lac, the inspiration for their names often came from influential educators.



Evans Elementary School
(Photo by Fond du Lac School District, 2024)

Katherine Evans, namesake for Evans Elementary School in 1955, dedicated almost every hour of every day to education. She taught children at Franklin School before leading Lincoln School as principal starting in 1919.

Even after the school bell released children at the end of the day, Katherine continued teaching with night school for immigrants. She also furthered her own studies in universities during the summers.

By the time Rose B. Chegwin retired after 48 years as a teacher in 1938, she’d only ever missed half a day of school. Even before she became a teacher, she’d found her calling for education at the age of 10, when she began teaching children in her neighborhood.

Margaret K. Roberts tried out an ungraded reading program in her classroom—something she’d learned from studying in England—and the teaching method rippled beyond Fond du Lac, reaching curriculums nationwide.

Margaret also helped ensure students of all needs received access to education, from guiding a program for home-bound and disabled students to setting up transportation for students with physical disabilities.

When Roberts Elementary School was built in 1963, she was still alive to see the dedication.

In the modern day, the Fond du Lac School District has worked to meet the changing needs of local children, paying attention to varied abilities, race, and socioeconomic status.

This includes holding several dedicated administrative roles, including an equity coordinator, a mental wellness navigator, a director of English language and bilingual education, and more to support students, staff, and faculty.

Laurice Snyder became a champion for this goal after she joined the district as a supervisor of community education services in 2007, advocating for initiatives that responded to the needs of students and families in underserved populations.

Middle schools were once known as junior high schools

A school best known as Roosevelt Junior High School started out as Fond du Lac High School in 1873, back when students at that age were called “scholars.”

When it was converted into Roosevelt Junior High School in 1922, 19 teachers taught 701 pupils.

Roosevelt Junior High’s condition deteriorated by the 1950s, and it was considered unfit to continue supporting students, paving the way for two new junior high schools.

Sabish Junior High School was built in 1962, named after Frank A. Sabish, who had been Roosevelt Junior High’s principal up until 1959.



Woodworth Middle School
(Photo by Fond du Lac School District, 2024)

Before he moved up the ranks of school leadership, he taught social studies, coached basketball and football, and started Roosevelt’s first school newspaper.

Woodworth Junior High School was built in the same year as Sabish, and was also named after a former principal—R.B. Woodworth was Roosevelt Junior High’s principal just before Sabish.

These schools taught seventh, eighth, and ninth grade. For the first few years, it was reported that the two schools' football teams were locked in a fierce rivalry.

A third school came along in 1971, dedicated to Henry Theisen, who was principal of Goodrich High School for 34 years.

Three schools served junior high students for about ten years, until the district had to downsize and closed Woodworth in 1981.

Starting in 1990, while the school was still closed, local students and parents teamed up to use some of the space to create a youth center. Woody's offered a supervised and alcohol-free space for middle and high school-aged students to spend their weekends dancing, eating pizza, and playing games.

Woodworth reopened in 1992 after it was updated with a computer lab and new art and science rooms to keep up with Sabish and Theisen.

Before Fond du Lac High School, there was Goodrich High School

Fond du Lac's first high school burned down in 1867 and was replaced six years later—this is the building that would later become Roosevelt Junior High School when a new Fond du Lac Senior High School was built in 1922.

The new school was renamed Goodrich High School in 1955 and slowly expanded. By 1967, it included the auditorium called Goodrich Little Theater, followed by the Aquatic Center in 1991.

Students outgrew Goodrich in 2001, and the district planned out how to build a bigger high school without its size being intimidating. As a result, Fond du Lac High School was designed to keep color-coded classroom “pods” separate from the fieldhouse and auditorium.



Goodrich High School
(Courtesy of Wisconsin Historical Society)



Fond du Lac High School
(Courtesy of Fond du Lac School District, 2024)

The new high school resulted in changes to every other school as well. The year it opened, sixth grade was moved from elementary to newly-named “middle schools,” and ninth grade was moved from junior high to high school.

Goodrich’s building was converted to Riverside Elementary School, with some school district offices also finding a home in the building.

DID YOU KNOW?

Fond du Lac High School alumnus Braelon Allen, class of 2022, became a football running back for the New York Jets in 2024—the youngest player in the NFL for that season.

As for St. Mary’s Springs Academy, the school started out in 1909 as a small boarding school exclusively for young women and girls ages 7 to 16.

John Boyle remodeled the building—formerly a sanitarium—and donated it to the Congregation of Sisters of St. Agnes, who took the opportunity to operate it and draw in girls from Wisconsin and beyond.

Catholic high schools had a rule that didn’t allow coeducation, but St. Mary’s Springs was the only Catholic school north of Milwaukee. In the 1930s, Archbishop Stritch made an exception to that rule and allowed boys to attend as long as students and faculty followed specific restrictions.

Boarding stopped in 1956, which allowed a little more space for an ever-growing student body, though the school continued to expand.



Fond du Lac’s other private school is Winnebago Lutheran Academy (WLA), which started several years after St. Mary’s Springs Academy.

St. Peter’s Evangelical Lutheran Church opened the school in 1925 when it added ninth grade to its grade school. WLA grew with its student body, adding another grade each year until those first freshmen graduated as seniors in 1929.

At first, WLA held classes in St. Peter’s School, before it bought property in 1946 and moved to Merrill Avenue in 1955. From there, it added classrooms in 1971, 1987, 1999, and 2003.

Now, the school is joined by 38 congregations and 14 schools in and around Fond du Lac, all a part of a larger international church body, the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod.

WLA purchased new property west of Fond du Lac in 2020 with the intention of raising funds to build a new school—one that includes more room for arts, trade skills and athletics.

Technology grows with the students

In 1989, Sabish Junior High School became the first school in the Lake Winnebago region to have a Macintosh computer writing lab. It was equipped with 16 Macintosh computers and four printers to expose students to the latest available technology, furthering the Fond du Lac School District’s goal to improve reading and writing skills.

The school then gained limited access to the “World Wide Web” by the 1995-96 school year, and all district schools had internet access within the next few months. However, not all classrooms had computers right away, due to the high cost.

Starting in the 2012-13 school year, the students of Fond du Lac High School each received a Google Chromebook—computers that operate from the web rather than software. At the time, the district was the largest in Wisconsin to implement Chromebooks, and one of few districts in the nation.

Chromebooks gave students the means to complete assignments online throughout the school day and at home, increasing engagement and helping the district keep up with the rise of technology. Having one for every student was part of a “one-to-one” initiative, which also set students up with Google accounts unique to them. These accounts included email addresses and file sharing.

Renee Nolan became a part of the Instructional Technology team for the district in 2012 and was a leader in the one-to-one initiative, as well as the implementation of Google Apps for Education and other technological classroom tools. She guided the district, students, and teachers in the growth of technology and its usefulness for student learning.

Other local schools like St. Mary’s Springs Academy also integrated technology into their lessons as it became available, from using computer labs to learning how to blog or navigate new software.

St. Mary’s Springs Academy also integrated its own one-to-one technology initiative, starting in 2019 with the high school students. The rest of the school followed in 2020, when the COVID-19 pandemic made virtual learning necessary.



St. Mary’s Springs Academy students. Photo by Patrick Flood

Higher education has included three major facilities

In 1936, St. Agnes Convent had many novices preparing to become Sisters of St. Agnes that were ready and willing to practice teaching at a college level. However, state college leaders would not allow teachers to wear religious habits.

So, Marian College was born. Under the efforts of Sisters Vera Naber and Aloysia Leickem, it opened in September of that year to 17 full-time students and 25 part-time students.

From then on, the college kept growing, filling in almost 80 acres for the next several decades and adding nursing, liberal arts, science, and other programs to its curriculum.

After many years of accreditation and earning a high reputation, Marian officially became recognized as a university in 2008.



Marian University 1969

(Image courtesy of the Congregation of Sisters of St. Agnes Archives)



Marian University present day

(Image courtesy of Marian University)

Moraine Park Technical College started out as Fond du Lac Vocational School, teaching drawing and cooking above Model Laundry on Macy Street. It eventually added barbering, auto mechanics, sewing, home economics, and business education

With all of these subjects drawing many interested students, the school built a new building in 1917, then again had to move in 1964—this time to where the county’s airport used to be. It’s there on Johnson and National streets that it adopted the name Moraine Park Technical College.

Now, the school offers associate degrees, technical diplomas, certificates, and more in fields such as maintenance, construction, culinary arts, cosmetology, and accounting. Students have the option to start a career after graduation or transfer their credits and continue on to a bachelor’s degree.

In 1968, when the state’s college system was called Wisconsin State University, a branch campus opened in Fond du Lac, welcoming 224 freshmen. Students would attend for two years, and then, if their degree required more education, they would transfer to another school, often to Oshkosh’s campus.

Over the years, the school became University of Wisconsin Fond du Lac, and hosted not only students but the rest of the community with a public theater and athletic facilities.

In the summers from 1990 until the late 2010s, it invited students in grades 2 to 4 to experience campus life in a program called Learning Enrichment for Able Primary Students (LEAPS), with classes like veterinary science, chemistry, folk dancing, and theater.

Students in grades 5 through 7 didn’t miss out, however, and had College for Kids, with classes teaching computerized music, robotics, arts, and culture.

In 2018, UW-FDL merged with University of Wisconsin Oshkosh to become University of Wisconsin Oshkosh-Fond du Lac campus. It closed in 2024 due to low enrollment and budget. This left the campus in the hands of Fond du Lac County, renaming it the Fond du Lac County Campus.



First registration at UW Fond du Lac, September 1986
(Photo courtesy of the UW Digital Collections)



Fond du Lac County Campus main building as of 2024

DID YOU KNOW?

The UW Fond du Lac school mascot and nickname was almost the Super Bees, Baboons, or Cobras, but the school ultimately decided its students to be known as the Centaurs. In 1999, however, student athletes proposed a more modern mascot as long as the school was expanding. From then on, the school mascot and nickname was the Falcons.

Elizabeth Waters

Elizabeth Waters was 6 years old when she started school in 1871, where she would develop a lifelong love for studies.

From a young age, she was well-spoken, giving speeches long before she spoke at her high school graduation in 1881 to the rapt attention of her peers.

After attending university, she spent a few years teaching away from her hometown—one year in Neenah and five in Minnesota—but missed Fond du Lac and returned permanently in 1892. From then on, she politely declined any job offer that took her away from Fond du Lac, even the highly sought-after opportunities in state colleges.

“Maybe they’ll think I’m not very good because I’ve done practically all of my teaching in one city and one school,” she once said. “But I don’t care. I was born in Fond du Lac, and Fond du Lac is my home. I love Fond du Lac.”

Fond du Lac returned her love. Community members and fellow educators respected her greatly, and students always picked her classes—not because they were easy, but because they knew they would learn a lot from a woman who “even made Shakespeare interesting.”

Elizabeth was partial to English literature, but also taught German language studies, geometry, algebra, and history. Additionally, she was a leader in the education world, the first woman principal of the local high school, and a member of several boards.



