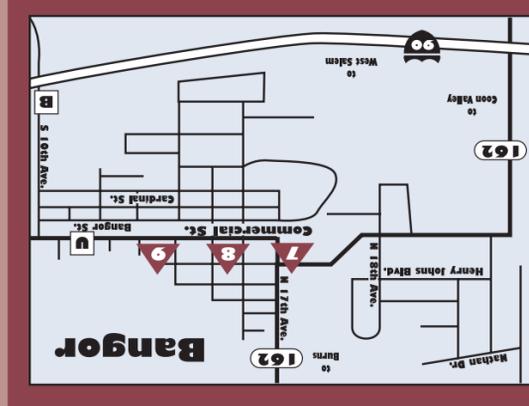
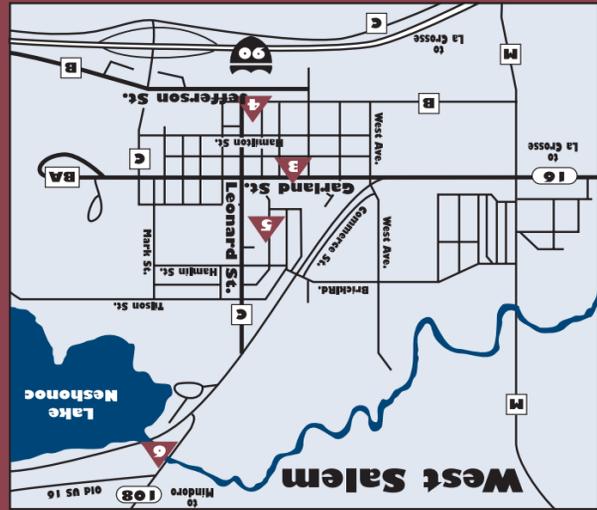
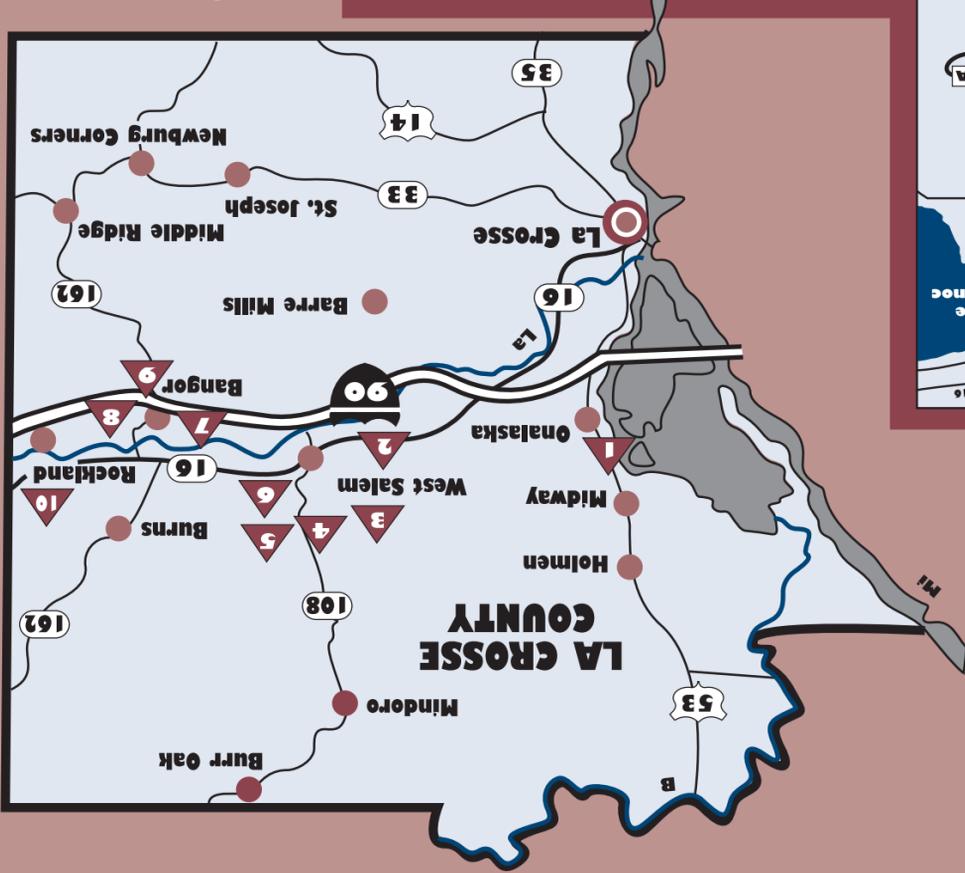
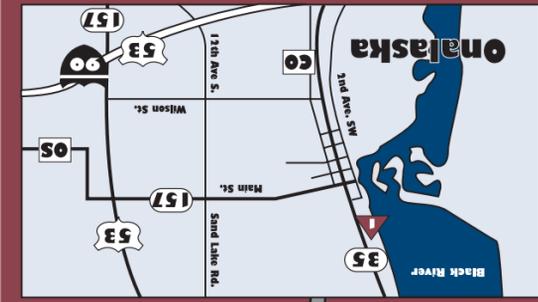




