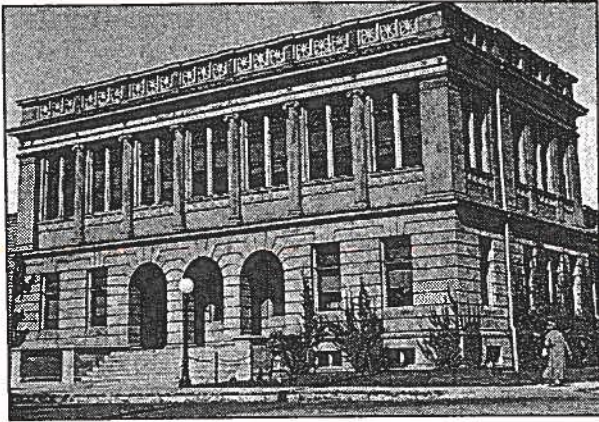


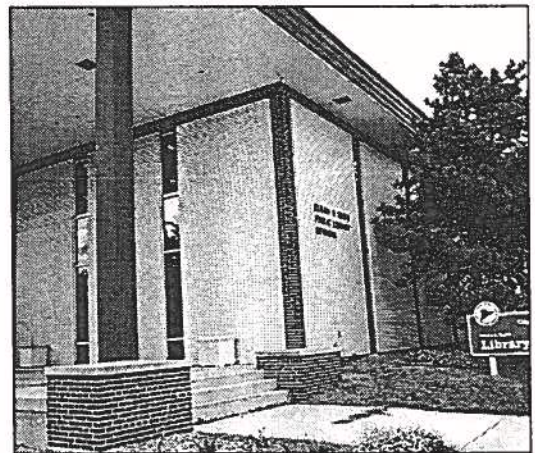
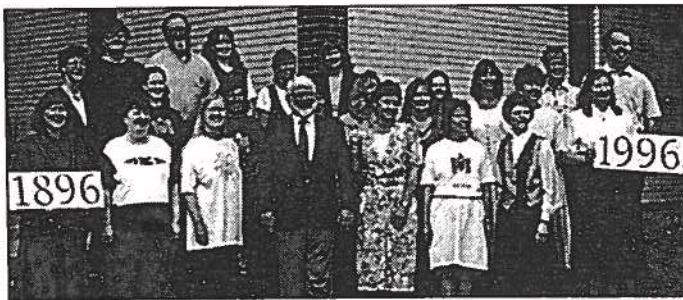
MENASHA'S ELISHA D. SMITH PUBLIC LIBRARY



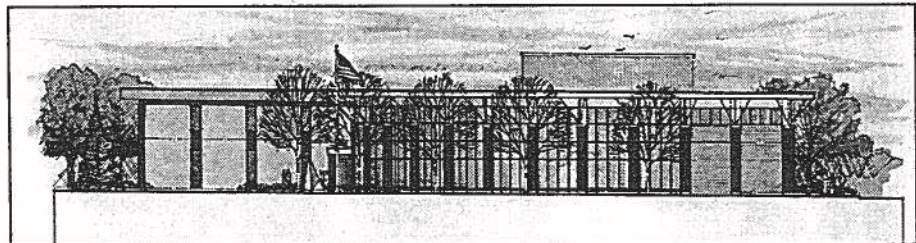
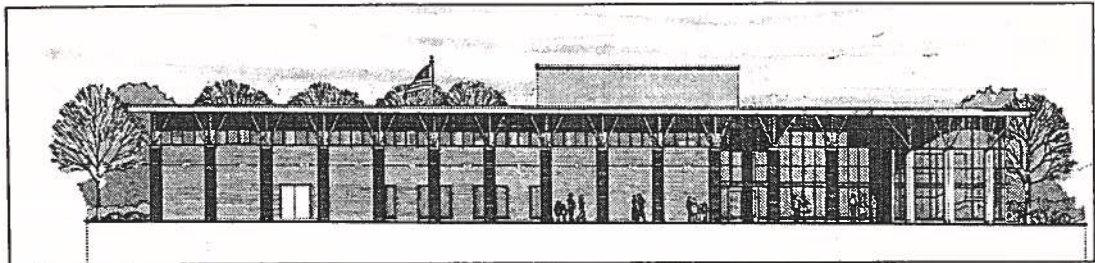
# Reading and Leading

... in the past,

... in the present,



in  
the  
future!