Elizabeth Waters

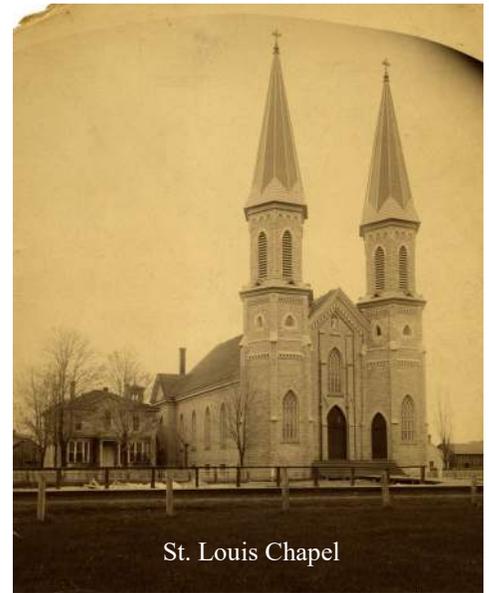
(Photo courtesy of Wisconsin Historical Society)

Churches

Religion was important to many people as they settled in Fond du Lac with a variety of faiths, prompting the establishment of churches, associated private schools, and other community organizations.

Ever since the first services were held in the city, the faith of church members also influenced them to give back to the community. This has included helping families in need directly or creating the means to help many people at once, from food pantries to thrift stores.

The first sermon in Fond du Lac was held in 1839 in Dr. Mason Darling's home, led by Reverend Jesse Hallsted, a missionary to the Brothertown nation. As churches started getting built in the community, religious services were held in homes, schools, and even the local courthouse.



St. Louis Chapel

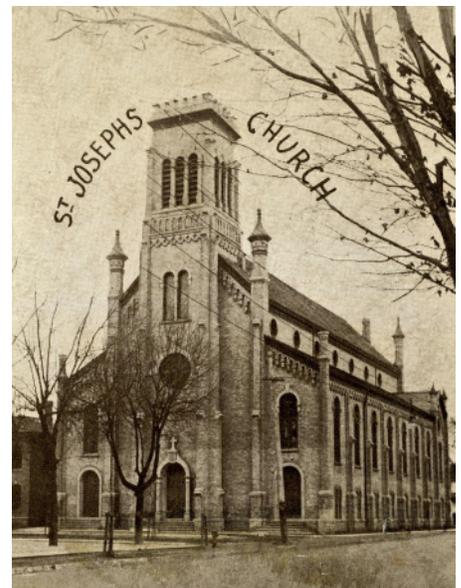


The First Baptist Church started with its first eight members in a schoolhouse in 1845, then finished its church building in 1853.

Fond du Lac's first Catholic church was built as St. Louis Chapel in 1847, and needed its first expansion in 1853 to accommodate a large number of Catholic immigrants.

Even so, several members split from this church to start St. Patrick's Church in 1854. Later, many German Catholics formed St. Mary's Church in 1865.

When a group of French Catholics started their own church in 1870 and named it St. Louis Church, the previous St. Louis Church changed its name to St. Joseph's.



St. Joseph's Church

While Governor Nathaniel Tallmadge's house hosted the first Episcopal services in Taycheedah in 1842, St. Paul's Church held services at the corner of Macy Street from 1851 to 1866, when a new cathedral was built on Division and Sophia streets.

This church burned down in 1884 and rebuilt as the Cathedral Church of St. Paul, reopening just in time for Easter Day in 1887.



The First Presbyterian Church was built in 1855 after a group of residents had been meeting in private homes, and it moved in 1917.



Immanuel-Trinity Lutheran Church

St. Peter's Lutheran Church was another church started by German settlers, led by Pastor Gottlieb Fachtmann in 1858. The members held service in the courthouse, a school, and a former congregation-alist church until their church was built in 1869.

German residents also started the Evangelical Friedens Kirche—later Church of Peace—in 1869 and the Immanuel German Lutheran congregation in 1897. In 1920, the Immanuel congregation merged with the Trinity English Lutheran congregation, which had organized in 1911, to create the Immanuel-Trinity Lutheran Church.

Members of the Black community that came to Fond du Lac during the Civil War organized the Zion African Methodist Episcopal Church and built a physical church from donations at West Eleventh Street and the river in 1862. The first pastor was Reverend S. Hutchinson.

By 1880, the church included a Sunday school and occasionally hosted events like cake walks and festivals that were open to the public.



Jewish residents didn't establish a place of worship until 1914, but even then, the religious society Kehilath Jacob would pray in rented halls until 1922, when they built the Kehilath Jacob Synagogue.

In 1960, the community saw a new site for the temple, built on a former Jewish Center and re-named to Temple Beth Israel.

A small group of Greek immigrants came to Fond du Lac in 1914 and built the Holy Trinity Greek Orthodox Church in 1916 on Macy Street, where it remains today.

A modern church called Bread Of Life Family Worship Center established in 1992 and became an intentional multiracial church, with Bishop Dr. H.D. Haywood and his wife, Bishop Beverly A. DeShazer-Haywood, dedicating themselves to community involvement in the years that followed.

The name changed slightly over the years, and by 2020, it became known as Bread of Life Cathedral of Hope.

The six Catholic churches— Sacred Heart, St. Joseph, St. Louis, St. Mary, St. Patrick, and St. Peter—combined in the early 2000s to form Holy Family Catholic Community. St. Louis, St. Patrick, and St. Joseph churches closed by 2005, and St. Louis burned down in 2007.

As of 2025, Holy Family offers Mass in both English and Spanish at the three remaining churches, as well as Holy Family on the east side, Holy Family Our Risen Savior, and Holy Family Presentation of the Blessed Virgin Mary.



Holy Family Catholic Church

(Photo by Holy Family Catholic Community)

The Holy Family parish became known for community engagement, particularly helping impoverished Fond du Lac residents. It opened the Holy Family Warming Shelter in 2023.

Medicine

The Congregation of Sisters of St. Agnes were a teaching order by tradition, but when Dr. Frank approached Mother Agnes Hazotte in 1895—after he attempted to open a hospital several times—she recognized the need in Fond du Lac and pledged the sisters’ effort to make a hospital a reality.

This resulted in one of Fond du Lac’s most longstanding institutions, bringing in doctors, nurses, and nursing students, as well as their growing skills and expertise alongside the growth of medical technology.

St. Agnes Hospital is the city’s oldest

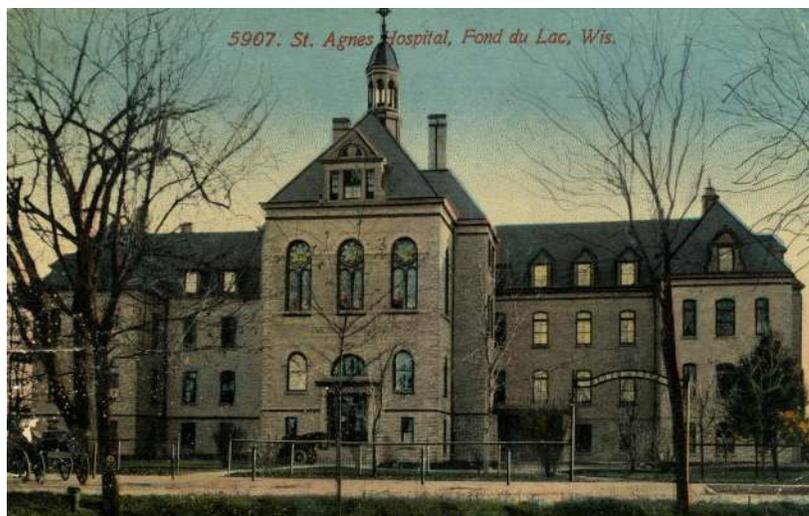
First known as St. Agnes Sanitarium, the hospital opened in 1896 with the help of a loan from brothers Henry and John Boyle. The name changed to St. Agnes Hospital in 1900.

Even after treating its first patient, Otto Schmidt, for typhoid fever, St. Agnes Hospital faced several early challenges, including a lack of electricity: nurses traveled the halls carrying kerosene lamps, and elevators were operated by hand pulleys.

The public was afraid of hospitals, associating them with death, so Mother Agnes made sure all the lights were lit to make it seem like the hospital was filled, indicating it was alright to come in. One of the doctors would also ride his carriage and horses to the hospital in the middle of the night as if he were responding to an emergency.

In 1919, the hospital became the first Catholic hospital to change nursing students’ attire for the sake of hygiene, switching out black wool for a more sanitary white silk.

The hospital also started the state’s first cancer registry in 1954, and founded residential facility Hospice Hope in 1980.





Dale Michels Heart and Vascular Care
(Photo by SSM Health Greater Fond du Lac)

St. Agnes has grown in both size and technology with Fond du Lac for over 100 years, serving the greater Fond du Lac area with emergency care, cancer care, therapy, angioplasty, maternity, robotic surgery, and more.

As the hospital teamed up with Ripon Medical Center, Waupun Memorial Hospital, and regional clinics, the resulting health delivery system was known as Agnesian HealthCare.

Agnesian HealthCare merged with SSM Health in January 2018, and the associated hospitals, surgery centers, and clinics became known under the name SSM Health.

DID YOU KNOW?

The SSM Health Dale Michels Heart & Vascular Care center is named after the owner and president of Michels Pipeline Construction. Dale Michels suffered a heart attack in 1998 and needed transport to Milwaukee, but freezing conditions delayed the helicopter. The Michels family donated money for the initial center in 2006, then again for the expansion in 2022 to help ensure the area had local access to heart care.

Local healthcare providers respond to diseases that swept the nation

Fond du Lac's healthcare systems have periodically faced major outbreaks, from the Spanish Flu pandemic in 1918 to polio around the 1950s.

Polio, also known as poliomyelitis, is a viral disease that affected mostly children for many years, invading nervous systems and causing paralysis. In Fond du Lac, it came in waves.

In 1949, residents were urged to wrap their garbage to contain germs, and workers of the local garbage dump regularly covered the dump and garbage trucks in disinfectant. That year saw 715 cases by the end of September, with 29 hospitalizations and three deaths. For Wisconsin as a whole, the highest peak of polio was in 1955, with 2,544 cases statewide.

When the first injectable polio vaccine was invented in 1954, many people were skeptical, but Fond du Lac was one of the first communities in Wisconsin to volunteer children for the trial test.

A new health concern came on March 11, 2020, when Fond du Lac County reported its first two cases of the COVID-19 virus. It was also called Coronavirus in its first several months. The next day, Wisconsin Governor Tony Evers declared a public health emergency for the state.

In the days and months that followed, Fond du Lac had to adapt to travel restrictions, ordinances to wear masks, and limited contact with other people. Many businesses closed temporarily, and students attended school virtually for the rest of the school year.



Dr. Udalis (Photo by SSM Health Greater Fond du Lac)

Throughout the pandemic, SSM Health—then still called Agnesian Healthcare—worked closely with the Fond du Lac County Health Department to help Fond du Lac navigate through the various health concerns.

By that summer, businesses implemented plexiglass barriers and social distancing measures, and restaurants kept up with the demand of curbside pickup and contactless delivery.

