

# Lakefront Heritage Project

## Welcome!

Welcome to the Lakefront Heritage Project, a collaboration focused on recognizing the history of the Greater Hudson area. We appreciate your interest in our community's past, and hope to inform and inspire the next generation with this project, which was created in partnership with the Hudson Area Chamber of Commerce & Tourism Bureau, the Octagon House Museum, and Christiansen Creative.

Our self-guided tour offers twenty-three topics from the past that you can enjoy in sequential order, or by simply matching the number shown on the banner to the audio clips on your screen.

We hope you enjoy the tour, our beautiful Lakefront Park, and the scenic St. Croix River during your experience. Please find banner number one to begin our tour by acknowledging our local indigenous cultures.

## Thank You to our Partners:

### Project Partners

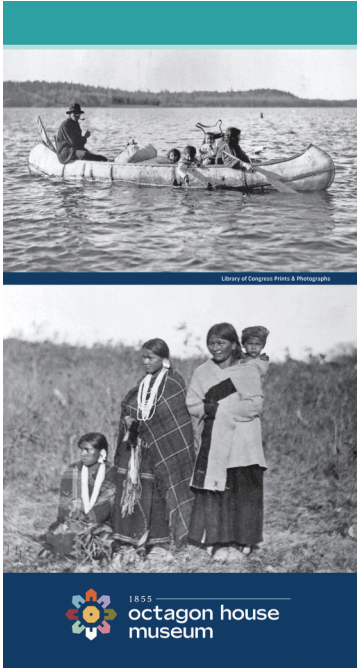
Christiansen  
Creative



### Supporting Partners



# 1 Local Indigenous Cultures



We gratefully acknowledge the Native Peoples on whose ancestral homelands we gather, as well as the diverse and vibrant Native communities who make their home in Wisconsin today.

When we look at the history of Hudson, we should first and foremost note the deep history of indigenous cultures. The first group in what is now Wisconsin was the Woodland Culture, comprised of semi-permanent groups who moved with the seasons.

After the Woodland Culture came the Mississippian Culture, who began arriving from the south. After which, the Oneota moved to the area. You might be more familiar with their descendants, the Dakota Tribe.

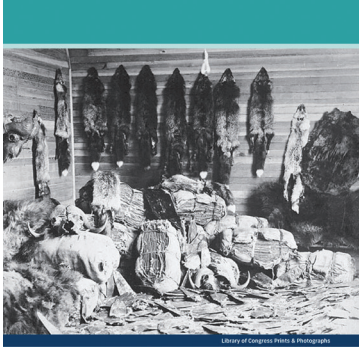
The last to arrive in what is now Wisconsin, and Hudson in particular, was the Ojibwe. The Ojibwe traveled west as their homelands in the east were disrupted by European settlement.

Both the Ojibwe and the Dakota Tribes claimed what is now west central Wisconsin as their home by the time Europeans were settling in Hudson, with the St. Croix and other rivers serving as boundaries for these tribes. The Ojibwe were more of a woodland culture, while the Dakota culture was more centered around rivers and plains.

Find Banner Two and learn about the first European visitors to the Hudson area.

# 2

## Our First European Visitors



The first Europeans to come to the Lake Superior region as explorers, traders, and missionaries were the French.

Instead of discovering gold, the wealth they uncovered was in the fur trade. Fur became lucrative and dominated the Great Lakes with the St. Croix and Mississippi Rivers serving as transportation and shipping routes.



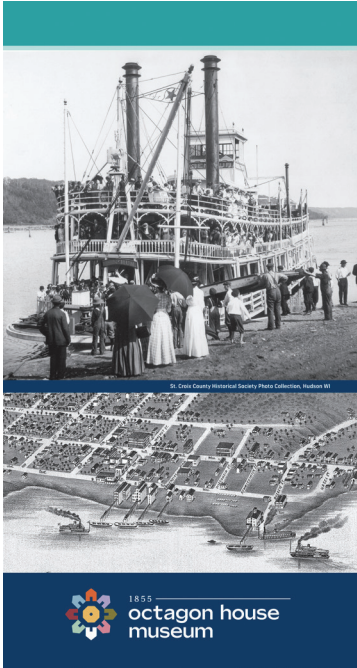
When they first arrived, the French discovered two tribes in conflict: the Ojibwe and the Dakota. The French took to the woods as traders and trappers where they became close partners with the Ojibwe, supplying them with weapons. Strengthened through this relationship, the Ojibwe eventually drove the Dakota across the St. Croix and out of present-day Wisconsin.



The conflict with the tribes impacted the fur trade, and many trade routes were endangered and sometimes closed. Explorer Daniel Greysolon, Sieur du Lhut ((mon)-sieur due lute), is credited with establishing Fort St. Croix in 1680. In 1694, Fort Lasseur (less-sieur) was built on an island in the Mississippi, just below the mouth of the St. Croix River. The St. Croix waterway forts both protected and strengthened the fur trade efforts.

Look for Banner Three for more about our river transportation, specifically steamboats in Hudson.

