

The Mississippi Valley Traveler

Travel Guide
**Lake Pepin
Tour**



Along the Upper Mississippi River
Red Wing to Wabasha (Minnesota) and
Nelson to Hager City (Wisconsin)

by Dean Klinkenberg

**Books by the
Mississippi Valley Traveler:**

Quad Cities Travel Guide

Lansing to LeClaire Travel Guide

Driftless Area Travel Guide

**This eBook is an excerpt from the
*Driftless Area Travel Guide.***

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On the cover: Lake City marina.

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RED WING

(16,116)

A popular destination for daytrippers from the Twin Cities, Red Wing is a good place to use as a base to explore the surrounding area; stick around for a few days.

Arriving in Town

US Highway 61 enters town as Main Street, while US 63 connects to the Eisenhower Bridge via 3rd Street, if you wish to cross the river to Wisconsin. Red Wing's unique civic mall has a concentration of public and religious buildings; it is just west of downtown on a wedge of land between East and West Streets running from Main Street to 7th Street.

History

Let's start with the town's namesake: Red Wing. He was probably born about 1750 and was probably the nephew of Chief Wabasha I, though no one is sure. He was a shaman and a very successful military leader of the Mdewakanton Dakota in the latter part of the 18th century. In Dakota his name was *Tatankamani* (Walking Buffalo). French explorers, for reasons that are not well documented, called him *L'Aile Rouge* (Red Wing). He broke from Wabasha's band, leading a group of 100 who lived near the mouth of the Cannon River. He led an active life in the middle of changing times, chatting with the explorer Zebulon Pike in 1805 and fighting with the British against American interests before switching sides in the middle of the War of 1812. He traveled to Portage des Sioux (Missouri) in 1815 to sign a treaty of friendship with Americans. When he

was older, he gave the name Red Wing to his oldest surviving son, Wakute, and called himself Shakea (The Man Who Paints Himself Red). He died March 4, 1829 while hunting.

The land around the Cannon River was not open to legal settlement until 1853, but a few Europeans still found a way to move in. The first to arrive were two families of Swiss missionaries: Samuel and Persis Denton in 1837 and Daniel and Lucy Gavin in 1838. They stayed until 1845, probably converting no one. Another group of Presbyterian missionaries and their families arrived in 1849 when Minnesota became a territory. At that time, Red Wing was home for about 300 Dakota. Among this group of missionaries were Joseph Hancock (b. 1816 in Orford, NH) and his wife Maria Houghton Hancock. Joseph built good relationships with the Dakota and learned their language. In 1850, Maria died during childbirth, and the next year his son died, too. Distraught, he left Red Wing for several years. John Day came from Wisconsin and moved—illegally—into the abandoned mission house, trying to establish a claim on land that still belonged to the Dakota. The Dakota were not amused, so they tore down the house. Day built a new house and the Dakota tore that one down, too. This process repeated itself about a dozen times before Day finally left.

The Dakota signed away the rights to their lands in the 1851 Treaty of Mendota and were removed from Minnesota by the 1860s. With the Dakota gone, Europeans flooded in and reshaped the area. Red Wing was platted in 1853 and became the county seat. Joseph Hancock eventually returned and played a central role in the city's development, serving as post master and writer of first county history, among other things.

Most early settlers were from the East, but there were also many Scandinavian and German im-

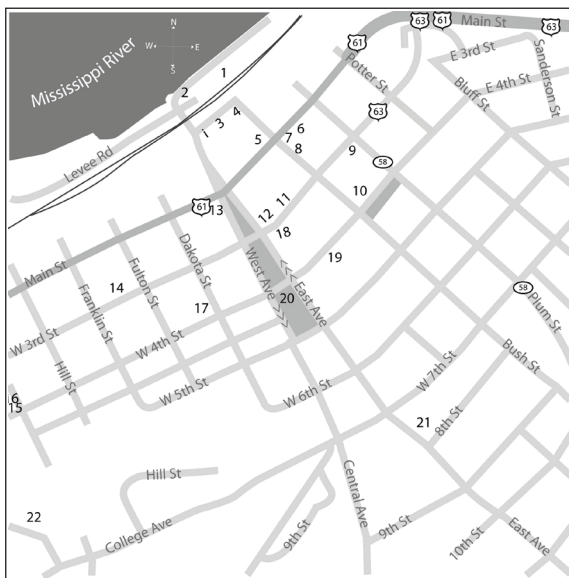
migrants. Hotels were built to house new arrivals, including an ill Henry David Thoreau who came for a four-day health respite in June 1861. He was trying to recover from tuberculosis but died the next year. While in Red Wing, he climbed Barn Bluff and was so moved he wrote about the river valley: “Too much could not be said for the grandeur and beauty.”

Red Wing counted 1251 residents in 1860 and over 4000 just 10 years later. Much of Red Wing’s early growth was fueled by wheat. In 1873, Red Wing had a warehouse that could store one million bushels of the grain; twice that amount shipped from town that year. The wheat trade declined in importance by 1880, but Red Wing had a strong, diversified economy with businesses like shoe manufacturing, sorghum processing, the Red Wing Iron Works (1866-1983), cigar factories (mostly 1870-1920), brewing, brick manufacturing, lumber, and quarrying.

Pottery makers have been mainstays in the local economy for generations. In the early years, local clay was plentiful and was an especially good raw material. The industry began with German immigrant Joseph Pohl in 1861; he later decided that farming was a better fit for him. William Philleo founded a terra cotta business in 1870 and had a nice run. He moved his company to St. Paul in 1880 and renamed it, but some of his former employees stayed in town and founded the Red Wing Stoneware Company. In 1906, the three existing pottery companies merged to form the Red Wing Union Stoneware Company, which produced pottery until 1967. In 1984, the Red Wing Pottery brand was brought back to life.

Red Wing’s economy today is a mix of light manufacturing, healthcare, and tourism; the Red Wing Shoe Company is the largest employer.

RED WING



MAP KEY

THINGS TO DO

- 10. Alveo Military Museum
- 20. Band shell
- 19. Farmers Market
- 22. Goodhue County History Center
- 1. Levee Park
- 3. Red Wing Arts Association Art Gallery
- 6. Red Wing Shoe Museum
- 2. Rusty's River Rides
- 18. Sheldon Theater

PLACES TO SLEEP

- 14. Candlelight Inn
- 21. Golden Lantern Inn
- 15. The Guest House Next Door
- 16. Moondance Inn
- 17. Pratt-Taber Inn
- 5. St. James Hotel

PLACES TO EAT

- 8. Bev's Café
- 11. Hanisch Bakery
- 9. Liberty's Restaurant and Lounge
- 7. The Nortons Restaurant
- 5. The Veranda/Jimmy's/The Port

OTHER

- 4. Amtrak Station
- 13. Post Office
- 12. Red Wing Public Library

Red Wing's Difference Makers

Red Wing has had more than its fair share of people who left a big mark. Frances Densmore (1867-1957) studied music at Oberlin Conservatory of Music. While studying in Boston with John Paine, she learned of the work of Alice Fletcher, one of the first people to record Native American music, and was inspired to follow her example. She spent much of her adult life documenting and recording the music of Native Americans, even as others were trying to erase their culture to force assimilation. In 50 years, she made some 3,000 recordings and published 20 books.



Francis Densmore recording Mountain Chief (Library of Congress)

Dr. Alexander P. Anderson (1862-1943) was a prominent scientist who invented Puffed Wheat and Puffed Rice. When they were first shown off to the public at the 1904 World's Fair in St. Louis, they were treated like popcorn; Quaker Oats later used its marketing resources to convince the public to eat them for breakfast. His research had been conducted elsewhere, but he came back to Red Wing to live and work in 1915 and built a large complex called Tower View that now serves as a residential arts program.

Tourist Information ⓘ

The old rail depot, completed in 1905 and still used by Amtrak, houses the **Red Wing Convention and Visitors Bureau** (420 Levee St.; 800.498.3444/651.385.5934; M–F 8–5, and from Memorial Day thru Oct also open Sa 10–3, Su 11–3).

Attractions

The standout geological feature in town is a chunk of land that rises 300 feet above the city. Known to the Dakota as *Khemnichan* (hill, wood, water), Europeans called it Barn Bluff because the general shape reminded them of a barn. You can explore **Barn Bluff Park** (500 East Fifth St.; 651.385.3674) via hiking trails that take you past abandoned quarries, next to limestone cliffs, and across goat prairies with great views of the area. You will also find remnants of Webster's Way, concrete steps to the top that were first built in 1899, rebuilt, then mostly destroyed by highway construction.

Memorial Park (542 E. 7th St.; 651.385.3674) sits atop Sorin's Bluff and is another place with great views of the area. A few thousand years ago, Barn Bluff and Sorin's Bluff were islands in a much wider and deeper Mississippi River.

From big views to big shoes. **The Red Wing Shoe Museum** (315 Main St., 3rd floor; 651.388.6233; M–F 9–8, Sa 9–6, Su 11–5) houses the World's Largest Boot, crafted for the company's 100th anniversary in 2005. The boot is 16 feet tall, 20 feet long, and 7 feet wide, measuring an impressive size 638 ½ D, perfect for that 120-foot tall person in your life.

The **Aliveo Military Museum** (321 Bush St.; 651.327.1569; F,Sa 10–4; free) showcases the collection of Bruce Sexton, a 30-year military veteran who served around the world and had a chance to col-

lect some remarkable items: rare bayonets, a Philippine Moro Kris sword, a Zulu shield, and uniforms. The broadest collection of items is from WWII-era Germany and Japan but other places and wars are represented.

Red Wing has several riverside parks that would be fine spots to picnic. **Bay Point Park** (1392 Levee Rd.; 651.385.3674) is next to Boat House Village and the main channel. **Levee Park** (432 Levee Rd.; 651.385.3674) is a small, pleasant riverside park with a memorial to the *Sea Wing* disaster (see page 343). Further from downtown, **Colville Park** (510 Nymphara Lane; 651.385.3674) has plenty of places to spread out along the river.

The **Goodhue County History Center** (1166 Oak St.; 651.388.6024; Tu–F 10–5, Sa, Su 1–5; \$5) has a wide-ranging collection that traces the history of the region from the earliest inhabitants to later arrivals. The collection includes displays on early agriculture and trades (don't miss the 18th century Lien family lathe), local characters like France Densmore and Eugenia Anderson, the lumber industry, and recent and distant history of the Native American population.

The **Red Wing Pottery Museum** (Pottery Place Mall, 2000 Old W. Main St.; 800.977.7927; M–Sa 10–6, Su 11–5; free) showcases the history of stoneware in Red Wing, with pieces that are functional and artistic. Did you know that mason jars were once made of stoneware, not glass? I didn't. Check out the impressive range of stoneware jars that range in size from minis barely large enough to hold a few tablespoons of salt to the 20 gallon monsters.



Eisenhower Bridge from Barn Bluff

Getting on the River

Rusty's River Rides (Levee Park; 612.859.6655) 90-minute narrated river cruises from mid-April through October (M–F 3:30p, Sa, Su 1p, 3p; \$12).

Ken of the **Lake Pepin Guide Service** (507.254.1174) is a fishing guide who also takes groups on tours of the Mississippi River in a pontoon boat (\$250/half-day for 3 people, \$400/day for 6 people).

If you prefer to take charge of your own transportation, **Ben and Joe's Fun Rentals** (1616 Old West Main; 651.388.4259) organizes kayak trips down the Cannon River to Bay Point Park in Red Wing; call for rates and times.

Culture & Arts

The **Red Wing Arts Association Art Gallery** (418 Levee St.; 651.388.7569; M–F 8–5, Sa 10–5, Su Noon–5 from May–Dec, Daily Noon–4 the rest of the year) maintains an impressive gallery in the old rail depot next to the visitors center.

If you want to sample performing arts, check out the schedule for the **Sheldon Theater** (433 W. 3rd St.; 800.899.5759/651.388.8700). The charming renaiss-

sance revival building opened in 1904 and still hosts live theater and movies.

Dr. Alexander P. Anderson, inventor of puffed rice and puffed wheat, built an estate and research center on the northern end of town that is now an artist-in-residence program called the Anderson Center at Tower View. Adjacent is the **Anderson Park Sculpture Garden** (163 Tower View Dr., 651.388.2009; daily dawn–dusk; free), a 15-acre space dotted with large-scale sculptures and a few interpretive signs explaining the different types of ecosystems native to Minnesota.

Tours

The **Red Wing Trolley Company** runs a 50-minute tour around town with stops at Pottery Place, the Sheldon Theatre, Barn Bluff, and Colvill Park (Red Wing Depot, 420 Levee St.; 651.380.3220; Th–M 11a–3p from Memorial Day weekend through October; \$10/adult).

If you are a geek like me who enjoys seeing how things are made, you shouldn't miss the tour of **Red Wing Shoe Company** (314 Main St.; 651.385.5934; M–Th 1p, F 10a from mid-March–Oct.; free). The 90-minute tours give a nice overview of the shoe-making process; some of their sewing machines are 100 years old and still being used! You don't need a reservation; just show up at Plant #2 on the west end of town at US 61 and Cannon River Avenue at the designated time; park in the spots closest to Cannon River Avenue. You won't be allowed to tour if you are wearing open-toed shoes.


If you want a closer look at the process of manufacturing pottery, **Red Wing Stoneware** (4009 Moundview Dr.; 800.352.4877/651.388.4610) offers 20-minute factory tours (M–F 10:30a, 1p, 3:30p; \$3).

Entertainment and Events

Red Wing hosts a **daily Farmers Market** from mid-May to mid-October (Red Wing City Hall, 4th and Bush Streets), that occasionally includes live music on Saturday mornings. There is also a **weekly Farmers Market** on Saturdays (8a–2p) in Levee Park. If you are in town on a Wednesday evening between late June and early August, check out a concert at the **band shell** in Central Park (4th Street at East Street).

Festivals. Red Wing has festivals throughout the year, but two of the best ones are **River City Days** (800.498.3444) in early August that includes a Venetian boat parade and the **Fall Festival of the Arts** (800.498.3444), a juried art fair that celebrates local and regional art.

Music. One of the best venues for live music is just outside of town at the **Music Loft of Hobgoblin Music** (920 Highway 19; 877.866.3936/651.388.8400). They host events, often once a month, that bring in musicians that lean toward roots/Americana. Back in town, the British-pub inspired **Jimmys** at the St. James Hotel hosts live music on Friday evenings (8–10:30).

 **TIP:** If you want a nightcap but prefer a quality adult beverage, The Nortons Restaurant (307 Main St.; 651.388.2711) has a late night happy hour where you can get half-price rail drinks and a dollar off all draught beer (Tu–Sa 9p–10p).

Sports and Recreation

The **Cannon Valley Trail** (507.263.0508) is a 20-mile former railroad line converted to a multi-use trail from Cannon Falls to Red Wing that is popular with bicyclists, in-line skaters, hikers, and cross-country skiers. The trail has an elevation change of 115 feet but it is so gradual, you probably won't notice. The trail is free for

hikers but other users must purchase a pass (\$3/day, \$20/season wheel pass for bikers and skaters; \$6/day, \$20/season pass for skiers).