Over 200 county residents died from complications of the virus in the pandemic’s first two years, and many more were hospitalized.

COVID-19 vaccines arrived in Fond du Lac in December 2020, but were limited in number at first. The county used a phased approach to roll out the vaccine, and prioritized citizens that were most at risk, including healthcare workers and those over the age of 65.

In an effort to reach everyone in the community and improve the overall vaccination rate, the county paid special attention to its underserved communities. The Fond du Lac County Health Department and United Way collaboratively hosted pop-up vaccine clinics that met these communities where they were at, such as the local Mexican minimart and the summer Pride Picnic.

Additionally, SSM Health Greater Fond du Lac hosted sensory-friendly vaccine clinics specifically aimed for those with autism or anyone else challenged by the usual vaccination setting.



Wisconsin State Patrol Trooper Matt Barker helps deliver COVID-19 vaccines, received by SSM Health personnel Marcus Heller and Kate Reinke. (Photo by SSM Health Greater Fond du Lac)

DID YOU KNOW?

During the height of the COVID-19 pandemic, many people of Fond du Lac stepped up, whether to make reusable masks, volunteer to deliver meals to immunocompromised residents, or support county healthcare professionals and first responders that were on the front lines.

Local businesses also pivoted to support the community, including Elkay Interior Systems, which built protective barriers for businesses and made masks for local organizations; United Manufacturers, which also added masks to its production; and ModTruss, which created portable bio-containment cubicle for isolating possible COVID-19 patients. Website development company “wisnet” also made a directory of restaurants offering curbside pickup or delivery.

Micro-hospitals are established in 2024



For most of its history, St. Agnes Hospital stood as the only hospital in the city of Fond du Lac.

Aurora Medical Group—later known as Aurora Health Care—opened its first clinic in Fond du Lac in 1995, with six local physicians offering primary care services. It opened a larger clinic on Wisconsin American Drive three years later.

In 2020, the clinic made the decision to expand with an emergency department and more room for inpatient and outpatient services, but the project was delayed two years. Aurora Medical Center-Fond du Lac started construction on the clinic site in 2022 and opened to patients in 2024.

Froedtert Thedacare Health announced its own community hospital project in 2022 and broke ground on Johnson Street in 2024, intending to provide around-the-clock emergency, inpatient, and outpatient services.

Congregation of Sisters of St. Agnes

In 1858, Austrian missionary Reverend Casper Rehrl created a sisterhood of pioneer women to serve under the patronage of St. Agnes of Rome. One of these women was Anna Mary Hazotte, who was chosen as Mother Agnes, the first Superior General of the congregation at age 17.



“When Father Rehrl first met her, the story goes, he placed his hand on her head and said, ‘Your name shall be Agnes.’ He immediately saw so much potential in her that he gave her the name of the community’s patron saint.”

- CSA Archivist
Jenny Lukomski, 2024

The first motherhouse was in Barton, southeast of Fond du Lac in Washington County, and moved to Fond du Lac 12 years later.

The sisters have had a reputation for jumping in where they are needed, and saying “yes” to everything they could, from teaching grade school to establishing St. Mary’s Springs Academy and Marian College when the need for higher education arose.

This also included St. Agnes Hospital, for which the sisters received the necessary training to open in 1896 as the city’s first hospital.

Within Marian University, they established the Marian University Working Families Grant Program in 2002, providing funding for tuition, rent, childcare and food for local, low-income single parents.

They also partnered with many local organizations to help support people experiencing poverty, people struggling with addiction, victims of domestic abuse and sexual assault, and more.

Outside of Fond du Lac, the sisters operate a house for immigrants in New York City and a ministry in Nicaragua, South America. They’ve also served in Ecuador, Honduras, and Russia.

Above: Mother Agnes Hazotte, (1847-1905), General Superior 1864-1905

Right: Aerial view of St. Agnes campus looking southeast showing St. Agnes Convent, St. Agnes Hospital, and St. Agnes School of Nursing.

Images courtesy of the Congregation of Sisters of St. Agnes Archives



Dr. Darold Treffert

Darold Treffert was born in Fond du Lac on March 12, 1933, and would go on to be a pioneering psychiatrist in the realm of autism, hyperlexia, savant syndrome, and related conditions.

During his career as a mental health professional, he took an interest in what he called “exceptional minds” and his research that followed brought him international renown.

One of the things he was most known for was approaching his research with a focus on strengths rather than limitations, something he invited others to do in their daily lives.

He retired in 1991, but continued to influence Fond du Lac’s approach to neurodiversity for many more years.

The Treffert Center opened in 2016 to provide multidisciplinary diagnosis and treatment for autism and behavioral and communication disorders in children and adults. It includes the Treffert Library, with resources on neurodivergence and diversity and inclusion, as well as the daycare and after-school center Treffert Academy.

The center and the North Fond du Lac charter school, Treffert Way for the Exceptional Mind, implement Treffert’s approach for everyone they serve.

Treffert died in December 2020. Since then, SSM Health has opened Treffert Studios in collaboration with Moraine Park Technical College.

The studios opened in 2023, with one side dedicated to a mental health clinic, and one side open to all as a community center, a safe space to explore creative outlets and learn trade skills. Both sides honor Treffert’s teachings.



Courtesy of SSM Health Greater Fond du Lac

First Responders

Starting in 1847, when Fond du Lac first became a village, two constables were elected to watch over the community each year. At that time, Fond du Lac County had already received judicial status in 1844 and built a courthouse in 1846, using the first floor as the county jail. The county elected its first sheriff, F.F. Davis, in 1848.

This was the start of the Fond du Lac Police Department and the Fond du Lac County Sheriff's Office, respectively.

City and county officers faced many local challenges over the years, from rowdy residents to dangerous criminals and large-scale disasters.

City law enforcement started with two constables

When Fond du Lac obtained its city charter in 1852, city marshals were appointed, starting with C.N. Snell. The format changed again in 1866 when the city replaced the office of city marshal with a police force. The first police chief was James T. Conklin.

Police headquarters moved from a barn to the city jail in 1890. That building served the force until 1921, when the department first moved operations.

From 1954 to 2001, both city and county law enforcement operated out of the City County Government building, until the Fond du Lac Police Department moved headquarters to Main Street.

In the present day, the department includes several teams and special divisions such as detectives, K-9 teams, tech specialists with drones, school resource officers, a Domestic Violence Intervention Police Specialist, and a social worker that responds collaboratively with a Mental Health & Wellness Police Specialist for calls of a person in crisis.



DID YOU KNOW?

The Fond du Lac Police Department's K-9 Unit was established in 1995, and the first police dog was a German shepherd named Zeiko under handler Officer Steve Klein.

Early fire marshals had plenty of work ahead of them

Fond du Lac appointed its first fire marshals in 1848, a time when all the wooden buildings had a high risk of catching fire from stray sparks in fireplaces and other sources. A year later, all new houses were required to have stone or brick chimneys for that very reason.

The day-to-day duties of the fire marshals, Jon Bannister and A.L. Ellsworth, were to inspect buildings for hazards and make sure dry brush was kept a safe distance from buildings—and potential sparks.

When a fire did break out, the marshals handled it with a “bucket brigade,” in which members of the brigade stood in a line passing water-filled buckets to the next person in line until the person at the front threw the water on the fire.

In 1854, the city’s new fire engine could be pulled to fires, where someone of the newly-formed 50-man volunteer fire department would hand-pump water from the nearest pond or well.



Volunteer Firefighters Station 1



Volunteer Firefighters Station 4

Local volunteer fire departments eventually disbanded in 1877, but a paid fire department resurfaced a year later.

Firefighting equipment developed as the years went on, with firefighters working 84-hour work weeks by 1948, which slowly shortened to a 56-hour work week by 1983.

In 1974, the city started having firefighters trained as Emergency Medical Technicians (EMTs), and 10 years later, started operating as a paramedic provider. Now, the department is known as Fond du Lac Fire Rescue, providing the community with both fire and ambulance services.

One night went down in history as “The Night the Churches Burned”

One of the most notorious fires in Fond du Lac’s history became known as “The Night the Churches Burned.”

It happened September 25, 1908, and started in Crescent Garage at Marr and Second streets—which, until two years previously, had been Crescent Opera House.

Cans of gasoline exploded in the building, and the fire quickly spread to nearby St. Joseph’s Church. Strong winds that night carried sparks to other buildings up to two blocks away, including the Ulysses S. Grant School, St. Peter’s Lutheran Church, the Congregational Church, and several other buildings in between.

The fire quickly grew out of control as local water pipes broke, and the mayor had to call the Oshkosh Fire Department for help. In the meantime, the Fred Rueping Leather Co. permitted local fire crews to use the tannery’s artesian wells to help control the blaze.

Flooding was long a historical problem

Fond du Lac has had a few devastating floods in its history, whether from heavy rain or a rapid spring thaw.

Three days of rain in June 1905 overwhelmed local waterways, and early one morning, the Eldorado dam burst, washing out Fond du Lac roads.

Many homes and businesses were damaged as floodwaters reached first-floor windows in parts of town. Some residents fled their homes in rowboats, and in the hours and days that followed, some boat owners charged a nickel to transport people to shelter or even to work.



Fond du Lac River

A worse flood spread through in August 1924, when the area experienced eight inches of rain within 48 hours. One man died in the city, with more losses in the surrounding area.

People from the east side of the city took to canoeing around, and a few others risked the streets with their automobiles as much as they could.

Water receded from the streets that night, but remained in some of the buildings into the morning, including 17 feet of water in the basement of the high school.

DID YOU KNOW?

The effects of the 1924 flood rippled down a local river to the Milwaukee River, which raged out of control and washed away 30 bridges. As a result, some Milwaukee businessmen started a campaign to preserve the landscape around the river between Fond du Lac and Milwaukee, intending to create a state park. This would become the Kettle Moraine State Forest.

The biggest flood in Fond du Lac's modern history occurred in June 2008, when heavy rainfall overflowed the Fond du Lac River.

About 2,000 properties were significantly damaged, many residents lost power, and at least 15 homes were totally destroyed.

Fond du Lac High School had to cancel its graduation ceremony, and the local Red Cross set up a shelter at the school for the first day, opening a larger headquarters the next day at the Fond du Lac County Fairgrounds.

It took months for the city to recover, with residents hauling away over 3,000 tons of ruined appliances, furniture, and household items as a flood relief center assessed damage and directed volunteers where they were needed.

Eleven years later, the city handled another significant flood, but this time in early spring. In 2019, the weather warmed up too quickly, breaking the Fond du Lac River's ice into large slabs that jammed underneath the downtown bridges.

Water rose in the early morning hours of March 14 and reached as far as Johnson Street by 8 a.m. City crews used boats and buses to evacuate people, alongside a few improvised vessels such as a laundry basket with wheels from a laundromat and a front-end loader construction machine.



2019 flood (Photo by Doug Raflik, courtesy of The Reporter)

An animal rescue under the Johnson Street bridge took on four feet of water, but with the efforts of several community members, all the animals inside survived.

