

UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN-LA CROSSE

LODGING IN LA CROSSE, WISCONSIN

1880s

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BY

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The following is a study of the phenomenon of lodging in La Crosse between 1880 and 1890. Using historical, visual and quantitative evidence, it will examine patterns of distribution, ethnic and occupational factors, and patterns of success and failure. The use of this focus will provide a new look at the social, economic, and ideological makeup of a community in the midst of transformation.

The subject of lodging has been largely ignored or relegated to a lesser historical importance than some of the more accessible local topics such as steamboating, the lumber industry, and the biographies of prominent businessmen. Yet lodging activities, whether commercial or private, were widespread and integral parts of the community experience. For example, 12 percent of the 2,594 heads of households recorded in the 1880 U.S. Census of La Crosse took in boarders that year. Similarly, six percent of the entire population boarded in someone else's home. ¹

Boarding activity in La Crosse served both the social and economic needs of the participants. For family heads and boarding house keepers, the taking in of lodgers offered a myriad of benefits, including: income augmentation or profit, the ability to exert some form of control over others, household assistance, companionship, and the personal satisfaction of helping fellow churchmembers, immigrants, or orphaned kin. For the boarders, this same situation often provided an extended family of sorts, a safe

haven in which to assimilate into an alien culture, a place to learn or carry out a trade, or an alternative to homeownership.

The hotel industry was another important aspect of lodging activity in La Crosse in the 1880s. The peaks and valleys associated with hotel business during this decade serve as a barometer for levels of economic confidence during that time. They reflect the degree of public hope for a future in which disposable income would be available for recreational, business, or migratory travel. The extent to which prospective hotel keepers were willing to risk themselves by going into business was a manifestation of that hope.

To illustrate this point, consider that a total of sixty-nine hotels did business in La Crosse during the 1880s. Standing alone, this fact suggests a steady, healthy economy. Yet, a closer examination of the actual years of operation shows that, of the total, all but seven of these businesses began during one of the following time periods: 1880-82, 1884-85, and 1888. Each of these times represented periods of renewed confidence in the city's economic future. It is also worthy to note that less than a third of the total survived into the next decade.²

Before pressing further, however, it is first necessary to draw distinctions between the three types of lodging activities pursued in La Crosse during the eighties. Each

type displayed features characteristic to it. Hence, these features will serve as the basis for distinction.

"Hotels" will indicate activities with a clear profit motive, requiring overhead in the forms of advertisement and a staff of employees. These were legitimate business ventures, recognized as such in both the census and the city directories. "Boarding houses" denote non-hotel facilities housing five or more boarders. These appear to have been profit driven, although not as commercially oriented as were hotels. "Augmented households" will refer those housing from one to four boarders.³ These comprised 90 percent of all heads taking in boarders.⁴ The motive appears to have been directed more toward economic maintenance rather than profit. With these distinctions in mind, it is now possible to examine the phenomenon of lodging in La Crosse.

As stated earlier, almost all of the hotels operating in the 1880s began during one of three periods. The years 1880-82 saw the greatest amount of starts, with twenty-six.⁵ This local demonstration of economic confidence was conterminous with two events of national significance.

The first was the country's rebound from the depression of the 1870s.⁶ Such rebounds are usually characterized by increased business activity, employment, and consumer spending. In La Crosse, this was best exemplified by the rise in production in the lumber industry. Between 1879 and

1881 local sawmill output increased 175 million board feet.⁷ The increase in demand for lumber signified an increase in capital and private investment in the form of construction. Likewise, as the local sawmills accounted for 60 percent of the total payroll in 1880, steady employment was ensured.⁸

For the prospective innkeeper, this overall improvement in the local and national economies meant that more disposable income could be allocated for travel. In addition, it suggested that business-related travel would increase in lockstep with business recovery. By the summer of 1880, this undoubtedly seemed to be the case. During one week in June, for example, 497 people lodged in city hotels, an average of about twenty-four per facility.⁹ By the year's end, eighteen proprietors had opened their doors for the first time. Among them were: J.J. McGovern of the St. Louis House, J.H. Preston of the Commercial Hotel, Ferdinand and Annie Schmidt of the European Hotel, and Alex Whalen of the Minnesota House.¹⁰

Another factor spurring hotel activity during this time was the unprecedented influx of northern European immigrants into the Midwest. Immigration rose dramatically as the U.S. economy recovered, beginning around 1880 and reaching a nineteenth century peak in 1882.¹² Between 1880 and 1885, La Crosse's population swelled by almost 50 percent.¹³ While many new Americans settled in La Crosse during this period, many more also passed through on the way to points further

west. Norwegians, for example, usually entered Wisconsin at the Port of Milwaukee from Grand Haven, Michigan.¹⁴ From there, a convenient and much travelled route across the state was the Chicago, Milwaukee, and St. Paul Railroad connecting Milwaukee and La Crosse.