The **Hay Creek Trail**, a six-mile paved bike path connects to the Cannon Valley Trail and will eventually form part of the Goodhue Pioneer State Trail. The trail ends at **Dorer Memorial Hardwood Forest—Hay Creek Unit** (State Highway 58; trails open May 1–Nov. 1), a day-use recreation area with horse trails.

If you didn't bring your own horse, **Hay Creek Stables** (29491 Hay Creek Trail; 651.385.9395) offers guided horse rides through the Hay Creek Valley (\$35/hr); call to schedule.

If you want to bike one of the trails but didn't bring a bicycle, no worries. Head to **Wheelhouse Cycles** (1932 Old West Main; 651.388.1082; M–F 10–7, Sa,Su 10–5), conveniently located a stone's throw from the trailhead of the Cannon Valley Trail (\$20/day for a standard hybrid, \$40/day for a Trek road bike). Get there early; they don't reserve bikes and on weekends, rentals are gone by 10am.

Ben and Joe's Fun Rentals (1616 Old West Main; 651.388.4259; Th–Sa) will also set you up with a bicycle (\$5/hour, \$20/day for a standard bike; \$25/day for a tandem bike); if you were hoping for something with a motor to get you around town, they also rent scooters (\$15/hour, \$75/day).

For a swim, your best bet is the **Colvill Aquatic Center** (480 Nymphara Lane; 651.388.9234; daily Noon–7p from June to Labor Day; \$6.50) and its large pool with waterslides.

You can go **mountain biking** or play **disc golf** at Memorial Bluff (542 E. 7th St.), or **rock climbing** at Barn Bluff.

For skiing or snowboarding, head to **Welch Village Ski and Snowboard Area** (26685 County Road 7 Blvd.; 651.258.4567); at press time, fees were \$47 for an all-day lift pass and \$30 to rent a standard set of ski or snowboard equipment. Indoor ice skating is available at **Bergwall Arena** (215 Pioneer Rd.; 651.388.6088) and **Prairie Island Arena**



The giant boot

(370 Guernsey Lane; 651.267.4346). Call for open skating times and fees. Outdoor skating rinks are abundant.

Shopping

FALCONER VINEYARDS WINERY produces wines from local grapes; I enjoyed the whites more than the reds, although I also liked their port (3572 Old Tyler Rd.; 651.388.8849; F,Su Noon–5, Sa 10–6 from late April–Thanksgiving, weekdays from Noon–5 added in the fall). **HOBGOBLIN MUSIC** (920 Highway 19; 877.866.3936/651.388.8400; M–F 8–5, Sa 10–5) is renowned for its hand-crafted Celtic harps; you can also get that accordion you’ve been pining for. The **POTTERY PLACE MALL** (2000 Old W. Main St.; M–Sa 10–6, Su 11–5) has a number of fun shops vending antiques, chocolate/candies, used books, kitchenware, etc. **RED WING POTTERY** (1920 Old W. Main St.; 800.228.0174/651.388.3562; M–Sa 9–6, Su 9–5) is a big store with plenty of pottery, some hand-thrown, plus home knick-knacks, candy, and

t-shirts. You can watch a potter at work in the back of the store.

The downtown area has several boutique shops worth a visit. **BEST OF TIMES BOOKS** (425 W. 3rd St.; 651.388.1003; M–F 10–6, Sa 9–5, Su 11–3) has a good selection of new and used books. The **UFFDA SHOP** (202 Bush St.; 800.488.3332/651.388.8436; M–F 9–8, Sa 9–6, Su Noon–5 from May–Dec, otherwise open M–W, Sa 9–5, Th, F 9–8, Su Noon–5) sells Scandinavian-themed products like porcelain, glassware, candies, hand-knit sweaters, and books of Ole and Lena jokes. At the **RED WING SHOE STORE** (315 Main St.; 651.388.6233; M–F 9–8, Sa 9–6, Su 11–5), you can buy a pair of shoes or boots meant to take a beating. **THUNDER CLAN TRADING POST** (312 Bush St.; 651.385.0515; M–Sa 9–5) has Native American arts and crafts.

Eating

For a light breakfast, head to **HANISCH BAKERY** (410 W. 3rd St.; 651.388.1589; M–F 5:30a–5p, Sa 5:30a–3p; WiFi) and snack on fresh pastries and coffee.

BEV'S CAFÉ (221 Bush St.; 651.388.5227; M–F 5a–8p, Sa 6a–2p, Su 8a–1p) is a downtown diner that offers heartier, reasonably-priced breakfasts (\$3–\$8); check out the gritwurst, a house specialty.

For made-from-scratch goodness, head to **SMOKEY ROW CAFÉ/JENNY LIND BAKERY** (1926 Old West Main St.; 651.388.6025; M–Sa 7:30–6, Su 9–4; WiFi) and enjoy a wrap or sandwich on fresh bread (\$6–\$8); breakfast options include quiches, strata, and sandwiches (\$5–\$7).

LIBERTY'S RESTAURANT AND LOUNGE (303 W. 3rd St.; 651.388.8877; Su, M 8a–10:30p,

Tu–Th 8a–11p, F,Sa 8a–midnight) is a family-friendly restaurant with a wide-ranging menu of generally well-prepared foods from burgers to tacos to lasagna to walleye (sandwiches \$6–\$9, dinner entrées \$10–\$22); you can order breakfast all day (most items \$4–\$8).

Fresh and delicious Mexican standards are the norm at **FIESTA MEXICANA** (2918 N. Service Dr.; 651.385.8939; Su–Th 11–10, F,Sa 11–11); their menu includes a nice range of seafood options (entrées mostly \$7–\$11).

The St. James Hotel has three good choices for a meal. If you want casual dining, **THE VERANDA** (M–Sa 6:30a–8p, Su 7:30a–8p) is the only place in town that has outside seating with a river view. Breakfast items are mostly \$7–\$8; lunch and dinner menus lean toward salads, sandwiches, and light entrées (\$8–\$16). If you are more in the mood for gastropub fare at reasonable prices, head to the fifth floor and dine at **JIMMY’S** (daily 4p–10p) where you can eat heartier fare like fish and chips or Korean BBQ short ribs (entrées \$9–\$13) and pair it with a craft beer. Alas, if fine dining is what you crave, head downstairs to **THE PORT** (Tu–Sa 5–9). This inventive menu includes a vegetable strata called Beggar’s Purse, plus bison ribeye, and other soul-satisfying concoctions (entrées from \$16–\$33). To make reservations at any of these restaurants, call 800.252.1875/651.388.2846.

THE NORTONS RESTAURANT (307 Main St.; 651.388.2711; M 11a–9p, Tu–Sa 11a–10p, Su 11a–8p) offers fine dining in a space with a sleek, modern décor. When I dined at Nortons, the menu had something of a Cajun theme, but that is not always the case; what is typical is finely crafted food that emphasizes seasonal ingredients. They offer half- and full-size portions for most of their dinner entrées, something I wish more restaurants would do (dinner

entrée prices: half-portions from \$12–\$22, full portions from \$20–\$36).

Sleeping

Camping. About six miles from town, the **HAY CREEK VALLEY CAMPGROUND** (31655 Highway 58 Blvd.; 888.388.3998/651.388.3998) has plenty of overnight sights in a scenic valley adjacent to the Hay Creek Unit of Dorer State Forest; overnight sites are mostly in an open field with little shade but are large (\$33). **HIDDEN VALLEY CAMPGROUND** (27173 144th Ave. Way; 651.258.4550; WiFi) is about 15 miles northwest of Red Wing, near the village of Welch and along the Cannon River Trail; it has several sites next to the Cannon River (\$38/site); no reservations and no credit cards.

Budget. The only non-chain budget option in town is the **PARKWAY MOTEL** (3425 Highway 61 North; 651.388.8231; WiFi); rooms are in decent shape and clean and come standard with fridge, microwave, coffee, and cable TV (\$49–\$59+tax).

Bed and Breakfast. Red Wing has an impressive collection of bed and breakfast inns; you won't go wrong at any of these. Each includes a full breakfast.

THE CANDLELIGHT INN (818 W. 3rd St.; 800.254.9194/651.388.8034; WiFi) has five guest rooms in an Italianate home built in 1877 by Horace and Alice Rich; Horace was the President of Red Wing Stoneware, which later became Red Wing Pottery. Lynette writes about food and makes a mean breakfast. The house is decorated with a period feel and has rich, warm woodwork throughout (\$159–\$229+tax). **THE GOLDEN LANTERN INN** (721 East Ave.; 888.288.3315/651.388.3315; WiFi) has five rooms in the 1930s-era house built for J.R. Sweasy, the first

president of the Red Wing Shoe Company. Check out the original art deco bathroom on the first floor. The rooms include two two-room suites and a third-floor suite with a more contemporary décor; all rooms have luxury options like gas fireplaces, king beds, and flat screen TVs. You can opt for breakfast in your room (\$169–\$209+tax). Don't be fooled by the imposing limestone Italianate house that is the **MOONDANCE INN** (1105 W. 4th St.; 866.388.8145/651.388.8145; WiFi in most rooms); the interior is welcoming and artful, decorated with French and Italian antiques. The house was essentially gutted after being rescued from neglect, so the rooms are in great shape and equipped with private baths including two-person whirlpool tubs (\$169–\$215+tax). **THE PRATT-TABER INN** (706 W. 4th St.; 651.388.7392; WiFi) is in an 1874-era house that went through a major overhaul; the four rooms, all with a private bath, have a seasonal theme and are decorated with a nod to the past but not handcuffed by it (\$150+tax). **THE ROUND BARN FARM** Bed and Breakfast and Bread (28650 Wild-wood Lane; 866.763.2276/651.385.9250; WiFi) is simply lovely. The house was built just a few years ago but it looks like a 19th century brick farmhouse thanks to generous use of reclaimed materials. The five guest rooms each have a private bath with whirlpool tub and individual climate controls, plus a fireplace, and feather beds with pillowtop mattresses (\$159–\$249+tax). Don't forget to check out the namesake round barn, built in 1914 and used primarily for special events.

Cabins/Houses. THE GUEST

HOUSE NEXT DOOR (1117 W. 4th St.; 866.388.8145/651.388.8145) is a four-bedroom, two-bath house with a full kitchen and plenty of historic character, good for a family or group of friends traveling together (\$325+tax; 2 night minimum).

Moderate. The **NICHOLS INN OF RED WING** (1750 US Highway 61; 651.388.6633; WiFi) is a newer hotel in a commercial district north of downtown with clean, contemporary rooms outfitted with fridge, coffee, and cable TV; some rooms have a microwave (\$95–\$154+tax, incl continental breakfast). The Grande Dame of local lodging is the **ST. JAMES HOTEL** (406 Main St.; 800.252.1875/651.388.2846; WiFi). This historic hotel was built in 1874-5 and has been a landmark in Red Wing for generations. In 1975, the Red Wing Shoe Company rescued the hotel from oblivion and completed a major overhaul that included building a new tower. No two guest rooms are identical. Each is named for a steamboat and has a handmade Amish quilt. The wide range of room types and sizes means rates can vary tremendously; most rooms run \$175–\$200 (+tax) on a weekend, but package deals help reduce costs.

Resources

- The local newspaper is the *Red Wing Republican Eagle* (651.388.2914).
- Post Office: 222 West Ave.; 651.388.8637.
- Red Wing Public Library: 225 East Ave.; 651.385.3673; WiFi; M–W 10–8, Th,F 10–6, Sa 9–3 from Memorial Day to Labor Day, M–W 10–8:30, Th,F 10–6, Sa 10–4 the rest of the year.

Getting To and Out of Dodge →

Red Wing is one of the stops on **Amtrak's Empire Builder** route; Amtrak uses the neoclassical Red Wing Depot (420 Levee St.) but does not maintain a service window. You can buy your tickets on-line (www.amtrak.com), by phone (800.872.7245), or on the train. Westbound trains depart Red Wing at 8:52p for destinations along the Mississippi River that include St.

Paul/Minneapolis (1 hour, 40 minutes), and St. Cloud (3 hours, 50 minutes) before continuing on through the western United States to Seattle. Eastbound trains depart Red Wing at 8:54a and pass through Winona (1 hour, 15 minutes) and La Crosse (1 hour, 45 minutes) before terminating at Chicago (7 hours). Fares can vary substantially; they are based on the number of available seats, so you will generally pay less the further in advance you book.

Getting Around

Limited bus service is available through **Hiawathaland Transit** (866.623.7505; M–F 6a–6:45p; \$1.75). They operate two scheduled routes around the city; route 1 will be of most use to visitors.

For more information and updates, visit my web site at <http://www.mississippivalleytraveler.com>.

WACOUTA

(Uninc)

Wacouta is a small residential community with a number of lakefront homes and not much for a visitor to do, other than gawk at the big homes.

Arriving in Town

Follow Wacouta Road from US 61.

History

Wacouta was settled nearly as early as Red Wing. George Bullard arrived in 1850, He had been a trader and worked closely with the Dakota, so, when he platted the village in 1853 he chose a name to honor Chief Wakuta, one of the last Dakota chiefs in this area.

The founders of the village of Wacouta had high hopes for their town. In 1853, they went head-to-head with Red Wing for the county seat. Wacouta's proprietors pinned their hopes on getting votes from the lumbermen across the river who were regular customers at the village's hotels and businesses. Red Wing, still a small community at the time, imported 20 men to town, ostensibly to work for the village but, in reality, just to vote in the county seat election. Red Wing won. Wacouta didn't develop much after losing the election. It had a station on the Chicago, Milwaukee, and St. Paul railroad, but no major industry. Wacouta today is a small residential community with a number of lakefront homes, some new and very expensive.

Sports and Recreation

The **Rattlesnake Bluff Trail** is a paved trail that passes through mostly flat terrain. You can ride/walk/run up to four miles; for route info, check out the sign by the township hall (go left at the Y in the road).

For more information and updates, visit my web site at <http://www.mississippivalleytraveler.com>.

FRONTENAC STATION

(Uninc)

Frontenac Station is the place you pass through on the way to Frontenac State Park and Old Frontenac.

Arriving in Town

US Highway 61 forms the western boundary of town; whoever laid out the village chose street names to reflect the predominant ethnicities of area settlers: Germania, Hibernia, Scandinavia, Brittania.

History

Frontenac Station may lack the glamorous history of Old Frontenac, but it has nothing to hang its head about. The village came to life in the 1870s when the railroad built tracks along this alignment instead of through Old Frontenac. This decision was made at least partly because Israel Garrard didn't want trains rumbling through his bucolic resort community.

Frontenac Station developed into a solid, small community whose businesses served the local agricultural industry. By 1900, the village had a quarry, a grain elevator, a saloon, general stores, and blacksmiths. Stone from a nearby quarry was used in the construction of St. John the Divine in New York City.

Frontenac Station is also home to the oldest government building in continuous operation in Minnesota. The Florence Town Hall was completed in 1875 and is still serving the local community.

Tourist Information ⓘ

Your best bet to learn about the local scene is to stop in to the **Whistle Stop Restaurant** (33683 Highway 61 North; 651.345.5800; daily 6a–8p).

