Early Transportation

Transportation was and is very significant to our city's history. The way people get around is called transportation. In the early days people used a horse and buggy or a wagon for local travel.

Kenosha’s harbor was very important to the early settlers to protect their ships from strong waves and winds. Early settlers’ supplies often came by water, and many of their goods were transported the same way to other areas of the United States. However, in the early days of Kenosha, there was no official pier, or platform, which reached into the water. Ships could not enter our harbor due to the sandbars, or ridges of sand built up by currents, in the lake that blocked their passage.
Small boats, called lighters, hauled the supplies from these early transport ships. Lighters were very heavy and often needed several men to maneuver them. Deacon Whitney, a local inn owner, had a dog named Boss. When someone announced “lighter,” Boss would run up and down the streets barking. This way locals knew their help was needed on one of the lighters.

Kenosha received money to deepen its harbor. This allowed ships to enter into the harbor and dock. Kenosha grew rapidly after this because it made receiving and shipping supplies easier.

Questions

1. What means of transportation were used by the early people of Kenosha?

2. How would Kenosha be different if we were not located on Lake Michigan?
Questions

1. What materials are used to make roads today?

2. Why was a hard-surfaced road important to citizens of Kenosha?
Southport Lighthouse

The first settlers of Kenosha realized a need for a light at Southport to guide ships into the harbor safely. After four unsuccessful attempts Southport Lighthouse was built in 1866. It was made of Cream City brick brought from Milwaukee. The Southport Lighthouse stands 55 feet tall. A year after its completion, the keeper’s cottage, standing on the west side of the lighthouse, was built to house the lighthouse keeper and his family.

In 1906 the decision was made to extinguish the light of the Southport Lighthouse. In 1913 the lantern gallery was removed, and the lighthouse was closed off at the top of the tower. Southport Lighthouse was dark for the first time since its creation.

During the 1950s citizens of Kenosha learned that the federal government had begun plans to demolish the old lighthouse and united together to save the historic structure. The federal government gave Southport Lighthouse to the city of Kenosha. In 1994 enough money was raised to reopen the Southport Lighthouse that once shown brightly for the city of Kenosha. The inside was cleaned up, the lantern room at the top of the tower was replaced, and a new lens was installed. Although the lighthouse no longer services the United States Coast Guard for Kenosha, it shines brightly in Kenosha’s harbor as a treasured symbol of Kenosha’s early beginning.
Questions

1. In the picture the keeper’s house is near the lighthouse. Why did the keeper need to live near the lighthouse?

2. Discuss other jobs where people may need to live near their work.
Kenosha’s Lighthouses

Southport Lighthouse

Day

Sunrise

Night

Pierhead Lighthouse

Daytime
The Streetcars

Another mode of local transportation used by Kenoshans was the streetcar. In 1903 Kenosha acquired its first streetcar, which ran on tracks down the center of the street. Later, electric streetcars, also called trolley cars, were purchased by the city. Kenosha acquired trackless trolleys in 1932, which were replaced by buses in 1952.

During the 1990s Kenosha utilized a refurbished trolley for sightseeing, tours, and special events. Riders could get a taste of historic Kenosha by riding one of these trolleys. Electric streetcars were brought back to Kenosha during the summer of 2000. These streetcars circle Harbor Park, a local lakefront attraction; the Kenosha Museum; the marina; and many historical businesses of Kenosha. For a small fee, passengers can take a ride back in time to get a feel for “old Kenosha.”

First Streetcar, 1903

Joseph McCarthy Transit Center
Question

1. How many forms of transportation can you identify in this picture? (Hint: Can you find five?)
Early Schools

When the first children arrived from Buffalo, New York, by ship, they had already been attending classes on board taught by Jason Lothrop. In 1835 Jason Lothrop became Kenosha’s first teacher and held classes for 27 students in his home.

The Block Schoolhouse was constructed of logs in 1837. It was 20 feet by 20 feet (about the size of a large living room). It was known as a rate school because families paid a rate, or fee, for each child who went to it. Those who had no children in school paid nothing.