Immigrants who were just passing through La Crosse, awaiting relatives, or simply unable to afford other accommodations easily found temporary lodging. The C.M. & St.P. railroad provided an "Emigrant Room" near its downtown platform for sleeping purposes.¹⁵ Similarly, local grocer C.B. Solberg built a temporary quarters for immigrants on South Front Street after "Castle Garden," the old facility, burned down in 1870.¹⁶ The city police regularly patrolled these areas, providing the new arrivals with around-the-clock protection from "tramps, salesmen, [and] slickers." Local residents often assisted these transient strangers by acting as interpreters or providing information.¹⁷

Those who could afford the expense often opted for better accommodations, however.¹⁸ Many hotels and boarding houses in La Crosse catered to particular ethnic groups or at least mixed groups of recent northern European arrivals. Often, the proprietors of these facilities were themselves immigrants. Peter Nelson, proprietor of the Nora House, and Peter J. Larson of the Pearl Street House, both native Norwegians, did most of their business with fellow countrymen. Contrarily, John Stephenson of the Tremont

House, also a Norwegian, housed a mixed variety of immigrants, of which only a few were Scandinavian.¹⁹

Often, proprietors advertised in the local foreign language newspapers in the hope of attracting clients. Nord Stern advertisements, for example, used "Deutsches Gasthaus" to describe several different local hotels, including the American House and the Eagle Hotel.²⁰ Sometimes, the names of the facilities themselves attracted ethnic customers. A homesick Norwegian, for instance, may have realized some degree of welcome familiarity at an establishment such as Peter Neilson's Christiana Hotel. This was so named after the North Sea coastal city that was a common embarkation point for Norwegian emigrants in the late nineteenth century.²¹ Likewise, recent arrivals from Germany likely identified with hotel names such as Germania House, Vater Rhein, or Saxonia.

Immigration slowed considerably after 1882, and with it much of the migratory travel that local innkeepers had welcomed.²² By the end of 1883, little more than half of the hotels that operated two years before were still in business.²³ This seems to have been an adjustment peculiar to the local hotel industry rather than a city-wide economic slump.²⁴ Perhaps it was the result of overspeculation on the part of the owners. Whatever the case, however, another boom period was just around the corner.

The period between 1884-85 reflected a different set of circumstances that renewed hotelkeepers with a sense of hope, and caused another flurry of speculation. As early as 1883, rumors of the Chicago, Burlington, and Quincy Railway's interest in La Crosse had begun to circulate. The La Crosse Sunday News reported in December of that year that the company was "already negotiating for depot grounds."²⁵ Innkeepers welcomed this news warmly; so warmly in fact, that in 1884, sixteen hotels either started or reopened, followed by six more the next year.²⁶

By 1884, the Burlington rumor had become fact, and plans for the Burlington House were under way. This hotel-depot complex, to be constructed at the northwest corner of Second and Pearl Streets, would serve La Crosse as the terminal for the new railway. Local anticipation was fueled by this activity. The 1884 Sanborn Fire Insurance Map of La Crosse even went so far as to show the "Foundation For 3-sto. BR. Hotel To be built."²⁷

To those involved in the business of travel accommodations, a vote of confidence from the railroad was seen as indicative of a prosperous future. La Crosse business leaders in general respected Burlington during this period as an aggressive company, "able to hold its own" competitively. They also praised the company's concern for the welfare of its employees, lauding Burlington's apparent

recognition of "the truth that workingmen have something else in them besides bones and muscles."²⁸

As with the hotel boom at the beginning of the decade, this period also ended rather abruptly, but this time overspeculation was only part of the problem. In 1886, the nation slid into a recession. On the local front, sawmill output plummeted to a decade low, victimized by the economic slowdown and a fire at the Colman Sawmill. By the next year, 50 percent of La Crosse hotels had closed their doors.²⁹

The rise in hotel startings in 1888 differed from the rest in that a significant amount of the activity was in North La Crosse. This was part of an ongoing process however.