Attractions

Florence Town Hall (33923 Highway 61 Blvd), built on a lot donated by Israel Garrard, has been used as focal point for the town's business since it was completed in 1875; the interior has impressive details like maple floors, wainscoting, pieces of original furniture, and old voting booths.

Eating

THE WHISTLE STOP RESTAURANT (33683 Highway 61 North; 651.345.5800; daily 6a–8p) is a standard small-town diner/dive, where you can get a big breakfast any time of day (\$3–\$7) or a burger (\$5–\$7).

For more information and updates, visit my web site at <http://www.mississippivalleytraveler.com>.

OLD FRONTENAC

(Uninc)

Old Frontenac was home to a well-heeled resort—the “Newport of the North”—attracting folks from across the US. It is now a well-preserved Civil War-era community undisturbed by modern roads.

Arriving in Town

Old Frontenac is not directly on the Great River Road, but it is just a short detour away via County Highway 2, which loops around and through Old Frontenac and connects to the River Road north and south of Frontenac Station. At the point where County Highway 2 makes a sharp turn, take Lake Avenue Way to get to the heart of the old resort area.

History

The first European to live in the area was Rene Boucher, who set up a log stockade called Fort Beauharnois in 1726. He brought two Jesuit missionaries with them, Michel Guignas and Nicholas de Gonner, who established the Mission of St. Michaels the Archangel, possibly the first church in Minnesota. They abandoned the fort by 1763 when the French were forced to cede their North American lands to Great Britain. James “Bully” Wells was the next person to establish a significant presence. He ran a trading post that was established by 1840. After the Treaty of Mendota opened the Minnesota Territory, more settlers moved in. Everet Westervelt bought Wells’ claim around 1854 and built the first store in the area; at that time it was known as Western Landing.



One of the former resort homes

Brigadier General Israel Garrard and his brother, Lewis, visited the area on a hunting trip in 1854 and were so enchanted they vowed to return. In 1857, Israel bought 4,000 acres from Jean Baptiste Faribault and divided it into quarter shares: one for each of three Garrard brothers and one for Westervelt, reserving 320 acres for a town site they called Westervelt. Israel Garrard bought out Westervelt in 1859 and renamed the village Frontenac in honor of Louis de Buade de Frontenac, a governor general of New France who commissioned several explorations of the Mississippi Valley.

Garrard built a home he called St. Hubert's lodge (in honor of the patron saint of hunters) and the village attracted a few settlers, many of whom were from Cincinnati where they had previously worked for Garrard. While the village of Frontenac attracted some industry, its main claim to fame was the resort on a point of land at the northeast end of town. Garrard converted a warehouse into the Lakeside Hotel; turned a general store into a hall with a theater, billiards, and tavern; and built nine cottages for summer resort guests. For seventy years, Frontenac was a favored summer vacation spot for the genteel on holiday.

After the resort waned in popularity, Methodists

bought the former Lakeside Hotel and ran it as a retreat center for decades. Many of the buildings later fell into decline until a gradual effort to restore them began in 1987, largely through the efforts of Bill and Linda Flies. What makes Frontenac unique today is not so much the number of Civil War-era buildings but that an entire community from that period is essentially intact and undisturbed by modern development. The former resort buildings are being restored but are now private residences.

Tourist Information ⓘ

Your best bet to learn about the local scene is to stop in to the **Whistle Stop Restaurant** (33683 Highway 61 North; 651.345.5800; daily 6a–8p).

Attractions

Frontenac State Park (County Road 2; 651.345.3401; \$5/day vehicle permit) has plentiful hiking and picnicking, much of it with great blufftop views of Lake Pepin. The park has sections of bottomland hardwood forest that are popular with birders.

Christ Episcopal Church (County 2 Blvd.; 612.345.3531) was completed in 1869 as the resort area was coming into prominence; the logs used to build it were floated down the St. Croix and Mississippi Rivers. Other than the addition of a few electric lights and forced air heat, the church is just as it appeared when built.

Sports and Recreation

The **Florence Township Beach** is by the boat ramp at the end of Garrard Street.

Sleeping

Camping. The main campground at **FRONTENAC STATE PARK** (County Road 2; 651.345.3401; \$5 daily vehicle permit + camping fee) is in a heavily wooded area and the sites are nicely spaced apart (\$18/without elec, \$22/ with elec). There are also six primitive, cart-in sites that are a quarter-mile walk from the parking lot (\$12).

Budget. Villa Maria opened in 1880 by Ursuline nuns as a boarding school for girls; the school was a big success, which required new buildings. Israel Garrard donated a large tract and the new school and dormitory buildings opened in 1890. The school did well for decades but came to an abrupt end when the school was struck by lightning in March 1969 and burned to the ground. The sisters decided not to rebuild and closed the school, but they found another use for the former dormitory, creating the interdenominational **VILLA MARIA RETREAT AND CONFERENCE CENTER** (29847 County 2 Blvd.; 866.244.4582/651.345.4582; WiFi) on its expansive 70 acres. The rooms were once dorms for a private, parochial school, so they are small, don't have a TV or phone, and share common bathrooms and showers. They are perfect for that quiet retreat you have been craving (Weekends: one night costs \$73.50/person and includes three meals; two nights will run you \$110/person with meals included from Sa breakfast through Su brunch).

LAKE CITY

(4,950)

Lake City, more so than any other community in the region, feels like a resort town, with busy streets, boutique shops, a large marina crowded with sailboats, and unattractive waterfront condominiums. The lake (see the Lake Pepin sidebar on page 76) abounds with natural beauty and recreational options, which explains why the city's summer population swells to 12,000.

Arriving in Town

US Highway 61 enters town as Lakeshore Drive; US Highway 63 heads west near the center of town and is Lyon Avenue from that point on. The small commercial district is located northeast of US 61 from Lakeshore Drive to Lake Pepin and along Washington and Franklin Streets.

History

Jacob Brody arrived in 1853 and gets the credit as Lake City's first settler; he was joined by his brother Philip and other settlers the next year, most of whom came from New England. Before Lake City amounted to much, the towns of Florence and Central Point were attracting settlers, but those communities faded away as it became clear that Lake City had the superior steamboat landing; in 1858, alone, Lake City counted 1,500 steamboat dockings.

As the population exploded from 300 in 1856 to over 2500 in 1870, business boomed. For a brief time, Lake City was busy with clamming, button manufacturing, and grain shipping. The railroad arrived in

1872 and the grain elevators were moved from the lakefront to the railroad tracks. With the decline in steamboat traffic, Lake City grew into a commercial center for local farmers. During the Depression, all three banks in town closed; only one eventually reopened.

Lake City residents have been witness to two major disasters on Lake Pepin. The *Sea Wing* was an excursion

boat that sank near Lake City on July 13, 1890, killing 98 of 215 passengers (see the sidebar on page 343). A half century later, a B-24 Liberator crashed in Lake Pepin on December 15, 1944 during a snow storm. The four-engine prop plane was a long-range bomber being moved from St. Paul to Kansas City. The plane exploded on impact and sank; the bodies of the three crew members could not be recovered until six months later because of ice on the lake.



Wiebusch Windmill Haven

Tourist Information ⓘ

You can stock up on brochures at the **Lake City Tourism Bureau** (101 West Center St.; 877.525.3248; M–F 9–5, from April–Oct. also open Sa 10–3).

Attractions 💡

Lake City has a number of parks along the waterfront that would be a fine place for picnicking or quiet

contemplation, including **Gold Star Mother's Park** and **Ohuta Park** along Park Street, **McCahill Park** near the marina, and **Roschen Park** on South Lakeshore Drive. There is also a small park at the end of **the point** in the middle of town that juts out into Lake Pepin. Follow Chestnut Street past the beach and mobile homes for a great panoramic view.

Hey, what's that? Scotland may have the Loch Ness Monster, but Lake Pepin has **Pepie**, a mysterious, very large fish, or monster, or very large tree stump. Stories about a monster in the lake go back to Native American oral traditions. **Pepie** even got a mention in the 1871 edition of the Minnesota Historical Society's *Book of Days Almanac*. Maybe you'll be one of the folks who claims to have seen this mysterious creature, but you are more likely to see a **Pepie t-shirt** than the actual monster. If you are the lucky one to get the first video of **Pepie**, you could be the next YouTube star.

The **Lake City Historical Society** set up a few displays about Lake City's past in the second floor ballroom of the 1899-era **City Hall** (205 W. Center St.; 651.345.5383; M–F 8–4:30; free); the ballroom is at least as interesting as the display cabinets.

It's a bit of a detour from the river, but **Ralph Wiebusch's Windmill Haven** (36225 County Road 72) is worth the 15-minute drive. **Ralph** is one of those folks who walks a fine line between serious collector and obsessive. His interest in windmills dates back to the 1970s when he moved them from farms in the Midwest to ranches in the West. Over the years, he has purchased and restored about three dozen of them; two dozen currently adorn his yard. The windmills were used primarily between the 1880s and 1930s to pump water from wells. To get there from Lake City, travel south on US 63 toward Zumbro Falls; just be-



The Point

fore reaching town, turn left on County Road 72. The windmills are 0.7 miles on the right.

Getting on the River

You can't rent a boat around here, but you can pay someone else for a ride. The **Pearl of the Lake** (100 Central Point Rd.; 651.345.5188) is a paddlewheel replica that offers 90-minute cruises on Lake Pepin from April through October (W–Su 1p; \$15).

Culture & Arts

Lake City has two places where can view (and buy) the work of local artists: **Serendipity Coop Art Gallery** (110 S. Washington; 651.345.5734; W–Sa 10–4) and **Local Elements Art Gallery** (210 S. Lakeshore Dr.; 651.345.4278; F,Su 10–2, Sa 10–5).

Entertainment and Events

The local **Farmers Market** is on Thursday evenings from 6p–8p at the Chestnut Street beach.

Festivals. Enjoy the scenery of Lake Pepin with an extended bike ride around the lake as part of **Tour de Pepin** (early June). Options include a 12-mile ride to

Wabasha with return by bus; a 32-mile ride to Stockholm (Wisconsin) with return on the *Pearl of the Lake* paddlewheeler; or biking the entire 72-mile route. You must register for the event (\$50). Ralph Samuelson invented water skiing in 1922 on Lake Pepin, which naturally the town must celebrate with a festival; it has been doing just that since 1972 with **Waterski Days** (last weekend in June). The 18-year old Samuelson strapped two pine boards to his feet, each board eight feet long by nine inches wide, and got behind a motorboat operated by his brother; when his brother hit the throttle young Ralph was lifted out of the water. No doubt inspired by Samuelson, in 1973 Lake City resident Dennis Francis, then 27-years old, waterskied the Mississippi from Coon Rapids (Minnesota) to the Gulf of Mexico. The festival includes a parade on Sunday afternoon and a waterskiing demonstration. Celebrate the apple harvest with **Johnny Appleseed Days** (1st weekend of October); expect plenty of art and craft vendors, an apple pie competition, and a children's peddle tractor pull. Contact the tourism office for details on these events (877.525.3248).

Sports and Recreation

Take a pleasant stroll along the waterfront on the 2 ½ mile paved path called the **River Walk**.

Lake City has **two swimming beaches**, one at the foot of Chestnut Street (651.345.3905) and another in Hok-Si-La Park (2500 N. Highway 61; 651.345.3855).

Shopping

HUETTL'S LOCKER (1903 N. Lakeshore Dr.; 651.345.3424; M–F 8:30–5:30, Sa 8a–Noon) is an old-fashioned butcher and meat shop, making a variety of specialty sausages and cured meats that you should

Lake Pepin



Sailing on Lake Pepin

Lake Pepin is a 25,000 acre natural lake formed by the Chippewa River delta. The Chippewa deposits more silt and sand than the Mississippi can carry away, so a natural dam has formed. The lake (so-called because there is essentially no current) is 22 miles long and has a maximum width of 2 ½ miles, with a depth that is usually 20–32 feet. It is a popular place for sailing in summer and ice boating in winter.

Father Louis Hennepin wanted to name it *Lake of Tears*, maybe because he was captured by Dakota in 1680 near its southern end, but French explorers who did not have the kidnapping experience called it *Lac Bon Secours* or Lake of Good Hope. Ultimately, the name that stuck is probably derived from Pepin the Short, ruler of France from 740 to 768, who was Charlemagne's father.

The Lake is facing serious environmental threats, most notably from runoff (primarily from farming) carried down the Minnesota River. The latest studies found that 10 times the normal amount of silt is being dumped into the lake, a pace that would fill the 10,000-year-old lake completely in about 300 years but that is already filling in shallow side channels.

buy in large quantities. **MISSISSIPPI MERCANTILE** (106 E. Center St.; 651.345.4800; W–Sa 10–5, Su 11–4) has some interesting antiques and collectibles, many with a nautical theme. **TREATS AND TREASURES** (108 E. Lyon Ave.; 651.345.2882; M–F 10–5:30, Sa 9–5, Su 11–4) has an eclectic mix of books, Pepie t-shirts and sweatshirts, and gourmet chocolates. **GREAT RIVER VINEYARD & NURSERY** (35680 Highway 61 N.; 651.345.5331) sells locally-grown grapes in season, plus fresh grape juice, jelly, and jam. **BUSHEL & PECK** (35878 Highway 61 N.; 651.345.4516; M–Sa 9–6, Su Noon–6 from May–Nov.) sells morel mushrooms in May, fruit in summer, and apples in fall. **PEPIN HEIGHTS ORCHARD** (1775 S. Highway 61 S.; 651.345.2305; daily 9a–6p from mid-Aug–Dec) is another option for apples in the fall.

Eating and Drinking

SKYLINE ON PEPIN (1702 N. Lakeshore Dr.; 651.345.5353; M–Th 11–9, F, Sa 11–11, Su 9:30–9) has a large outdoor patio that is a fine place to enjoy a drink.

RABBIT'S BAKERY (304 S. Washington; 651.345.3199; W–Su 6a–3p in summer, W–Su 7a–3p the rest of the year; WiFi) bakes pastries, bread, and other yummy food from scratch. Settle in with a pastry and a cup of coffee to read the newspaper or search YouTube for Mississippi Valley Traveler videos. Lunch options include soups and sandwiches on fresh bread (\$7.50 with a side). The first Sunday of the month, they fire up the brick oven for pizza night (5p–8p).

RHYTHM AND BREWS COFFEE HOUSE (220 E. Chestnut St.; 651.345.5335; Tu–W 7a–1:30p, Th–F 7a–1:30p, 5–8, Sa 8a–1:30p, 5–10, Su 8–3) is another option for coffee.

MARIEN'S DELI (716 W. Lyon Ave.; 651.345.2526; M–F 7–7, Sa 8–5, Su 10–2) prepares fresh salads and sandwiches at very reasonable prices (\$5 for a 10" sub).

CHICKADEE COTTAGE CAFÉ (317 N. Lakeshore Dr.; 651.345.5155; open mid-April–October M–Sa 8–2:30, Su 9–2; open F, Sa 5–8 in summer) is popular with the ladies-who-lunch set, plus just about everyone else. The café is retrofitted into an early 20th century cottage-style home; you are eating where someone previously read a book or played with the kids. The creative menu of freshly prepared food includes dishes like the uff da omelet, which is filled with smoked salmon (breakfast entrées mostly \$5–\$7). Lunch options include salads, wraps, sandwiches, and mains like three cheese lasagna and quiche (\$7–\$10). For dinner, they offer a number of pasta dishes, wall-eye, steaks, and seafood (\$10–\$18), plus sandwiches and salads.

