

MERRILL'S EAST SIDE IN 1901

a part of the Chicago, Milwaukee and St. Paul system, and it proved to be the addition to the facilities of the city that civic leaders had long sought as the clue to more prosperous times.

Most of the important personalities of the old period stayed over to make the new. Here are a few of them: O. B. Smith, of course; T. B. Scott, Frank Andrews, Henry Keyes, Cyrus Strawbridge, E. Space, D. A. Kline, Herman Rusch, Ed Khutz, John Dunker, Henry Sales, Dave Finn, M. H. McCord, T. P. Mathews, A. C. Norway, William Averill, Harrison Ccable, George Kitchuck, Max Streeter, John Cotter, and S. S. "Big" Ayer.

The census of 1880 showed the population of Lincoln county to be 2,011, while Jenny the village that only six years before had had an insignificant population, now tallied 822. The population growth had been rapid, but was only the take-off for the gains that were to follow. The next year, in 1881, the city was incorporated, with S. S. Merrill, the superintendent of the railroad, giving his name to the town by a special act of legislation.

The first city election was held March 6, 1883, when the following officers were chosen as the first ever to hold office in Merrill: Mayor, T. B. Scott; Treasurer, M. W. Sweeney; City Attorney, A. A. Helms; Assessor, J. H. McMurray; City Clerk, D. W. McLeod. The first aldermen were H. Bachman, Thomas P. Mathews, John Phelps, M. Botta, A. H. Stange, Adolph Drewson, Fred Wilkes, William Bisbee, W. H. Cannon, M. O. Munnick, Henry White, and S. M. Hoyt. Mr. McLeod and C. C. Townsend were justices of the peace, and Herman Zipp, George Gibson, and H. W. Boyer were constables; John T. Adams was first city marshal and the first superintendent of schools was M. C. Foster. The first board of supervisors comprised H. R. Skinner, John Woodlock, H. H. Chandler, William Canfield, and V. R. Willard.

The first council-meeting was held in Helms & Hoyt's office March 13, 1883. The city hall was erected in 1885-9 at a cost of \$16,273.

Within the decade 1883 to 1903, Merrill as we know it now was largely built. The courthouse was built in 1892, the steel bridge was built in 1892, the business district took shape, civic buildings were constructed, and the population rose near the 7,000 mark.

The first telephone office in Merrill was built by the Wisconsin Telephone company in 1881 and service was started with 20 telephones. In 1883 a toll line, consisting only of a grounded line of No. 16 iron wire, went through from Merrill to Wausau, and the first call over it was from S. Heineman to Heineman Bros. at Wausau. In 1886 the citizens of Merrill organized a local phone exchange that continued to operate until 1910, when the company took over its 500 or so subscribers and rebuilt it in 1912. The city water-works came in 1887.