Northsiders had begun to boast of their area as a "city by itself" as early as 1884.³⁰ Late in that year, the La Crosse Sunday News, a North La Crosse newspaper, began to run more advertisements for Northside businesses. These businesses, mostly located along Mill and Rose Streets, included the H.A. Winston Grocery, Nels Simonsin and Luithen & Butsch hardware stores, and L.M. Nelson's Barber shop. The latter was one of many barbers on Mill Street, but he was the only one that claimed to have "Bath Rooms connected" to his establishment.³¹

Curiously, the News lacked any advertisements for hotels, regardless of their locations, during the early part of this Northside renaissance. The reason for this is unclear. This

changed in November of 1888 however, when the paper ran its first-ever advertisement for the "newly finished and furnished" Hurley's Hotel, located at "433 Mill Street, North La Crosse."³²

The completion of the Chicago, Burlington and Northern roundhouse and carshop in the city's Tenth Ward undoubtedly had much to do with this change in advertising. The facility, with its promise of new jobs, was regarded as a boon to the community. An 1887 publication, La Crosse Illustrated, estimated that "the train men employed...will, with their families, form a population of 3,000."³³

The significance of this statement was not the accuracy of the prediction but the certitude placed behind it. In 1888, Northside innkeepers opened for business at an unprecedented rate. These included not only facilities in the traditional business section of Mill Street such as the St. Nicholas Hotel and the Empire House, but also Edward Smith's Union House, located at 1915 Prospect Street, near the new C.B. & N. roundhouse.³⁴

Investor confidence was not exclusive to North La Crosse, however. A city-wide total of twenty hotels started or reopened in 1888. This included the long awaited Burlington House on Second and Pearl. The hotel industry was sustained through the next year, as activity remained constant. But unfortunately, this time of rampant speculation saw the same

fate as the other peak periods of the decade. By 1890, closings had reduced the previous year's active hotels by a half.³⁵

The pattern of hotel distribution in the 1880s reflected connections to both rail and river traffic. The downtown platform for the Chicago, Milwaukee, and St. Paul Railroad was flanked by the Minnesota House, Clyde Hotel, and Northwestern Hotel on the west, and the elegant Cameron House on the east.³⁶ The Cameron, operated by Warren D. Fox, was actually financed to a large extent by C.M. & St.P. in 1879 as a hotel-depot complex. The railroad conducted its business in the north end of the building, and transient employees stayed in the fourth floor tower.³⁷

Another interesting feature of the Cameron House and the other establishments mentioned was their close proximity to the public river landing. In fact, the majority of nineteenth-century La Crosse hotels were located near the Mississippi River docks in the First and Second Wards.³⁸ The correlation between the river and business success was established early in La Crosse's history. For hotel keepers, this became especially true after the mid-1870s, when steamboat lines began a shift in focus from freight to passenger carriage in reaction to growing competition from railroads.³⁹ It appears in fact that river traffic, more than anything else in the eighties, provided the greatest amount of steady business for the hotel industry, sustaining

it through both good and bad times. Of the thirteen hotels that enjoyed unbroken business during that decade, for example, ten were located within two blocks of the river.⁴⁰