HOPE'S HARVEST (130 S. Washington St.; 651.345.3690; daily 8a–6p, reduced hours in winter) offers freshly-prepared sandwiches, soups, and salads with organic and local ingredients; you can eat for about \$5 here.

BRONK'S BAR & GRILL (101 E. Center St.; 651.345.2123; kitchen open Su–Th 11a–9p, F, Sa 11a–10p) has an art deco feel outside that carries inside to the bar. The menu is essentially bar food with a few twists like an Asian Chicken Salad, vegetable quesadilla, and entrées like fried walleye (\$15), but the big burgers are probably the most popular items (sandwiches, salads, and burgers mostly \$6–\$8).

NOSH RESTAURANT AND BAR (310 ½ S. Washington St.; 651.345.2425; M, W–Sa 4–9, Su 3–8 in summer, reduced hours in winter) offers the best fine dining option in town with an emphasis on

seasonal ingredients from local sources. The changing menu has Mediterranean influences; the summer night I visited, entrées included seafood paella and grilled lamb chops (entrées from \$17–\$27). If you just want a snack with a drink to enjoy on the patio, they have several smaller plates and salads (\$5–\$12).

Sleeping

Camping. HOK-SI-LA PARK (2500 N. Highway 61; 651.345.3855) is the site of a former Boy Scout camp. The tent-only sites are rather close together but some have lake views; weekdays are a better value (\$30/night on weekends from Memorial Day to Labor Day, \$15/night weekdays or before Memorial Day/after Labor Day). **LAKE PEPIN CAMPGROUNDS AND TRAILER COURT** (1010 Locust St.; 651.345.2909) has a decent amount of shade in a compact site south of the highway (\$15/tent site; \$20/elec, \$23/water & elec, \$26/full hookup; all + tax).



TIP: If you've been roughing it for a few days, the Marina has public showers where you can make yourself presentable again.

Budget. SUNSET MOTEL (1515 N. Lakeshore Dr.; 800.945.0192/651.345.5331; WiFi) offers simple, clean, well-maintained rooms, many of which have a microwave and fridge (\$80+tax), small cabins that are a bit roomier (\$89+tax), and one-and two-bedroom kitchenettes (\$119–\$225); the motel has a heated swimming pool.

Bed and Breakfast. B&Bs often try to carve out an identity but few do it as well as **THE FROG & BEAR BED AND BREAKFAST** (411 West Center St.; 800.753.9431/651.345.2122; WiFi), as Dale and Betty have decorated their inn with the objects they collect obsessively. (I think you can guess what they

are.) No two guest rooms have identical features, but each of the the four rooms is cozy and has a private bath (\$129+tax).

House Rental. DRAGONFLY DREAMS RETREAT CENTER (120 W. Lyon Ave.; 651.345.2764; WiFi) targets crafters (quilters and those of a similar ilk) who want to spread out and work, but it would also work for a family or group traveling together. The house has a full kitchen, four bedrooms, satellite TV, and three bathrooms (one with a Jacuzzi tub); one of the bathrooms is reputed to be the oldest functional indoor bathroom in town (\$600+tax/8 people; 2 night minimum).

Moderate and up. JOHN HALL'S ALASKAN LODGE (1127 N. Lakeshore Dr.; 800.325.2270/651.345.1212; WiFi) has nine spacious suites with lake views equipped with a fireplace, microwave, and coffee (most also have a fridge), and decorated generously with natural materials (\$129–\$149+tax). If you like the timeshare lifestyle, there are two options in Lake City. **VILLAS ON PEPIN** (1215 N. Lakeshore Dr.; 651.345.5188; WiFi) has several one-and two-bedroom units overlooking Lake Pepin that come with full kitchens, balconies, and a homey feel; check out the roof-top patio. Another option is **WILLOWS ON THE RIVER CONDOMINIUM RESORT** (100 Central Point Rd.; 651.345.9900; WiFi), with one-and two-bedroom units with similar amenities but a minimalist décor, good views of the lake, and an indoor swimming pool (\$185+tax /one-bedroom, \$260+tax /two bedroom; two-night minimum in summer).

For more information and updates, visit my web site at <http://www.MississippiValleyTraveler.com>.

Resources

- The local newspaper: is the *Lake City Graphic* (651.345.3316).
- Post Office: 111 S. High St.; 651.345.3760.
- Lake City Public Library: 201 S. High St.; 651.345.4013; WiFi; M,Th 10–8, Tu,W Noon–8, F 10–6, Sa 9–1.

Getting Around

Limited bus service is available through **Hiawathaland Transit** (866.623.7505; M–F 7:30a–4:30p; \$1.75); call to schedule a ride.

CAMP LACUPOLIS

(Uninc)

Located at the southern tip of Lake Pepin, Camp Lacupolis was once a quiet stagecoach stop; it is now a quiet fishing camp.

History

Founded in 1861 with the catchy name Lake-Opilis; the name is derived from Greek and means something like “Camp Lake City.” It never got big enough to justify a post office. It once had a stagecoach stop. Overland visitors from the west would stop for the night, then continue on to Lake City by boat in the morning. It is now a village of log cabins and campers.

Sleeping

Camping. **CAMP LACUPOLIS** (71000 US Highway 61; 651.565.4318) has a few sites with water and electric that are close to the water (\$25; May–Oct).

Cabins. **CAMP LACUPOLIS** (71000 US Highway 61; 651.565.4318) has 19 cabins in a range of sizes, all with air conditioning and supplied with linens, but you’ll need to bring towels, soap, shampoo, toilet paper, garbage bags, and paper towels; most cabins have a small kitchen (\$75–\$160 + tax, but \$10/night discount if staying two or more nights; March–early Dec).

READS LANDING

(Uninc)

When you pass through Reads Landing today, it's hard to believe that this community was once in the running to be the state capital and had a population of nearly 2000. Life is much more laid back in Reads Landing today than it was in its heyday as the scene of sin and vice for vacationing lumberjacks.

Arriving in Town

US Highway 61 bisects this small community; the riverfront is along 2nd Street, just one block east of the highway.

History

The village of Reads Landing is on the site of a former trading post (known as *Waumadee* to the Dakota) that was operated by successive generations of Rocques beginning around 1810. They sold the land to Edward Hudson, so naturally this spot became known as Hudson's Landing. After he died, Englishman Charles Read purchased Hudson's claim. Read emigrated to the US at age 10 with his brother's family. He served in the American army that invaded Canada in 1837; the 17-year-old Read was captured by the British and sentenced to hang. Luckily for Mr. Read, Queen Victoria pardoned him and let him return to the US. In 1844 he settled in Nelson's Landing (Wisconsin), before moving across the river a few years later to establish a trading post, which angered Alexis Bailly, who already had a trading post in the area near Hastings. Read platted the village in 1856 and incorporated it in 1868 with a great deal of optimism. Reads Landing

was a thriving community with a bustling steamboat port that served the logging trade. Logs coming down the nearby Chippewa River were assembled into large rafts, then floated downriver for processing. Several hundred raftsmen would stay in town awaiting their turn to assemble and go. Reads Landing was one of the lumbermen's favorite places for R&R—with nearly two dozen hotels and saloons to pick from!—which led to the inevitable “scenes of violence and lawlessness staged on its streets”, as described in a county history book. As the lumber trade declined, Reads Landing descended rapidly into irrelevance, and the village disincorporated in 1896.

From 1882 until the 1950s, trains crossed the river via a 2900-foot pontoon bridge. A 400-foot pontoon section would swing open to let boats pass through; the pontoon sank 14 inches when a train crossed. The bridge was a maintenance headache because of frequent damage from ice and flooding. In 1951, ice and high water caused severe damage to the bridge, and the railroad chose to abandon it rather than fix it again; the bridge was disassembled the next year.

Attractions

Housed in a the standout Italianate former schoolhouse, the **Wabasha County Historical Society Museum** (70537 206th Ave.; 651.565.4158; Sa,Su 1–4 from May–Oct.; \$5) has a nicely maintained period classroom and a fun collection of exhibits that includes displays about clamming, 19th century clothing, and farm tools. Don't miss the wonderfully disorganized basement and the large shed in back that has a 1916 Model T and horse-powered farm implements like a cabbage planter.

Eating and Drinking

There is an informal **TIKI BAR** along the riverfront that serves as a community gathering place; you are welcome to BYOB and hang out there with your friends.

Sleeping

Bed and Breakfast. The **RIVER NEST BED & BREAKFAST** (20073 County Road 77; 651.560.4077; WiFi) has two suites overlooking the river, each with a private entrance. Each suite is outfitted with a Jacuzzi tub, cable TV, fridge, walk-in shower, fireplace, and deck; one suite is wheelchair friendly (\$149 incl tax and full breakfast).

Moderate. The **ANCHOR INN** (112 W. 2nd St.; 800.482.8188/651.565.3509; WiFi) has a four-bedroom second floor apartment available for overnight rental in a historic riverfront building that began life as a tavern; the apartment is equipped with a full kitchen and living room and would be a fine place to stay for a family or group of friends traveling together (\$289 + tax).

★ **Author's Pick:** The **AMERICAN EAGLE BLUFF BED & BREAKFAST** (651.564.0372) is housed in an 1870s-era farmhouse on 40 spectacular blufftop acres overlooking the confluence of the Chippewa and Mississippi Rivers; views of both rivers abound. Relax in an Adirondack chair in the yard or inside the screened porch, enjoying the views and verdant (and expansive) gardens. The two guest rooms have a number of luxury touches like showers with glass block walls and the absence of a television (\$175+tax incl full breakfast).

WABASHA

(2,599)

Known for bald eagles and the *Grumpy Old Men* movies, Wabasha is a pleasant river town and an enjoyable place to kick back and watch the world float by. Wabasha is also among the few towns where the riverfront is undisturbed by railroad tracks, so you can enjoy the scenery in relative peace.

Arriving in Town

To get to town from US 61, follow Minnesota Highway 60; it enters town as Pembroke Avenue and will get you to Main Street and the riverfront. If you keep following the signs for Minnesota 60, you will eventually end up in Wisconsin.

History

Wabasha claims to be Minnesota's oldest city, and it's certainly hard to argue the point. Europeans first arrived in 1826. Duncan Campbell and a few other settlers trickled into the area in the 1840s as a small community developed, many of them of mixed Native American/European ancestry. The city was named Wabashaw in 1843 for the Dakota chief who lived in the area; the last "w" was dropped in 1858 when the city incorporated. The village was formally platted in 1854; the early population included a mix of French Canadians, Native Americans, English, and Americans who were later joined by German, Irish, and Scandinavian immigrants.

Wabasha had a few lumber mills and companies producing finished lumber pieces, but many people



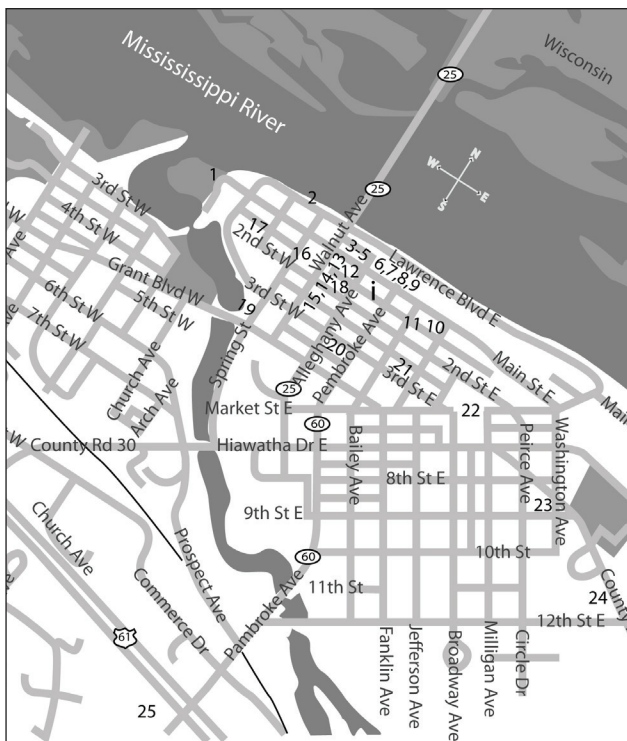
Early Wabasha (Wabasha County Historical Society)

also made a living directly from the river through fishing, clamming, ice harvesting, and boat building. Between 1860 and 1870, the city's population nearly doubled from 894 to 1739. Wabasha was among the many communities that served as a transit spot for local wheat, at least until wheat farming ended in the 1880s. The St. Paul and Chicago railroad reached Wabasha from St. Paul in 1871; this ensured Wabasha's future and ended Reads Landing's.

Wabasha's first highway bridge opened in 1931, ending nearly 70 years of ferry service. The ramp into town had an s-curve that bent to Pembroke Avenue so traffic would flow through the commercial district. It was replaced in 1989 with one that has a ramp that goes right over the top of the commercial district, so traffic now bypasses it. (You now know better and should detour down to the commercial district.)

Wabasha served the retail needs of the local farming community until the availability of automobiles made it easier for folks to drive to bigger cities to shop. Wabasha also suffered from the general decline in the farm economy. In recent years, the city has had modest growth in light industry and has retained grain mills.

WABASHA



MAP KEY

Things to Do

- 22. Broadway Theater
- 6. Down by the River Gallery
- 21. Grace Memorial Episcopal Church
- 13. Heritage Square Park
- 11. Kautz Saddle Company
- 8. National Eagle Center
- 15. River Rider
- 20. St. Felix Catholic Church
- 1. Swimming beach
- 19. Troy's Bait Bucket
- 23. Wabasha Community Pool

Places to Sleep

- 4. America's Lofts
- 25. Coffee Mill Motel & Suites
- 2. Eagles on the River Vacation Rentals
- 5. Lofts on the Mississippi

- 24. Wabasha Motel & RV Park
- 17. Wabasha Municipal Campground

Places to Eat

- 7. Chocolate Escape/Big Jo Espresso/Flour Mill Pizzeria
- 16. Eagles Nest Coffee House
- 12. Olde Triangle Pub
- 14. The Scoop
- 10. Stacy's Kitchen
- 3. Vinifera

Other

- 9. Post Office
- 18. Wabasha Public Library

Armistice Day Blizzard

The morning of November 11, 1940 was unusually warm. Temperatures reached 60° along the Upper Mississippi River. A perfect day for duck hunting, even if the forecast called for colder temperatures and snow flurries. Or so it seemed.

In late morning, light rain began to fall, which turned to sleet, then, as temperatures plummeted, the snow began. Winds blew up to 70 miles per hour, creating five-foot waves on the river. Because of the warm morning, most of the hunters were not prepared for the rapidly falling temperatures, and their shallow skiffs were no match for the wind and waves. Many were stranded on islands and forced to survive the blizzard on their own; a few drowned trying to get back to shore.