People arrived by the busload to Community Church, which was acting as the Red Cross shelter. While shelters usually stayed open for two to three days, this one stayed open for two weeks until everyone had a place to go.

Following that flood, the city has prioritized minimizing flooding risks to avoid repeat events. Changes have ranged from updating street pump stations to making plans for river-front improvements.

Five fallen officers are remembered in Fond du Lac

Fond du Lac's law enforcement offices have lost five officers on duty between 1898 and 2021.

Fond du Lac Police Officer William Christian Prinslow died November 19, 1898, the date law enforcement calls his "End of Watch." He was shot after trying to stop three men from robbing a mail carrier. He had been on his way to his shift, in uniform but unarmed.

Officer Nick A. Klaske's End of Watch was October 31, 1961, after he was shot responding to a burglary call at a local gas station. He had surprised three suspects in the act of robbery and pursued them on foot when one opened fire.

Officer Craig A. Birkholz did not hesitate to assist his fellow officers on March 20, 2011, knowing that his colleagues were being shot at, and at least one officer was down. Before he'd joined the police department, he'd served combat tours of duty with the United States Army, both in Afghanistan and Iraq.

Wisconsin State Trooper Trevor Casper died March 24, 2015 in Fond du Lac, exchanging gunfire with a heavily-armed suspected serial bank robber he'd followed into the city. It was his first solo shift at the department, and his last act had protected the people of Fond du Lac from further harm.

Officer Joseph J. Kurer's End of Watch was Sept. 22, 2021; he died from complications of contracting COVID-19 in the line of duty. He was a member of the Tactical Field Force Team, Honor Guard Unit, Domestic Violence Intervention Team, and was certified as a Field Training Officer.

Events & Recreation

Even in Fond du Lac's earliest days, city leaders wanted to draw more people to the area to help grow the community.

The residents themselves found many things to do in the area, often delighting themselves in outdoor activities that haven't changed much over the years, such as hunting, fishing, and boating.

Others engaged in community sports or simply looked forward to recurring events.

1901 street fair decorated Fond du Lac with extravagance

A street fair and carnival once filled Main Street Fond du Lac with music, laughter, and revelry for four days in 1901.



Main Street from First Street

Businessmen wanted a vibrant event to attract customers and grow the city, and residents got parades, band concerts, high wire artists, street booths, and dances as highlights of the week.

A five mile long floral parade engaged 500 mounted horsemen and many parade floats with names like "Neptune" and "Jupiter."

Night parades such as the "ghost parade" were also popular. Main Street lights were turned off to create a spooky atmosphere, and marchers rode white horses and wore black uniforms decorated to look like skeletons.

Over the course of the event, Main Street businesses were adorned with flags, bunting and wreaths, and illuminated arches crossed over the intersection of Main Street and Forest Avenue. Shop owners and other merchants offered specials in their stores or booths, from souvenir novelties to free perfumes.

Attendees could also see military reenactments, historical displays, moving pictures, dancers, and circus performers like Prince Schuman the high wire expert and Lunette the flying lady. They also played games for prizes and paid 10 cents to vote for a carnival queen.

On the final night, confetti rained down on attendees by the ton, and young visitors took delight in throwing the confetti around.

The county fair started with a focus on livestock

The Fond du Lac County Fairgrounds have hosted many events throughout Fond du Lac's history, some of the most notable being county fairs and circuses. The city purchased the land, which used to be called Kite Park, in 1892.



1919 Fond du Lac County Fair

The first county fair was not held in the fairgrounds, but rather in Rosendale in 1852. It was a two-day affair that was focused on exposition of livestock, organized by the Fond du Lac Agricultural Society.

In 1870, the Fond du Lac Agricultural Society—already partnered by then with the Mechanical Society—collaborated with the Fond du Lac County Dairymen's Association and allowed local factories to submit cheese for exhibition.

DID YOU KNOW?

Fond du Lac was host to the Wisconsin State Fair in 1881 and 1882.

Despite some unfavorable weather the first year, an estimated 30,000 people visited the city on the first day and were impressed with the city's hospitality throughout the fair week.

Early fairs also included horse races, acrobats, and contortionists, a major change to modern county fairs that feature demolition derbies, tractor pulls, and big-name grandstand music acts.

Many other parts of the fair haven't changed too much; they've only gotten bigger. This includes carnival rides, agricultural exhibits, games, and food stands.

The circus regularly drew in visitors

Another regular visitor to Fond du Lac's county fairgrounds was the circus, which, in its heyday, came to town by train, rolling in during the early morning hours. Elephants were usually the first to disembark, needing room to lumber their way to the fairgrounds and help set up the tents.

Hours later, the circus would announce itself with a parade, heralded by the circus band drawing in people to watch the riders on horseback, followed by the clowns and the caged lions, tigers, and leopards.

The circus itself included the big top tent — which hosted animal tricks and trapeze artists — surrounded by smaller tents for the sideshows, such as a fire eater or a sword swallower.



Circus parade band (Photo from Fond du Lac Symphonic Band)

“Sufficient to say that each and every act, feature and performer is the best in its field else it could find no place upon a Ringling-Barnum program. 800 men and women performers comprise the human personnel, while hundreds of trained horses, five squads of performing elephants and troupes of seals, geese, dogs, ponies, doves, bears and back-firing mules add to their quota of interest.”

—Daily Commonwealth, July 28, 1926

In 1997, the American Royal Circus brought in white tigers from Las Vegas and 34-inch high miniature ponies.

Occasionally, such as in 1999, a circus train would stop in Fond du Lac and stay for a while with food, displays, clowns, and fireworks before moving on to its grand event in Milwaukee.

Sometimes the elephants became headlines outside of the circus show, like in 1972, when many of the George Matthews Great London Circus trucks were stuck in the mud after a rain storm at the end of the night. A wrecker arrived at 10:30 p.m., and the circus's elephants helped push and pull the trucks far enough for them to be towed the rest of the way out. The last truck was freed at 4:30 a.m.

In 1977, Barbara the elephant escaped. She was being used to set up the Carson & Barnes Circus when a truck backfired and spooked her. Dragging a tent behind her for part of the journey, she crashed through yards and broke through fences, overturning a camper before circus workers caught up to her just east of Fond du Lac.

DID YOU KNOW?

Babe the elephant, with the Moose circus, celebrated her 12th birthday on the steps of the Fond du Lac courthouse in 1924, complete with a monster birthday cake from Gerhard Bakery. Babe then went on to pay a visit at the Children's Home for a performance with two other members of her family.

Lakeside Park became a draw for recreation in 1896

On the south side of Lake Winnebago, much of the land was swampy, filled with cattails and marsh grass. It was hard to trudge through to get to the lake, so a campaign started around 1889 to extend Main Street to the water, forming a lakefront of solid ground.



Local business leaders, the city, and residents all contributed to the transformation, and by 1896, roads and a wooden sidewalk provided access to the waterfront.

A boardwalk led into the lake, ending in a large slide, which boosted recreation with the start of swimming schools.

The park drew in many residents, and continued to grow over several years. John T. Boyle gave the park its first pavilion in 1897, unveiled in a presentation with over 5,000 residents in attendance to see red, white, and blue lanterns that hung suspended from the trees and roof of the pavilion.

Two years later, a plan for lagoons and islands came to fruition. This same plan scooped out an existing low area on the east side of the park, which became popular as the “Big Hole” and lighthouse harbor.

In early 1900, William McDermot gifted an octagon-shaped bandstand to the park, which became a significant historical landmark.

The lighthouse came after, during the Great Depression. Local lumberman William Nuss donated the lumber to build a lighthouse in the park, and architect Roger A. Sutherland created the plans. Unemployed citizens constructed the lighthouse in 1933.



Fred Frazier, park superintendent in the 1940s, would occasionally find wounded animals and care for them, an act of compassion that started a zoo in Lakeside Park.

By the 1960s, it boasted a bear cage with a den, a fenced deer area, and even exotic birds, a fox, and a monkey. The bear den and animal cages were eventually replaced with a petting zoo.

Also in the 1960s, the Fond du Lac County Conservation Alliance eyed Supple Marsh across the Fond du Lac River for a plan to utilize part of it for recreation in 1964.

It had long been home to a number of fish and wildlife, including muskrats and several kinds of ducks, but the city had been using about 30 acres of it for a landfill. The organization fought the matter until 1967, when the city purchased the marsh for a recreational area.





For a time, an annual Pepsi Sports Olympics challenged participants to canoe jousting, wheelbarrow races, limbo contests, log rolling, three-legged relays, and more.

Today, Walleye Weekend still celebrates the start of summer annually as Fond du Lac's largest free family festival. With the help of local sponsors and hundreds of volunteers, the event both showcases the community and raises money for local area nonprofit organizations.

(photo from Fond du Lac Festivals, Inc., 1980)

Sports history in Fond du Lac includes baseball, hockey and more

Outside of local high schools, popular sports in Fond du Lac's history have included teams and leagues for bowling, softball, windsurfing, horseshoeing, and volleyball, often sponsored by local businesses.

Organized baseball teams date back to the late 19th century in Fond du Lac, with team names like the Webfoots, Cubs, Giants, Mudhens, and Molls throughout the early years. In the 1940s and 1950s, they were known as the Fond du Lac Panthers.

Local baseball was revived in 2017, when the Fond du Lac Dock Spiders arrived as part of the Northwoods League, a collegiate summer baseball league. The team plays at Marian University's Herr Baker field, and is the partner team of the Wisconsin Timber Rattlers in Appleton.

The Dock Spiders won two league championship titles since then: one in 2018, and the next in 2020, when the league divided into pods for its season during the COVID-19 pandemic.



Photo courtesy of the Fond du Lac Dock Spiders

Boxing was historically a popular competitive sport, and today, martial arts continues to draw local participants. Olympic silver medalist Lynn Roethke opened Club Olympia in Fond du Lac as a personal trainer and coach in 1997. Club Olympia specializes in judo as well as Pilates, strength training, and other fitness activities.

Lynn won silver in judo at the 1988 Summer Olympic Games in Seoul, South Korea, and medaled in other international championships over the years, including the Pan American Games. She was honored as U.S. Judo Female Athlete of the Year in 1985 and 1987.



With several trails weaving across the Fond du Lac area, bicycling is another popular activity, whether cyclists ride casually or competitively.

Bicycling hit a peak in popularity in the 1890s, and Oscar Huelsman won the first “military road race” among nine boys on bicycle in 1897. He won a gold medal after 500 people watched the race on Second Street.

In 2004, Fond du Lac ultracyclist Dave Haase competed in his first Race Across America challenge—a route that spans 3,000 miles from California to Maryland. While he didn’t finish the race that year, he finished the next year as the top American finisher, fourth place overall. He was the top American finisher six more times by 2024.

The immediate Fond du Lac area also has three main golf courses. The South Hills golf course opened in 1927 and officially became a country club in 1958—its name became South Hills Golf & Country Club when it became an equity club in 1987.

Rolling Meadows Golf Course broke ground in 1970 with golf clubs rather than shovels, and opened in 1972. Whispering Springs Golf Club followed after Ed Huck and Terry Flesch bought Ledgewood Golf and Supper Club in 1990. The course remodeled in 1996.