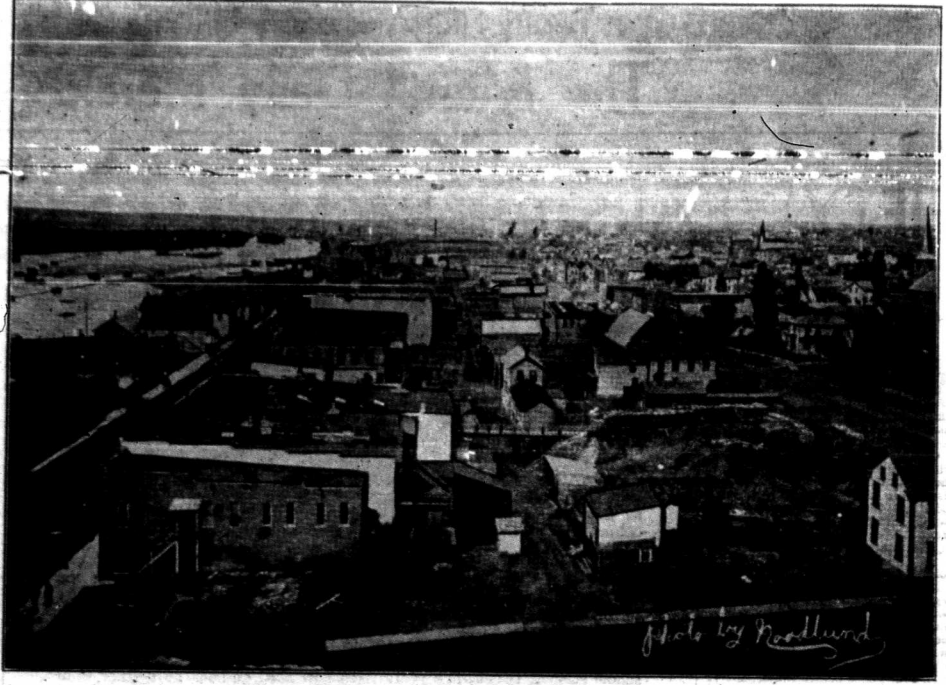
In 1891 the T. B. Scott library was opened, with Miss Janet Russell as librarian. Her successor, Miss Helen Price, who came in 1905, set on foot a movement for a new library building. After much negotiation a donation of \$17,500 was secured from Andrew Carnegie and the present building was erected. After Miss Price

the librarian have been Miss Katherine C. Barker; Miss Winnifred Bailey, 1916; Miss Elizabeth Burke, 1918; Miss Edna Dearth Orr, 1921; and Mrs. Nathalie H. Scribner, the present librarian, 1922. In that summer four traveling libraries were established for county use, one each by the Women's Alliance, the Study Class, the Heineman Lumber company, and Mrs. W. H. Flett.

The city's first fire-fighting organization was a semi-organized group under H. W. Wright. In 1884 chemical apparatus was purchased and the West Side engine house was built. After the installation of the water works in 1887 the department was regularly organized as a volunteer department with Julius Thielman as chief. The first East Side engine house went up in 1890; in the next two years two hose carts, each drawn by one horse, were added in the hand-drawn chemical and hook and ladder apparatus; and in 1892 a horse-drawn hook and ladder truck was obtained. In 1894 the city decided to employ a paid driver for this hook-and-ladder apparatus, and Andrew Millsap, present chief, thus joined the force exactly forty years ago.

The whole department was put on a paid basis in 1898. Mr. Thielman served as chief two years; then Richard King came in, to be followed four years later by John Cotey. After his four-year term Owen Love held the post for three and a half years; then, in 1901, Mr. Millsap went into the position he has held ever since.

In 1892 the lumber industry reached its height. There were eight mills in operation; the Gilkey-Anson company, the Illinois & Wisconsin company, the Champagne company, the Merrill lumber company, the T. B. Scott company, the Wolf River company, the H. W. Wright company, and A. H. Stange. The total cut in that year was approximately 150,000,000 feet of lumber and 85,000,000 shingles. Four years later, in 1896, the cut had fallen below 100,000,000 feet of lumber and 30,000,000 shingles, and from then on the volume declined rapidly. As the pine diminished, hemlock and hardwood stands were drawn upon, and George E. Foster & Co. opened a hardwood office in Merrill in 1893, and by 1898 about twenty mills in Lincoln and adjoining counties were engaged in hardwood manufacture.



This picture was taken from the courthouse tower while the courthouse was under construction in 1901. A view such as this taken only thirty years ago gives a good idea of the progress that has been made in building up Merrill in recent years. The railroad boom, that resulted in Merrill's first period of growth, was already over when this picture was taken.

T. P. Mathews Was Big Factor in Forming County

One of the most conspicuous citizens of the early days of Merrill, or Jenny, was Thomas P. Mathews. We cannot devote the space to do justice to the memory of Thomas P. Mathews.

Mr. Mathews was born in New York City, December 6, 1825. At six years of age he was left fatherless. At 12 years of age he went to live with relatives in Lawrence County, New York.

