



**FOND DU LAC** was nicknamed Fountain City for its many artesian wells. The first fountain erupted in 1849 when water was struck 85 feet below the surface at the corner of Main Street and Western Avenue. While the artesian wells are no longer evident, there are still many sights to see in the downtown. Take some time and enjoy the rich history of the downtown through the buildings and architecture. Learn some interesting facts and tidbits about the people and places that made Fond du Lac the city it is today. As you tour the downtown be sure to take a moment to enjoy the people and businesses— they are making tomorrow's history today!

**1 Civil War Monument (Veterans Park)**

For almost 110 years, this locally designated tin statue has welcomed visitors to Veterans Park. Fond du Lac County is believed to have had more volunteers in the Civil War than any other county in the State. The statue is 35' tall, weighs 8 tons and leans 7" from vertical at the top. Monuments of the era were often made of stone, but metal was gaining popularity for its affordable price and appealing durability. Local leaders expected a solid brass statue, but were disappointed when it turned out to be hollow tin. In the late 1980's, the statue was tilting and repairs to the foundation were needed. No one minded the maintenance, but an outcry arose when the statue was turned. It had always faced east due to military protocols, but trees had grown up around the monument, blocking its view. The trees could not be moved because they commemorate local heroes so leaders opted for turning the statue so more people could see it. Veterans Park is the site of the old County Courthouse. The Courthouse was razed when the City-County Building was constructed across the street.



**As you leave Veteran's Park, head north on Macy Street until you reach First Street.**

**2 Macy Street**

Macy Street was named for John B. Macy who owned a lot of land in the center of the City. Macy came to Fond du Lac at the urging of Eastern bankers who were interested in development opportunities of the west. In 1850, Macy started construction of the Rock River Valley Union Railroad from Fond du Lac and extending south to Janesville, following the Rock River, where it joined another rail line from Chicago. This was the start of the Chicago & Northwestern Rail system.

**3 First Baptist Church (90 South Macy Street)**

This locally and nationally designated structure is an example of early 20<sup>th</sup> century Neo-Gothic design. The building incorporates the coloration and proportion of Craftsman design with the ornament and structural features of Gothic tradition. The First Baptist Church of Fond du Lac was organized in 1845 and joined with the People's Church, an unaffiliated body, in 1905. With the increase in size the congregation had to construct a new building. By the 1930's the First Baptist Church was one of the most active congregations in the City. They moved to a smaller structure in 1980.



**Head north on Macy towards Forest Avenue.**

**4 Forest Avenue**

The street was supposedly named for the twenty-three sawmill operators that lived on the street, but could also have been named for the wooded areas along the avenue. Forest Avenue between Brooke and Seymour was paved with concrete in 1908 becoming the first concrete pavement in Wisconsin and one of the first concrete streets in the nation. In 1835 the bridge across the East Branch of the Fond du Lac River was constructed when the Army was building Military Road. The bridge preceded all other bridges in this part of the State. Military Road was the first road to cross Fond du Lac county and was part of a larger road project. Troops from various forts throughout the State constructed the road in sections. Troops from Ft. Winnebago extended the road from Portage to Fond du Lac and troops from Ft. Howard extended the road from Fond du Lac to Green Bay. On your way out of town, stop at the historical marker on Military Road to learn more.

**Continue to head north on Macy Street to Division Street.**

**Turn left onto Division Street and cross the river to your next destination.**

**5 Cathedral Church of St. Paul (51 West Division Street)**

On September 3, 1848, St. Paul's Church was formally organized by Rev. Joshua Sweet. The expanding congregation moved to its current location in 1866. In 1875, with the formation of the Diocese of Fond du Lac, St. Paul's parish church became Cathedral Church of St. Paul The Apostle and the seat of the first bishop, John Henry Hobart Brown of New York. The first building was destroyed by fire in 1884 and replaced with the present Gothic-Revival church constructed between 1885-1887. The church interior is decorated with many outstanding examples of ecclesiastical art, but the most significant is the front of the St. Augustine chapel altar—it is an exquisite piece of color-infused marble, an example of the Endolithic process. The windows in the chapel, done in 1966, show a different use of stained glass from all other windows.



**Head east on Division Street, cross the river and Macy Street until you reach Main Street. Cross Main to the east side of the street. You will be looking at the buildings on the west side of the street.**

**6 Finnegan's (2 North Main Street)**

This locally designated landmark was built in 1867 as the Bank of Fond du Lac. After the bank failed, a saloon took over—Schmidt's Sample Room. The site is known for Carrie Nation's ax-wielding attack in 1902 after a rousing lecture on the evils of tobacco and liquor. The building is also famous for underground tunnels which connected the bar to the Hotel Retlaw and to Dillingers.