# 3 Steamboats Arrive in Hudson



The Palmyra is believed to be the first steamboat to traverse the St. Croix River in 1838, but it was nearly a decade later, on April 15, 1847, before the first steamboat docked at the foot of Buckeye Street and what is now Lakefront Park.

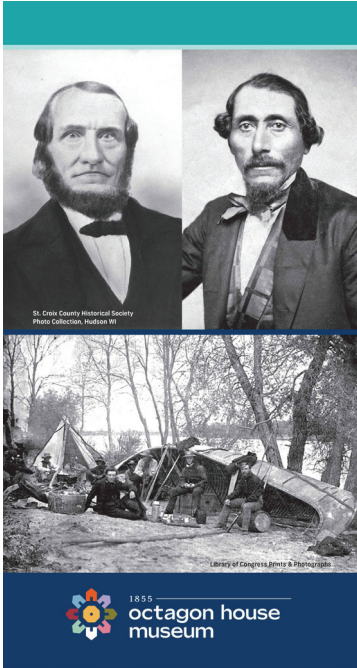
At that time, Hudson wasn't even named Hudson; it was called Willow River. Look out at the park along the river. Imagine warehouses lining the banks and a huge wharf where seven steamboats could load at one time. Each boat was about 100 to 120 feet long with its own distinctive whistle.

The steamboats made travelling and settling along these shores much easier than by land, creating a population boom. The vast majority of people came by boat, and they started coming fast – at one time, as many as 400 people per week.

By the 1850s, packet boats, which offered more luxurious travel, were steaming up and down the St. Croix. First Class passengers could enjoy strolls on the second level deck, with entertainment, elegant meals, and private staterooms. Deck passengers would pay less to travel on the main deck among the cargo, livestock, and wagons.

Look for Banner Four and meet some of our first settlers.

# 4 Hudson's First Settlers



Just after the St. Croix River saw its first steamboat, our community started to see visitors from what is now Minnesota. Lewis Massey, his brother-in-law, Peter Bouchea, along with other trappers and guides, began traveling the river by canoe and keelboat.

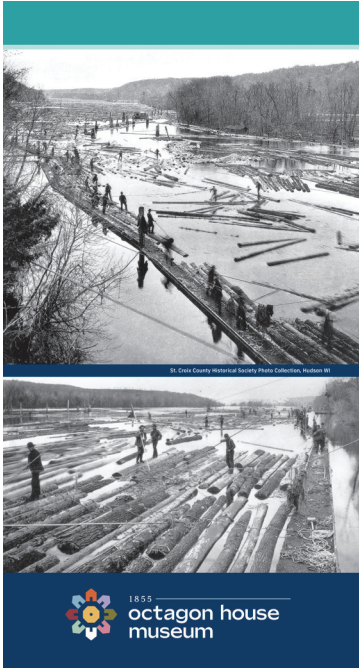
Massey and Bouchea had been living at Fort Snelling, providing officers with guided hunting and fishing expeditions on the St. Croix. By 1840, these men had settled in what is now the Hudson area, dividing up the settlement between the two of them. Hudson saw several name changes during this time, including Willow River, Buena Vista, and eventually Hudson.

Massey and Bouchea lived at the foot of St. Croix Street in what was called Frenchtown. Go explore Walnut Street close to the river and you'll find a plaque on a rock that notes the site where Massey had built his home.

At this point in time, a real community was just beginning to develop. It wouldn't really start evolving into a town until the 1850s.

Find Banner Five and learn how lumber changed the Hudson community forever.

# 5 The Lumber Industry in Hudson



Our earliest settlers first traveled to the area in search of game and furs, but lumber was our first major industry, as the St. Croix River Valley was rich in lumber's chief commodity, white pine.

In 1837, the demand for lumber was high and many loggers illegally cut timber on public land and sent logs downstream where towns had cropped up along the river with large mills set to cut boards. Hudson was one of these towns.

Hudson's first sawmills were created in the 1840s and early 1850s. Look around Lakefront Park and remember the warehouses and steamboats lining the river area; now add several sawmills pulling giant logs from the river to your vision. The mills not only provided jobs, but they also helped support other growing businesses, such as breweries, forges, and general stores.

As is the case with most booms, a bust was just around the corner. The last sawmill whistle blew on November 10, 1917, signaling the end of the lumber era on the St. Croix River. When the blades of Hudson's last sawmill came to a halt, the valley had been lumbered out.

Hillsides of stumps and Victorian homes were left behind as monuments to the now-gone majestic and ancient white pine. This region was part of the largest white pine forest on the face of the earth, and it was all cut down in one generation.

Locate Banner Six and learn why Hudson had so many names.



# 6 All of Hudson's Names



As land was settled, The Wisconsin Territorial Legislature passed a bill that created St. Croix County in 1840. The boundaries of the county encompassed 50,000 square miles, and originally included parts of Minnesota and large parts of western Wisconsin. At that time, the settlement that became St. Paul (Minnesota's eventual beloved capitol city) was not considered important enough to even be a county seat. Stillwater was selected as St. Croix County's seat.