# Centennial days

On April 18, 1996, the board of trustees of the Elisha D. Smith Library gathered in the meeting room to celebrate "100 years of reading and leading."

It was on that date in 1896 that the Menasha Free Public Library Association was born.

The first board, called together by Lucy Lee Pleasants, met in the parlor of the National Hotel, elected officers and determined to purchase furniture and books.

The library, however, didn't yet have a home.

Later that year, the association moved into two rental rooms above the Tuchscherer Building on the northwest corner of Chute and Milwaukee streets.

Two years later, it had its own building, thanks to the generosity and direction of Menasha pioneer industrialist Elisha D. Smith.

That stately structure on Mill Street served the city well until 1969 when the present library opened on the corner of First and Racine streets, the site of the city's first high school.

That session in April 1996 kicked off more than six months of commemorative activities which culminated with the Centennial Celebration Reception on Sunday, Nov. 17.

It was a festive period, a time for

## Library board kicks off six-month celebration of '100 years of reading and leading' in April 1996

reflecting on the past and a time for focusing on the future. It was fun-filled for all ages, too.

Hundreds of patrons and visitors,

There was an abundance of food and activities for all ages.

And the Friends of the Menasha Public Library saw to it that it was a

memorable occasion as well. They sold canvas book bags, T-shirts and sweatshirts, coffee mugs and even watches, all emblazoned with the library's centennial logo.

There were wandering clowns and balloon art, face-painting and carnival games, disc jockey music and plenty of food, brats and burgers and popcorn and cotton candy.

A huge centennial cake was cut and devoured, there was a visit by Ronald McDonald and the day concluded with "The Great Rondini Magic Show."

Erin Davisson, anchor of WFRV-TV, Channel 5, news, served as celebrity hostess.

A veterans' ceremony, with a color guard and 21-gun salute, along with the national anthem sung by Judy Piel, opened the celebration.

U.S. Rep. Tom Petri addressed the assembly and then the group officially

turned over the Veterans' Memorial Monument to the city.



Muriel Heller, a member of the library board when the present building was dedicated, assists director Jack Fry in the cutting of the centennial cake.

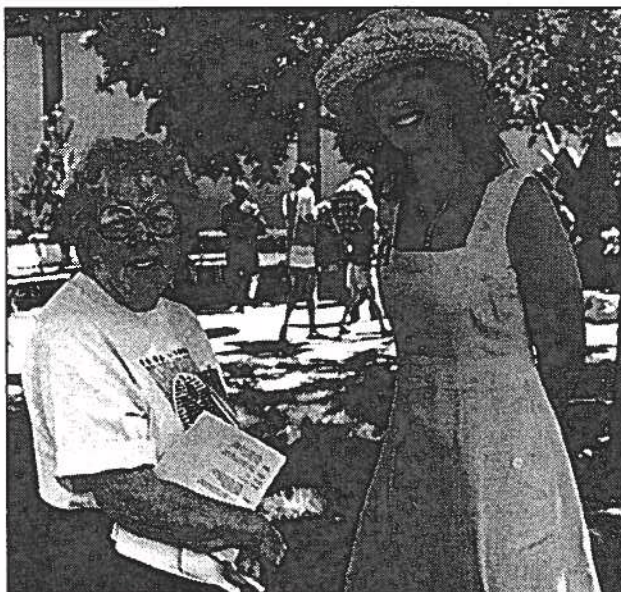
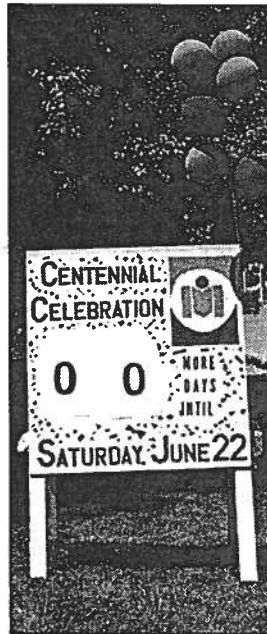
from tots to senior citizens, strolled the grounds on June 22 during the library's "street party."





