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## History of Waterford.

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St. Thomas Aquinas School,  
Waterford, Wis.

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History  
of  
Waterford.

Francis Norton.

## History of Waterford.

In the glacial ages nature has been kind to Waterford.

It has left rugged hills lined through the center by a small powerful river. Lying around here is a rich prairie <sup>sw</sup> where in the early days or former days roamed herds of deer. In former days the red men chose Waterford as their headquarters, for in those days the rough hilly land was the hiding place of much small game, which the Indian hunted for food and fur. The grass land fed the deer. The lakes and places for Waterford food. The river furnished plenty of fishing.

The river they say can be forded easily. Just south of our bridge the river has a hard gravelly bottom covered by water so shallow that it could be safely forded at almost any time. This ford naturally became a center from which Indians trails spread in all directions and around it was established a regular camping ground.

One old chief a Winnebago had his head

quarters on the highland between Lura Stone and Fred Coopers residence. A trapper passing through this part of the Country in an early day called this Council Ground, "Cadney Castle" and it has been known by that same name ever since.

All about this place were fields of Indian corn.

In the year 1836 Samuel Chapmann and Levi Barnes Left the Indians in search of mill sites which were free from Malaria Fever which raged in Chicago. They were trying to escape so they made a trip northward.

Making over land on horse back following Fox River northward they found the site of place where Waterford now stands. After filling claims upon the land which would control the mill power Mr Chapmann went back to Indiana in 1838. He soon returned back with his family and erected his log cabin on the side of the hill where the Pierce barn now stands. In this house Levi Barnes a Methodist evangelist

then known as ever held the first church services.

This cabin known as "the Ark" became the head quarters for early settlers and travelers, for the latch string of its hospitable door ever hung out.

Mr. Barnes began to take up government in this vicinity. He planned to have built their homes and farms for each of his children. When they built homes there was snow on the ground. When the snow melted the flow settled enough so the water came in on Mr. Barnes best carpet.

This was one of the many troubles in pioneer life. Once when there was no food in the settlement "Grandma Barnes" as they called her said: "The food will provide" Just as she said that they looked out of the window and saw a deer caught in the bush by the horns. This furnished food for the whole settlement. The horns may still be seen by the curriers.

During the year 1838 and 1839 many settlers came to Waterford.

Among these were S. E. Kress who built the first tavern. Six years later he built the first tavern that is now the Waterford House, one of the first brick houses of the village.

One of the oldest houses which is still standing is known as the Old Chapman House. This house was built after the old log cabin was not strong enough to live in. Nails were scarce at that time so wooden pegs were used to fasten the beams together. This was considered a very fine house at that time. It was made of lumber grown around Waterford and sawed in Chapman and Barnes saw mill. There were three fine places.

The young people of the village used these as a Social Center. The younger men lifted up the stoves and carpets so they could dance.

When the fun was over they put the carpets down and the stoves up. For refreshments

they had plenty molasses candy, pop corn  
cider and apples

When the Juneville - Milwaukee plank  
road was built it passed through Waterford.  
This road ran from Rochester to the west side  
of the Waterford House and crossed the river  
on a bridge about a mile north of here.

The planks were laid side by side by the  
Waterford House. The planks were laid side  
by side to make a road which would be dry no  
matter how severe the weather might be.

The road was kept up by tolls paid by travelers  
About every ten miles apart there were toll gates  
and at each one a small amount of money  
was collected for traveling on the road. After  
many years the road became unsafe because  
the planks wore out. Along this road thousands  
of bushels of wheat were handled every year.

The Waterford House was a busy tavern in  
those old days. The front part was built of  
brick with 2 long porches extended entirely  
across the front of the house.

The lower porch extended across the front and around the corner on the west side fronting on the plank road. Extending out to the north of the back the position of the House was a frame building. In the front were the reception rooms and parlors. The back frame part was divided into two parts the sleeping room and the dancing hall which was long and narrow.

The dancing hall had a spring floor and many of the Waterford people still remember dancing in this Hall.