By May of 1848, when Wisconsin officially became a state, St. Croix County was reduced in size with the St. Croix River as its western border. With Stillwater now outside state lines, the first Wisconsin State Legislature made Willow River the new county seat.

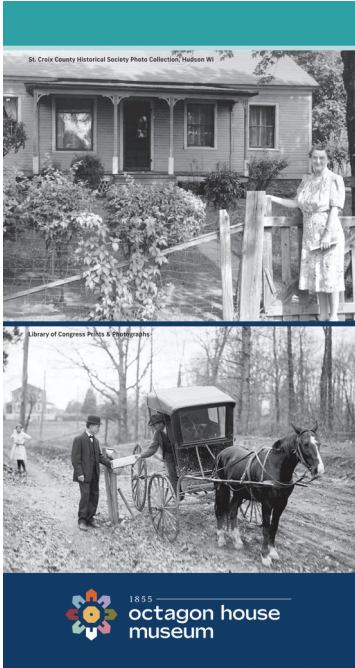
Expansion in the area continued as the population grew rapidly. In the spring of 1849, part of Willow River petitioned to become a separate town known as Buena Vista, meaning "beautiful view." The separate communities of Buena Vista and Willow River, however, were short lived.

In 1851, the two settlements were combined and again called Willow River. This caused considerable dissatisfaction among some of the residents and a new name was sought. Many of the easterners living in the area were impressed with the similarity between the palisades of the Hudson River in New York and the bluffs of the St. Croix River. In November 1852, the name Hudson was officially adopted.

Move to Banner Seven to learn the surprising history of Hudson's first postal service.

# 7

## Hudson's Postal Service



As more people started settling in this area, our community needed mail service. In 1840, Doc Phillip Aldrich was given the contract for carrying the mail from Point Douglas, which is near Hastings, Minnesota, all the way north to St. Croix Falls, Wisconsin.

For the first few years, Aldrich would make the trip just twice each month. In 1847, Aldrich established a weekly mail route which he carried by foot from Hudson to St. Croix Falls. By 1849, he was appointed the postmaster and continued in that post for two years.

Aldrich was a man of many talents. He was appointed St. Croix County's first judge in 1844, and also served as a county commissioner. The first meeting of present-day St. Croix County was held at Aldrich's home in 1848.

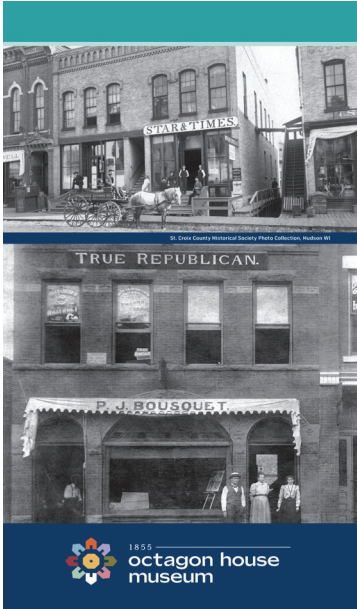
Hudson's first official post office was built in 1848. One of our later post offices, constructed by the U.S. Treasury Department in 1939, is open as a private business and operates on Locust and Third Streets.

Look for Banner Eight and see what local media looked like generations ago.



# 8

## The Beginning of Local Newspapers



In the mid-1800s, Hudson's population was expanding, and publishers identified a market for newspapers. The very first noted for being published was the St. Croix Banner in 1850. At this time in history, newspapers openly aligned themselves with their favored political party – and this was true in Hudson. The St. Croix Banner was aligned politically with the Whig Party, the political group that was formed by opponents of President Andrew Jackson.

Additional papers soon began to emerge, such as the Hudson Journal, which was aligned with the democratic party until a new owner changed its politics, as well as its name, to the Hudson Republic. A handful of papers came and went in the next few years, including the St. Croix Inquirer and the Hudson Shield and Banner, which was later renamed the Pathfinder.

It was The Hudson Chronicle, beginning in 1860, that had longevity. Becoming the Hudson City Times and merging with the Hudson Star, The Hudson Chronicle became the present-day Hudson Star-Observer. An original office of theirs is still standing at 112 Walnut Street, one of our most historic buildings.

Continue to Banner Nine and find out where children were educated in Hudson.

# 9

## The Start of Schools in Hudson



The Hudson Public School System can be traced back to 1849 when School District Number One for the town of Buena Vista was formed. Sarah Partridge signed a contract to teach five months of school for \$4 per week. Her first classes of about 25 students were taught in the rear section of the Brunswick Hotel, which was located at the corner of First and Walnut Streets, down by the river.

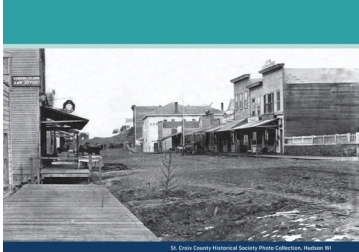
The first permanent two-room school building was constructed in 1855 on Sixth Street. This building was later enlarged to six rooms to also serve as Hudson's first high school until 1887. At that point in time, Hudson erected a dedicated high school building for the older students.