In 1838 Rev. Marvin Kinney opened a select school (now known as a private school) called Southport Academy. Students in the upper grades paid $3 every quarter, and those in the lower grades paid $2. Louis Harvey was the first principal. Harvey later became a postmaster and then governor of Wisconsin.

Rueben Deming and Michael Frank helped establish the first free school in Kenosha in 1845. This school was free to all children living in Kenosha and was the first of its kind built west of the Allegheny Mountains, making Kenosha known as a community that valued education for everyone.

Education is also important to Kenosha today. We have many public and private schools. Over 4,000 people work in education in some way.

Question

1. What do you think it would be like to attend a one-room schoolhouse?

2. Can you name some different kinds of jobs one might have working for the schools?
Important Educators

In 1839 a man named Michael Frank came to Southport (Kensha). While visiting Burlington, Wisconsin (Racine County), a man offered to make him a partner in a store. He returned to Southport for his baggage.

On his trip back to Burlington, he stopped to think. He wondered if he should live in Southport or Burlington, so he used a stick to help him decide. Michael Frank held the stick above the ground and let it fall. It fell toward the east--toward Southport--so he remained in Southport until his death.

Michael Frank was the first president of Southport Village. When the town became Kenosha, he was chosen as **mayor**. A mayor is the political leader of a town or city. He also held a job as an **editor**, or supervisor, of the *Southport Telegraph*, one of Kenosha’s earliest newspapers. He is best remembered for his commitment to free education in our city. Frank Elementary School is named after him.

Mary Bradford was a student at Kenosha High School. After **obtaining** a college education, she returned to Kenosha to teach. In 1910 she became **superintendent of schools** for Kenosha. She was the first woman in Wisconsin to have this job. Today the superintendent of Kenosha Unified School District No. 1 supervises the operation of all of its schools and staff. Bradford also served as president of the Wisconsin Teachers’ Association.

Mary Bradford began the first kindergarten in Wisconsin, the first open air school, and the first junior high school. Later she opened a **vocational school**. Vocational schools teach students to prepare for jobs such as an administrative assistant or an auto mechanic. She worked hard to help women get the right to vote. Mary D. Bradford High School is named for this great Kenosha educator.

**Question**

1. Who is our current superintendent?
Reuben Deming

In 1836 Reuben Deming came to Kenosha. He was a minister who believed that educating children was important. He helped to open free schools in Kenosha. Many of the city's children attended these schools. One of the other important beliefs he held was that all people should be free. At that time in the southern states, many blacks were slaves. Some people who lived in the northern states felt that owning slaves was wrong. Therefore, the Underground Railroad was started to help slaves escape slavery. They secretly traveled to the states in the North where slavery was outlawed, or against the law. It was not a real railroad, but, rather, a way of helping slaves escape to freedom in Canada. Because Kenosha was a port, Kenosha was a stop for slaves on the Underground Railroad. The slaves hid on ships that were taking wheat into Buffalo, New York, and were eventually taken to Canada. Many slaves stayed in Deming’s attic until the ships were ready to leave the Kenosha harbor. Reuben Deming’s children could not tell anyone about the slaves living in their attic. If they spoke about them, the police might have put their father in jail.
Civil War Monument

The Civil War was fought between 1861 and 1865. It was a war between the northern states and the southern states in America. One group of men who fought for the North were from Kenosha. They were known as the Park City Grays and were mainly high school boys. The first Yankee (or Northerner) who was killed was Mr. Ellsworth, from Kenosha. They were to take over a hotel, and he was shot. Reuther Central High School has a flag displayed in the hallway in their honor as it was in that building that these soldiers had gone to school. Many of those who died in the Civil War were buried in Green Ridge and the old St. Mark's cemeteries. A monument in Library Park and a boulder at Green Ridge Cemetery in Kenosha honor those who fought and died in this war.