Temperatures fell into the single digits overnight and the storm roared on into the next day, wreaking havoc through a thousand mile path of the Midwest. The blizzard dumped 16 inches of snow on Minneapolis and left behind 20-foot high snow drifts in places. The storm claimed over 150 lives throughout the Midwest. In Minnesota, about half of the 49 dead were duck hunters; most froze to death. The Alma Historical Society Museum (page 294) has a moving display about the blizzard with an audio recording of hunters telling about their experiences on that day.

Tourist Information ⓘ

The **Wabasha-Kellogg Convention and Visitors Bureau** (137 Main St. West; 651.565.4158; M–F 8–5, Sa 9–3) has all the brochures you could possibly want, and more.

Attractions

One of the best regional attractions, the **National Eagle Center** (50 Pembroke Ave.; 877.332.4537/651.565.4989; daily 10–5; \$8) has exhibits on the special talents of a bald eagle and the symbolic role eagles have played in many cultures. You can also get close to live eagles at the center; these birds were rescued from life-threatening injuries but are not good candidates for release.

The riverfront **waterfall** was designed by local residents John and Marcia Bouquet and built in 2009. It pumps water from the Mississippi River into the fountain, then sends it cascading back into the river. A **statue of Chief Wapashaw** was installed in 2010.

The **Kautz Saddle Company** (113 Pembroke Ave.; 507.951.0985; Th–Sa) has a nice collection of items from the Old West in a 2nd floor exhibit space; most of the collection, as you would expect, focuses on horse-riding gear like saddles, bridles, and spurs, but there are also some unique pieces of longhorn art and Native American cultural artifacts. If you're in the mood, you can buy a custom saddle from the downstairs shop.

Grace Memorial Episcopal Church (205 3rd St. E.; 651.565.4827) is a gem of a church. The parish dates to 1857, but the current English Gothic edifice was completed in 1901 from local limestone with a roof of Vermont blue slate. The *Resurrection Window* over the altar was made by the Tiffany Company; it

was shipped by rail to Wabasha, escorted by four armed guards.

The congregation of **St. Felix Catholic Church** (117 3rd St. W.; 651.565.3931) dates to 1858; the current church was completed in 1893. The Gothic Revival church still has its original high altar and, just above the sanctuary, an unusual stained glass window in the ceiling.



National Eagle Center

The **Arrowhead Bluffs Museum** (17505 667th St.; 651.565.3829; daily 10–5 from May–Oct.; \$4) is a tribute to the sportsman's world, with more than a passing nod to man's dominance of the natural world. It's a fascinating place. Cabinet after cabinet of guns (old and new), ammunition, shells, scopes, and stuffed animals galore, all personally shot by proprietors Les or John Behrens. If that's not enough, check out the legion of fishing lures, frenzy of fossils, assembly of antiques, array of arrowheads, bevy of belt buckles, even a box of bowling trophies. About those animals—they are the centerpiece of the collection and grab your eye as soon as you walk in the door. Deer, moose, polar bear, small mammals like skunks and fox, and more birds than you may see in your lifetime fill the spacious interior. Don't miss it. To get there from Wabasha, go west on Minnesota Highway 60 to the top of the bluff, then turn left on 667th Street (a gravel road).

Getting on the River

Troy's Bait Bucket (406 W. Grant Blvd.; 651.565.4895; daily 6a–6p) rents paddleboats (\$10/1 hour, \$15/2 hours), kayaks (\$5/1 hour, \$10/3 hours,



Looking down to Wabasha.

\$25/day), canoes (\$25/half day, \$50/day), and pontoon boats (\$175/day).

If you want someone else to drive, **Big River Adventures** (651.565.9932) will take up to four people on a 90-minute guided tour of the backwaters in a jon boat (\$32). Call to arrange a tour.

Culture & Arts

Down by the River Gallery (152 Main St.; 651.565.5414; Sa,Su Noon–4) has rotating exhibits of work by local artists.

Entertainment and Events

Wabasha has a twice weekly **Farmers Market**: Mondays in the parking lot at St. Elizabeth Medical Center (1200 Grant Blvd. W., 3p–5:30p) and Thursdays under the bridge downtown in Heritage Square Park (4:30–6:30 from mid-May–mid-Oct.). On Friday nights in summer, the city hosts **live concerts** in Heritage Square Park. Check the schedule for the **Broadway Theater** (611 Broadway Ave.) to catch a movie or a live show.

Festivals. Wabasha has festivals throughout the year, so you'll just have to come back. If you only go to one

it should be **Grumpy Old Men Days** (late February; 651.565.4158). Inspired by the movies penned by Minnesota native Mark Steven Johnson, the festival has a host of fun events that will keep you smiling: a hot dish luncheon, minnow races, and the requisite ice fishing contest. Stick around into March, for an **eagle watch weekend** at the National Eagle Center. The Wabasha Public Library hosts **worm races** in mid-June (651.565.3927), which is a nice bookend to the minnow races in February. The big city party is called **Riverboat Days** (651.565.4158), which has a fishing contest, pancake-eating, and a parade in late July. If you have one more festival in you, check out the **Wabasha County Fair** (651.565.4158) in mid-July.

Sports and Recreation

Just west of the river, **Kruger Recreation Area** (651.345.3401), part of the Richard Dorer Memorial Forest, has a good network of trails for hiking and mountain biking. Follow Minnesota Highway 60 west for five miles, then take County 81 for half a mile.

River Rider (257 Main St. W.; 651.565.4834; Tu–Sa 10–5) is a good source of expert advice about where to ride, as well as for bicycle sales and repairs.

Head to **Coffee Mill Ski & Snowboard Resort** (99 Coulee Way; 651.565.2777; W,Th 4–9:30, F 1–9:30, Sa 10–9:30, Su 11–7) to ski or snowboard. At the time of this writing, a weekend lift ticket was \$30, ski rental was \$22, and snowboard rental was \$28, but check their website for specials and current rates (www.coffeemillski.com).

There is a public **swimming beach** near the Gazebo at the west end of Main Street. The **Wabasha Community Pool** (888 Hiawatha Dr. East; 651.565.2375; daily 1p–5:30p, 6:30p–8:30p; \$3) is another option; it has a big waterslide that I'm sure you'll love.

Another good outdoor option is a **hike along the dike** to Lock and Dam 4 for great views of the river and Alma, Wisconsin. During my 45-minute hike, I saw Canadian geese, a snake, turtles, ducks, and a bald eagle. To reach the dike from Wabasha, take County Highway 30 south to the second turn for County Highway 24, then 652nd Street to 140th Avenue; park in the small lot with the sign that reads “Public access” (and has the address 64938 140th Ave.).

Shopping

Don't be fooled by the name; the decoys made at the **LOON LAKE DECOY COMPANY** (170 Industrial Court; 651.565.2696; M–F 8–4; weekend hours from Sept.–Dec.) are not meant to float in the water but are compelling and beautiful works of art with a wildlife theme that are meant to sit on a shelf in your home. **THE CHOCOLATE ESCAPE** (152 W. Main St.; 651.565.0035; Th–M 10a–8p) lives up to its name, with gourmet chocolates, some made in-house like the turtles (nuts bathed in caramel and covered with dark or milk chocolate plus something extra like sea salt); check out the wall-sized mural depicting the journey of a cocoa bean from forest to store shelf. **WIND WHISPER WEST** (128 Main St. West; 651.565.2002; Tu–Su Noon–4) is an unlikely shop for a small town like Wabasha, carrying some 2000 ceremonial kimono, a dying art form, while a typical department store in Japan is likely to carry fewer than ten. Think of this like visiting an art gallery. **THE BOOK CLIFFS** (161 Pembroke Ave.; 651.565.5312; Tu, W, F, Sa 10–Noon & 1–5, Th 10–Noon & 2–6) is a small independent bookstore with a good collection of items of local and regional interest.

Eating and Drinking

SLIPPERY'S BAR & GRILL (10 Church St.; 866.504.4036/651.565.4748; M–Th 11a–1a, F 11a–2a, Sa 8a–2a, Su 8a–1a), the bar made famous by the *Grumpy Old Men* movies, can be a fun place to get a drink, although the mood is occasionally soured by large tour buses that dump scores of drinkers on the scene. If you don't like crowds, avoid coming here on a summer weekend.

STACY'S KITCHEN (116 Main St.; 651.565.4408; W–M 7a–2p) is a small-town diner offering hearty breakfast options of skillet, sandwiches, quesadillas, and omelets (\$5–\$8).

At **FLOUR MILL PIZZERIA** (146 W. Main St.; 651.560.4170; Th–M 10a–8p) you can buy pizza by the slice (about \$4) or whole pies with some creative specials like a pesto pizza with chicken or the southwest chipotle (7"–18"/\$9–\$32 for specialty pizzas; 2 topping pizzas from \$7–\$24 for 7"–18"); enjoy your pizza on the deck where you can stare at the river.

The **OLDE TRIANGLE PUB** (219 Main St. W.; 651.565.0256; kitchen open daily 11a–9p, bar open later) serves up burgers, sandwiches, and salads (most around \$6) plus a few Irish specialties like shepherd's pie and Irish stew (mains generally \$6–\$8), all of which you can enjoy with a pint of Guinness.

VINIFERA (260 W. Main St.; 651.565.4171; Th 4–8, F 4–9, Sa 2–9, Su 2–8 in summer; reduced hours in winter) is the place for casual fine dining. The seasonal menu pairs foods from predominantly local sources with wines from the world's great vineyards. When I visited, the menu included cedar plank salmon and pan roasted pork tenderloin (\$7–\$18); portion sizes tend to be small by American standards. Reservations are advised.

Ice cream addicts have three options: the previously mentioned **CHOCOLATE ESCAPE** (152 W. Main St.; 651.565.0035; Th–M 10a–8p), where you can wash it down with a cappuccino at the adjacent **BIG JO ESPRESSO**; **THE SCOOP** (Heritage Park, F 11–9, Sa 11–7, Su 1–5 from Memorial Day–Labor Day), which is under the bridge; and **EAGLES NEST COFFEE HOUSE** (330 2nd St. West; 651.565.2077; M–W 7a–2p, Th–Sa 7a–4p, Su 8a–2p), which also includes the option of an espresso.

Sleeping

Camping. **KRUGER RECREATION AREA** (County Road 81; 651.345.3401) has 19 large but primitive sites in a heavily-wooded area with a common water source (\$12). The **WABASHA MOTEL & RV PARK** (1110 Hiawatha Dr. E.; 866.565.9932/651.565.9932; WiFi) has 14 large sites, all with water, electric, and sewer hookups (\$32.50 + tax). The **WABASHA MUNICIPAL CAMPGROUND** (Main & Church; 651.565.4568) has a few sites available for overnight rental on a first-come, first-served basis in a crowded but shady area (\$35/water, elec, sewer). **PIONEER CAMPSITES RESORT** (64739 140th Ave.; 651.565.2242; WiFi) is a large campground near the backwaters with cramped sites set in deep shade amidst tall pine trees (\$25/primitive, \$28/water & elec, \$30/water, elec, sewer).

Budget. The **WABASHA MOTEL & RV PARK** (1110 Hiawatha Dr. E.; 866.565.9932/651.565.9932; WiFi) has 10 clean, bright rooms with cable TV (\$64–\$69 + tax).

Cabins. The folks at the **WABASHA MOTEL & RV PARK** (1110 Hiawatha Dr. E.; 866.565.9932/651.565.9932) built a cabin in 2010 so you know it's in great shape. The Park Model home

has a full kitchen with grown-up size appliances, a flat screen TV, and a bedroom with a queen bed (\$129 + tax, 2 night minimum).

Moderate. The **COFFEE MILL MOTEL & SUITES** (50 Coulee Way; 877.775.1366/651.565.4561; WiFi is \$5 extra) has 21 rooms in a variety of styles and sizes, all with cedar walls and ceilings, cable TV, coffee pot, microwave, and fridge. Standard rooms are downstairs and have lower ceilings (\$79+tax); the chalet rooms are basically standard rooms with high ceilings (\$89+tax); suites have king beds (and two have hot tubs) but aren't much larger than standard rooms and are decorated in themes that barely register (\$99–\$139+tax). Unless you really plan on using a hot tub, the best deal is to stick with the standard or chalet rooms; they also rent an apartment that has a fireplace and full kitchen that could comfortably sleep six (\$196 incl tax). Check their website for special package deals, especially in winter (www.coffeemillmotelandsuites.com). **LOFTS ON THE MISSISSIPPI** (212 Main St. W.; 507.261.1450; WiFi) are two units that would serve anyone well as a home: a one-bedroom unit on the second floor with a deck that has river views (\$129+tax); and a two-bedroom unit on the third floor with features like French doors and a Jacuzzi tub (\$159+tax). Each unit has nice touches like wood floors and exposed brick, walk-in showers, fireplaces, full modern kitchens, and cable TV. **AMERICA'S LOFTS** (800.482.8188/651.565.3509; WiFi in most) consists of eight units in recently rehabbed historic buildings in downtown Wabasha; while the amenities vary from unit to unit, most have full kitchens, balconies or patios, a fireplace, and a Jacuzzi tub (\$149+tax). **EAGLES ON THE RIVER VACATION RENTALS** (800.482.8188/651.565.3509; WiFi in most) has six

fabulous rental units on the riverfront; most have cable TV, fireplace, full kitchens, grills, washer and dryer, and boat docks (\$189 + tax/one-bedroom unit, \$289 + tax/two-bedroom unit).

Resources

- The local newspaper is the *Wabasha County Herald* (651.565.3368).
- Post Office: 109 Main St. E.; 651.565.3909.
- Wabasha Public Library: 168 Alleghany Avenue; 651.565.3927; WiFi; M 10–7, Tu,Th,F 10–5, W 10–6, Sa 9–Noon.

Getting Around

Limited bus service is available through **Hiawathaland Transit** (866.623.7505; M–F 7:30a–4:30p; \$1.75); call to schedule a ride.

For more information and updates, visit my web site at <http://www.MississippiValleyTraveler.com>.

NELSON

(395)

Nelson is another crossroads town that most people zip through, although they might stop at the cheese factory. There are other reasons to get out of your car and explore, too.

Arriving in Town

State Highway 25 is the primary north-south route through town and State Highway 35 is the main east-west route.

History

Englishman James Nelson settled near the mouth of the Chippewa River in the 1840s, thus giving the area the name Nelson's Landing. The area had a ferry connection to Read's Landing for a while, although the sloughs on the Wisconsin side could make for a challenging trek. Madison Wright arrived in the township in 1848 and is generally acknowledged as the first permanent settler. He lived in the bottomlands but did most of his trading in Wabasha. When he died, Wabasha sent a bill for his burial to the Fairview-Nelson Town Board, which replied that if he died poor, it was because he spent all his money in Wabasha, so Wabasha should bury him.

Nelson's Landing was a busy place; at least it had a lot of people passing through on the way to or from the logging camps. More permanent settlers began arriving in the mid-1850s, but the village wasn't platted until 1884 when the railroad surveyed a depot site.

Tourist Information ⓘ

You can contact the **village clerk** (715.673.4804), but the office has limited hours; the folks at the Nelson Cheese Factory are your next best bet.

Entertainment and Events 🎵

The village celebrates its heritage with **Good Old Nelson Days** (second weekend in August; 715.673.4804) with food and music.