In 1917, the Sixth Street School was destroyed in a devastating fire. In 1919, a brand-new high school was built on Fourth Street and although it has evolved throughout the decades, it's still in use today. After over 50 years as a high school, it became a middle school, and as of 2008, it continues to educate new generations as the Willow River Elementary School.

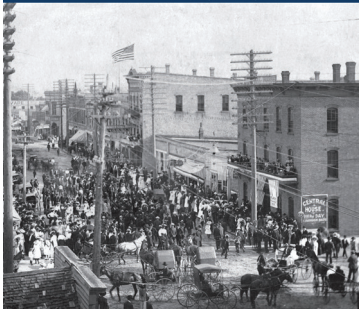
Locate Banner Ten and learn about Hudson's population boom.

# 10

## Hudson Begins to Grow



© Dane County Historical Society Photo Collection, Hudson, WI



1855 octagon house museum

As mentioned in Banner Three, with the regular arrival of steamboats beginning in the 1840s, the population of Hudson began to grow quickly and dramatically, peaking with arrivals of as many as 400 people per week in the 1850s. This was not a year-round occurrence, however. Sources of the time note that newcomers arrived in spring, summer and “hopefully by autumn.”

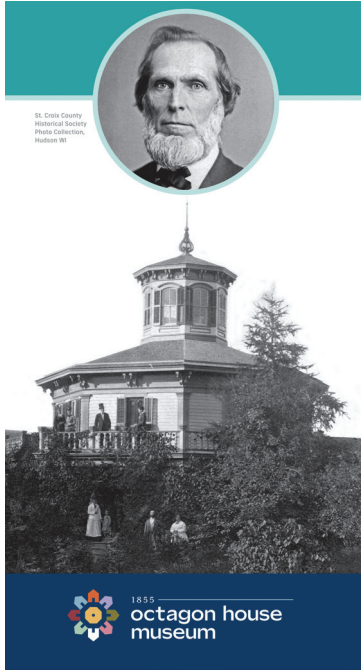
That’s an understandable hope. From 1850 to 1857, Hudson had grown from a small community of just 500 people to a bustling city of 2,500. It takes a lot of fast organization to accommodate healthy growth that can survive Wisconsin winters in less than a decade.

Many things were changing in Hudson by the end of the 1850s with the introduction of the railroad and the influence of John Comstock. The City of Hudson was incorporated in 1857 and Comstock became its third mayor in 1859. Comstock was one of the foremost leaders in promoting railroad development in the region and served as a local advisor for Daniel Baldwin, president of the West Wisconsin Railroad.

Indeed, Comstock made Hudson more than just an easy location to which to travel; he helped create a community in which new immigrants wanted to settle. Aside from his accomplishments in politics and the railroad, he was successful in the flour milling industry, invented a system using sewage gas to heat buildings, and created the First National Bank of Hudson in 1863.

Move on to Banner Eleven to see more about Hudson’s famous Octagon House.

# 11 The Octagon House



St. Croix County  
Historical Society  
Photo Collection  
Hudson WI

John and Nancy Moffat, along with their daughter, came to Hudson in 1855 from upstate New York. They were looking for a new start in life and already had family who had immigrated west and settled in the area.

The octagon shape in houses was a kind of fad in upstate New York at the time and the Moffats thought they were a good idea. At the time, the location on Third Street was a bit outside of where everything else was in town, so it was very easy to build a house that was really in the wilderness, on an acre of land, surrounded by white pine. It turned out to be a pretty good economical shape. The house is built with six-inch-thick slabs from the ground all the way to the top two stories, and that makes it well insulated for Wisconsin winters.

Over time, Hudson grew up around the Octagon House. John Moffat became a successful lawyer, representing a number of railroad companies. He eventually served as a St. Croix County judge for two terms and practiced law well into his 80s.

Today, the house is now the Octagon House Museum and the home of the St. Croix County Historical Society.

Find Banner Twelve and learn about the impressive St. Croix County Courthouse building.

# 12

## St. Croix County Courthouse



When St. Croix County was created in 1840, it was much bigger than it is today and even included parts of what is now the State of Minnesota. The town of Stillwater was originally selected as the county seat in 1846, but by 1849, the county government began meeting in “Buena Vista,” an earlier name for Hudson.

In 1852, Buena Vista officially became Hudson and the county seat for St. Croix County. The first courthouse built in 1856 was a short-lived wooden structure on Third and Orange Streets.

The second courthouse was constructed in the same spot in 1900. When dedicated, it was hailed as a reflection of the “growth of St. Croix County,” and the “steady efforts of a people for more than half a century.” This building was a much more impressive red sandstone structure with three stories, stained glass windows, and a tower.

Completed at a cost of \$50,000, the courthouse served the community for forty years in an official capacity as well as for entertainment, including plays and dances, as it was the only building in the community large enough to host such events. Although it is no longer a government building, it is still just as impressive today.