Board member Sally Griesbach, left, greets a patron.

# 100th feted with Street Party



"Friends" Margaret Vollmer and TV-5's Erin Davisson



Amanda Pavlat hoists a heavy bag of books



# 'Library of the Year'

**I**t was heady company.

A year earlier the Madison Area Technical College was singled out. During the previous 33 years, public libraries ranging from Milwaukee to Madison to Brown County, along with major college collections, captured the distinguished award.

In 1988, the Elisha D. Smith Library joined the prestigious list. It was named the Library of the Year by the Wisconsin Library Association.

Letters of congratulations poured in from throughout the state. Likely a few eyebrows were raised. Few public libraries from small cities had been so honored. None of the Fox Cities' libraries had ever made the WLA list.

But Menashans were well aware of their secret treasure. They knew their library was special, that its facilities and services were outstanding, that its staffers were the friendliest and most helpful around.

It was just a matter of getting that word out.

Patricia Galloway, a former Menasha library board president, couldn't let that oversight continue. She had been a patron of the library for more than 40 years and her family had taken part in everything from preschool story hours to adult research.

But she didn't fully appreciate the Menasha library until she joined the board a decade earlier.

She decided to spearhead the effort to win state recognition.

Letters of support were solicited from Menasha leaders and from patrons, pre-teens to senior citizens.

The response confirmed her suspicions. The Elisha D. Smith Library was worthy of the WLA award.

People were proud of their library, and they were using it. In the previous decade, while the city declined in population, circulation was up 78%. There were fewer births and thus fewer youngsters.

Still, the children's department grew substantially. The Saturday and holiday programs drew more than 3,500 children. Families were flocking to the library for film nights and concert series.

## Menasha joins distinguished list of state libraries in 1988 through the efforts of the staff and determination of a former trustee

Also popular were the "Life in Menasha" photo contests, organized by librarian De Dalum, along with special art exhibits, craft displays and demonstrations.

The library was an important asset to the community, one that people of all ages had come to rely on and to enjoy. It wasn't just a depository of books and magazines and research manuals.

It offered free videos and rental VHS players. It had photocopy machines and typewriters available to the public. Groups made use of the

homes.

The staffers were encouraged to attend conferences and workshops to keep abreast of innovations in their fields. They also offered patrons a network of services through Winnefox Library System and interlibrary loans, and were active in associations to foster the latest technology in Menasha.

"Friends of the Menasha Library" had been formed less than a year earlier but already it had more than 100 paid members and had sponsored a book sale, provided Christmas decorations, took over the "Walking Books" service and was in the process of developing a "Book and Bite" noon hour program which it labeled "Smorgasbook."

The Elisha D. Smith library was 18 years old at the time but the building didn't stand still. The departments were rearranged and remodeled for patron convenience and comfort.

Energy studies were followed up, ceiling fans installed and electronic theft devices cut down on the number of missing volumes. A Centrex phone system was added, as were computers to ease catalog card production.

On one occasion, staffers pitched in to make the library more accessible to the public. They moved 70,000 volumes and audio-visual materials in two days to allow easier patron access to adult services on the main floor and the mezzanine.

They carried beepers to better serve people during slower times. They used a cordless phone, long before such devices became popular, to improve reference service.

In Galloway's nomination letter she stressed the attribute of "user friendly."

"One of our patrons from a neighboring town," Galloway wrote, "said they even make you feel good about paying a fine."

Her praise was echoed in several other letters sent to the WLA.