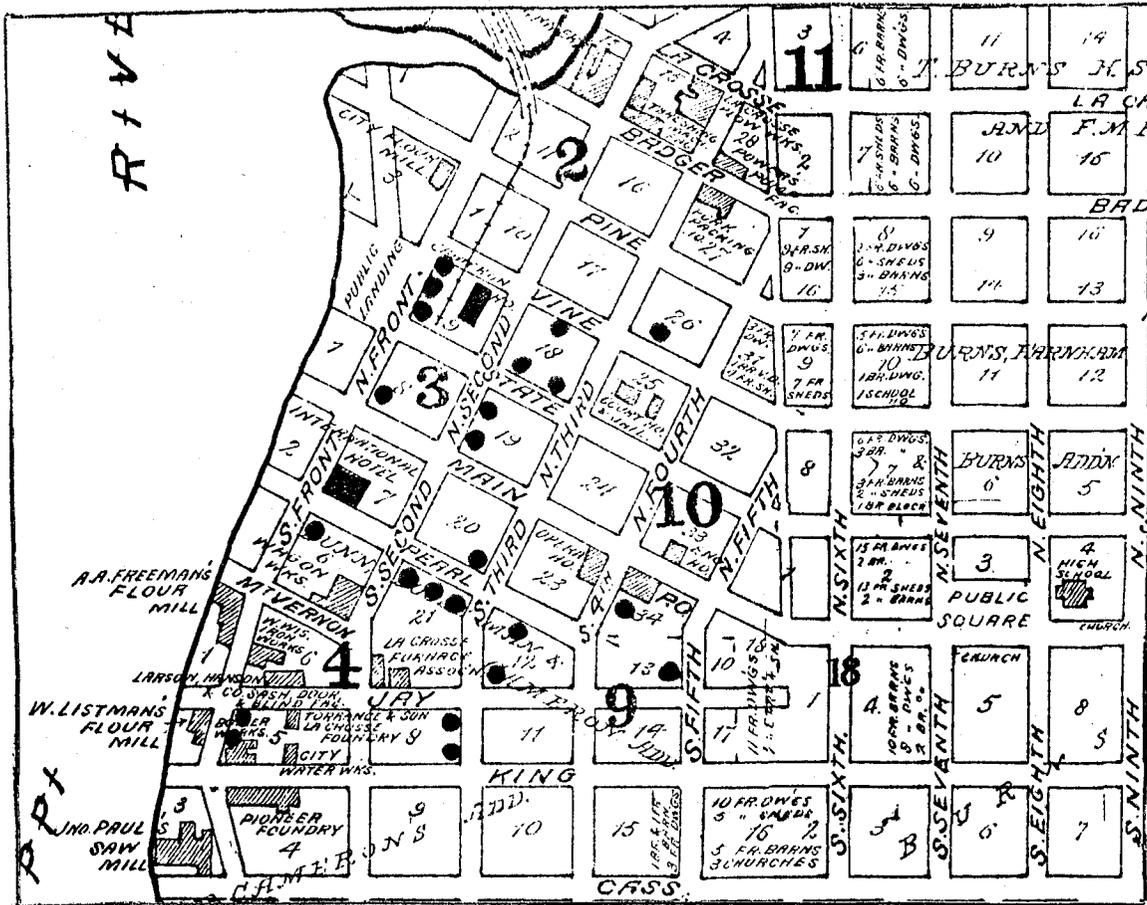


Fig.1 Distribution of hotels in downtown La Crosse, 1884. Source: 1884 Sanborn Fire Insurance Map, courtesy of the Area Research Center, UW-La Crosse.

The clientele of La Crosse hotels ranged from general mixes to markedly ethnic collections. The Schmidt's European

Hotel, for example, proved to be just that, for it housed a majority of eastern Germans and Russians. Likewise, as mentioned above, the Nora House and Pearl Street House catered to Scandinavians. But ethnocentrism was not exclusive to Europeans. Two of the larger facilities, Mrs. A.E. Mill's Esperson House and J.G. Robbins' International Hotel, for example, showed a predominance of Yankee patrons.⁴¹

Most of the establishments, however, did not display noticeable client preferences. The Wisconsin House, the City Hotel, and the American House, each owned by a Luxembourger, housed mixed collections of Germans, Scandinavians, Canadians, and Yankees.⁴² One proprietor, Louis Meister of the Hotel De Lasker, even advertised his lack of class preference in the German newspaper, Nord Stern, by assuring that his facility "seeks not only to honor the needs of important statesmen, but also to offer a pleasant home for the travelling public and for the neighboring farmer."⁴³ But Meister's location had much to do with his message. The De Lasker was situated at 200-202 Pearl Street, next door to the Otto Kiene Pork Packing Company.⁴⁴

Aside from the travelling public, the hotels also housed a great many transient workers. Seven members of a travelling musical troupe turned up as lodgers at the Revere House in the 1880 Census. Quite often, clients were rivermen or railroad employees. A Northside innkeeper by the name of

Winston, for instance, housed predominantly railroad workers.⁴⁵

A substantial number of "clerks" also lodged at various hotels in the downtown area, presumably within walking distance of their places of employment.⁴⁶ Whatever their occupations, these people must have been rather well paid. The rates at downtown hotels ranged from \$1.50 to \$2.00 per day. This was roughly equivalent to the average daily wage.⁴⁷

More often than not, hotels provided rooms for employees. The 1880 Census recorded anywhere from one to thirty-two employees in residence at various establishments.⁴⁸ The latter extreme, the International Hotel, was one of the more successful lodging facilities in early La Crosse. As the self-proclaimed "best \$2.00 house in the Northwest," it was better able to afford the expense.⁴⁹ Of course, it was an expense calculated to save in the long run. By housing or feeding employees, an innkeeper lowered his or her cost of living, thus keeping wages down as well.