Continue to Banner Thirteen to learn about the role Hudson played in the Civil War.

# 13 Hudson Joins The Civil War



By the 1860s, Hudson was growing quickly, but much of the city's progress came to a halt as the nation began a bloody Civil War in 1861.

The first unit from Hudson to enter the war was Company G of the 4th Wisconsin Infantry Regiment. The war was two months old when the steamboats came up the river to pick up the local troops. They landed on a Friday morning and by Friday afternoon about 5,000 people gathered in Hudson, cheering the soldiers on with huzzahs and a band, as their boys marched down from the hilltop camp, south of town, to the river with the setting of the sun.

The 4th Infantry Regiment spent their longest time in Texas where they rode outpost duty until they were released on May 28, 1866.

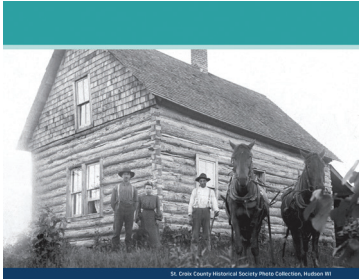
After the Civil War, many Hudson veterans returned home to their families and more than half of them then chose to enlist in the National Guard.

Move on to Banner Fourteen to learn about the farming boom in the area.



# 14

## Farming Becomes Big in Hudson



After the end of the Civil War, Congress passed the Homestead Act of 1862 allowing any adult citizen or immigrant to claim 160 acres of surveyed land. Claimants were required to live on and “improve” their plot by cultivating the land. After five years, the land was free or, after only a six-month period with trivial improvements, the land cost \$1.25 per acre. After the Civil War, Union soldiers could deduct the time they had served from the requirements.

This obviously drew farmers to the area with wheat on their minds. Wheat was well adapted to the needs of pioneer farms as it could be sowed with a minimum of soil preparation and then ignored until harvest time. It was already a huge success, and during the 1850s, it rivaled lumber as St. Croix Valley’s chief export.

In 1854, Greens Paradise Mill, on the Willow River, two miles upstream from Hudson, became the first grist mill in St. Croix County. Proximity to the St. Croix and Mississippi Rivers gave the county’s wheat farmers a transportation advantage for shipping their crop to national and international markets. By 1860, St. Croix County led Wisconsin in wheat yields.

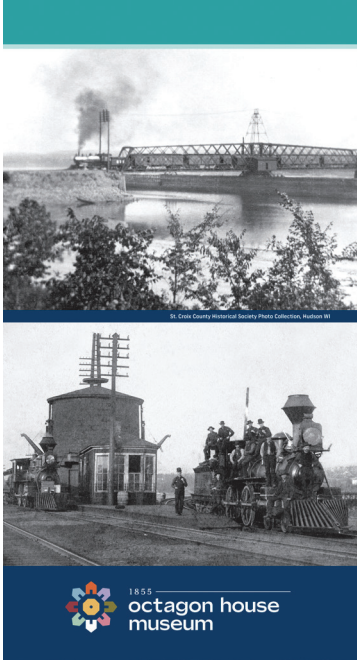
In 1867, two more flour mills were built at the mouth of the Willow River on the same land that housed a sawmill only 22 years earlier. A few years later, the mills were churning out over 500 barrels of flour per day.

Just like the lumber boom, the glory days of wheat came to an end; land became more expensive and by the 1870s yields began to decline after years of planting the same crop. The soil became depleted, and the fields were more susceptible to pests and disease. As transportation evolved, farmers were able to ship fresh dairy products to the major cities. The transition was difficult, but dairy farming would eventually become a more reliable source of income for Wisconsin’s farmers, and so came the development of the Dairy State.

Find Banner Fifteen to learn about the West Wisconsin Railway.

# 15

## Railroads in Western Wisconsin



Railroads began in western Wisconsin in 1854 and in 1856, Congress set aside nearly 4,000,000 acres of Wisconsin's public domain for railroad construction. The railroad first came to Hudson in November of 1871, connecting it to other major cities in the region. In just a few short years, Hudson had rail lines to River Falls, St. Paul, Minneapolis, Chicago, and Omaha.

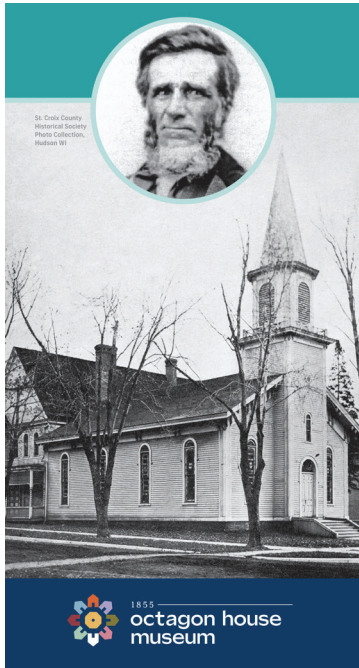
The area railways brought a great amount of industry to Hudson. In 1875, the offices for the Western Wisconsin and Northern Wisconsin railway companies were moved to Hudson. During this time, an average of 85 coaches and 900 freight cars were presided over by the car shops in North Hudson Bay.