Capt. Charles Frantz of Kenosha
Ninth Reg. Infantry, Co. C.
Enlisted September 9, 1861
Wounded and imprisoned at Jenkins' Ferry
Discharged May 15, 1865

Questions

1. Why is a monument important?

2. If you were to build a monument today, who or what would you choose to honor and why?
Civil War Memorials in Library Park

- In honor of the brave men of Kenosha County, who victoriously defended the Union on land and sea during the War of the Great Rebellion, 1861-1865.
- The First Wisconsin Cavalry Rendezvous 1861-1865.
- From 1862 to 1865, the regiment fought to preserve the Union.

The images show various monuments and memorials dedicated to the memory of those who fought during the Civil War.
World War Memorial

The United States was involved in World War I from April 6, 1917, to November 11, 1918. There were over 2,000 men from Kenosha who served in that war. Kenosha’s memorial to these men can be found at the entrance of the Simmons Library at Library Park. The memorial includes a dedication to “The men of Kenosha County who served their country in the Army, Navy, and Marine Corps during the World War.” (At that time they did not know there would be a World War II.) Kenosha’s Red Arrow Division fired artillery at the Germans. Artillery are large firing weapons, like cannons, operated by a crew. A World War I artillery gun like the ones used by our soldiers is on display in Eichleman Park. Red Arrow Park in Kenosha was also dedicated to these courageous soldiers.

Questions

1. For whom would you create a memorial?
2. What symbol would you use?
Early Murder Changes Wisconsin's Law

In 1850 there were many changes taking place in our city. Kenosha became a city and named Col. Michael Frank the mayor. Many immigrants still flocked to our city. One of them was an Irishman named John McCaffary.

In the summer of 1850, John McCaffary drowned his wife, Bridget, in an in-ground holding tank for water called a hogshead. Being a warm summer’s night, many neighbors were awakened by the commotion. One of these people was the new mayor of Kenosha, Col. Michael Frank. He ordered John McCaffary arrested.

Nine months later he was tried in the county courthouse. The jury found him guilty. A jury is a group of people who decide if a person is guilty or not guilty of a crime. He was sentenced to be hanged on August 21, 1851. The gallows were built near 67th Street and 14th Avenue. Gallows are a raised platform, usually with a collapsible floor or trapdoor.

More than 3,000 local people came to watch the hanging. Many people in Kenosha and throughout the state of Wisconsin were upset with the hanging. Due largely to this event, the death penalty was ended in Wisconsin in 1853. This meant people were no longer put to death for the crimes they committed. John McCaffary was the last person in Wisconsin to be killed for his crime. While this decision still holds true for Wisconsin, other states have a death penalty for major crimes.
Why did People Continue to Come to Kenosha?

During the 1840s Kenosha grew very fast. People were coming here from the eastern part of the United States as well as many countries in Europe. Irish, German, English, and Scottish immigrants were some of the people who came to the United States in search of a better life. They wanted to leave behind hunger and many other problems they faced in Europe. Kenosha seemed like a good place to begin their new lives.

When the 1890 census, or count of people living in a place, was taken, it showed the ethnic background of most people living in Kenosha, Somers, and Pleasant Prairie. At that time the largest ethnic group living in the Kenosha area was German followed by Irish, English, Italian, and Polish.

These settlers wanted their new community to be similar to those they left behind. Many settlers chose to build their new homes near people of their own ethnicity, or own ethnic group, in order to keep their native language and customs alive. Their trades, or jobs, came in handy when creating their new community. Each family was able to lend their own expertise in creating businesses which helped Kenosha grow. The area of Southport became a hub, or center of activity, for buying, selling, and trading their goods.

Southport had many new businesses by the end of the 1840s. Some of those businesses are listed on the next page:
- 9 general stores
- 1 drug store
- 2 masons
- 1 jeweler
- 1 wagon and plow maker
- 16 carpenters
- 4 taverns and several breweries
- 1 bakery
- 1 fanning mill factory

- 1 printing office
- 1 copper shop
- 2 painters
- 4 tailor shops
- 2 tin shops
- 1 machine shop
- 2 blacksmiths
- 1 cabinet maker
- 2 shoe shops