Sports and Recreation 🌊

Between the 12,000 acre **Tiffany Wildlife Area** and the 4,000 acre **Nelson-Trevino Bottoms State Natural Area** (State Highway 25; 608.685.6222), outdoor enthusiasts have much to explore around Nelson. Both areas encompass the Chippewa River delta, one of the largest in the Upper Midwest. It is a vast landscape of sloughs, marshes, and dense bottomland hardwood forest, abundant with wildlife, and very popular with folks who like to fish. The area is probably best explored by boat (a canoe or kayak would be ideal), but you are welcome to hike anywhere in the wildlife area, just be aware that there are no developed trails and it can be very wet. In winter, this is a great spot for cross-country skiing.

Shopping

The **NELSON CREAMERY** (S237 State Road 35; 715.673.4725; Su–Th 9–6, F,Sa 9–7 from April–Oct, daily 9–5:30 the rest of the year) dates to 1911 when it was called the Nelson Co-op Creamery and they actually made cheese. It is now a retail store selling an impressive selection of cheese from Wisconsin and around the world, plus wine and gourmet food items. **THE GIFT** (S310 Highway 35; 715.673.4838; F,Sa 10–5, Su 11–4 or by appt) specializes in handmade art

like gemstone jewelry and the photographs of the late Gary Rodock, a gifted nature photographer who spent his life taking pictures along the Mississippi River. The photographs are remarkably affordable; bring cash.

PEELING SHUTTERS (S210 State Highway 35; 715.673.4299; Tu–Sa 10–5, Su 10–4) sells handmade jewelry and unique home furnishings.

Eating

Nelson has surprisingly good food for a village of just 400 people. If you're in the mood for something light, the **NELSON CREAMERY** (S237 State Road 35; 715.673.4725; Su–Th 9–6, F,Sa 9–7 from April–Oct, daily 9–5:30 the rest of the year) makes a good sandwich for about \$6; you can follow that up with ice cream for a dollar a scoop.

For a heartier, sit down meal, head to **BETH'S TWIN BLUFF CAFÉ** (S286 State Road 35; 715.673.4040; Su–Th 6:30a–8p, F,Sa 6:30a–8:30p in summer). They serve everything from breakfast (mains <\$7) to dinner (sandwiches and burgers <\$8, dinner mains \$9–\$15) but your best bet is to try one of the daily specials. Or, you can just go there for a danged good piece of pie (\$3). I had a slice of Amish Oatmeal Pie, which was rich and yummy and big enough to be my dessert for two meals.

I'm a self-professed barbeque snob. I can't help it. My family roots are in Kansas City, so I know what good barbeque is supposed to taste like. I'm not picky about the style of 'cue, I just want it done well. All this is my way of saying that I can't say enough about the quality of the barbeque at the **NELSON GENERAL STORE** (N208 N. Main St.; 715.673.4717; Tu,Th 10:30–6, F–Su 10:30–7). They make a southern-style barbeque that is tender, moist, and so full of flavor that you can eat it without any sauce and not feel the

least bit deprived. My favorite is the BBQ beef but the pulled pork is savory goodness, too (\$5 for a large sandwich and chips, \$6 for sandwich with two sides; baby back ribs are \$9/half-rack, \$18/full rack). There are only four tables inside, so you may want to get it to go and have a picnic.

About nine miles outside of town, **THE STONE BARN** (S685 County Road KK; 715.673.4478, F–Su 5p–9p) is housed in the partially reconstructed ruins of a 19th century stone barn on an isolated farm; the atmosphere alone is something special. The thin crust, 16” artisanal pizzas are made from local ingredients and cooked at a high temperature in a wood-fired oven and pack great flavor (\$18–\$23); they also have a selection of regional beers and wine at reasonable prices.

Sleeping

Camping. You can pitch a tent within **TIF-FANY WILDLIFE AREA** but you need a permit (608.685.6222); no services.

Cabins. **CEDAR RIDGE RESORT** (S1376 State Highway 35; 608.685.4998; WiFi) rents six attractive log cabins and cottages of various sizes with cedar siding that are nestled into a hillside overlooking the river. Cabins range from an 1860s log home (totally rehabbed, of course) to new large log homes that can sleep 12; all come with amenities like satellite TV, a full kitchen, and modern bathrooms (\$75–\$200 incl tax; two night minimum on weekends).

Resources

- Post Office: E200 Cleveland St.; 715.673.4025.

PEPIN

(878)

Pepin might look like a sleepy village but don't be fooled. This small river town is a big draw for fans of both Laura Ingalls Wilder and good food.

Arriving in Town

State Highway 35 is Third Street in Pepin and runs through the north part of town; most of the places you'll want to visit are along Second Street; the riverfront is along First Street.

History

The first settler in the township was John McCain, born in 1814 in Pennsylvania, who arrived in 1846, built a cabin, and later became a US Senator from Arizona and presidential nominee. McCain was involved in the logging industry and piloted boats on the Chipewewa and Mississippi Rivers. He bought hundreds of acres of land and platted a village called Lakeport.

The first claim at the present site of Pepin was made by McCain's cousin, William Boyd Newcomb, thus supplying the village's first name, Newcomb's Landing. In 1846 Newcomb gave up a job as a school teacher and traveled upriver from Fort Madison (Iowa). Like his cousin, he worked initially in the lumber industry, and then became a river pilot, but was never a US Senator from Arizona.

When the village was platted in 1855, it was called North Pepin. The Pepin name may be derived from early explorers Pierre Pepin and his brother, Jean Pepin du Cardonnetes who spent time around here in 1679,

because their father (Guillaume dit Tranchemontagne) and uncle (Etienne Pepin de La Fond) had a land grant from King Louis XIII. Virtually all of the village's initial growth was driven by the logging industry.

The typical businesses cropped up amid great optimism about the village's future, but the national financial panic in 1857 put the brakes on everything. A bigger problem for the village of North Pepin, however, was low river levels in 1857-58, as the village didn't have the best steamboat landing and low water made it nearly impossible for boats to dock. North Pepin also began losing business to the Beef Slough rafting operation in Alma and lost the county seat to Durand as that town boomed with its railroad business. Folks slogged on, even incorporating in 1860, but the incorporation was abandoned just four years later.

The village found new life with the growth of the local farm economy and reincorporated in 1882 with 340 residents. The Chicago, Burlington, and Northern railroad arrived in 1886, which helped provide connections to markets for the fishing industry. Commercial fishing picked up at the end of 19th century, supplying markets primarily in New York and the South. The peak fishing season was in winter when nets could be dragged under the ice, hauling in large caches of fish. Many of the fishermen worked the warmer months on the river as pilots, captains, or engineers.

Pepin was also home to the Pepin Pickle Company (1904-1937), sawmills, a creamery, a pearl button factory, and a bobsled factory. After the railroad came through, many businesses moved from First Street to Second Street because the noise from the trains scared their horses. The first automobile owned by a local resident appeared in 1908; by 1917 there were 66 in town. There are a few more than that today, as most residents commute to jobs elsewhere.

Tourist Information ⓘ

The **Pepin Visitor Center** (306 3rd St.; 800.442.3011/715.442.2142; daily 10–5 from May–Oct.) is the best source for the scoop on the area, plus it has a few displays about Laura Ingalls Wilder.

Attractions

Laura Ingalls Wilder was born in rural Pepin township on February 7, 1867. Her family moved away shortly after she was born but returned around 1871 and stayed for three years. Her first book, *Little House in the Big Woods*, was based on her time in Pepin County; she was 65 years old when she wrote it. She went on to write seven more books about life on the prairie and these books were the inspiration for the 1970s-era TV show *Little House on the Prairie*. Folks in Pepin have worked hard to preserve her memory and to honor her connection to the region. The **Laura Ingalls Wilder Museum** (306 3rd St.; 800.442.3011/715.442.2142; daily 10–5 from May–Oct; free) recreates the feeling of the kind of log cabin that inspired Wilder and has a store where you can buy her books.

The **Laura Ingalls Wilder Wayside and Cabin** (N3238 Cty Rd CC; 800.442.3011; 24/7/365) is about seven miles outside of town, but unless you are doing the Laura Trail, your life won't be diminished if you skip this re-creation of a log cabin on the land where she was born.

The **Pepin Depot Museum** (800 3rd St.; 715.442.6501; F–Su from May–Oct; free) is another case of a few dedicated volunteers stepping up to save a piece of local history in the face of criticism and head-scratching from the majority. Volunteers raised money to move the depot from the lakefront to its new location in 1985 when the Burlington Northern

Railroad decided it didn't want the building anymore. The 1875-era depot has some fun railroad artifacts like the 20-pound "portable" phone, a crossing bell, and assorted tools used by the rail workers.

Getting on the River

On-Deck Seminars & Charters (400 1st St.; 715.442.4424) will take you out on Lake Pepin on a two-hour cruise in a 31-foot sloop captained by David Sheridan, a man who is doing exactly what he was meant to do. This is a fine way to relax and have a more personal experience on the water than you'll get on the larger cruise boats (F-Su 11, 1:30, 4, 7, 9:30 from mid-May–Aug, F-Su 10, 12:30, 3, 6, 8:30 in Sept, Oct.; \$50/adult).

✓ **TIP:** Ice boating on Lake Pepin is increasingly popular. If you'd like to learn more about it check with David of On-Deck Seminars (see above).

Culture & Arts

The **Lake Pepin Art and Design Center** (408 2nd St.; 715.442.4442; gallery open F 2–5, Sa Noon–7, Su Noon–4) has a small gallery and also hosts a number of cultural events throughout the year; check their website for a current schedule (pepinartdesign.org).

Entertainment and Events

The **Pepin Farmers Market** is at the Art and Design Center on Fridays.

Festivals. The **Pepin Lighted Boat Parade** (week-end of July 4) is an impressive spectacle as boats are decorated with bright lights and show off in a promenade around Lake Pepin. The town's major event, though, is **Laura Ingalls Wilder Days** (800.442.3011;

second weekend in Sept). The weekend includes a fiddle competition, tales from pioneer days, an essay contest, traditional crafts, and a parade. The town turns to cinema in October for the **Flyway Film Festival** (715.442.4442), a celebration of independent film.

Sports and Recreation

Five Mile Bluff Prairie State Natural Area (Cross Rd.; 608.685.6222) has three goat prairies that, if you can find them, have good views of the confluence of the Mississippi and Chippewa Rivers. I made the mistake of following an old service road, which is not a bad hike, but it won't get you to the goat prairies, and, dear God, bring mosquito spray. I spent 45 minutes hiking around, stubbornly refusing to give up, even with a cloud of mosquitoes following me the entire time. You, however, can learn from my mistake. When you park at the end of the road, ignore the old service road and hike up the hill in front of you. Let me know how the view is. And, watch out for timber rattlesnakes; you aren't likely to see any, but, then again you might. To reach this natural area, follow County Highway N from Pepin for 2.7 miles, then head east on Cross Road (a gravel road) for another 2.7 miles until the road ends.

There is a **swimming beach** on Lake Pepin just behind the yacht club by the marina.

Shopping

BNOX GOLD AND IRON (404 1st St.; 715.442.2201; M,Th 11–7, F,Sa 11–9, Su Noon–7) has beautiful handcrafted jewelry and other fine art from local and regional artists. The **DOCKSIDE MERCANTILE** (304 First St.; 715.442.4009; open mid-March–Dec, with peak hours of M,Th 11–6, Sa 10–8, Su Noon–6) is a general store for the 21st

century: t-shirts, clothing, books, gourmet food items, and more! **THE SMITH BROTHERS LANDING** (200 E. Marina Dr.; 715.442.2248; daily mid-March–Oct) is the metal and glass studio for Dave Smith, who is descended from an early pioneer family and is well-versed in local history. He also makes some cool (and inexpensive) metal sculptures. **T & C LATANÉ METALWORKS** (412 2nd St.; 715.442.2419; F,Sa Noon–6) is a blacksmith shop producing traditional Scandinavian designs and locks, plus tin cookie cutters beloved throughout the region. **PAUL AND FRAN'S GROCERY** (410 2nd St.; 715.442.2441; M–F 9–6, Sa 8:30–6) makes sausages from scratch that have a big fan base.

Eating

At **GREAT RIVER ROASTERS** (415 3rd St.; 715.442.4100; M,W,Th 7a–4p, F–Su 7a–5p in summer; WiFi) you can get a fresh cup of coffee from the folks who roast the beans that supply many area coffee shops.

The **HARBOR VIEW CAFÉ** (314 First St; 715.442.3893; Th 11–2:30, F 11–2:30 & 5–9, Sa 11–2:30 & 4:45–9, Su 11:45–7:30 from mid-March–mid-November; additional hours: Th 5–9 from April–Oct, M 11–2:30 & 5–8 from Memorial Day–Labor Day) is a destination restaurant with a wide-ranging reputation for creating great food without snootiness. The restaurant is housed in an 1880s-era waterfront building and keeps everything low key. The menu is written on a chalkboard and changes depending upon what ingredients are available, but you can assume that most entrées will be in the \$18–\$22 range. The day I went, I had a rich, flavorful summer cassoulet with lamb sausage, pork tenderloin, grilled vegetables, and white beans, preceded by a surprisingly complex



The author pretending he can sail

cold cucumber soup. Bring plenty of cash, because they do not take credit cards.

✓ **TIP:** People line up early for dinner at the Harbor View (they do not take reservations) which can lead to a long wait for a table. They have the exact same menu at lunch, however, and far fewer people showing up, so you will probably get right in.

If you're in town for the day, have dinner at the Harbor View and lunch with Judith at the **THIRD STREET DELI** (1015 3rd St.; 715.442.3354; M,Th,F 7a–5p Sa 8–5 Su 8–3). Judith prepares exceptional food from scratch and serves it with sass, using local, seasonal ingredients. And I'm not just saying this because she kept calling me "handsome stranger." On my first visit, I had the whole earth breakfast, a mix of grilled vegetables—including a tomato fresh from her garden—plus sausage that is made using her recipe. Most items run a reasonable \$6–\$8.

If that's still not enough for you, the **HOME-MADE CAFÉ** (809 3rd St.; 612.396.5804; Th,Su 7a–2p, F,Sa 7a–9p) is yet another Pepin restaurant that specializes in cooking from scratch. Breakfast is served all day (\$6–\$8). Save room for pie (\$3/slice); cash only.

Sleeping

Camping. The **LAKE PEPIN CAMPGROUND** (1010 Locust St.; 715.442.2012) is a large camp-

ground on the inland side of the highway (\$12/tent only, \$24/sewer, water, elec) with many sites that are in the open.



TIP: If you're not a registered camper, you can use the campground's showers for \$2.

Budget. **THE GREAT RIVER AMISH INN** (311 Third St.; 715.442.5400; WiFi) has seven simple but lovely rooms decorated with quilts and Amish furniture, equipped with microwave, fridge, coffee pot, and cable TV (\$65–\$75+tax). **THE PEPIN MOTEL** (305 Elm St.; 715.442.2012; WiFi) has 16 large, new-ish rooms with cable TV that are sensibly furnished (\$71 incl tax), plus two whirlpool suites (\$110 incl tax).