The Historic Sites of the La Crosse River Valley brochure project has been funded with the assistance of a grant-in-aid from the National Park Service, U.S. Department of the Interior, under the provisions of the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended. Historic Preservation grants-in-aid are administered in Wisconsin in conjunction with the National Register of Historic Places program by the Historic Preservation Division of the State Historical Society of Wisconsin. Additional funding was provided by the La Crosse County Preservation Commission. The contents and opinions in this document do not necessarily reflect the views or policies of the National Park Service, the State Historical Society of Wisconsin nor the La Crosse County Board.

Prepared for the La Crosse County Historic Sites Preservation Commission  
Design by Tanner Design & Illustration  
1996



The La Crosse River, which begins in Monroe County and flows westward towards the Mississippi River through the width of La Crosse County, has supported human life for more than 12,000 years. The prehistoric Native Americans who lived in the La Crosse River Valley left remnants of their existence with stone projectile points, clay pot fragments, and pictographic drawings in nearby caves. By the mid-1840s, the first Euro-American settlers came to this area permanently. The city of La Crosse, located at the mouth of the La Crosse, Black, and Mississippi rivers, was settled by 1841. Shortly thereafter land claims were being made for the townships of Barre, Holland, Hamilton, Burns and Bangor. By 1855, virtually every La Crosse township had settlers within its boundaries.

The villages of Onalaska, West Salem, Bangor and Rockland established along the tracks of the La Crosse and Milwaukee Railroad which traversed the river valley by 1858. The rail lines were vital links for the people of La Crosse County, as they provided transportation for goods, such as lumber, flour and agricultural implements, to distant markets, particularly to the west. The river valley communities attracted many interesting people, including Joseph Husa, a Czechoslovakian immigrant who in 1860 established the Husa Brewery in Bangor, Thomas Leonard, founder of West Salem in 1858, Charles Mason Nichols, founder of Onalaska's Nichols Lumber Company in 1856, and Hamlin Garland, Pulitzer Prize winning author who lived periodically in West Salem from 1893 to 1940.

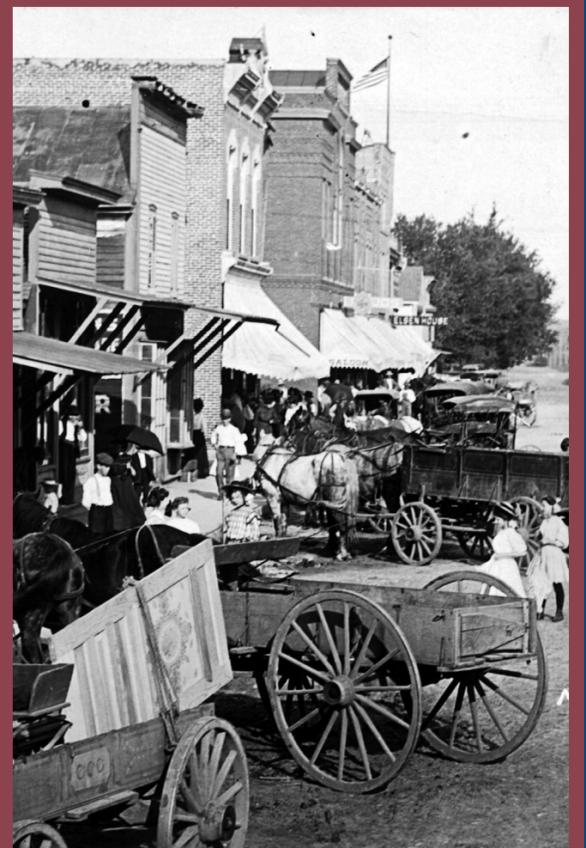
The La Crosse County Historic Sites Preservation Commission, a branch of the La Crosse County Board, helps oversee the protection and enhancement of La Crosse County's valuable historic properties. As a part of this goal, the commission has sponsored the La Crosse River Valley Heritage Corridor Project, which identifies, documents and highlights many of the valley's rich historical treasures. This brochure is one component of the project.