During the 1920s and the 1930s, somewhere between 500 and 700 men were employed by the rail company in Hudson. All of this industry drew great numbers of immigrants to North Hudson. One notable group was the Italians, who came from Cumberland and other places to work in the shops. These men and their families built houses and started a community, and by June of 1912, North Hudson was incorporated as a village with a population of 586. To this day, North Hudson celebrates the Italian heritage of its community roots.

Move to Banner Sixteen for information about Ammah Andrews, Hudson's celebrated architect.

# 16

## Andrews' Impact on Architecture



Many of the historic buildings in Hudson share a distinct Greek Revival look, and that's mostly due to one man, Ammah Andrews. Andrews arrived in Hudson in the 1840s and became the preeminent architect and builder from the town's founding and for many decades. He, along with his twin brother, Amassa Andrews who arrived in 1853, and his brother-in-law, John Comstock, were responsible for most of our iconic buildings.

Andrews was a remarkable builder and carpenter dedicated to the philosophy of American architect Asher Benjamin. Andrews had a copy of one of Benjamin's guides to help builders on the frontier erect worthy structures, mostly in the classical Greek Revival style. The guide even had suggestions on the detailing, brackets, cornices, doorways, and proportions of everything.

One of Andrews' most celebrated homes is the Darling O'Brien House, featuring beautifully proportioned pillars and large windows, considered one of the most outstanding homes in the St. Croix Valley since it was first built.

Many of Hudson's great early homes were constructed by the Andrews Brothers, including several of the classic Greek Revival style houses that still line Vine Street, as well as the First Baptist Church of 1866 and the County Courthouse of 1857.

Move on to Banner Seventeen and find out about the Great Fire of 1866.

# 17

## Hudson's Great Fire of 1866



With lumber so close at hand, it was natural that the town was built using the local wood, but this proved to be a catastrophic weakness.

In 1866, on a dry and windy day, a fierce fire began in downtown Hudson that spread quickly. A sheet of flames grew on each side of Second Street and the west side of Third Street. A bucket brigade started, but it did no good. Much of downtown and the nearby homes were destroyed. Only one brick building on Walnut Street was left standing.

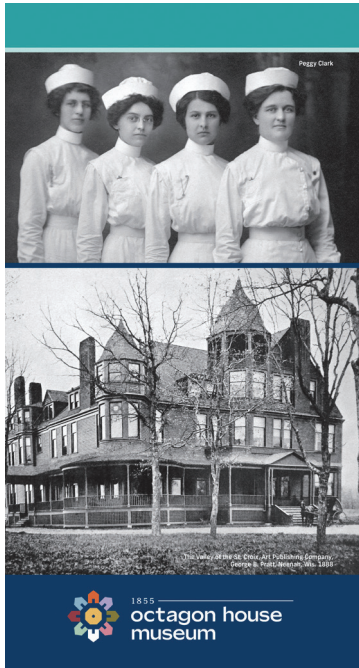
Thankfully, no lives were lost. People came from surrounding communities the Sunday after the fire to see the ruins. Sixty-four businesses and twenty homes were lost. Hudson was in ashes.

Lessons were learned from the fire. Upon rebuilding, new structures were built of brick and stone rather than wood, and a more adequate fire department was developed. A fire hall was built in 1872 at the corner of Third and Walnut Streets. This red brick structure housed the fire engine and had a tower containing Hudson's first fire bell. The bell is still in existence and is housed at the current fire station.

Walk to Banner Eighteen to learn about Hudson's first hospital.

# 18

## Hudson's First Hospital



Hudson's first hospital, the Oliver Wendell Holmes Hospital, was built in 1887 at the end of Seventh Street, and included a nursing school.

In 1894, the Holmes Hospital was purchased by Doctor Samuel Johnson, and he renamed the facility the Hudson Sanatorium. Rates of the hospital were unbelievable compared to present day standards. For \$35 a week a patient could have the best private room in the hospital. This rate included medical attention, baths, and everything else in connection with the institution, except medicine, laundry, and surgical operations, for which there was an extra charge. It was the only hospital Hudson had for many years and it caught fire in May of 1934.

Over the years, several Hudson homes have served as hospitals, including the Williams Sanatorium on Third Street. Doctor Boyd Williams operated a cancer hospital there until 1947. A pioneer in the surgical removal of cancerous tumors, Williams donated the Hudson Arch and Lakefront Park to the city.