In 1854 he left for the west, and landed in Ripon, this state. Mr. Mathews developed leadership early in life, and liked politics. While a resident of Ripon, he helped to organize the Republican party. He continued the support of the Republican party until 1872, when he joined the bolters and supported, and voted for Horace Greeley.

In 1878 he helped to organize the Greenback party and was a presidential elector on the Greenback party ticket. In 1880 he supported James B. Weaver, candidate for president on the Greenback ticket.

In 1854 he came to this city and spent the winter in a logging camp located on Lake Pesobic. He continued in the logging business: Early in 1859 Mr. Mathews married Martha A. Green of Wausau. His wife was a native of Ohio, of Puritan ancestry, being a direct descendant on her mother's side from Mary Chilton, the first white woman that ever stepped on Plymouth Rock, and on her father's side from the earliest settlers in Massachusetts. The newly weds set up housekeeping in Mr. Mathews' logging shanty near Lake Pesobic.

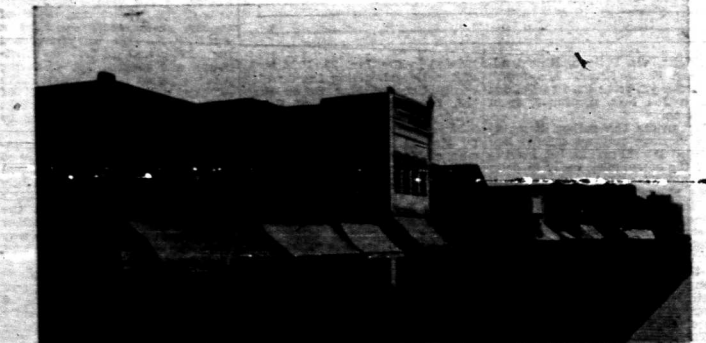
As early as 1870 the people of this section commenced to agitate for separation from Marathon county. They visioned the unlimited riches of this section. But Marathon county was strong with the legislators. In 1872 a committee of three was appointed to present the matter to the legislature. This committee was composed of

T. P. Mathews, Frank Andrews and H. A. Keyes.

Mr. Mathews spent the winter of 1872 and '73 at Madison. But he got no action from that legislature. The winter of 1873 and '74 found Mathews in Madison again. Before the legislature adjourned in 1874, a bill was passed creating Lincoln county.

The job was not completed, the new county was still attached to Marathon county for judicial purposes. Next winter found Mr. Mathews again in Madison where he completed the job. That the people of the new county appreciated his services is shown in the fact he was elected the first county treasurer and re-elected twice. At the end of his third term he refused re-election. Mr. Mathews died at the age of 62 years and 21 days on December 27, 1887.

WEST MAIN STREET ABOUT 1900



Note that the street cars were in use when this picture was taken. R. Laatsch was running the photographic business now occupied by the Badger Studio. The board sidewalks are another indication of change.

Mayors of Merrill

T. B. Scott	1883-1884
E. L. Bump	1885
T. P. Mathews	1886
A. A. Helms	1887
J. N. Cotter	1888
Jul. Thielman	1889
L. N. Anson	1890-1891
Henry Wright	1892
Charles W. Badeau	1893
Harry H. Foster	1894
John R. Babcock	1895
Herman F. Fehland	1896
August H. Stange	1898
J. L. Thielman	1899-1900
H. W. Wright and A. H. Stange	1901
Alfred H. Wright	1902-1903
John O'Day	1904-1905
George M. Anson	1906-1907
Ful. Thielman	1908-1909
John Elsen	1910-1911
J. A. Emerich	1912-1913
F. J. Smith	1914-1917
D. B. Reinhart	1918-1923
A. R. Wittman	1924-1927
G. E. Cotter	1928-1929
A. R. Wittman	1930-1931
W. H. AuBuchon	1932-