Across from the Hotel where Mr. Dupans home now stands there were large barns where the horses were kept.

Sixty years ago most of the work was done by oxen instead of horses. It took two or three days to take a load of wheat to Milwaukee.

Old settlers here say that they have seen times when the streets were lined off for blocks with teams during hauling time.

In its day Waterford has been a great manufacturing center. The first mill was started by Mr. Chapman.



it was a saw mill. Later he erected a flour mill. In 1848 another flour mill was erected. A paper mill and distillery were also run here for a number of years. Mr. Lule who run the paper mill was obliged to close down at the end of three years after or for the lack of power. The distillery was also obliged to close down because they could not easily ship their products.

The first stove was erected by A. B. James Jr. in a wooden building on main street.

The first Protestant Church was erected in 51 by Levi Barnes being the minister. For the first two years they met in this house.

They decided to build a new church. The new church was built of stone and thought a fine one at that time. It stood where the high school now stands.

The people were very proud of the gallery and of the cushioned seats. It had a very high steeple and the bell they used is now in the German Methodist Church. The church would seat about 300 people. Quite a congregation gathered there every Sunday.

The first Catholic Church was built 60 years ago. Before the church was built many faithful Catholics walked seven miles to Burlington to attend services. Sometimes a parish priest would come to Waterford and then they held the services in Coopers Shop, which stood near the river where the park now stands.

The first school was established in 1840 and was taught by Miss Caldwell. She received no salary for her work and boarded around her pupils homes.

The first school house was a little net building.

The Chapmans had a little melodeum and this was carried back & forth from school to their home until an organ was purchased.

This melodeum still stands in Chapmans attic. When this school was no longer fit for use it was torn down and the second school was built of stone. This old school is standing as the back part of the Graded School.

When they voted for a High School they added a brick part to the old building which is still standing and used for the Graded School.

The first marriage to take place in the village was Ira J. Rice. His Bride came from South Port now known as Kenosha.

The first child born in Waterford was Ellen Chapman. She was born in 1834. Soon after they came to Waterford. The first death was the infant son of Ephraim Barnes.

A post office was established in 1834. Samuel C. Buss was our first post master. At first, mail was carried by stage from Kenosha to Jonesville and Waterford received mail once a day.

Moses Vilas a surveyor laid out the town and made a plat in '45. Waterford and the country round were fond of celebrations and good times. One year Burlington one of Waterford's neighbors gave a Fourth of July celebration. They offered a flag to the biggest delegation - the best decorated float. Waterford won the flag with a float on which rode the "Goddess of Liberty" and her attendants. The people attended the celebrations in lumber wagon

but they had just as good a time as if they had driven automobiles.

One of the parties in Waterford was to celebrate the return of the boys from Civil War.

They had been captured and put in Danville prison and later were exchanged. Some of these boys were G. Anderson, C. Chapman, J. C. McDonald, Joe Teach and John Scofield. Waterford has sent 1189 men to fight in the Civil War.

Waterford has not been without disasters in the spring of '81 the year spoke was the year, big snows. The river overflowed its banks and spread in an angry flood over three blocks. The water extended as far as Mrs. Groat's house in the west and past Halbach's store in the east and the people went to and from in boats.

Betsy Olson was drowned at this time while attempting to go to the Rochester Academy.

The water was about ten feet higher than it is now. The water was so high that when she was buried she was taken through town on boats.

In Noll's Grocery Store a can of gasoline caught fire. The fire spread to Kelt Campers Blacksmith Shop. Reuning Saloon Noll's three story furniture store. Every building in that block except one occupied by Herman Wembrook and O. S. Foote barber shop on the north side was destroyed.

Waterford was incorporated as a village in 1906. Was now a thriving village with two banks, four churches, a High School, flour mill several stores, lumber yard, two cemeteries two cigar factories weekly paper, Hotel, five garages, theater, Amusement Hall, two paved streets, flight servers, water, Drug Store, Bakery Undertakers Doctors. Water aid its part in the World War many boys went, and took their part and of these one lost his life Alfred Essmann.