Miriam Hagen, who later joined

**"The Menasha library was selected for distinguished achievement in service.**

**"We need more libraries like yours."**

**Donna Senzig  
WLA awards committee**

public meeting rooms — 422 times in 1986 — and the audiovisual equipment and even the Steinway grand piano.

There were community bulletin boards and special handouts. Teachers looked to the library for materials unavailable in their schools.

Some 121 teacher packs were prepared the previous year and two elementary schools became summer branches for reading programs, attended by 950 youngsters. There were 207 story time sessions for preschoolers.

The library offered "talking books" for the visually handicapped and "walking books" for the elderly confined to their residents or nursing



the Menasha library staff, said her experiences as a child at the Menasha library had inspired her 25-year career as a professional librarian.

Karen Witz, media specialist at Butte des Morts Junior High School, praised the public library for its helpfulness in a variety of school programs.

Mayor Thom A. Ciske noted the library had "admirably addressed the needs of patrons while proactively responding to the budgetary realities of modern government operations by being resourceful and innovative."

There were letters from young and old patrons, from nursing homes, schools and other libraries, including the Winnefox System.

Two months after the packet of information and supporting letters were submitted, the WLA selection committee made its decision.

**"The Menasha library is user friendly. "One of our patrons said they even make you feel good about paying a fine."**

**Patricia Galloway  
Former board president**

Director Jack Fry knew the Menasha library had an outstanding track record, but he figured the Library of the Year award would go to a library with a major expansion project, not to one which had just made the best use of its limited resources.

Fry received the announcement in the mail June 27, 1988, from Donna Senzig of the WLA Awards and Honors Committee.

She said the library was picked for its "distinguished achievement in service." She added, "We need more libraries like yours."

The Menasha library had met the WLA standards and more. It excelled in user oriented services, in cooperative library arrangements, in its collections, in staff development and in improvements to physical facilities.

The Elisha D. Smith Library was closed that Wednesday, Oct. 26, to allow all staffers a chance to bask in the glory that was theirs at the WLA annual conference at Lake Geneva.

Ten days later the banner was raised for all to see at a public reception at the Menasha library.



Library staffers were all smiles as they posed with the banner that unveiled Menasha's "secret" in fall of 1988.



# Forecast: prosperity

**T**en thousand years ago, there was ice — hundreds of feet thick — covering everything. When the glacier retreated, it left Lake Winnebago in its wake.

Then came man, pre-historic woodland peoples from Canada who roamed about the land, hunting and fishing. Three thousand years ago, there were Indian villages scattered along the waterways. Agriculture, the raising of corn, beans, squash and tobacco, had transformed the nomadic tribes.

In the early 18th century, there were settlements of Fox, Menominee, Winnebago and Sac Indians in the region. But then came the white men, adventurers and fur traders, and tribal life was forever changed.

The Fox controlled the river and collected a toll from each passing French canoe laden with furs. That business was shortlived, however. So was the tribe. In 1730, the French and their Indian allies slaughtered hundreds of Fox in a surprise attack. They were buried in a communal grave on the edge of the waterway.

---

**Menasha was destined to become a city of 110,000, according to one newspaper editor.**

---

The mound was called Butte des Morts, or "Hill of the Dead."

A century later all that remained of Indian society was located at Winnebago Rapids, a government model village on the Neenah side. However, that experiment to introduce the civilization of white men to Native Americans soon was abandoned.

---

**By 1898, Menasha's population topped 7,000 and its 30 factories employed more than 2,500 workers**

---

The tribal legacy survived only in name. Neenah is taken from the Winnebago word for "water." Menasha means "island."

In the 1840s, white settlers from the East left their indelible marks on the land at the north end of Lake Winnebago.

James Doty, territorial governor and land speculator, led the charge along with his son Charles, buying land for as low as \$5 an acre.

The first home in Menasha was built by Corydon Northrup on what is now Milwaukee Street. Elbridge Smith, a lawyer from the East, built a frame dwelling on Canal Street in 1848. It served as law office, dance hall and the community's first school, privately taught by Miss Hettie Frost.