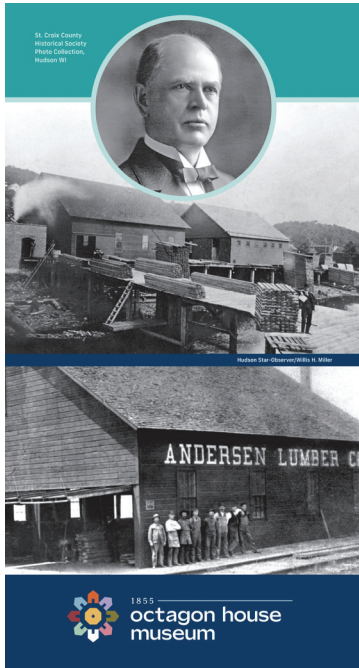
In 1946, the William H. Phipps Foundation was incorporated for the aiding and building of the Hudson Hospital. Starting with a donation of \$70,000 from the Phipps Foundation, a fund-raising campaign began in 1950 and continued through 1952 to raise an estimated \$245,000 for its construction. The hospital opened in January of 1953 and was located on Liberty Hill, just south of Prospect Park. The Hudson Memorial Hospital was named in the memory of the men and women who served in the armed forces.

Find Banner Nineteen for information about the formation of the Andersen Corporation.



# 19

## The Start of the Andersen Corporation



Andersen Windows was started right here in Hudson. Arriving in America from Denmark as an immigrant in his teens, Hans Jacob Andersen first worked as an East Coast lumberjack, but by age 20 he was in Minnesota, carving out a career as a building contractor.

Hans moved his family to Hudson in 1896, where, with his father-in-law, he established a sawmill and formed the Wisconsin Lumber and Building Company.

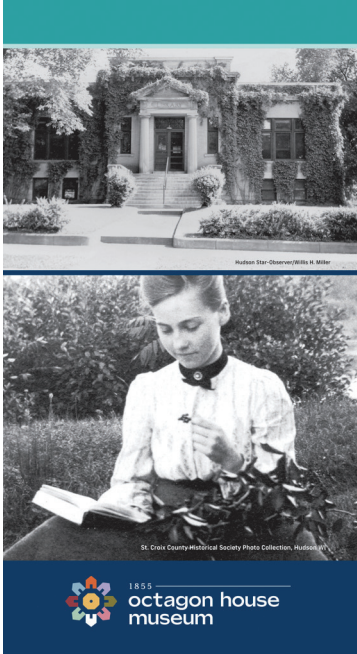
In 1903, Andersen and his family founded what would become the Andersen Corporation with the revolutionary idea to standardize window frame sizes and mass produce windows. Their first factory was in Hudson, but in 1913 moved south of Stillwater, Minnesota, which is now Bayport, where he had access to three railroads. Today, Andersen Windows and Doors is one of the most recognized building brands in the world.

Move ahead to Banner Twenty to read about Hudson's iconic first library.



# 20

## Hudson's Iconic Library



The Hudson Public Library can trace its origins back to the Civil War era when local residents would gather at houses to search the newspapers for news of loved ones who may have died in action. Beginning after the war until 1904, the growing library was housed on the second floor of various Second Street buildings, but had no dedicated location to call its own.

This changed with the Carnegie Foundation. Between 1883 and 1929, businessman and philanthropist Andrew Carnegie donated huge sums of money to build libraries around the world. A total of 2,509 were built - 63 in Wisconsin alone.

For the Hudson Public Library, the Carnegie Foundation provided \$12,000 for the building, with the stipulation that the City of Hudson provide a suitable site, books, furniture, and \$1,200 a year in maintenance. The building was complete in May of 1904 at the southwest corner of Third and Locust Streets with a collection of nearly 3,000 books and magazines, thanks in part to donations from the Ladies Library Association and the Hudson Volunteer Fire Department.

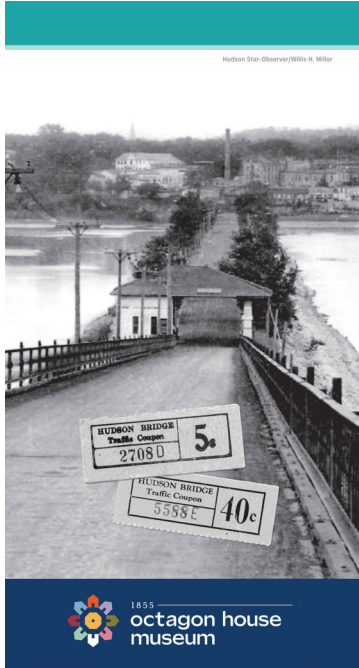
Throughout its 90-year history, Hudson's Carnegie Library was not just a grand building where generations of Hudson's children picked out their first library books, it also served as a community meeting place for many organizations. For example, during World War One, Red Cross volunteers used the basement to roll bandages for the war effort. For many years, the St. Croix County Historical Society used the library basement to keep records and to display many of its collections until it moved to the Octagon House in 1964.

Eventually, the Carnegie Library became woefully short of space for the needs of a modern library. Because it lacked sufficient accessibility, the library was moved in 1995 to the former County Building on Fourth Street. Then, in 2010, the library moved into its beautiful home today at 701 First Street.

Find Banner Twenty-one for more information about the toll bridge.