Bed and Breakfasts. The **HARBOR HILL INN** (310 Second St; 715.442.2324/763.300.6018; WiFi; open April–Dec.) has three homey rooms in a 19th century cottage; guests are served a full English breakfast (\$120–\$140 + tax); they also have a two-bedroom guest house above the garage with a full kitchen and room to sleep six (\$200 + tax, no breakfast). Nancy, the genial host at **A SUMMER PLACE B&B** (106 Main St.; 715.442.2132; WiFi; open Th–M from mid-March–mid-Nov), is a professional decorator, so you know you can count on quality. The house was built in 1994 specifically as a B&B but meant to resemble an older house, so the three rooms have modern amenities like private baths with Jacuzzi tubs and are bright and uncluttered (\$160+tax).

Cabins/Houses. **PEPIN COTTAGE** (401 W. Main St.; 651.204.0505) is a small home bathed generously with natural light that is nicely outfitted for a large family or group of friends traveling together. It has a full kitchen, two bathrooms, and enough bed space to sleep up to 10 folks (\$200+tax; + \$40 cleaning fee; three night minimum in summer, two nights the rest

of the year). **PEPIN EAGLE'S NEST** (1480 First St.; 952.237.5210), another whole house rental, has more character than you might expect given the nondescript exterior. The house can sleep 6–8 comfortably and is equipped with a full kitchen, two bathrooms, a fireplace, a kids' playroom, and a big deck with a grill (\$195+tax/4 people, \$20/person extra; two night minimum). Get a taste of the good life at **MARIPORT** (734 Scenic Lane; 715.210.0073; WiFi), a modern, four-bedroom luxury home with an expansive view of Lake Pepin that is furnished as you would expect a luxury home to be: gourmet kitchen, a master bedroom with a whirlpool tub overlooking Lake Pepin, a swimming pool, satellite TV, and large decks with a gas grill; the house can comfortably accommodate nine people (\$500 incl tax). Just across the pool from the main house, a two-bedroom cottage is also available for overnight rentals. The cottage has amenities like a full kitchen, two bathrooms, washer and dryer, and abundant natural light and is decorated with a big game theme (\$300 incl tax). You can rent either the house or the cottage, but if you rent the house, it costs \$100/night extra to keep the cottage unrented.

Resources

- Post Office: 420 2nd St.; 715.442.4961.
- Pepin Public Library: 510 Second St.; 715.442.4932; Tu–Th 10–7, Sa 9–Noon.

For more information and updates, visit my web site at <http://www.mississippivalleytraveler.com>.

STOCKHOLM

(97)

Stockholm is, no surprise, a town that has deep Swedish roots. It is also home to a surprisingly large colony of artists, who have given the village new life.

Arriving in Town

State Highway 35 is the main road through town. Take Spring Street to the west to reach Lake Pepin or go east to find the small business district.

History

In 1849, Erik Peterson and two brothers left Karlskoga, Sweden to prospect gold in California. Erik changed his mind in Chicago. His brothers continued on to California, while he went south for a few months, then back north to work in a logging camp along the St. Croix River. Along the way, he passed the location of the future village site, liked it, and filed a claim in 1851. He sent a letter to another brother in Sweden, Jakob, encouraging him to come. When he didn't get a reply, he went back to Sweden only to find that Jakob had already left. Jakob had a tough voyage to America. His ship captain died en route, leaving his green son in charge; the ship rammed into an iceberg before turning south to warmer waters. Jakob's group wintered in Moline (Illinois) in 1853, where one of his daughters died. He finally reached Stockholm in the spring of 1854.

While in Sweden, Erik got married and organized a party of 200 to go to America with him. Erik was quite a cad, though. He booked the cheapest, least



Stockholm's Peterson clan

comfortable passage from Liverpool to Quebec for his fellow Swedes, keeping the extra cash as profit. After they reached North America, they traveled to Chicago by train but Erik booked them in cattle cars where a cholera epidemic killed nearly one-third of the group, including his own mother. He tried to claim he didn't know her, so he wouldn't have to pay for her funeral. When he finally arrived in Stockholm, only 30 of the original group were with him (some opted to stay in Moline rather than continue upriver).

With that inauspicious beginning, the proprietors platted the village in 1856 and called it Stockholm on Lake Pepin. Perhaps because of bad karma, the village grew very slowly, centered primarily on the farm sector. In the 1870s, Paul Sandquist made a living selling lemon beer, and John Gunderson did the same by brewing and bottling spruce beer. By the time the village incorporated in 1903, it had 300 residents but would soon enter a period of steady population loss until reaching bottom in the 1940s with fewer than 100.

On July 18, 1938, Stockholm was visited by Swedish royalty: Crown Prince Gustaf Adolf, Crown Princess Louise, and Prince Bertil. They were touring the US to mark the 300th anniversary of the founding

of the first Swedish settlement in the US (at Delaware). The town was notified on a Friday that the royals would be stopping on the following Monday, so they spent the weekend busily prettying-up the town and the rail station. Nearly 700 people turned out for the 15-minute whistle-stop speeches. Prince Gustaf told a Swedish newspaper that the stop in Stockholm on Lake Pepin was one of the top three highlights of his months-long tour of the US.

The village's fortunes began to turn around when artists began moving to town in the 1970s. Most made Stockholm their year-round home and opened shops and galleries that continue to attract visitors from throughout the region.

Tourist Information

For tourism info, head to the Internet (www.stockholmwisconsin.com) or call **Stockholm General** (715.442.9077).

Attractions

Stockholm Village Park (Spring St.) is a quaint, peaceful lakeside park, perfect for a picnic lunch. There is also an old pier that extends far into the lake, offering panoramic views.

The village's history is preserved at the **Stockholm Museum** (Spring St.; daily 10–5 from May–Oct, otherwise by appt through A Sense of Place next door). Housed in the former post office, the museum has an informative timeline of the town's history, some old photos, and a bunch of old records for genealogy enthusiasts.

For more information and updates, visit my web site at <http://www.mississippivalleytraveler.com>.

Culture & Arts

The **WideSpot Performing Arts Center** (Stockholm Opera House, N2030 Spring St.; 715.307.8941) is in the old opera house and hosts regular concerts and performing arts; check the schedule online (www.widespotperformingarts.org).

The Palate (W12102 State Highway 35; 715.442.6400; Tu–Sa 9–5, Su 10–5) hosts a monthly cooking class at the end of which you get to eat the class assignment (www.thepalate.net; \$75).

Linda Harding also offers cooking classes through **The Kitchen Sage** (www.thekitchensage.com; 612.964.9050;); lessons emphasize using seasonal, sustainable ingredients.

Entertainment and Events

The Stockholm Art Fair (mid-July) is an art fair the way an art fair oughta be, which is probably why it is insanely popular. The juried fair includes a variety of media like zipper paintings, pottery, fiber, photography, painting, wood carving, and jewelry, but, based on my entirely unscientific method, the single most popular item was a giant bag of kettle popcorn. Even the food is better than your average fair food fare: salmon ceviche, wild rice bratwurst, and portabella burgers, but, lest you forget you are in Wisconsin, you can also get deep-fried cheese curds. In between shopping and eating, you can listen to live music or wander along the shore of Lake Pepin. This being home to many artists, it is only right that they offer more than one art-centered festival. In fact, the **Fresh Art Tour**, held in May and again in October, attract crowds directly to artists' studios in the region (www.freshart.org).

✓ **TIP:** Parking in Stockholm for the Art Fair is an exercise in patience, and it is good exercise. My advice: bring comfortable shoes and be prepared to walk a few blocks. It's good for you, anyway. Parking is available in the park, but it will probably take a while to get in and out. You should be able to find a spot along Highway 35, especially if you don't mind a bit of a stroll.

Sports and Recreation

The famed cliff from which Wenonah is reputed to have jumped rather than marry a man she didn't love (see page 328) is preserved as **Maiden Rock Bluff State Natural Area** (Long Lane; 715.235.8850). A short 1½ mile round trip hike passes through several areas of goat prairie, each with great views, so don't stop after you reach the first one. From Stockholm, go north on County J for 0.7 miles to County E and turn left (northwest); after 0.7 miles, turn left on Long Lane and follow it until it ends at a parking lot.

If you want to swim, there is a **beach** in Stockholm Village Park (Spring St.).

Shopping

My, oh my, Stockholm has a surprising number of shopping options for a town of fewer than 100 people, and, even better, all are interesting boutique shops. While I could justifiably list every single one of them, doing so would take away the fun of exploring on your own. If you need an enticement to stop, here are some of my favorites. Keep in mind that many stores may close or have reduced hours from November until spring.

A SENSE OF PLACE (N2037 Spring St.; 715.442.2185; M, Tu, Th–Sa 10–5, Su 11–4) is a store on a mission to encourage us all, but especially children, to get outside and explore the natural world.

Pick up a book or one of the many items aimed directly at children with Nature Deficit Disorder: kites, animal-themed toys; nature guides, etc. They also carry a nice selection of books about local and regional history. A village named Stockholm has to have a store with a Scandinavian theme; **INGEBRETSEN'S AV STOCKHOLM** (12092 State Highway; 715.442.2220; Th–Tu 10–5:30 from March–Oct, F–Su 10–5:30 in Nov, Dec) fits the bill, selling items like fine glass and fiber products, candy, and books. There are a number of shops and galleries showcasing the work of local artists. **STOCKHOLM POTTERY AND MERCANTILE** (N2020 Spring St.; 715.442.3506; F, Su Noon–5, Sa 11–5 from May–Dec.) obviously specializes in local pottery, but they also sell the work of artists working in other media. **ABODE STOCKHOLM** (N2030 Spring St.; 715.442.2266; daily 10–5) has a handsome space that is used to showcase fine art. **STOCKHOLM GENERAL** (N2030 Spring St., #4; 715.442.9077; hours vary by season) has a good selection of Wisconsin-made cheese, beer, and wine. A short drive from the village, the **MAIDEN ROCK WINERY AND CIDERY** (W12266 King Lane; 715.448.3502) grows several types of apples, which are available in the retail store in late summer. What really sets them apart, though, are the ciders they create from their own apples. This is not the sweet, cloudy non-alcoholic cider that you see in every store in the fall, but a refined, hard cider that packs a bit of a punch. There is no charge to sample the ciders, but I bet you will have a hard time walking out empty-handed (Tu 4p–7p, W–Su 10–6 from April–Dec).

Eating

BOGUS CREEK CAFÉ AND BAKERY (N2049 Spring St.; 715.442.5017; café open F 10–4, Sa, Su 9–4; bakery open M–Th 11–4, F, Sa 9–5; both open Apr–Dec; WiFi) is a pleasant courtyard café serving tasty, fresh food using seasonal ingredients, but the prices are high (most items, including breakfast and sandwich options are \$11–\$13); cash only.

THE STOCKHOLM PIE COMPANY (N2030 Spring St. #1; 715.442.5505; Th–M 10–5, Tu Noon–6; reduced hours in winter) makes pie like you wish your grandma made (\$4.25/slice or get a whole 10” pie for \$18); on any given day they should have eight or more types of pie, including one or two savory pies. If you’d rather have a cinnamon roll, they make those, too (\$2.25).

A TO Z PRODUCE (N2956 Anker Lane) is another rural gourmet pizza joint that uses ingredients produced or grown on their farm (\$20–\$26). They only serve on Tuesday evenings (4:30p–8p from mid-February–Thanksgiving); bring your favorite picnicking supplies, a snack, something to drink and be prepared to wait a couple of hours for your pizza and to pack out what you brought with you.

Sleeping

Stockholm has several excellent boutique lodging options, but the only budget option is the campground.

Camping. STOCKHOLM VILLAGE PARK (Spring St.) is lovely place to camp; the sites are shaded and virtually all have views of Lake Pepin (\$12/tent; \$15/camper); no showers.

Houses. Inspired by Scandinavian country home décor **LILLA HUS** (N2089 Spring St.; 612.275.1227;

WiFi) embellishes a rustic cabin with elegant touches like chandeliers; the cottage is light and airy and has one bedroom, two bathrooms, a walk-out basement with patio, and a spiral staircase to the basement (\$150+tax). The **GREAT RIVER BED & BREAKFAST** (State Highway 35; 800.657.4756; open mid-March–Dec.) is in the original 1870s-era home of Jakob Peterson, one of the founders of the village. Relax in the screened porch or next to the fireplace or take a hike on the extensive grounds. The house has a lively décor accented with original art and stylish furniture from different periods (\$175+tax; cont breakfast; two people maximum occupancy; no credit cards). **TANSY HUS** (W12066 Second St.; 626.523.8910; WiFi) is a cute century-old home that has a Victorian farmhouse feel. The four-bedroom house has lovely oak floors, a modern kitchen, two bathrooms and room to sprawl; it is a good place for a large group or a family (\$220+tax/4 people, \$20/person extra, two night min + \$80 cleaning fee). **A COTTAGE IN STOCKHOLM** (W12224 Highway 35; 715.448.2048) is a warm, elegant place that feels like a home and not a rental property. The house has a modern kitchen, full bathroom, a deck, and good views of Lake Pepin; it can comfortably sleep four (\$250+tax/4 people).

Moderate and up. THE SPRING STREET INN (N2037 Spring St.; 651.528.9616; WiFi) is one of the older buildings in town. The cozy apartment has a rustic feel, and is furnished with Amish furniture; it has a kitchenette, full bath, and a sitting room (\$125+tax; cont breakfast); no credit cards. Located a few miles from the village, **MAIDENWOOD** (N447 244th St.; 715.448.4001; WiFi; open May–Oct.) is set in a peaceful area far from the intrusions of modern life. All three rooms have a private bath and plenty of country comfort; the treehouse room is above the

garage and has copious natural light; the other two rooms have amenities like a steam shower or Jacuzzi tub (\$144+tax; cont breakfast). If you forgot to bring something to read, the house is filled with 8000 books, so, odds are pretty good you'll find something to your liking. **THE RIVER ROAD INN** (W12360 State Highway 35; 612.306.2100; WiFi) is a distinctive multi-gabled building, clearly visible from the other side of Lake Pepin. The two luxury suites each have an elegant spa shower, outdoor deck, wet bar, bed with pillow tops, and a great view of Lake Pepin (\$220+tax; cont breakfast). The carriage house room is rich in natural light, with a fireplace, deck, satellite TV, and a shower you won't want to leave (\$255+tax).

Resources

- Post Office: W12117 Highway 35; 715.442.5169.

Getting Around

Normally this is about public transportation, but Stockholm, ever eager to please visitors, has two ways to ensure your comfort as you explore the village. The **Blue Bikes of Stockholm** provide an easy way to get around town, if walking a few blocks is too much for you; pick one up and drop it off at designated locations, like the corner of Spring and State Highway 35. On a rainy day, the **Blue Umbrellas of Stockholm** will keep you dry as you explore the shops; look for them in front of local businesses and, when you are done, leave them in front of the last place you visited.

MAIDEN ROCK

(121)

A long and skinny town wedged between Lake Pepin and the bluffs, Maiden Rock has a few surprises that make it worth a stop.

Arriving in Town

State Highway 35 dips and rolls through town like a rollercoaster; the small business district is along the highway. Chestnut Street will get you to the river.