Other new arrivals in 1848 included Philo Hine, George Stickles, Thomas and William Brotherhood, Henry C. Tate, I. M. Naricong, William Geer, J. H. Trude, Uriah Clinton, Henry Alden, John B. Lajest and Jeremiah Hunt. Hunt's daughter, Lydia, was the first white child born in Menasha in Feb. 22, 1849.

In 1849, one year after Wisconsin became a state, Charles Doty and Curtis Reed platted Menasha.

The two had been instrumental in wrangling government approval for a canal on the north end of Doty Island, and Menasha's fortunes surged.

That year Menasha got a post office, with James R. Lush in charge, and its first public school, taught by Mrs. Henry Alden. Two years later there were three schools.

The government land office moved to Menasha from Green Bay and in 1851 a bridge was built across the Menasha channel.

In 1850, the population of the towns of Neenah and Menasha totalled 1,412. Two years later

Menasha's population alone stood at 1,625. Twenty years later, the Twin City total was 5,139, with Menasha holding the edge, 2,655 to 2,484.

To Menasha's dismay, the county board split the two communities in 1855. Menasha had become a village in 1853.

Neenah was incorporated in 1850 but it wasn't recognized by the state until 1856.

In 1859, a referendum on consolidating the adjoining villages was defeated. Menasha said yes, Neenah said no.

Neenah became a city in 1873; Menasha followed a year later.

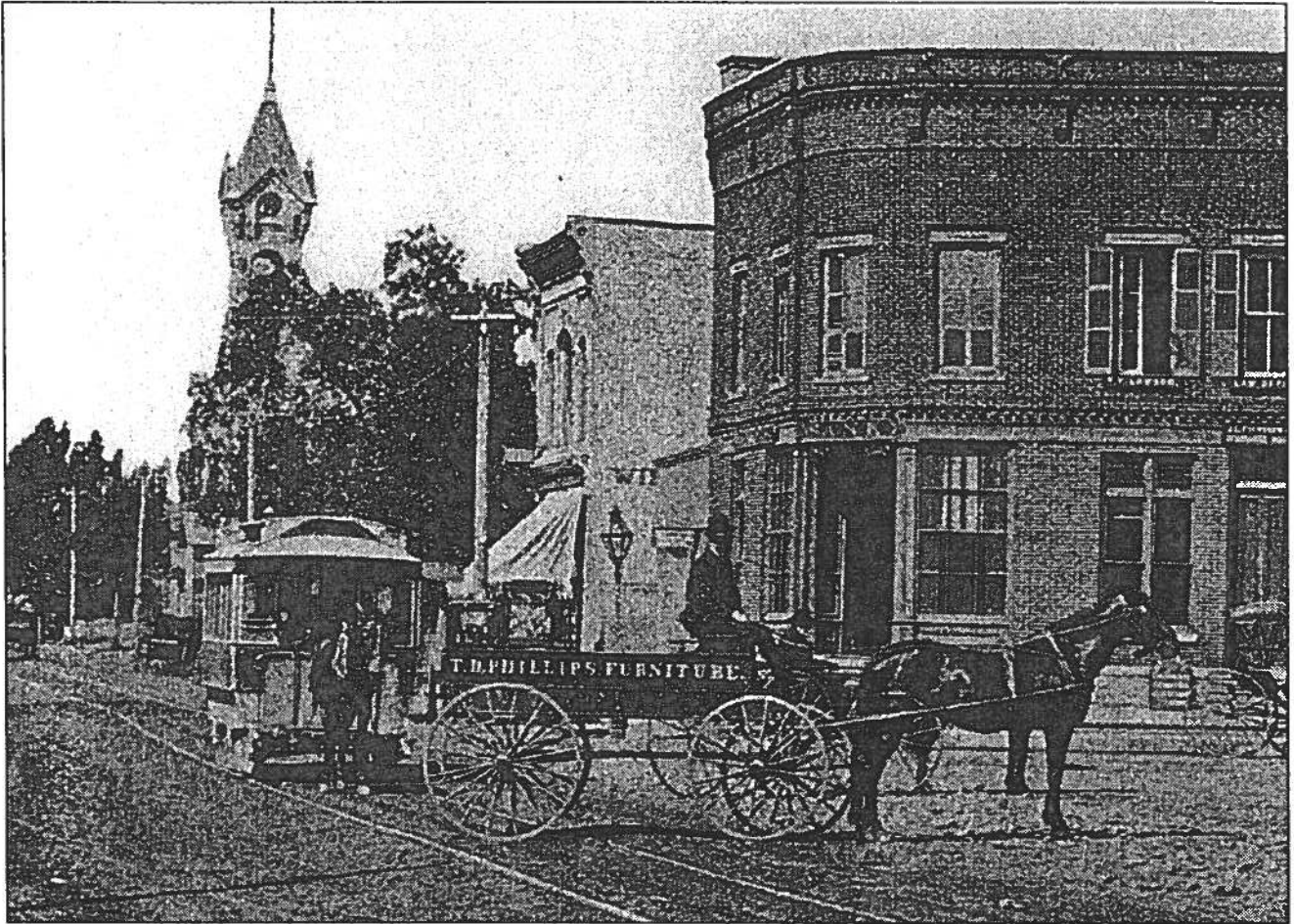
Menasha's first mayor was O.J. Hall. He defeated Curtis Reed, who felt the backlash from his subsidized railroad campaign. Curtis and his brother George were the founders of Wisconsin Central Railroad, which in less than four months laid 63 miles of rail, linking Menasha with Stevens Point. Curtis Reed did win the mayoral election in 1890, and also served eight years in the state legislature.

