



Journey Around

**OSHKOSH,
WISCONSIN**

*from **A** to **Z***

A

Winnebago Legend

as told by Waukon G. Smith, Thunder Clan
The Origin Story of Lake Winnebago

One day in the woods, Wak'djunk'aga, (wuck chunk og) the Winnebago trickster was talking to Brother Bear. "Brother Bear," he said, "do you think I can see Ma-ona, (Ma oh na) the creator?"

"Sure," said Brother Bear, "but you have to die first."

So Wak'djunk'aga went to a village where the warriors were shooting arrows. He cried out, "Shoot me! Shoot me! I bet you can't hit me!"

They shot him full of holes, but he could not die. Wak'djunk'aga now felt especially sad because he could not see Ma-ona. So he went to the top of a cliff and cried until his tears formed a large lake. Lake Winnebago is the creation of Wak'djunk'aga's tears.

Oshkosh is located where the Fox River flows into Lake Winnebago.

Lake Winnebago is the largest freshwater lake in the United States with the exception of the Great Lakes.



Beans, squash, and corn were the crops that the Menominee people planted as a way to live off the land. They also gathered wild rice and hunted.

The area now known as Oshkosh was once occupied by the Menominee Indian tribe. The Menominee People are of the Woodland Indian culture. Most of their culture reflects an adaptation to their environment, because the forests and lakes shaped the way of life for the Menominee People.



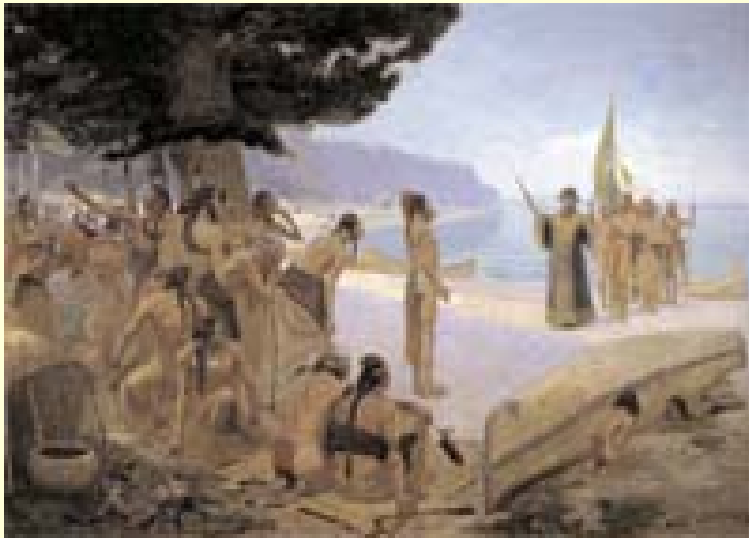
Menominee Village home

Chief Oshkosh was a Menominee Chief. He was born in 1795 and was often called “The Brave,” but his name means “Claw.”

Robert Grignon, from one of the first families that settled in Oshkosh, wanted the settlement to be named Oshkosh after the Menominee tribe’s chief. He wanted to keep the good will of the Menominees as they had been kind to the settlers.



Dreaming of finding a shorter route to China, Jean Nicolet was the first white explorer to arrive in what we know today as the Fox River Valley.



Nicolet's landing at Green Bay, mid-1600s.

He listened to the Native American stories about a wonderful river toward the setting sun. He made peace with the Native Americans which allowed other Europeans to come to the area unharmed.

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uropean fur traders came shortly after the explorers and the missionaries that came to teach European religion to the Native Americans.

The fur traders traded knives, guns, gun powder, cloth, trinkets, and glass beads for furs that the Native Americans had. These exchanges were mostly done at trading posts.



First among the white settlers to choose the Oshkosh area was Webster Stanley. When passing through in 1835, he noticed the rich soil and beauty and decided to settle with his family.



Webster Stanley

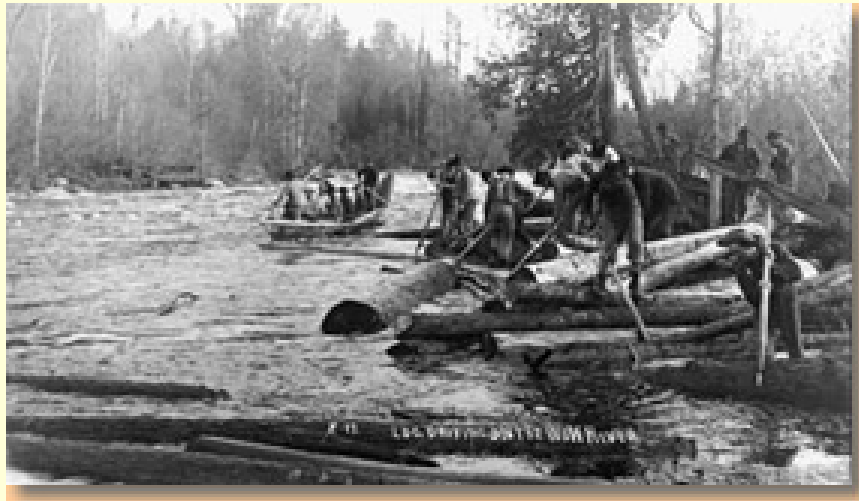
Photo courtesy of The Oshkosh Public Museum

No roads yet made it to Oshkosh, so the only way of traveling was by the lake, river, or trails. The nearest place to obtain supplies for food, tools, and clothing was Green Bay or Milwaukee.