Another local sport that has stood the test of time is soccer: the Fond du Lac Soccer Association was founded in 1977 and finished its soccer complex on the city’s east side in 1997.

Fond du Lac is also home to Blue Line Family Ice Center as of 1995, which supports celebrated local teams such as the Fond du Lac Bears hockey team and the Fond du Lac Blades synchronized skating teams.



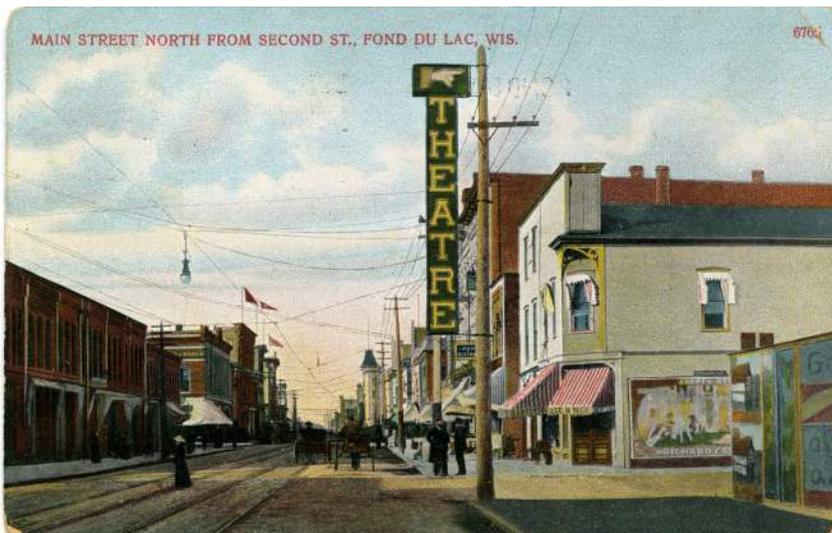
The Arts

In Fond du Lac's early days, entertainment often came in the form of community gatherings for live performances and public dances.

One could find a dance band playing somewhere in the community every weekend, and Fond du Lac's many stages attracted talent from all over—even some names that were world famous in their time, from actor Otis Skinner to John Philip Sousa and his band.

However, many arts groups, especially the ones that lasted into the 20th century, supported local talent as well, whether the performers went on to continue professionally outside of Fond du Lac or stayed at home to hone their art alongside other careers.

Fond du Lac went from performance theaters to movie theaters



Entertainment-seekers in Fond du Lac often had a number of options when looking for a way to spend their evenings.

The Crescent Opera House was one of the earliest in 1887, hosting not only opera, but also Shakespeare comedies and even a hypnotist from its spot on Second and Marr Street. Sometimes, it presented films, but with the technology at the time, “moving pictures” were short and silent.

Over the years, theaters could be competitive, such as when the Henry Boyle Theatre was built on Sheboygan Street in 1906.

P.B. Haber and H.R. Potter, who owned the Crescent Opera House, made a deal to help the new theater: if the Henry Boyle Theatre could sell 1,000 tickets for opening night at \$10 each (worth about \$300 in the 2020s), Haber and Potter would close the Crescent Opera House.

The Crescent closed four days before the Boyle Theatre's opening show, the comedy play “His Grace de Grammont.”

DID YOU KNOW?

High School student Cleo Smith, while working at a Fond du Lac theater in 1912, was asked to pick up their next entertainer at the train station, where he was arriving from Chicago. Cleo hopped on his bicycle to meet 18-year-old violinist Jack Benny and bring him to the theater—with Jack on the handlebars. He liked the ride so much that he asked Cleo to give him a tour of the town.

Many other theaters opened and closed through the 1920s, from the vaudeville Idea Theatre, to the Orpheum Theatre and the Bijou Theatre.

However, two theaters opened in 1925 to try their hands at being entertainment powerhouses in Fond du Lac, both on Main Street and nearly right next to each other. In fact, the two theaters raced to see which would finish construction first.

Fischer's Fond du Lac Theatre opened first, but the Retlaw Theatre was only a month behind.

They both helped popularize movies in Fond du Lac and were very successful despite how close they were to each other. Even when Fischer's Fond du Lac Theatre closed during the Great Depression, it reopened quickly with new owners as the Fond du Lac Theatre.



Fond du Lac Theatre

(Courtesy of Wisconsin Historical Society)

A new era to movie-going started in 1950 with the arrival of the Lake Park Outdoor Theater near Lakeside Park, which had a concession stand, an amusement area with a merry-go-round and a nearby drive-in for food such as fries, ice cream, or a root beer float.

The audience could sit in their cars as the movie played on the big screen, listening from speakers in their windows as they enjoyed popcorn and other treats.

By 1973, Fond du Lac had a fourth theater to choose from for a movie night. Cinema I and II in the Forest Mall introduced heightened technology with two "picture window" screens.

All four theaters lived long enough to show "Star Wars" in 1977, "Grease" in 1978, and "Raiders of the Lost Ark" in 1981. However, the Fond du Lac Theatre and Lake Park Outdoor Theater both closed in the 1980s.



(Photo by Doug Raflik, 2020, courtesy of The Reporter)

In 1998, brothers Dennis and Paul Frank, who by then owned the remaining theaters, closed the Retlaw Theatre just as they opened the new Fond du Lac Theatre across town with a whopping eight screens. “Titanic” played in both theaters during the transition.

They didn’t close the Forest Mall Cinema until 2014—its last shows included “How to Train Your Dragon 2” and “Dawn of Planet of the Apes.”

By 2019, the Fond du Lac Theatre changed hands to Odyssey Entertainment Inc., who remodeled the theater in 2024 for the first time in about 26 years.

Fond du Lac Community Theatre

When it came to stage shows, homegrown talent eventually grew in popularity, and the Fond du Lac Community Theatre formed in 1958.

Its first show was “Anastasia,” about a girl brought back to a Russian palace to play the role of the family’s lost princess, not knowing she was the real princess—the same story that inspired a 1997 animated film and a 2017 Broadway musical.

Its early years relied heavily on its members for accumulating props and costumes, and on the Fond du Lac School District for providing space to rehearse and perform.

For a long time, Fond du Lac Community Theatre did not include musicals in its repertoire. Musical theater was a separate group at first, but it went out of business in the 1960s.

Local schools’ auditoriums have continued to host community theater shows, from Roosevelt Junior High School’s auditorium, to the Goodrich Little Theater after it was built in 1967, to the Fond du Lac High School Performing Arts Center after it was built in 2001.

Children’s programming, which had been added sporadically over the years, was added to the theater group’s repertoire permanently in 2014, named Encore Youth Theatre.



(Courtesy of Fond du Lac Community Theatre)

Longstanding bands and choirs have entertained Fond du Lac for years

Fond du Lac had some public halls to listen to music in, but local bands and choirs also played concerts in parks, school auditoriums, and private venues they were hired for.

One popular spot for bands in particular was the Lakeside Park bandstand, donated by William McDermot in 1900, which is still standing over 120 years later.

A band that performed in this bandstand for most of its life started out as the Fond du Lac Military Band in 1898.

Many bands existed around this time, mainly performing with only brass instruments like trumpets, trombones, and tubas. However, the Military Band was one of the first in Wisconsin to incorporate woodwinds such as clarinets and oboes, as well as percussion instruments like drums.

Members of the Fond du Lac band weren't necessarily part of the military, as the Military Band name was just to distinguish the group from others for its use of woodwinds.



(Photo courtesy of Fond du Lac Symphonic Band)

The Military Band welcomed its first women players with a pair of high school students in 1938, but with infrequent vacancies, the band didn't have near equal membership between men and women until about 1974.

This was when new director Raymond Wifler started leading the band and reorganized it to keep it from fizzling out.



(Photo courtesy of Fond du Lac Symphonic Band)

The band's name changed to the Fond du Lac Community Band due to confusion with the "military" name. It changed again in 1989, this time to Fond du Lac Symphonic Band.

In the present day, the band performs a fall classical concert, a spring concert with more modern music, and several concerts throughout the summer.

Before he took on the local band, Ray Wifler—who was a music professor at UW Fond du Lac—started the Fond du Lac Community Choir in 1971.

He led the choir through its first year as it performed the first half of “Elijah,” a composition based on Old Testament Bible texts that typically lasts almost two and a half hours in its entirety. The choir performed the second half three years later.



(Photo courtesy of South Shore Chorale)

Ray Wifler passed the torch in 1972, and after its second concert, the name changed to Fond du Lac Oratorio Chorus for over 30 years. Most of this time was spent under the musical direction of Alan Lemery.

The name then changed to South Shore Chorale under director Cory Schneider in 2006, when the board of directors felt it was time for a fresh, new identity for the group.

South Shore Chorale performs in winter and spring, often in collaboration with the semi-professional South Shore Orchestra, professional soloists, and local students.

The Thelma Sadoff Center for the Arts

In addition to leading Fond du Lac’s major music groups during his time in the community, Ray Wifler also helped create the Windhover Center for the Arts in 2000.

Originally built in 1906 and previously housing a Masonic Temple, the building has been an arts center since 1995. It needed renovations to continue being a cultural center for the community, and families such as the Quadraccis donated to fund the transformation.

The name Windhover came from the title of Henry Quadracci’s favorite poem by Gerard Manley Hopkins. Henry and Betty Quadracci had also named Quad/Graphic’s charitable branch the Windhover Foundation earlier in their careers.

In 2013, the center entered another new era. It had been losing money, so it started a new campaign to renovate again and refresh its image in Fond du Lac.

This time, the top donor was the Sadoff Family Foundation, so the center was renamed to the Thelma Sadoff Center for the Arts, in honor of the Sadoff matriarch. Lacey Sadoff has said the new center would be distinctive yet comfortable, just like her grandmother, Thelma Sadoff.

Often called the cornerstone of the Arts and Entertainment District in downtown Fond du Lac, THELMA quickly became a hotspot for art exhibits, concerts, movie showings, and galas.

It has also been a hub for activities during downtown events such as Fondue Fest and Sturgeon Spectacular.



Fond du Lac boasts literature talent

Among Fond du Lac’s literary accomplishments is the novel “Seventeenth Summer” by Maureen Daly, not only written in Fond du Lac, but also based in Fond du Lac.

Born in Ireland, Maureen and her family came to Fond du Lac in the 1920s, and she liked the city so much in her youth that she immortalized it on paper. She started writing the novel when she herself was 17 years old, incorporating a few of her own experiences into the fictional story of Angie Morrow’s life in the summer before Angie leaves for college.

However, she didn’t publish the novel until she was in college, in 1942. While it was marketed toward adults, it became popular among teens who related to the characters, helping to create “young adult” as its own genre of literature.

After her novel was published, Maureen moved on to journalism for over 40 years before publishing her second novel, “Acts of Love” in 1986, and then its sequel, “First a Dream,” in 1990.

DID YOU KNOW?