Services provided by the hotels varied according to size and affordability. Most had a saloon, as drinking, gambling, and billiards were popular pastimes in La Crosse. The larger facilities included dining rooms. Some of the smaller ones had a common kitchen.⁵⁰

The Cameron House, probably the finest of La Crosse hotels during the 1880s, offered not only a main dining room, but also private eating and reception rooms, parlors, and a lounge that was a favorite afternoon stop for the local elite, including Frank Hixon, James J. Hogan, and Dr. Frank Powell. The Cameron catered to a special class of traveller as well. President Grover Cleveland, for example, stayed there during an 1888 visit to La Crosse.⁵¹

Aside from these amenities, the hotel was also reputed to have housed several "attractive unattached young ladies" on the third floor.⁵² This sort of thing was apparently rather common. Not to be outdone, the International Hotel, the Cameron's closest competitor, included among its many offerings a Turkish bath.⁵³

Commercial boarding houses lacked the lavish enticements of hotels, although many doubled as saloons. Compared to hotels, they were by and large the lodging places of the common worker. The occupations of boarders in these facilities were almost invariably blue collar.⁵⁴ Likewise, the distribution pattern showed a marked proximity of boarding houses to mills, foundries, and factories.⁵⁵

This was particularly true of North La Crosse. In 1884, for example, sixteen boarding houses operated between Gould and St. Paul streets. Of that total, thirteen were situated on

Mill Street, directly across from the sawmill yards of N.B. Holway, P.S. Davidson, and the La Crosse Lumber Company.⁵⁶

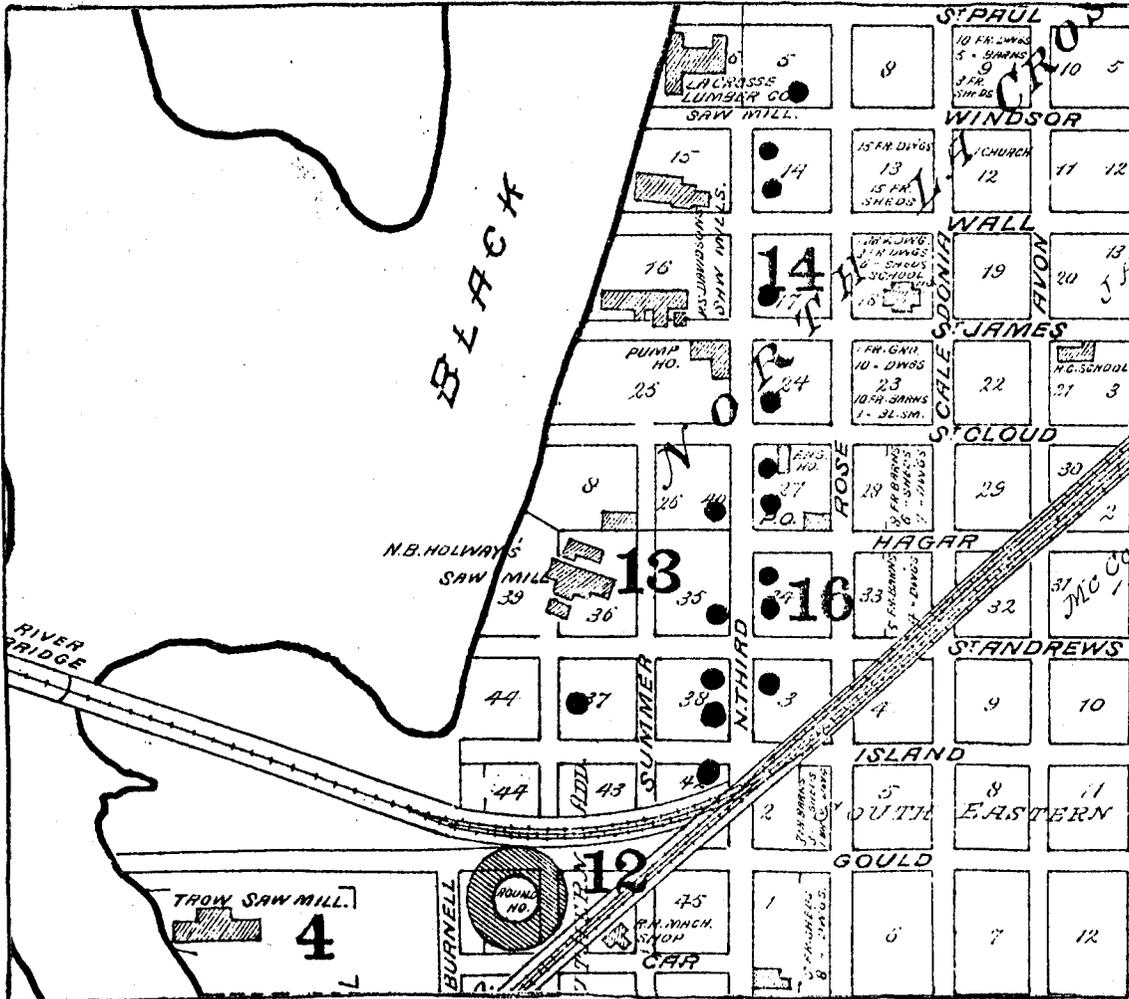


Fig. 2 Distribution of boarding houses in North La Crosse. Source: 1884 Sanborn Fire Insurance Map, courtesy of Area Research Center, UW-La Crosse.