The following descriptions of properties are keyed to a map of the region, which can be used as a guide to identify specific locations. Each property was selected based on its architectural and/or historical merits and most have some degree of public access, either as historic sites or places of business. Enjoy your voyage through the La Crosse River Valley's history!



**La Crosse County Historic Sites Preservation Commission**  
County Courthouse  
400 Fourth Street North  
La Crosse, Wisconsin 54601-3200

# Historic Sites of the La Crosse River Valley



## 1. F.E. NICHOLS HOUSE, 1888

421 NORTH SECOND STREET (HWY 35), CITY OF ONALASKA

Listed on NRHP in 1993

This two and one-half story Queen Anne style house was constructed by Frank Nichols of the Nichols Lumber Company family of Onalaska. The lumber company was founded on the Black River in Onalaska by his father, Charles Mason Nichols, in 1852. The company transferred to Charles Haskell Nichols and his brother Frank in 1871 and they incorporated in 1887. The Frank Nichols House became a center of social activities in Onalaska in the late decades of the nineteenth century, and is noted as being the first residence in Onalaska to have gas lighting. Today the house is operated as the Lumber Baron Bed and Breakfast.



## 3. HAMLIN GARLAND HOUSE, 1893

357 WEST GARLAND STREET, VILLAGE OF WEST SALEM

Listed as an NHL/NRHP in 1971

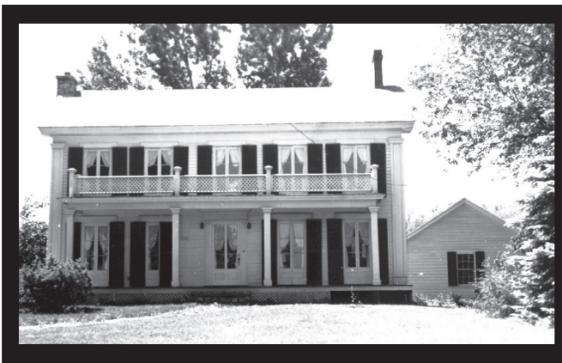
Hamlin Garland was born in 1860 in West Salem, though during the Civil War the Garlands moved to Iowa. In 1893, Hamlin Garland purchased this house in West Salem for his parents. Though Garland traveled extensively, he often spent summers in West Salem with his family. He wrote several well known books which often focused on the people of the Midwest. Some of his better-known works include *Main Travelled Roads*, *Son Of the Middle Border*, *The Trail Makers*, and his Pulitzer Prize winning *A Daughter of the Middle Border*.



## 4. THOMAS LEONARD HOUSE, 1859

99 EAST JEFFERSON STREET, VILLAGE OF WEST SALEM

The Thomas Leonard House is a Federal style house which is characterized by its two story side gabled form, multi-pane windows, and simplistic lines. Thomas Leonard was the founder of Neshonoc, which later became West Salem. Leonard was noted for his generosity when he donated land to the Baptist, Methodist, and Congregational churches, the railroad, the Hamlin Cemetery and the La Crosse Seminary.