Author Maureen Daly was one of four sisters celebrated for writing or journalism success. Maggie Daly was the columnist “Daly Diary” in the newspaper Chicago’s American, Kay Daly worked in advertising and became Revlon’s vice president, and Sheila Daly wrote a teen column for the Chicago Tribune.

Maggie Daly’s daughter, born in Fond du Lac, was the actress Brigid Bazlen, known for Hollywood films “The Honeymoon Machine,” “King of Kings,” and “How the West Was Won” in the early 1960s.

Maureen lived in Fond du Lac through the Great Depression, as did another writer, who famously chronicled his experiences in the 1930s through memoir.

Thomas Ramirez wrote “That Wonderful Mexican Band” over the course of many years, and published it in 2017, detailing his youth in Fond du Lac and the poverty that struck many families during the Depression.

The titular “band” in the memoir was a family band his father had started, for which Thomas played the tuba.

Prior to offering it in book form, he had serialized the memoir in the Fond du Lac Reporter. Additionally, Thomas wrote more than 150 novels in several genres, including mystery and military stories.



Fond du Lac’s Cindy Barden also has a significant number of works under her name, including 175 educational books for children, several magazine and newspaper articles, poems, and short stories.

Her most well-known book is “Foot of the Lake: An Early History of Fond du Lac, Wisconsin,” which was published in 1998 through the Fond du Lac Public Library.

Alongside her productivity and creativity, she was known as a champion for learning that touched many people’s lives.

Madame Kuony

Liane Kuony, the famous Madame Kuony, was born in Antwerp, Belgium, and studied interior decorating and culinary arts in Switzerland before she first arrived in the United States in 1937.

She met her husband in Milwaukee, but fell in love with Fond du Lac once they moved in 1949—the French-sounding name reminded her of home.

They moved into the historic former home of Keyes Darling, and after Madame Kuony did the interior design of the house herself, she started serving tea in the afternoons, welcoming her neighbors and the rest of Fond du Lac to try some of her culinary specialties.

Over the course of the next 10 years, this grew into luncheons, then dinner and special events. She created a name for herself as a gourmet expert, and for the house known as The Postilion.

She was most dedicated to French cuisine, and in the 1960s, she opened the Postilion School of Culinary Arts in her home. Her lessons were known for being light but informative; for instance, in a beef dissecting class, she covered the basics of beef cuts, hygiene in the kitchen, how to use every part of the animal without waste, and how to correctly cut the meat.

Madame Kuony closed the Postilion restaurant by 1980, but kept the culinary school going, even expanding it to a second school in Milwaukee, called the Postilion II.

She also opened a restaurant there called the Great House, but when it burned down in 1984, she decided to reopen the Postilion in Fond du Lac instead of trying to save the Milwaukee business. The Postilion reopened in May 1985, and was already fully booked until September on its opening day.

Madame Kuony died in 2005. Her husband had preceded her in death, and her children had moved to California, so the Postilion house's future was uncertain until the Fond du Lac County Historical Society bought it in 2009. It sold again to a family as a private house in 2013.

Fond du Lac's population boosted over the years

1850: 1,940

1860: 5,450

1870: 12,764

1880: 13,094

1890: 12,024

1900: 15,100

1910: 18,787

1920: 23,429

1930: 26,449

1940: 27, 209

1950: 29,936

1960: 32,719

1970: 35,315

1980: 35,863

1990: 37,755

2000: 42,203

2010: 43,021

2020: 44,678

2024: 44,300 (est.)

Acknowledgements

We began writing this book with the knowledge that so much has happened in the 26 years since Cindy Barden wrote “Foot of the Lake: An Early History of Fond du Lac, Wisconsin.” We weren’t prepared for the incredible variety of stories and true appreciation for Fond du Lac shared by from a number of residents, some new and some whose family histories here span many generations, each just as valuable in forming this growing city.

People are living histories. We hope these stories tell the tale of how Fond du Lac came to be; not only the major events, but also the human experience here and how those stories shaped this community.

Every attempt has been made to get the names, dates, and events correct. We are indebted to the many people who researched or double-checked the stories shared, took or shared photos, and lent their editing eyes to this project, including Fond du Lac Library Board members and Wisconsin historian Gavin Schmitt. Special thanks to the community members who shared their memories, family histories, and love for Fond du Lac, as well as the schools and businesses that shared images.

This work could have not have been done without the incredible research of local historian Tracy Reinhardt and the writing of Daphne Lemke. Both have put an immense amount of work into making sure the history and stories of Fond du Lac are not lost, but shared and enjoyed, both in this book and otherwise.

We would also like share our appreciation to the staff at the library who worked to bring this project to life: Melanie Kearns (Information and Outreach Coordinator) for project management; Avis Seizert (Local History and Genealogy Librarian) for valuable direction and support in research, editing, and collecting histories; Ian Stepleton (Public Relations Coordinator) for the cover art, editing, and photos; and Lori Burgess (Assistant Director of Operations) and Jon Mark Bolthouse (Library Director) for their vision and support.

Finally, thank you to the City of Fond du Lac and the Fond du Lac Public Library Board, without whose support this project would not have been possible. Thank you.

Bibliography

- Andler, Caroline. "Brothertown timeline of restoration," brothertowncitizen.wordpress.com, February 2024
- Andler, Caroline, and Craig Cipolla, "History – the Brothertown Indian Nation," Brothertown Indian Nation, unknown date.
- Barrett, Rick. "Fond du Lac metal structure company designs containment cubicle amid coronavirus pandemic," *The Reporter*, Mar. 25, 2020.
- Baum, Eric. "Association of Commerce thanks volunteers at annual meeting," *The Reporter*, print, Feb. 11, 2000.
- BCI Burke. "Company History." bciburke.com.
- Betz, Maureen, and John Ebert. *Fond du Lac County, The Gathering Place*. 1999.
- Birns, Mildred. "First Religious Service Held in Log Cabin," *The Reporter*, print, Aug. 22, 1970.
- Bradley, Eric. "Local businesses use the Web to increase profits and visibility," *The Reporter*, print, Jul. 6, 1998.
- Brandl, Patty. "Family of fallen FdL soldier asks that he not be forgotten," *The Reporter*, print, Aug. 4, 2005.
- Brothertown Citizen, "The Brothertown Indian Nation Celebrates First Annual Samson Occom Day," brothertowncitizen.wordpress.com, July 14, 2020
- Buchholz, Harley. "Fairs just don't really change," *Fond du Lac Commonwealth Reporter*, print, Jul. 30, 1968.
- Buccholz, Harley. *The Reporter*, print, 1970-1986.
- "Captain Derek A. Dobogai obituary." *The Reporter*, print, Aug. 30, 2007.
- Cardinal Athletic Alumni, "1947 FDL Panthers," Aug. 14, 2014.
- Carver Griffith high school graduate. 1863.
- "Cindy Barden Obituary," legacy.com, 2014.
- City of Fond du Lac, "City Manager," fdl.wi.gov, unknown date.
- Club Olympia, "Meet the trainers," clubolympiafdl.com, unknown date.
- Daily Milwaukee News. Sept. 22, 1861.
- "Dave Haase- Ultracyclist," davehaase.com, updated 2024.
- Destination Lake Winnebago Region, "Fond of Winning," unknown date.
- Doll, Linus. "Three strikes, 'yer out!" *The Reporter*, print, Aug. 11, 2014.
- Downtown Fond du Lac Partnership, "History of the Downtown Fond du Lac Partnership," downtownfdl.com, unknown date.
- Draves, William. "Vietnam: 30 casualties and many unhappy memories," *Fond du Lac Reporter*, print, Apr. 30, 1975.

Bibliography

- Esparza, Mary. "Women who helped make history: Their names are well-recognized," *The Reporter*, print, Mar. 2, 1986.
- Faris, Myron. "Supple's Marsh—a haven for creatures of the wild and source of memories and thrills for many persons," *Fond du Lac Reporter*, print, Nov. 5, 1976.
- FdL Soccer Committee, "Soccer complex among best," *The Reporter*, print, Mar. 2, 1997.
- Fond du Lac Community Theatre, "History," unknown date.
- Fond du Lac Convention & Visitors Bureau, "The Fond du Lac Area Visitors Guide," *The Reporter*, print, May 18, 1986.
- Fond du Lac County, "Airport Overview," fdlco.wi.gov. Unknown date.
- Fond du Lac County Fair, "History of the Fair," fonddulacountyfair.com. Unknown date.
- Fond du Lac County Historical Society, "Galloway House and Village Backstage Pass School," [youtube.com](https://www.youtube.com), Jul. 15, 2020.
- Fond du Lac Dock Spiders, "About the Dock Spiders," *The Northwoods League*, unknown date.
- Fond du Lac Fire Rescue. "History," fdl.wi.gov, unknown date.
- Fond du Lac Journal. Sept. 9, 1852 and May 26, 1853.
- Fond du Lac Police Department. "History of the department," fdl.wi.gov, unknown date.
- Fond du Lac Public Library. "Community invited as library branch renamed to honor former county executive Allen Buechel," fdlpl.org, April 17, 2023.
- Fond du Lac School District "About FDLSD," fonddulac.k12.wi.us. Unknown date.
- Fond du Lac School District. "Fond du Lac School District educator receives WEMTA Excellence Award," *FDL Reporter*, Mar. 29, 2017.
- Fond du Lac Symphonic Band. "Band History." fdlsymphonicband.com.
- The Grateful Nation Project & Hero Cards. "Hero 104: Marc Ian Nieto." herocards.us. Unknown date.
- González, Sergio. "Mexican Migrant Workers in Mid-Century Wisconsin." *University Place, PBS Wisconsin*. Oct. 17, 2017.
- Gores, Stan. *Fond du Lac Commonwealth Reporter*, print, 1966-1969.
- Hall, Ken. "Rolling into history: FdL library's Bookmobile retired," *The Reporter*, print, Aug. 29, 2011.
- Holy Family Catholic Community, "Worship together at the church of your choice," *The Reporter*, print, Mar. 11, 2001.
- Dr. Homes, Micheal, and Nancy Zompolas, "Fond du Lac School District makes progress in achieving key elements of Strategic Plan," *The Reporter*, print, Feb. 25, 1996.
- honorstates.org, "Gold Star Veterans : Wisconsin Fond du Lac County." Unknown date.
- Hooker, Bill. "Wisconsin Magazine of History." Vol. 16, No. 4, June 1933.