Menasha and Neenah became early industrial leaders, thanks to the water power generated on the Fox River. At first flour mills flourished. There were 15 different mills in the two communities, producing 2,250 barrels a day, a million-dollar industry.

Menasha, according to one newspaper editor, was destined to become a city of 110,000 people.

But then flour moved west, the farmlands of the Dakotas produced the wheat and Minneapolis became the miller. Menasha and Neenah turned to paper. The Kimberlys, the Clarks, the Whitings, the Gilberts and the Stranges all made fortunes from paper manufacturing.

Meanwhile, one of Menasha's pio-



A horse-drawn streetcar pauses for a furniture wagon to cross Main Street in the Menasha Square in 1887.

neer industrialists, Elisha D. Smith, was prospering from his woodenware business.

He had moved to Menasha from New England in 1850, opened a general store and then bought a floundering wooden pail company.

Before the turn of the century he

**Polish and German immigrants settled in Menasha, and by 1870, the foreign-born dominated by a 2-1 margin.**

had turned it into the largest plant in the Twin Cities and one of the largest of its kind in the world.

Immigrants also shaped Neenah and Menasha, their cultures, religions and lifestyles. In 1870, the foreign-born dominated by a 2-1 margin.

Scandinavians, including many Danes, settled in Neenah and the Germans and Polish resided in Menasha.

Thirty years later, when the immigration wave subsided, only one-third were foreign born, but living patterns were set.

In 1879, Silas Bullard, superintendent of schools, reported 1,140 children in six school buildings. More than half of them attended parochial schools. St. Mary's Parish constructed the first Catholic school in the Green Bay Diocese in 1868.

By 1898, Menasha's population had grown to about 7,000. There were 30 factories employing 2,500 people. An estimated 1,600 worked for Menasha Woodware alone. The streets had lights and the telephone company had 100 subscribers.

The Interurban Electric Line replaced the horse-drawn streetcars. It

ran between Neenah, Menasha and Appleton.

Steamboats, such as the Evalyn, the Marston, the Lynch and the Carter made the city dock a regular stopping place. Roberts' Resort was a popular lakeside hotel, drawing visitors from throughout the country.

And the products of Walter Bros. Brewing Company, established in 1888, were widely known.

*This special edition was prepared, written and produced by Peter A. Geniesse.*

*Photographs used were from the Menasha library's historical collection, the newspapers of the time, other sources and taken by Geniesse.*