History

Maiden Rock village and bluff get their names from a long-standing legend about a young, Native American girl called Wenonah (first born daughter), who jumped to her death from the bluff rather than agree to an arranged marriage to a man she didn't love who was from a rival Indian nation, or he could have been a French voyageur, or possibly an English trader. The story has many versions, something noted sarcastically by Mark Twain in *Life on the Mississippi*. Whatever the true story, the legend has been around for generations, at least since the 18th century, and it undeniably resonates with our romantic ideals: this story inspired Perry Williams to compose a libretto for an opera and Margaret A. Persons to write an epic poem.

The first folks to settle at the future village site were brothers Amos and Albert Harris and John Trumbell. The village was initially called Harrisburg but after Trumbell bought them out and platted a village in 1857, he changed the name to Maiden Rock. Trumbell was pretty much the go-to guy in early Maiden

Rock. He tried to start a number of businesses and was probably the first European to sail on Lake Pepin. Maiden Rock did not have a regular steamboat stop because the main channel was on the Minnesota side; this was a major factor in the town's slow early growth. Early businesses included a sawmill, a shingle mill, a grist mill, a lime kiln, and a ship yard that built boats ranged from 16-foot sailboats to steamboats. Trumbell moved to Albany, Oregon in 1899 when the town had about 300 residents.

Maiden Rock lacked road connections to nearby communities for many of its early years, prompting someone to call it "a good place to live but a hard place to get out of." The village got a boost in 1886 when railroad connections to St. Paul and La Crosse were completed, but repeated fire disasters were not helpful; six fires ravaged the community just between March, 1911 and August, 1912.

This small village knows how to throw a big party, though. The town's centennial festival drew a large crowd, especially for the 55-unit parade. The centennial celebration included a beard judging contest with categories including best full beard and best trim. The major industry today is the Wisconsin Industrial Sand Company, which has an underground mine where they dig out sand for the oil and gas exploration industries in the Southwest.

Tourist Information

Contact **Pierce County Partners in Tourism** (800.474.3723/715.273.5864) or on the web (www.travelpiercecounty.com).

Attractions

Maiden Rock Village Park (W3535 Highway 35; 715.448.2205) is a pleasant location for a picnic.

Entertainment and Events

The local **Farmers Market** is on Saturday mornings near the art galleries on Highway 35 (9–Noon).

Festivals. Maiden Rock Summerfest (third Saturday in June) includes a parade and tours of the sand mine.

Sports and Recreation

Rush River Delta State Natural Area (608.685.6222) is a 341-acre floodplain hardwood forest, with no groomed trails that can be soggy, but is still a fun place to explore. Park at the lot at the junction of Highway 35 with County A; the natural area is south of Highway 35.

Shopping

The **SECRET HEART GALLERY** (W3553 State Highway 35; 715.448.2005; F,Sa 10–5, Su Noon–5) is where B.J. Christofferson sells her hand-crafted dioramas that fuse mysticism with humor. Next door, the **SWAN SONG GALLERY** (W3557 State Highway 35; 715.448.2244; F–Su 10–5) has a good collection of contemporary art from several local and regional artists whose work has an ecological focus. When you walk into **BASIL'S** (W3583 State Highway 35; 715.448.3039; Th–Su Noon–5), you may feel like you walked into a quirky collectibles store on a back street in London; sort through an eclectic collection of prints, knickknacks, glassware, and veils. Located just outside of the village, **DENEEN POTTERY** (W3706 110th St.; 715.448.3300; open by appt.) is the home, studio, and gallery for potters Peter and Mary Deneen.

Eating and Drinking

The **SMILING PELICAN BAKE SHOP** (W3556 County Highway 35; 715.448.3807; F–Su 8–5 from mid-March–Dec.) is reputed to have fine breads, torts, pies and other baked goods that inspire otherwise sensible people to drive hours on end to get their fix.

The **MAIDEN ROCK INN** (N531 County Road S; 715.448.2608; open weekends, call ahead at other times to find out if they are open), housed in the former schoolhouse just one block inland from the River Road, has a small café that uses local ingredients for the freshly-prepared dishes. The Inn also has a wine bar serving their exclusive collection of Alsatian wines.

For something completely different, dine at **VINO IN THE VALLEY** (W3826 450th Ave.; 715.639.6677; Th 5p–10p, Sa 4p–10p, Su Noon–7 from mid-May–late Sept), where you will enjoy fine Italian food al fresco in a scenic rural setting among the grapevines. The menu typically includes dishes like rigatoni rustica, antipasto salad, and pasta caprese (\$15–\$21; Sunday buffet \$19); enjoy it with a glass of their wine.

Sleeping

Camping. **MAIDEN ROCK VILLAGE PARK** (W3535 State Highway 35; 715.448.2205) has a few primitive sites next to the river, and a few electric sites next to the woods; no showers (\$10/primitive site, \$15/electric site).

Bed and Breakfast. **THE JOURNEY INN** (W3671 200th Ave.; 715.448.2424; WiFi) is a 21st century country inn built in 2006 to have a minimal impact on the surrounding environment. The inn is located on property that borders a large state natural area, so there are many nearby places to hike or snow-

shoe or meditate (try the labyrinth). The three nature-themed rooms in the house each has its own bathroom and patio (\$165+tax w/breakfast buffet). There is also a two-bedroom cottage on-site that has a full kitchen, spa tub, and wood-burning stove that can sleep up to six (\$165+tax; \$25/person for more than two guests; two night minimum; no breakfast).

Cabins/Houses. Located next to a working pottery shop, the **PEPIN FARM POTTERY AND GUEST-HOUSE** (W3706 110th St.; 715.448.3300; WiFi) is a quaint older home that has been through a complete renovation; it has a modern kitchen, screened porch, a large tub, and walking paths on the property where you can enjoy the sounds of nature (\$165+tax with two night minimum).

★ **Author's Pick: THE MAIDEN ROCK INN** (N531 County Road S; 715.448.2608; WiFi in the dining room) has four guestrooms in a 1906-era schoolhouse that has been through a skillful and classy 15-year renovation. Each of the four rooms has individual climate control, an elegant bathroom, wainscoting, and tin ceilings (\$150–\$180+tax incl full breakfast). Common areas include a recreation room with TV and billiards, grotto and courtyard, sauna, and massage room. Follow the circular stairs to a rooftop deck with great views of the village and river.

Resources

- There is a small monthly publication called the *Maiden Rock Press* that circulates around the village.
- Post Office: N517 County Rd S; 715.448.3771.

For more information and updates, visit my web site at <http://www.mississippivalleytraveler.com>.

BAY CITY

(465)

Once the center of a large commercial fishing operation, Bay City today is primarily a residential community, with less tourism than some of its neighbors along Lake Pepin.

Arriving in Town

State Highway 35 skirts the eastern end of town. Go west on Wabash Street to reach Main Street or the river.

History

Mr. A.C. Morton was the first known European to arrive at the future village site; he built a home in 1855. A.J. Dexter believed he had purchased the land before Morton's arrival, so he got a bit peeved when Mr. Morton's surveyor, a man named Markle, showed up to plat the village of Saratoga; Dexter killed the surveyor for trespassing. This didn't create a positive vibe for the new village, so Saratoga was abandoned and the buildings were moved across the ice to neighboring Warrentown. Charles Tyler bought the site in 1856 for \$1700 in back taxes and rebranded the site as Bay City, naming it for the natural bay that was the site's most distinctive feature. Early 20th century businesses included the predictable saloon, a confectionary, a billiard hall, a grain dealer, and a meat market.

Bay City was once home to a major commercial fishing operation. Around 1910, a school of Scandinavian fishermen relocated from Sevastopol (Minnesota) to Bay City, because it was cheaper to get a

fishing license in Wisconsin. Bay City also had a rail station, so the fishermen had access to transportation that could ship their catch across the US. The fish were typically packed in barrels with ice but local hero Capp Tyler invented a box (the *Tyler Box*) that proved to be a more efficient packing method. He opened a box making factory in Bay City, and supplied fishermen along the eastern shore of Lake Pepin. Early on, most of the commercial fishermen ran small operations, but over time larger companies pushed out or swallowed the smaller ones. Changing tastes in the eating habits of Americans reduced demand for Lake Pepin fish after World War II; the last major fishing operation in Bay City closed in 1952. Bay City today has little industry; most residents commute to jobs in other places.

Tourist Information ⓘ

Get your questions answered at **Coffee by the Bay** (see below).

Attractions

The **1850s Conlin Log Cabin**, filled with period furnishings, is the highlight at the **River Bluffs History Center** (W6321 E. Main St.; 715.273.6611; call for hours or to schedule a visit). The main building (an old church) has a few historic photos, old farm tools, a buggy, and overview of agriculture in the county.

Saratoga Park (Pepin and Main Streets) has a small playground and places to picnic with a good view of Lake Pepin.

Getting on the River

Bay City Resort (N1202 Wabash; 715.594.3147) has a 14-foot fishing boat available for rent (\$20/day); you'll need to bring your own motor.

Entertainment and Events

Bay City Fest (715.594.3168) has events to challenge your skills in wiffle ball, bean bag tossing, and bed racing (2nd Saturday in June). At **Pioneer Day** (715.273.6611) immerse yourself in the 19th century and learn how to make butter and cider, listen to old-timey music, and watch an impressive display of corn stripping (no dancing involved).

Sports and Recreation

Pierce County Islands Wildlife Area (715.684.2914) is 860 acres of protected backwaters islands that are nearly adjacent to Bay City and good places to fish or watch wildlife; you'll need a boat to reach most of it.

There is a small **swimming beach** at the Bay City Park/Campground.

Eating

Get your java fix at **COFFEE BY THE BAY** (W6518 State Highway 35; 715.594.3894; M–Sa 7a–6p, Su 9a–6p; WiFi) and nosh on the freshly prepared food of the day.

Sleeping

Camping. **BAY CITY CAMPGROUND** (106 Park St.; 715.594.3229; open May–Oct) has 25 cramped sites surrounding a parking lot and next to a busy boat ramp (\$25/with utilities), but the tent sites are on a small peninsula away in a more desirable location (\$15/tent only sites); no showers.

Cabins. **BAY CITY RESORT** (N1202 Wabash; 715.594.3147; open Apr–Oct) has two basic cabins that are rough around the edges, but they are inexpensive and next to the bay that connects to Lake Pepin.

Each cabin has a bathroom with shower, full kitchen with microwave, air conditioning, and satellite TV (\$60 incl tax); no credit cards.

Resources

- Post Office: W6372 Main St.; 715.594.3862.

For more information and updates, visit my web site at <http://www.mississippivalleytraveler.com>.

HAGER CITY

(Uninc)

Hager City may not look like much (it isn't), but it has a place that you must visit—if you like authentic Jamaican food.

Arriving in Town

County Highways VV and K are the main routes in town.

History

Hager City had the distinction of getting the first post office in the township but apparently not much else worth writing down. When the railroad came through in 1886, the village was platted as Hager Chatfield, but the following year the Postmaster General suggested that Hager City would be a better name. That's all I have.

Tourist Information ⓘ

Contact **Pierce County Partners in Tourism** (800.474.3723/715.273.5864) or on the web (www.travelpiercecounty.com).

Attractions

The rock formation called **Bow and Arrow**, on a hillside visible from the River Road, is quite a mystery. This petroform was first noticed in 1902 by archaeologist Jacob Brower who thought the rocks were arranged in a shape that resembled a bow and arrow pointing toward Lake Pepin. Others have suggested that the shape is more likely a bird effigy, but no one

really knows what it was meant to be or when it was made, although all agree it has been there a long time.

Eating and Drinking

THE HARBOR BAR (N673 825th St.; 715.792.2417; kitchen open Su–Th 11a–9p, F,Sa 11a–10p, bar open later) is party central, especially on the weekends, with live music (check their schedule at www.harborbar.net), boaters coming and going, and the grill pumping out the best damn jerk chicken this side of Kingston (\$13). The standard menu includes Jamaica-inspired entrées like steam roast red snapper (\$11–\$24) or you can opt for a salad or sandwich (\$7–\$12). Unless you're a party animal, you may have a better experience going earlier in the evening rather than later.

Sleeping

Camping. Most of the sites at the **ISLAND CAMPGROUND & MARINA** (N650 825th St.; 715.222.1808; open May 1–Nov 1; WiFi) are strung along a single road on—you guessed it—an island just across from Red Wing with a good view of Barn Bluff. The sites are shaded, with many right on the main channel of the river (\$12/adult for primitive sites; \$32/water & elec); no credit cards.

Resources

- Post Office: W8123 165th Ave.; 715.792.2919.

For more information and updates, visit my web site at <http://www.MississippiValleyTraveler.com>.

TRENTON

(Uninc)

Arriving in Town

County K is the main drag through the village.

History

Wilson Thing (perhaps an ancestor of Thing T. Thing of *Addams Family* fame) was the first person to settle in the area; he showed up in 1848. Most early settlers in the Trenton vicinity were Scandinavians. The area had a bustling commercial fishing operation in the early 20th century, roughly from 1930 to the 1970s. Nearby Trenton Island was a notorious hangout for gangsters like Pretty Boy Floyd and John Dillinger who probably dropped some cash in the brothels and taverns.

Getting on the River

Everts Resort (N1705 860th St.; 715.792.2333) has a couple of fishing boats you can rent: a 15-foot boat without a motor (\$25/day), and a 16-foot Lund with motor and depth finder (\$105/day).

Sports and Recreation

Trenton Bluff State Natural Area (608.685.6222) has a couple of parcels with overlooks of the river valley. To reach the east tract, go north on County VV for 0.4 miles from Highway 35 and park along the road; walk due west through the woods and up the hill. For the western tract, go 1.5 miles north from the intersection of Highway 35 and County VV and park in the small pulloff; walk north of the road and up the hill.

Sleeping

Camping. **EVERTS RESORT** (N1705 860th St.; 715.792.2333) has a few overnight sites with hook-ups for campers but is not really equipped for tent camping.

Cabins. **EVERTS RESORT** (N1705 860th St.; 715.792.2333; WiFi near office) has five basic cabins on the river that are well-suited for groups; it is a laid back place in summer but very busy in spring and fall with fishermen. Most of the cabins are equipped a kitchen, full bath, and bunk beds plus a full or queen bed and can sleep up to eight people. Bring a sleeping bag, pillow, and towel (\$120+tax/4 people, \$20/extra).



About the Author

Dean Klinkenberg is on a mission to explore the Mississippi River from the Headwaters to the Gulf of Mexico, one town at a time. He has lived in Mississippi River towns for his entire adult life. He first grew attached to the river during his college years in La Crosse, Wisconsin and continued the affair after moving downriver to St. Louis, Missouri. Yet, in spite of 28 years along the banks of this iconic river, he discovered that he still has much to learn about the Mississippi. And, he's still learning.

The Usual Disclaimer

Change is a fact of life, even more so in the travel industry. Hotels, restaurants, and museums come and go; prices change. Although the information in this book is accurate on the date of publication, I don't have superpowers that allow me to freeze everything in time. I'll keep working on that. Until then, if you come across something that is not correct, no longer open, or of such terrible quality that you are questioning my judgment about everything, please drop me a line and let me know about your experience. You can reach me through my website: www.MississippiValleyTraveler.com.