Bibliography

- Juris, Anita. "Madame Kuony teaches art of beef dissection," Fond du Lac Reporter, print, Mar. 2, 1976.
- Karst, Pat. "Agnesians enter new era, increase apostolic endeavors," The Reporter, print, Mar. 6, 1975.
- Keppert, Jenny. "Pastor's 'FDL Initiative' seeks 'freedom, diversity, love,'" The Reporter, print, Jan. 27, 2002.
- Kilmer, Paulette. "Polio: surviving a killer," The Reporter, print, Jun. 18, 1995.
- King, Wayne. "The Long Road Home from World War I." Fond du Lac Public Library History at Home series, youtube.com, streamed live Oct. 18, 2018.
- Knuth, Carl C. "Shoveler most unusual of ducks visiting area," Fond du Lac Commonwealth Reporter, print, Jul. 1, 1966
- Koehler, C.J. "Pulls an elephant... runs on peanuts," The Reporter, print, Jun. 21, 1989.
- Kohl, Tom. "Adlam remembers Brewers, Panthers," The Reporter, print, Jun. 22, 1980.
- Kottke, Colleen. "Slain Waupun soldier will be dearly missed," The Reporter, print, Oct. 29, 2003.
- Lane, Susan. "WFON, KFIZ now under one roof," The Reporter, print, Mar. 25, 1988.
- Lemke, Daphne. FDL Reporter. 2020-2024.
- Lukomski, Jenny. "Women's Religious Collections and the Building of America's Schools and Hospitals," Midwest Archives Conference, May 4, 2024. Retrieved from csasisters.org.
- "Madame Liane C. Kuony Obituary," legacy.com, 2005.
- "Marian College Becomes Marian University," The Reporter, print, May 18, 2008.
- Marian University, "Working Families Grant Program," marianuniversity.edu, 2019.
- Merrill Herald, "Mrs. Kate Pier Was First Woman to Cast Vote in Fond du Lac Co.," June 25, 1925. Published online by Wisconsin State Historical Society.
- Mentzer, Mike, and Terry Beahm, "Runaway elephant surrounded," The Reporter, print, Aug. 8, 1977.
- Milwaukee Journal Sentinel, "Wisconsin lost 136 men and women in the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. Here are the names of every one." Sept. 8, 2021.
- Moraine Park Technical College, "College History: Fond du Lac campus," morainepark.edu. Unknown date.
- Mulligan, Keith. "KFIZ Pioneer in State Broadcasting," Fond du Lac Commonwealth Reporter, print, Aug. 22, 1970.
- The National Archives. "U.S. Military Fatal Casualties of the Korean War for Home- State- of- Record: Wisconsin." archives.gov.
- National Park Service. "Language of Slavery," nps.gov. Last updated May 16, 2024.
- The Olympics, "Lynn J. Roethke Biography," olympics.com, unknown date.

Bibliography

- On Wisconsin, "On, Alumnae: Kate Hamilton Pier," Summer 2019.
- Opinion page, "Walleye Weekend offers more family attractions," *The Reporter*, print, Jun. 6, 1986.
- Dr. Osterndorf, Alan, and Susan Hill, "School District continues to build on its strong foundations," *The Reporter*, print, Feb. 21, 1993.
- Palen, Sister Imogene. "Marian College doors open in 1936," *The Reporter*, print, Jan. 5, 1986.
- Pankratz, Jo Ann. "Better Library Service for County is Broadcast," *Fond du Lac Commonwealth Reporter*, print, Jun. 10, 1968.
- PBS Wisconsin, "Fondy Blades," Jan. 9, 2020.
- Perez, Maria. "Wisconsin's dairy industry would collapse without the work of Latino immigrants — many of them undocumented," *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*, Nov. 12, 2019.
- Plummer, Russ. "Bread of Life Church seeks permanent home in Fond du Lac," *The Reporter*, print, Mar. 23, 2011.
- Polk City Directories. *Fond du Lac, Wisconsin Polk City Directory. Published 2005.*
- Ramirez, Thomas. *That Wonderful Mexican Band: A Memoir of The Great Depression.* 2017.
- Razner, Sarah. *FDL Reporter*, 2019-2020.
- Records of Christ Church, Poughkeepsie, *New York History 1755-1910.*
- Reinhardt, Neil. "Memories of Eggs and Chickens." Unknown date.
- Reinhardt, Tracy. "The Night the Churches Burned." 2008.
- Reinhardt, Tracy. "Fond du Lac Floods." Presentation. Unknown date.
- Reinsch, Lee. "FdL schools all access Internet," *The Reporter*, print, Feb. 25, 1996.
- Reporter Staff, *Fond du Lac Commonwealth Reporter*, print, 1965-1971.
- Reporter Staff, *The Reporter*, print, 1972-2013.
- Ritger, Laurie. *The Reporter*, print, 1990-2014.
- Roznik, Sharon. *The Reporter*, 2000-2021.
- Schaenzer, Amie Jo. "St. Louis fire latest in long line of blazes," *The Reporter*, Apr. 6, 2007.
- Schrauth, Joann. "Memorial service honors 18 men killed in Korean War," *The Reporter*, print, Aug. 18, 2003.
- Schrauth, Joann. "Reaching out: Daisy Frazier gives a voice to Fond du Lac's African-American community," *The Reporter*, print, Oct. 31, 2010.
- Scotello, Frank. "C.D. Smith thrives on partnership with union workers," *The Reporter*, print, Sept. 4, 2000.
- Schwenck, Chris. "Readin' and 'ritin' and 'rithmetic." *The Reporter*, print, Jul. 16, 1993.

Bibliography

Semi-weekly Commonwealth. Jun. 14, 1898.

Semi-weekly Wisconsin. Sept. 12, 1866.

Sheimo, John. Fond du Lac Commonwealth Reporter and The Reporter, print, 1970-1976.

Snowball, Emma. "Wisconsin Winnebago fades into history as signing of the new constitution brings on The Ho Chunk Nation," originally appeared in Ho-Chunk Wo-Lduk, Volume VIII, Issue 19, Early December 1994. Published online at ho-chunknation.com Nov. 27, 2019.

South Hills Golf & Country Club, "About," southhillsfdl.com, unknown date.

South Shore Chorale. "SSC History," southshorechorale.org.

Spicuzza, Mary, and Bill Glauber, "Report on trooper's death: 17 seconds, 21 shots, 1 hero," Milwaukee Journal Sentinel, July 23, 2015.

Spicuzza, Mary, and Bill Glauber, "Stunned town mourns trooper who was 'born ready to do this job,'" Milwaukee Journal Sentinel, Mar. 25, 2015.

Srubas, Paul. "Death toll from Spanish flu epidemic 100 years ago should be reason enough to get flu shot," Fond du Lac Reporter, print, originally written for USA TODAY NETWORK-Wisconsin, Nov. 18, 2018.

Stanek, Heather. "Despite its age, FdL County Fair is still going strong at 159," The Reporter, print, July 18, 2010.

Steinert, Melanie. "Fond du Lac's sisters of St. Agnes to celebrate 150th anniversary with traveling exhibit," FDL Reporter, June 17, 2020.

Still, Lisa K. "History of the Randall Abner family," brothertownindians.org, Feb. 11, 2024.

St. Mary's Springs Academy, "Mission & Tradition," smsacademy.org, unknown date.

The Telegraph-Courier (Kenosha). Aug. 4, 1870.

Thompson, Debby. "Family-oriented weekend satisfies interests," The Reporter, print, Jun. 5, 1988.

Tucker, Kelly. "FdL's Black history predates Civil War," The Reporter, print, Feb. 27, 2003.

United for Diversity, "Our History," unitedfordiversity.org, unknown date.

United States Census Bureau. Quick Facts Fond du Lac City, Wisconsin.

UW-Madison Extension Fond du Lac County. "Agriculture Works Hard For Fond Du Lac County," 2020.

Vaisvilas, Frank. "Sturgeon revered by Menominee people, who inspired Wisconsin's sturgeon spearing season." Green Bay Press-Gazette, Feb. 10, 2021.

"Victor Capelle Obituary." legacy.com, 2003.

Winnebago Wheelmen L.A.W. 400, Bicycling 1891-1941, from the files of Fond du Lac newspapers, Fond du Lac, Wis. July 3, 1897.

Wisconsin Department of Administration Division of Intergovernmental Relations. "Tribes of Wisconsin," doa.wi.gov, last updated Oct. 2024

Bibliography

Wisconsin First Nations, "Tribal Lands Map," wisconsinfirstnations.org.

Wisconsin First Nations, "Current Tribal Lands Map and Native Nations Facts," wisconsinfirstnations.org.

Wisconsin State Journal. Aug. 27, 1866; Sept. 27, 1869; Sept 20, 1877.

World Health Organization. "Poliomyelitis (polio)," unknown date.

Worthing, Ruth Shaw. Content in Fond du Lac Historical Society Papers. Unknown date.

Wright Directory Co. *Wright's directory of Fond du Lac Co. for 1905*. Published 1905. Retrieved from University of Wisconsin Madison library.

Wright Directory Co. *Wright's Fond du Lac City Directory 1955*. Published 1955.

Xiong, Ger. Oral interview with the Fond du Lac Public Library.

Zahn, Anita. "First time at a circus is a day to remember," *The Reporter*, print, Jul. 17, 1985.

Photo credits

Cover: Lighthouse photo by Patrick Flood. Cover design by Ian Stepleton.

Page 7: View of Lake Winnebago from the Columbia Park tower in Fond du Lac County. Photo by Daphne Lemke.

Page 8: Lake Winnebago. Drawing by Daphne Lemke.

Page 9: Kiekhaefer Park. Photo by Daphne Lemke.

Page 10: Kettle Moraine State Forest near Greenbush. Photo by Melanie Kearn.

Page 11: Approximate tribal lands in Fond du Lac County in about 1800. Drawing by Daphne Lemke, based on information from Wisconsin First Nations and the tribal map on wisconsinfirstnations.org.

Page 12: Burial mounds and sign at Taylor Park in Fond du Lac. The sign reads, “Burial Mounds: Beginning about 1000 B.C. and continuing until approximately 1200 A.D., various groups of Native Americans immigrated to Wisconsin. Some of these people brought the custom of burying their dead in mounds constructed of topsoil to the state’s woodlands and prairies. Thousands of burial mounds dotted Wisconsin’s landscape during prehistoric times. The reason for mound burials is not known.” Photo by Daphne Lemke.

Page 13: The logo of the Brothertown Indian Nation, with their native name, Eeyamquittoowauconnuck. Courtesy of Brothertown Indian Nation.

Page 14: Brothertown Indian Nation’s spring powwow in April 2024. Council members, from left: Melissa Kavonis, Dawn Kraintz, Jessica Skeesuck, Michelle Wood, Phyllis Tousey, and Skip Blanc. Photo courtesy of Brothertown Indian Nation.

Page 15: Postcard scan of the First House in Fond du Lac. From the Fond du Lac Public Library collection.

Page 16 top: From left, Brothertown Indian Nation council member Dawn Kraintz, secretary Melissa Kavonius, and Treasurer Michelle Wood. Courtesy of the Brothertown Indian Nation.

Page 16 bottom: Lake Winnebago Water Walk, putting out prayers for gratitude and healing of the waterways connected to and including Lake Winnebago. Courtesy of the Brothertown Indian Nation.

Page 17: Wisconsin Historical Society, Savage & Ottinger, Salt Lake City. James Duane Doty, 55311.

Page 18: Harriet and Edward Pier. From the Fond du Lac Public Library collection.

Page 19: Wisconsin Historical Society, Waldo, Samuel Lovett, and William Jewett. Nathaniel P. Tallmadge, 2963.

Page 20: Rienzi Cemetery in Fond du Lac. Photo by Ian Stepleton.