Growing with more and more settlers, the forest in the area of the newly named Village of Oshkosh were cut down to build homes and business.

Logs being sent downriver.

Photo courtesy of The Oshkosh Public Museum.



The first sawmill was erected in 1847 by Morris Furman. Two other sawmills were quickly opened, and the hardwood trees in the area began to disappear. Lumbermen began sending white pine down the Wolf River to the Fox River, where the logs were sawed into lumber at the sawmills in Oshkosh. Oshkosh became known as the “Sawdust City.”

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aving a way to cross the water became more important as people continued to settle in the Oshkosh area.



Cable ferry

The ferry was a large flat bottomed boat that could carry people, animals, and supplies across the river. Later, the steamboat was also used. Around 1850 the first bridges were being built connecting the different areas of Oshkosh.

Incorporated as a village in 1846, and later as a city in 1853, Oshkosh had grown to a population of 2,787.

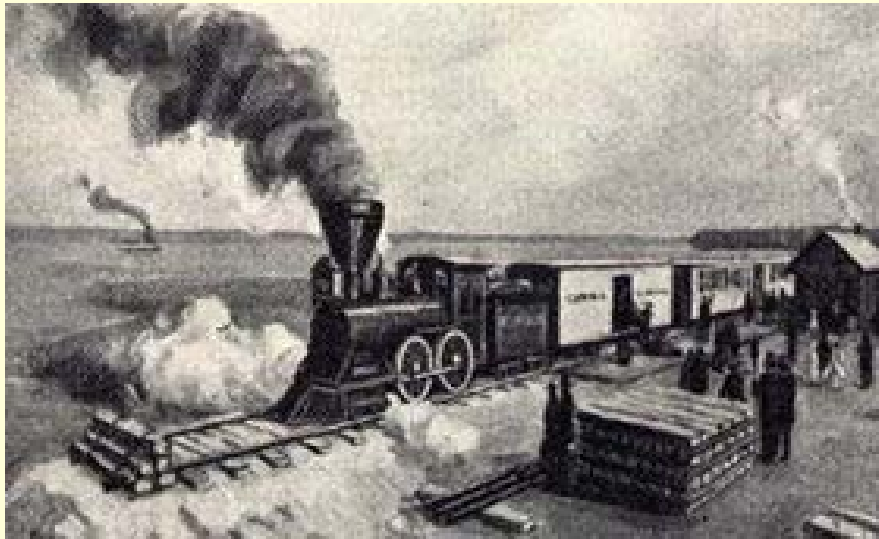
William Wallace Wright was very involved in the development of the City of Oshkosh. He was sometimes known as “The Father of Oshkosh” according to the Oshkosh Public Museum Archives.



William Wallace Wright

Photo courtesy of The Oshkosh Public Museum

Journeying to and from Oshkosh became easier around 1858 when the Chicago and Northwestern railroad connected Oshkosh to Chicago and beyond.



The arrival of the railroad meant worldwide distribution of wood products. This allowed Oshkosh industries to grow and prosper. The population continued to grow with the opening of new factories and in 1866 Oshkosh was the second largest city in Wisconsin after Milwaukee.

Known as the Great Fires, the fires that broke out in Oshkosh during the mid to late 1800s devastated most of the city.

- May 10, 1859 (broke out in a stable at Ceape & State Street) - destroyed business district.
- May 12, 1866 (started on west side of Main St.) - loss of post office and public hall
- May 9, 1874 (factory area)
- July 14, 1874 (west side of Main St. and northeast)
- April 28, 1875 (mill district)

This is what was left of the Main Street businesses after the July 14, 1874 fire.



Lots of rebuilding was done after the destruction of the fires. The rebuilt city of Oshkosh was the beginning for the present day city.



Downtown Oshkosh, 1889



**Present-day building in
Downtown Oshkosh**

After each of The Great Fires, Oshkosh rebuilt. Most of the buildings in downtown were rebuilt of brick and stone and have stood for many years.

Miss Emmeline Cook taught at the first school in Oshkosh, started in 1841 as an addition to Webster Stanley's log cabin.

As the city grew, the community saw a need for improved education. In 1867, the first high school opened. The demand for better trained teachers was met with the founding of the Oshkosh Normal School, now known as the University of Wisconsin Oshkosh.



Emmeline Cook

Photo courtesy of The Oshkosh Public Museum

Needlepoint tapestry lines The Grand Opera House walls, a theater built in 1883 to provide Oshkosh residents with cultural experiences.