In 1880, the Northside had the greatest amount of boarding houses with a total of twenty-one. Yet commercial boarding was by no means restricted to that area. The First Ward

contained fourteen houses, the Second and Third Wards, six and twelve respectively. The Fourth Ward had the fewest boarding facilities, with three. All three were located near the eastern boundary of the Second Ward. These houses may as well have been included in the Second's enumeration, for they had little in common with the white-collar stronghold that was the Fourth.⁵⁷

While most boarding houses were run by household heads or saloonkeepers, some were also run by local companies. In the lumber industry, for example, it was a fairly common practice to operate boarding facilities as part of a larger attempt to control various aspects of production, in this case, labor. In a similar manner, sawmill workers often received wages in the form of "due bills." These allowed the lumber companies to divert actual payment for labor until the fall, when sawmill production came to a close.⁵⁸

While this may have been considered sound management from the standpoint of the lumbermen, the due bill system often rendered the millworker unable to afford housing. Thus, room and board was "provided" through company-run houses. At least two such facilities existed in North La Crosse in 1880. On Gillette Street, for example, thirteen men boarded at a McDonald Bros. facility. Similarly, the R. M. Mooer company owned a dwelling near its sawmill on Rose and Gillette. This particular house included a kitchen and a large dining room.⁵⁹

The housing of female industrial laborers went beyond the predominantly economic motivations that inspired male boarding. While the wage control benefits of housing women were certainly not ignored, the issue of social control was a more important element of this practice. This was an example of the phenomenon in American women's history known as the "domestic ideology," or the glorification of the woman as the "creator of the home."⁶⁰

In the middle to late nineteenth century there emerged an attitude of "paternalism" toward females in the workplace. Males in both management and labor generally held that, if the existence of women in industry was indeed an "unfortunate necessity," at least steps must be taken to ensure that a woman's future role as homemaker was not endangered. One of the protective measures taken was the collective housing of female labor.⁶¹ In these facilities, tenant mobility was controlled and curfews were strictly enforced. Ostensibly, this was only an exercise of management's "concern" for the moral and physical protection of the mothers of future generations, not to mention wonderful public relations. Underlying all this however, was the deeper reality of an attempt toward maximum control over the lives of workers, a task made easier through the prevailing domestic ideology.

Downtown La Crosse contained two female boarding houses in 1884, one at 308 North Second and the other at 223 South

Front.⁶² It is difficult to determine exactly who ran these houses though, as both were located amidst various factories, stores, and mills. Proximity, at least in the case of the Front Street facility, offers a possible clue. It was located across from the La Crosse Knitting Works.⁶³

George Zeisler and John Gund, the brewers, each owned a boarding house. But these men not only housed their employees, they lived with them as well.⁶⁴ This situation differed from that of sawmill or factory housing. The boarding of skilled or semiskilled workers such as brewers, butchers, carpenters, and marblecutters did not represent any modern industrial scientific management scheme. Rather, it was part of the old guild-based European artisan tradition in which apprentices and journeymen were required to live with the master.⁶⁵ Evidence of strikes in 1880s Milwaukee by bakers "against being compelled to board with employers" suggest that this tradition may have been eroding during this time.⁶⁶

By and large however, management of boarding houses in La Crosse usually took place within a family unit. Generally, the male head of household served as manager unless he was employed elsewhere, in which case his wife ran the business. As in most professions of the nineteenth century, women were under-represented as boarding house managers. Out of fifty-six boarding houses in La Crosse in 1880, women ran only eleven. Three of these women were married to men who worked

outside the home. The rest were either divorced, widowed or single.⁶⁷

First Ward.....	4:10
Second Ward.....	1:5
Third Ward.....	1:11
Fourth Ward.....	0:3
Fifth Ward (North La Crosse)....	5:16

Fig. 3 Ratio of female boarding house managers to male by ward. Source: 1880 U.S. Census of La Crosse.