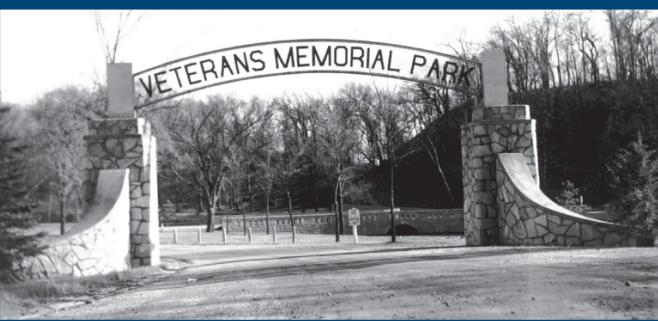


## 5. THE PALMER/GULLICKSON OCTAGON, 1856

358 NORTH LEONARD STREET, VILLAGE OF WEST SALEM

Listed on NRHP in 1979

The Palmer/Gullickson House was originally built in 1856 by Dr. Horace Palmer in the village of Neshonoc. When the railroad came through a few years later, the house was moved to the new village of West Salem. The house is built of oak beams with brick lining and sawdust insulation, and the barn was attached directly to the house. Purchased by Oliver Gullickson in 1921, the house now is maintained by the West Salem Historical Society.

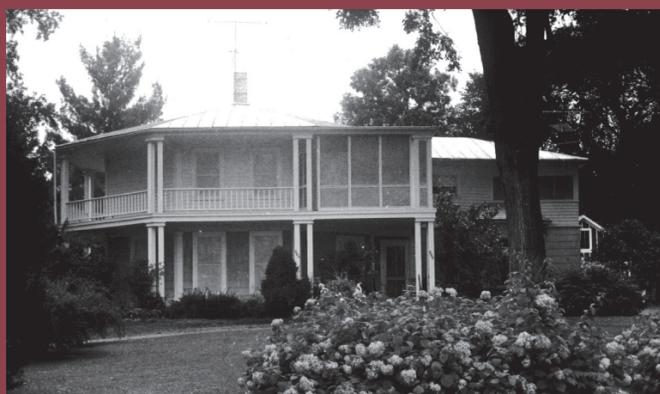


## 2. VETERANS MEMORIAL PARK, 1927

HIGHWAY 16 AND COUNTY HIGHWAY BM, HAMILTON TOWNSHIP

The Veterans Memorial Park, first conceived in the early 1930s as Waterloo Park, was moved from a site across Highway 16 to its present

location by the late 1930s. The WPA built three shelters, the stone bridge, and stone gateway in the late 1930s, and the park expanded to encompass tennis courts, softball fields, and horseshoe pits by the mid-1940s. In 1946 over 500 trees were planted throughout the park. In the early 1950s the park was renamed Veterans Memorial Park in honor of WWII soldiers from the area.



## 6. NESHONOC DAM AND POWERHOUSE, 1895, 1940

WEST SIDE HIGHWAY 108 AT THE LA CROSSE RIVER, HAMILTON TOWNSHIP

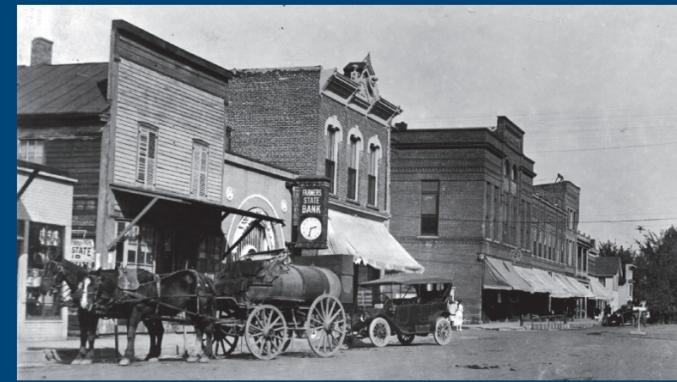
The Neshonoc Powerhouse, which is a stone building on the north bank of the river, was constructed by the McMillan Mill and Power Company in 1895, after an earlier powerhouse burned. The hydro-electric plant provided electricity to the village of West Salem, offering service to paying customers from sunset to sunrise. By 1919 it provided electrical service to the rural areas, and the village of West Salem had installed electric street lights. In 1940 the original dam was replaced by the concrete dam which is at this location today.