Page 22: “Kate Pier” photo by University of Wisconsin Law School Digital Repository Alumni Photos collection, licensed under CC BY-SA 4.0

Page 23: General Edward S. Bragg. From the Fond du Lac Public Library collection.

Page 25: Wisconsin Historical Society, Kurz & Seifert, Milwaukee. Civil War Regiment, 45176.

Page 26: Fond du Lac children celebrate Juneteenth in Buttermilk Creek Park in 2015. Photo by Doug Raflik, courtesy of The Reporter.

Photo credits

Page 28: Fond du Lac-area agricultural landscape. Photo by Patrick Flood

Page 29: Kathern Vang represented the Hmong culture at Marian University's Multicultural Day in 2014. Photo by Patrick Flood, courtesy of The Reporter.

Page 30 top: Ebony Vision council in 2016. Photo courtesy of Ebony Vision.

Page 30 bottom: Photo courtesy of Ebony Vision.

Page 31 left: Dancers at Holy Family Catholic Community's Latin Flavor festival. Photo courtesy of Holy Family Catholic Community.

Page 31 right: Food tent at Holy Family Catholic Community's Latin Flavor festival. Photo courtesy of Holy Family Catholic Community.

Page 32: CELEBRATE CommUNITY event in 2017. Photo by Doug Raflik courtesy of The Reporter.

Page 33: Commendation and Citation for Vietnam War Service in Laos to Blia Choua Vang. Courtesy of Ger Xiong

Page 34: Postcard scan of a toll gate in Fond du Lac. From the Fond du Lac Public Library collection.

Page 35: Locomotive No. 2714 in Lakeside Park, built in 1911 and retired in 1955. The Soo Line and Wisconsin Central Railroad donated it to the city of Fond du Lac. Photo by Ian Stepleton.

Page 36: Wisconsin Historical Society, W.A. Titus, Children Posing With New Car, 105456. Children are, from left, Alberta (Mrs. C.A. Richards of Rhineland), Arthur, Marjorie (Mrs. Frank Bump of Wausau), and Winifred.

Page 37: Steve Wittman, left, gives flight tips to Arden Hjelle before he flew the plane Arden built. Photo by The Commonwealth Reporter, 1965, courtesy of The Reporter.

Page 38: Katie Grinstead at Vir-Clar Farm in Fond du Lac. Photo by Patrick Flood.

Page 39: Logs down the Wolf River to Fond du Lac. From the Fond du Lac Public Library collection.

Page 40: Postcard scan of the North Western train depot in Fond du Lac. From the Fond du Lac Public Library collection.

Page 41: Postcard scan of Main Street at the corner of Forest Avenue. From the Fond du Lac Public Library collection.

Page 42 top: Forest Mall circa 2014. Photo courtesy of The Reporter.

Page 42 bottom: Main Street north from Sheboygan Street. Photo by Daphne Lemke.

Page 43: Hotel Retlaw as of 2024. Photo by Daphne Lemke.

Page 47: Fond du Lac Public Library between the late 1970s and early 1980s. From the Fond du Lac Public Library collection.

Page 48: Postcard scan of the first dedicated post office in Fond du Lac. From the Fond du Lac Public Library collection.

Photo credits

Page 49: The editorial room of the Daily Reporter. From the Fond du Lac Public Library collection.

Page 50: The front page of the first edition of The Fond du Lac Daily August 22, 1870. Reprinted here in 1970. Photo courtesy of The Reporter.

Page 51: KFIZ's building at 307 N. Main St. in Fond du Lac. Photo by Ian Stepleton.

Page 52: Postcard scan of Carnegie Library, Fond du Lac's public library, built in 1904. From the Fond du Lac Public Library collection.

Page 53 left: Fond du Lac Public Library in 2003. From the Fond du Lac Public Library collection.

Page 53 right: Fond du Lac Public Library, 32 Sheboygan St., in 2024. From the Fond du Lac Public Library collection.

Page 53 bottom: Fond du Lac Public Library bookmobile in 2001. From the Fond du Lac Public Library collection.

Page 54 top: First Street School, dated 1897. From the Fond du Lac Public Library collection.

Page 54 bottom: From the Fond du Lac Public Library collection.

Page 55 top: Chegwin Elementary School, 109 E. Merrill Ave., 2024. Photo courtesy of Fond du Lac School District.

Page 55 bottom: Evans Elementary School, 140 S. Peters Ave., 2024. Photo courtesy of Fond du Lac School District.

Page 56: Woodworth Middle School, 101 Morningside Drive, 2024. Photo courtesy of Fond du Lac School District.

Page 57 left: Wisconsin Historical Society, Wisconsin Architecture and History Inventory, "Fond du Lac Senior High School", Fond du Lac, Fond du Lac County, Wisconsin, 54299.

Page 57 right: Fond du Lac High School, 801 Campus Drive, 2024. Photo courtesy of Fond du Lac School District.

Page 58: Postcard scan of St. Mary's Springs Academy in Fond du Lac. From the Fond du Lac Public Library collection.

Page 59: St. Mary's Springs Academy Class of 2027 students Eljay Smith (left) and Jack Judkins. Photo by Patrick Flood.

Page 60 left: Sisters walking through Marian College campus in 1969. Courtesy of the Congregation of Sisters of St. Agnes Archives.

Page 60 right: Marian University campus, 45 S. National Ave. Courtesy of Marian University.

Page 61 left: UW Fond du Lac's first registration in September 1968 (FDLSLIDE_003_E). Photo courtesy of UW Oshkosh Archives. Copyright by University of Wisconsin System Board of Regents.

Page 61 right: Fond du Lac County Campus main building in 2024. Photo by Daphne Lemke.

Photo credits

Page 62: Wisconsin Historical Society, Stein, Simon Leonard. Elizabeth Agnes Waters, 62631.

Page 63 top: St. Louis Catholic Church at 195 N. Macy St. From the Fond du Lac Public Library collection.

Page 63 middle: Postcard scan of the First Baptist Church. From the Fond du Lac Public Library collection.

Page 63 bottom: St. Joseph's Church. From the Fond du Lac Public Library collection.

Page 64 top: Postcard scan of The Cathedral on Division Street. From the Fond du Lac Public Library collection.

Page 64 bottom: Immanuel-Trinity Lutheran Church, 20 Wisconsin American Drive. Photo by Ian Stepleton.

Page 65 top: Temple Beth Israel, 149 E. Division St. Photo by Ian Stepleton.

Page 65 bottom: Holy Family Catholic Church, 271 Fourth Street Way. Photo courtesy of Holy Family Catholic Community.

Page 66: Postcard scan of St. Agnes Hospital. From the Fond du Lac Public Library collection.

Page 67: Physicians at the Dale Michels Heart and Vascular Care center in Fond du Lac. Courtesy of SSM Health Greater Fond du Lac.

Page 68 top: Dr. Udilis (left). Courtesy of SSM Health Greater Fond du Lac.

Page 68 bottom: Wisconsin State Patrol Trooper Matt Barker helps deliver COVID-19 vaccines, received by SSM Health personnel Marcus Heller and Kate Reinke. Courtesy of SSM Health Greater Fond du Lac.

Page 69: Aurora Medical Center-Fond du Lac, 210 Wisconsin American Drive. Photo by Ian Stepleton.

Page 70 top: Mother Agnes Hazotte, (1847-1905), General Superior 1864-1905. Courtesy of the Congregation of Sisters of St. Agnes Archives.

Page 70 bottom: Aerial view of St. Agnes campus looking southeast showing St. Agnes Convent, St. Agnes Hospital, and St. Agnes School of Nursing. Courtesy of the Congregation of Sisters of St. Agnes Archives.

Page 71: Dr. Darold Treffert. Courtesy of SSM Health Greater Fond du Lac.

Page 72: City of Fond du Lac Police Department, 126 N. Main St. Photo by Ian Stepleton.

Page 73 left: Volunteer Firefighters Station 1. From the Fond du Lac Public Library collection.

Page 73 right: Volunteer Firefighters Station 4. From the Fond du Lac Public Library collection.

Page 74: Fond du Lac River from Macy Street with St. Paul's Cathedral in the background. Photo by Daphne Lemke.

Page 75: Four people are evacuated on a frontloader from the floodwaters on Johnson Street during the 2019 flood. Photo by Doug Raflik, courtesy of The Reporter.

Photo credits

Page 77: Main Street from First Street. Photo by Daphne Lemke.

Page 78 left and right: Fond du Lac County Fair in 1919. From the Fond du Lac Public Library collection.

Page 79: Circus parade band. Photo courtesy of Fond du Lac Symphonic Band.

Page 80: Postcard scan of Lakeside Park. From the Fond du Lac Public Library collection.

Page 81 top: Fond du Lac Military Band on the Lakeside Park grandstand. From the Fond du Lac Public Library collection.

Page 81 bottom: Fond du Lac lighthouse in Lakeside Park. Photo by Ian Stepleton.

Page 82 top: Lakeside Evening Kiwanis with the “World’s Largest Fish Fry” at Walleye Weekend. Courtesy of Fond du Lac Festivals, Inc.

Page 82 bottom: Walleye Weekend art by Tom Remo in the 1989 promotional flyer. Courtesy of Fond du Lac Festivals, Inc.

Page 83 top: Kids fishing tournament at Walleye Weekend. Courtesy of Fond du Lac Festivals, Inc.

Page 83 bottom: A sellout crowd for the Fond du Lac Dock Spiders at Herr Baker Field. Photo courtesy of Fond du Lac Dock Spiders.

Page 84 top: Prairie Trail in Fond du Lac. Photo by Daphne Lemke.

Page 84 bottom: Blue Line Family Ice Center, 550 Fond du Lac Ave. Photo by Ian Stepleton.

Page 85: Postcard scan of Main Street north from Second Street. From the Fond du Lac Public Library collection.

Page 86: Wisconsin Historical Society, Wisconsin Architecture and History Inventory, "Fischer's Fond du Lac," Fond du Lac, Fond du Lac County, Wisconsin, 54256.

Page 87 top: Fond du Lac Theatre, 1131 W. Scott St., in 2020. Photo by Doug Raflik, courtesy of The Reporter.

Page 87 bottom: Fond du Lac Community Theatre production of “Beauty and the Beast.” Courtesy of Fond du Lac Community Theatre.

Page 88 top: Fond du Lac Symphonic Band at the 2013 Buttermilk Festival in Buttermilk Creek Park with music director Ray Wifler. Photo courtesy of Fond du Lac Symphonic Band.

Page 88 bottom: Fond du Lac Symphonic Band at the 2022 fall concert at St. Paul’s Cathedral with music director Dale Shipe. Photo courtesy of Fond du Lac Symphonic Band.

Page 89: South Shore Chorale concert at the Fond du Lac High School Performing Arts Center with director Cory Schneider. Photo courtesy of South Shore Chorale.

Page 90: Thelma Sadoff Center for the Arts, 51 Sheboygan St. Photo by Ian Stepleton.

Page 91: Cindy Barden at an event celebrating the release of the book “Foot of the Lake: An Early History of Fond du Lac, Wisconsin.” From the Fond du Lac Public Library collection.