Despite the heavy commercial boarding presence in 1880s La Crosse, the fact remains that 90 percent of all non-hotel lodging took place in augmented households. The majority of these households included heads with families.⁶⁸ The motivation for this type of boarding activity appears to have been more socially-inspired than profit driven, although economic maintenance was certainly a factor.

An examination of the relationships between heads and boarders shows that most fell under one of three primary categories: occupational, ethnic, or familial.⁶⁹ A ward-by-ward analysis shows the most frequent relationship to have been ethnic. The most pronounced examples of this were the Third and Fifth Wards, claiming 42 and 36 percent of augmented households respectively. The ethnic orientation

was prevalent in all other wards except the Second, which demonstrated a 43 percent occupational tendency.⁷⁰

Occupational connections between heads and boarders did not always involve hierarchy, such as that seen in the traditional artisan structure. Many appear to have been merely relationships that originated in the workplace. This suggests that some occupational connections were as much social as business based. For example, household heads Thomas Kinney, C. Wheaton, and Ole Eggon shared the respective occupations of drayman, auctioneer, and raft worker with each of their boarders. Similarly Franziska Muller, a maker of cane seats, boarded a widow who did the same. These differ sharply from situations such as that of a First Ward merchant by the name of Shimmins, whose boarder cut marble for him.⁷¹

Ethnic clustering in both boarding houses and augmented households was extremely common, but the foci were different. Ethnicity generally ran in tandem with occupational similarity in boarding house situations. Conversely, purely ethnic connections prevailed in households with less than five lodgers.⁷²

Differences notwithstanding however, the tendency toward ethnic clustering among boarding families in La Crosse represents a quest for commonality that was typical in nineteenth-century America.⁷³ La Crosse in the 1880s was a

community in the midst of great demographic change. In that one decade, the city's population increased by 10,585 people.⁷⁴ Norwegians, Germans, Bohemians, Canadians, as well as Yankees, were all part of this population swell. While it is true that La Crosse in the 1880s was no "melting pot," neither did it possess large areas in which one nationality lived exclusively. There were a few neighborhoods in which a group showed predominance, like the Yankees in part of the Fourth Ward; but there were no clearly defined single-group "sections" of town.⁷⁵

In the absence of sections, ethnic clustering occurred on a household-by-household basis in the form of lodging activity. Of the twenty-one boarding houses recorded on the Northside in 1880, for example, seventeen showed clear ethnic orientation. Yankee houses predominated with nine, followed by Norwegians with five. The remaining three housed Germans, Danes, and Canadians.⁷⁶ The search for commonality through boarding in cases like these very likely had to do with ethnic tension associated with competition for industrial jobs. While separation at work was not always possible, it became so in their living arrangements.

In augmented households, the clustering of like nationalities served deeper needs than mere separation from others. For recent immigrants, boarding with fellow countrymen provided a safe haven from where the assimilation to American culture could occur within a family setting.⁷⁷

Most new arrivals were single men and women between the ages of eighteen and thirty-six.⁷⁸ Often, they arrived with little or no money, and many could not speak English. But help was available from others who had already made the adjustment.

As stated earlier, some La Crosse citizens assisted newcomers as interpreters at the train depots. But other networks of communication existed for immigrants in the forms of ethnic clubs, foreign-language newspapers, and various churches. These ethnic networks often led directly or indirectly to a housing opportunity, whether it was in a hotel, a boarding house, or as part of an augmented family.

Egid Hackner arrived in La Crosse in 1880. Shortly after his arrival, he "chanced to meet a German, who conducted [him] to the parsonage of the Reverend James A. Schwebach."⁷⁹ Through this connection, Hackner met his brother, a priest from St. Mary's ridge, with whom he stayed until he was "fortunate to find room and board with a family, Flickers by name, on La Crosse and Tenth Streets."⁸⁰

An interesting feature of boarding activity among foreign-born households in 1880s La Crosse was the frequent lack of regard for dissimilarities within a specific nationality or ethnic group. Regional differences, which would have normally precluded association in Europe, seem to have had little bearing on lodging. This was particularly true of

Germans, among whom it was not uncommon to find a Bavarian boarding a Prussian, or a Bohemian living with a family from Baden.⁸¹ There were even instances in augmented households where boarding relationships crossed ethnic boundaries completely. John Hamersham, a Norwegian, provided room and board for a man from Prussia. Likewise, Wisconsinite Gilbert Collier boarded four Norwegian co-workers.⁸²