The theater was renovated in the 1980s, and today, over 25 public performances and approximately 30 youth events comprise the fine arts season with another 100 activities, including community theater, corporate meetings and weddings, filling The Grand to capacity.

Oshkosh Truck came to town in 1918. Today, it is Oshkosh Commercial, and is one of the leading producers of commercial, military, airport fire and snow removal vehicles.



Then - 1924 Oshkosh Model F Dumper



Today - Medium Tactical Vehicle

Personalized Christmas cards could be created when Miles Kimball started his mail order business in 1935.

Today, the Miles Kimball Company is a leader in the catalog business offering cards, gifts, helpful household items, and unique food products, operating from the shores of the Fox River in Oshkosh.



Quick travel became easy when the Butte de Morts bridge was completed in 1955 connecting Milwaukee to Green Bay along Highway 41.



Planning began for the route of Highway 41 in 1926, but the addition of the new bridge allowed for safer and easier travel through Eastern Wisconsin. Efforts are being made in Congress to redesignate the section of Highway 41 from Milwaukee to Green Bay as Interstate 41.

Readers were satisfied when the free public library for Oshkosh was approved on May 25, 1895, and opened in a room in City Hall on April 1, 1896.

This building was built for the Oshkosh Public Library through a combination of private and public funds. It opened on September 3, 1900. The library may look slightly different today, but all Oshkosh residents can still have a free library account.



Oshkosh Public Library on opening day.

Sawdust Days became an annual celebration in 1972 to honor the city's history (then it was spelled Sawdust Daze).



Activities include water skiing, a flower show, dances, a city breakfast, art fair, boat parade, fireman water fight, merchants dressed in period costumes, an Indian dance, EAA fly over, band concerts and vendor displays.

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oday, 16 elementary schools, five middle schools, two high schools, and six charter schools make up the Oshkosh Joint School District.

Oshkosh educates nearly 10,500 students from early childhood through grade 12.



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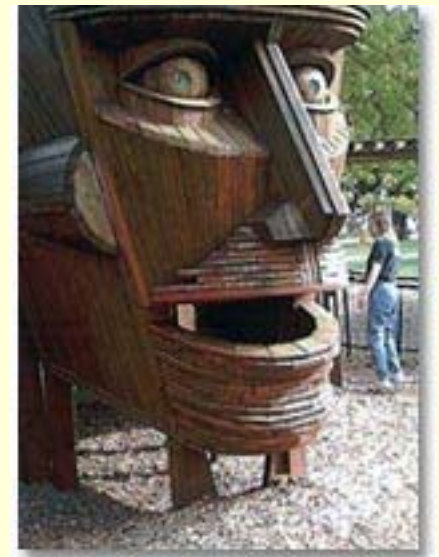
W Oshkosh provides Continuing Education, Nontraditional Programs, Community Outreach, and Adult Education programs to help promote education in Oshkosh and the Fox Cities.



The Oshkosh State Normal School was opened in 1871 as a teacher training program. Tuition was free to all who declared their intention to teach in Wisconsin public schools. In its centennial year of 1971, the institution merged into the Wisconsin system and became the University of Wisconsin Oshkosh.

Volunteers (6,000) constructed “Little Oshkosh” over a period of eleven days. “Little Oshkosh” is one of the largest and most unique community-built playgrounds in the nation.

Spreading out over 30,000 square feet, the playground is handicapped accessible, and features a “human” head, lighthouse, castle, airplane, tunnels, swings, gardens and many exciting play options.



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ittman Regional Airport was founded as the Oshkosh Airport Inc. in 1927 and now becomes the busiest airport in the world during the annual EAA Fly-in.



**Wittman Regional Airport
today during EAA AirVenture**

In 1928 the airport received its first commercial airmail service. Northwest Airways delivered the mail to Oshkosh and the surrounding Fox Cities. The airport is named for Steve Wittman (an air race pilot and designer) who managed the airport for 38 years.

Xcitement abounds during EAA's annual AirVenture event, "The World's Greatest Aviation Celebration."

Every September since 1953, aviation enthusiasts gather to study the latest aircraft and innovations, discover new ideas and techniques, and of course enjoy the afternoon air show.

The EAA Museum is open year round.

Museum attractions include an impressive collection of more than

200 historic airplanes, six movie theaters, art and photo galleries, flight simulators, gift shops and two "hands-on" interactive galleries for kids of all ages.



You can get all of your shopping done at the Outlet Shoppes at Oshkosh, which were built in the 1980s.



This outdoor mall is continually growing with new additions such as Journey's, Gap, and Old Navy. Don't forget the old favorites though, such as Oshkosh B'Gosh, Eddie Bauer, and Lands' End. And the only one of its kind American Girl Outlet.

Do **Z**ens and dozens of artifacts await you at the Oshkosh Public Museum. Go check it out to learn more about the history of this city.



The wealthy lumber mill owner Edgar Sawyer had this home built for him in 1908. It was donated by his family to Oshkosh to be used as a museum. Visit and explore the many artifacts, photographs, film, and archival materials kept here that represent all aspects of Oshkosh's people and heritage.