**Head north on Main Street.**

**7 German American Savings Bank (28 North Main Street)**

The building was built in 1873 to house the newly incorporated German American Savings Bank which catered to the city's German speaking population. The build is constructed of brick and stone with an Italianate style façade. Rudolph Ebert served as Bank President and

local well known investors included Frederick Rueping, William Rueping, Louis Muentner, J.C. Perry, Alexander McDonald and Franz Lauenstein.

**Head north on Main Street to Merrill Avenue.**

**8 Merrill Avenue**

Merrill Avenue marks the southern edge of the Original Plat. The street is named after Captain Moses E. Merrill, one of the stockholders in the land company.

**At Merrill Avenue, cross to the west side of Main Street and head south on Main Street to your next destination. You will be looking at buildings on the east side of Main Street.**

**9 Fischer's Fond du Lac Theater (27 North Main Street)**

The theater was considered the City's first movie palace, built by Fischer Theater Co. (Fischer-Paramount Theaters) in the Beaux Arts style of the time, featuring ornate terra cotta decoration on the exterior. This type of architecture was not typically seen in a downtown environment. Everything in the theater was considered state-of-the-art for its time, including the HVAC system that was capable of an early form of air-conditioning during hot summer months. Air was pulled through cooling chambers located in the basement where it was filtered, sterilized and cooled to 60 degrees. By the time air reached the theater, it was a comfortable 65 degrees. Although the theater itself is gone, the surrounding building which housed the lobby still remains.



**10 Wisconsin Power & Light Company (15 North Main Street)**

This three-story Italianate-style commercial building was constructed in 1874 and is part of the North Main Street Historic District. The building was occupied by the Wisconsin Power & Light Company in 1910 and was named the Public Service Building. WP&L was involved in the operation of the old interurban and local street car lines. In 1925 the company began phasing out the interurban services and promoting bus service. At that time, part of the storefront was remodeled and connected to the building to the north with a large brick arch that led to the bus depot. The single-story building to the north was used as the bus depot waiting room. WP&L remained in the building well into the 1960s.



**11 Hotel Retlaw (1 North Main Street)**

This locally and nationally designated landmark was built in 1923 by Walter Schroder. The name *Retlaw* came from spelling his first name, Walter, backwards. The hotel stands 8 stories tall and towers over other buildings in the downtown. You might be surprised to learn that the Hotel Retlaw has been the lodging of choice for many famous people over the years including Eleanor Roosevelt, Jack Dempsey, Gene Autry, Paul Newman, and John and Jackie Kennedy.

**Go east on Sheboygan Street one block to Portland Street. Go north on Portland Street to your next destination.**

**12 Trinity Church (40 East Division Street)**

The church was organized in 1911 to provide English speaking Lutherans with their own congregation because St.

Peter's was predominantly a German church. In 1920, Trinity English Lutheran Church merged with Immanuel German Lutheran Church, leading to the construction of this Neo-Gothic Revival church in 1930. The congregation made efforts to utilize local materials, including limestone from a quarry outside the City; local artisans created the interior wood carving. More than 90% of the building was completed by local labor. In 2002 the congregation voted in favor of building a new church at a new site. A local developer, Commonwealth Development, purchased the property for a restaurant and banquet hall with an eye towards maintaining the exterior and interior architectural details.



**Go west on Sheboygan Street to return to Main Street. Turn left (south) onto Main Street to reach your next stop.**

**13 Retlaw Theater (23 South Main Street)**

Walter Schroeder, owner of the Hotel Retlaw, did not want to be outdone by Chicago theater owner, Frank Fischer. On December 26, 1925, approximately one month after Fischer's theater opened, Schroeder opened the Retlaw Theater. While smaller than the Fischer, the Art Deco style Retlaw housed not only the largest one-floor theater in Wisconsin at the time, but also a glassed-in roof garden that was the only one of its kind outside of Milwaukee. The theater held seating for 1100 people and *Classified* was the first movie shown. The Retlaw stopped showing movies in September 1998, the same year it was designated a local landmark. One of the last movies screened at the theater was *Titanic*.



**14 The Woolworth Building (74 South Main Street)**

This three-story 20<sup>th</sup> century Commercial style is easily recognized by the large metal sign above the windows identifying it as the F.W. Woolworth Building. The building was probably constructed for the store operated by J.C. Whittelsey who began operating a dry goods business. He operated there until 1907, when the building was combined with its neighbor to the south to create the large Woolworth's Dime store.



**15 Commercial National Bank/Coliseum (91 South Main)**

This Richardsonian Romanesque building was constructed in 1903 and is part of the South Main Street Historic District. Its massive quality is achieved by using rusticated brownstone. The Commercial National Bank occupied this building until 1923. Between 1924 and the 1970s, the building housed a café and professional offices. At one time it was known as the Lion Café, named for the two stone-carved lion heads flanking the entrance of the building.