## 8. BANGOR COMMERCIAL HISTORIC DISTRICT

COMMERCIAL STREET, VILLAGE OF BANGOR

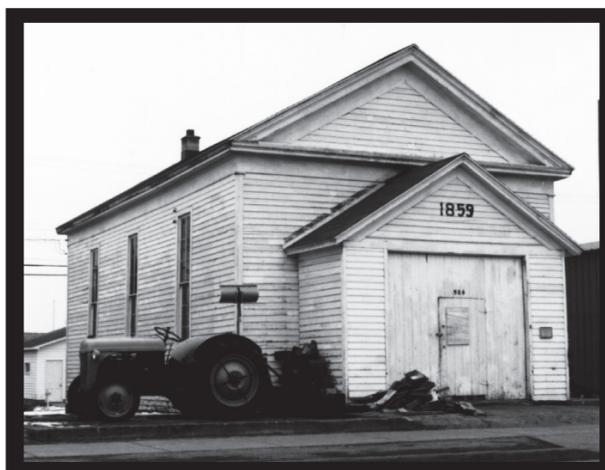
The Bangor Commercial Historic District, which is located in Bangor on the 1500 block of Commercial Street, consists of one city block of turn-of-the-century commercial buildings. The majority of the buildings, which consist of one and two story commercial vernacular forms, were constructed between 1899 and 1905 to replace the buildings which were destroyed in a fire in 1899. Bangor was founded in 1854 and prospered when the La Crosse and Milwaukee Railroad completed their lines through the La Crosse River Valley in 1858.



## 9. WELSH CALVINISTIC METHODIST CHURCH, 1859

504 COMMERCIAL STREET, VILLAGE OF BANGOR

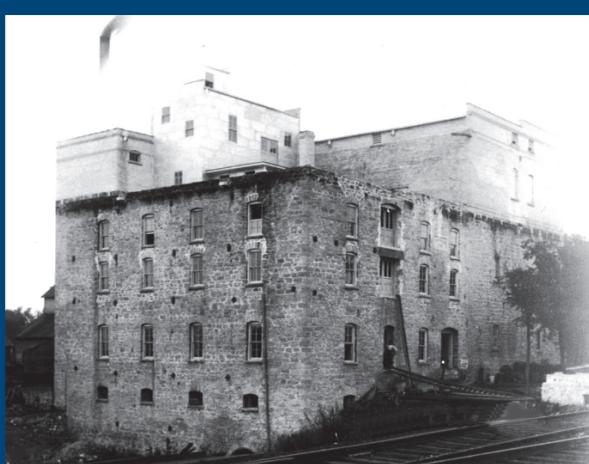
The Welsh Calvinistic Methodist Church, constructed of wood frame in 1859, is perhaps the oldest existing church in La Crosse County, and was built only five years after the founding of Bangor. The Welsh Calvinists of Bangor conducted services in the building until 1916. By 1920 the Welsh Calvinistic Methodists of Wisconsin were assimilated into the Presbyterian Church of the United States. The building now stands vacant, but is a strong reminder of Bangor's roots.



## 7. HUSSA BREWERY COMPLEX

WEST END OF COMMERCIAL STREET, VILLAGE OF BANGOR

The Hussa Brewery was founded in 1860 by Joseph Hussa when he purchased the original brick brewery building. It became one of the most productive breweries in the county, shipping its beverages as far as Milwaukee and Chicago. The Hussa House and the Hussa Office were each constructed of brick in 1881 and 1904, respectively. The Hussa Brewery remained in operation until 1920, when the complex became a canning plant.



## 10. ROCKLAND SCHOOL, 1928

NE CORNER OF OAK & CENTER STREETS, VILLAGE OF ROCKLAND

The Rockland School is a one story brick building with a hipped roof and segmental arch windows. It is typical of the small schools built in Wisconsin in the 1920s. Constructed in 1928, the Rockland School now serves the community as a recreational structure for public meetings and activities.