# 21

## Hudson's Notable Arch



Probably the most notable landmark in Hudson is the Hudson Arch, but the story of the arch is tied to the story of our old toll bridge. Opened for traffic in 1913, the toll bridge spanned the St. Croix River, connecting Minnesota to Wisconsin. The fee to cross was between five and 25 cents – depending on the size of your car and how many people were in it. With tourists lining up to make the trip, it meant a nice income for the city of Hudson. It wasn't until 1936, more than 20 years after the bridge opened, that the lighted Hudson arch began to welcome visitors.

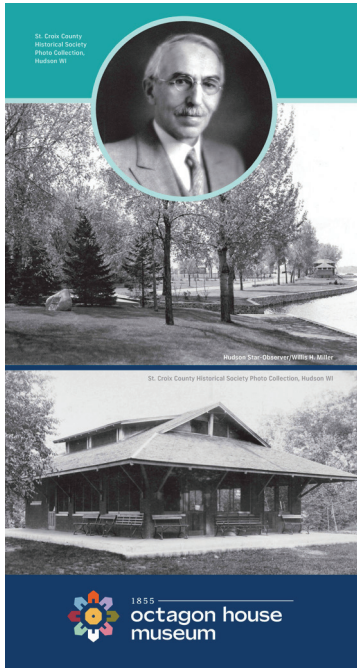
After decades of use, the Hudson toll bridge received national attention when Congress debated the concept of interstate highways and a free bridge across the St. Croix River. The days of the Hudson toll bridge were numbered and in November 1951, the structure was permanently closed when the new bridge was completed a mile south and opened to traffic.

In 1995, through tremendous community efforts, the “Arch over the Old Toll Bridge” was relit to serve as a unique historical welcome to Hudson. Today, visitors take pictures under the arch, and it serves as a beacon welcoming people to our community and our beautiful river.

Discover Banner Twenty-two and learn about one of our most notable park enthusiasts.

# 22

## The Father of Hudson's Park System



Christen Birkmose is known as the Father of Hudson's Park System. Birkmose was born in Denmark and arrived in Hudson in 1880. He originally began working with a flour mill and after gaining experience, he opened a general store on Second Street. The store was an incredible success and Birkmose operated it for 45 years until he retired.

In addition to his thriving business, Birkmose worked tirelessly to improve Hudson's park system. Earlier in the tour we described the warehouses and mills that once lined the lakefront in the mid-1800s. Years of industry left the area in a less than desirable condition. Birkmose helped to transform this from an eyesore of broken-down buildings and swampy shoreline to one of our most popular scenic parks today. In our warmer seasons, hundreds of people walk through Lakefront Park with their friends and family every day. The beautiful scenery, with close proximity to our historic downtown, attracts visitors from all over.

But Birkmose's greatest gift to Hudson was his donation of 27 acres of land just up the hill from downtown. This park is renowned for its Native American burial mounds and incredible views of the St. Croix River and surrounding bluffs. This scenic park was named Birkmose Park after its benefactor and provides the absolute best view of the river, the city of Hudson, and of nature's beauty as far as the eye can see.

Find Banner Twenty-three and you'll learn about Hudson's gem of a state park.

# 23

## Willow River State Park



The Willow River has played a special role in Hudson's history. When German immigrant Christian Burkhardt laid eyes on it in the 1860s, it reminded him of where he came from and how the waterways of his home region were being used for hydroelectric power. So much so, that Burkhardt built four power plants and dams and created the Willow River Power Company, which provided electricity to Hudson long before most of the other communities surrounding Hudson.

His company operated from 1866 to 1953 until it was purchased by Northern States Power. In 1967, Northern States Power, having already decommissioned the location, sold the land to the Wisconsin Conservation Commission for the creation of Willow River State Park, which opened in 1971.

The state worked to develop the area: removing some of the dams, building roads, campgrounds, trails, and facilities. Today, Willow River State Park draws around one million visitors each year with its majestic waterfalls, six-mile trail loops around the lake, as well as camping, fishing, kayaking, and canoeing.

Willow River State Park is clearly a favorite in the region.

# Lakefront Heritage Project

## Thank You!

Thank you for taking the time to learn about Willow River, Buena Vista, and Hudson history. Not to mention all the cultures from this area that came before Massey and Bouchea created the first settlement.

For those who want to learn more about our history, we recommend visiting the Octagon House Museum on Third Street, the Nancy Hawkinson History Room at the Hudson Public Library on First Street, or connect with the St. Croix County Historical Society.

For those who would like more information about Hudson, make sure to visit the Hudson Area Chamber of Commerce & Tourism Bureau on the corner of Second and Wisconsin Streets. We hope to see you in Hudson again soon!

## Thank You to our Partners:

### Project Partners

Christiansen  
Creative



### Supporting Partners



### Photo Credits:

- Hudson Star-Observer / Willis H. Miller
- Library of Congress Prints & Photographs
- St. Croix County Historical Society Photo Collection
- Peggy Clark
- The Valley of the St. Croix, Art Publishing Company, George B. Pratt, Neenah, Wis. 1888