Once again, this does not suggest that La Crosse was a melting pot of cultures. Ethnic similarity remained the primary connection between boarders and heads in augmented households. The Fourth Ward was especially interesting in this respect. Not only did it contain the fewest amount of commercial boarding houses and the greatest amount of white-collar workers, but also the greatest amount of Yankees per capita and the lowest percentage of heads taking in boarders.⁸³ This phenomenon had become common in the United States by the 1880s. Among middle-class Yankees, boarding activity had come to be associated with lower-class, largely immigrant lifestyles.⁸⁴

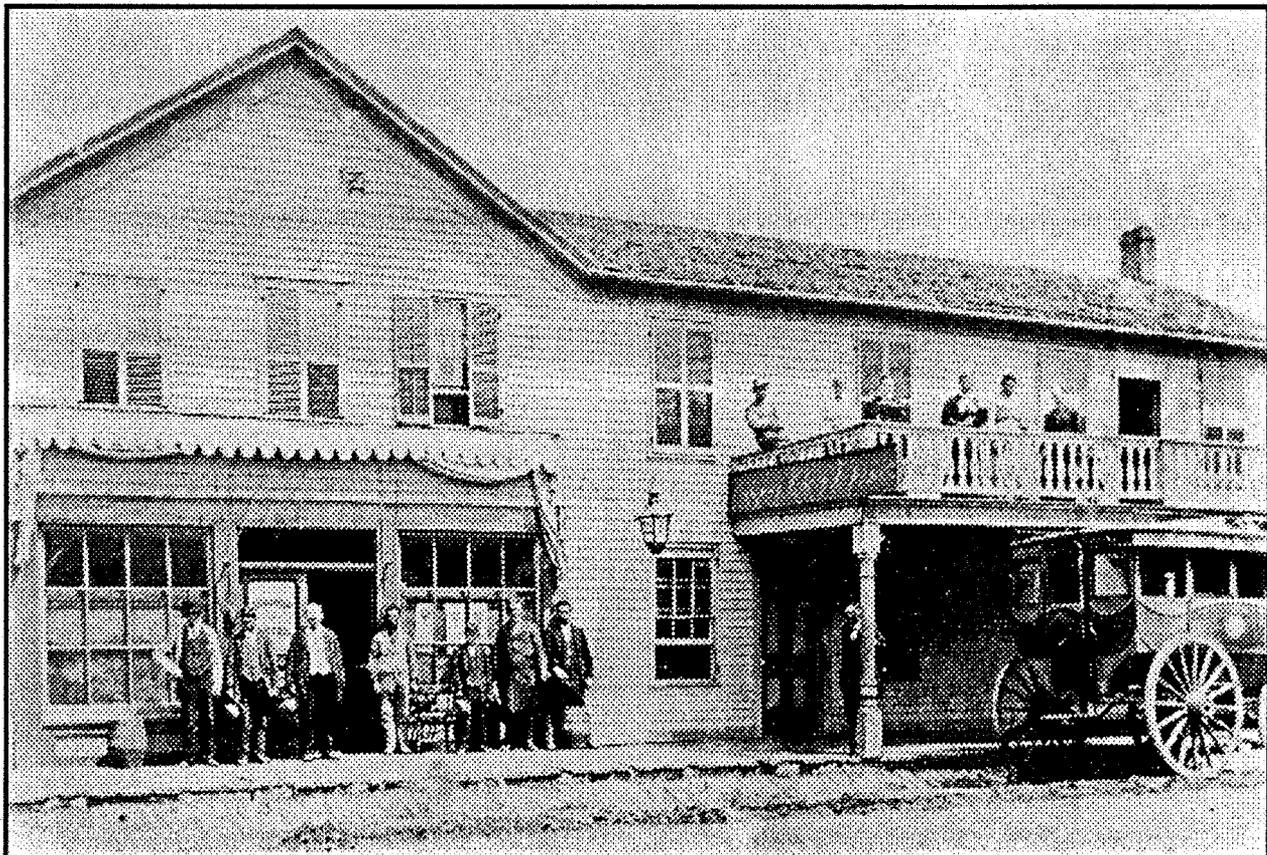
The familial relationships between boarders and heads were less frequent, but they were nonetheless present. Most of these cases involved children aged seventeen or younger. The fact that they were enumerated as "boarders" separated them from the children of the head. In all these cases, however, they either shared the head's surname or the place of birth of the head's wife or one of her parents.⁸⁵

Strangely, the least frequent of all augmented household boarder-head relationships, at least in 1880, were those in which the head was a widow or single woman. Only twenty-one such cases were recorded. Two of these heads, Martha Adams and Kate Champion, actually shared more of an occupational connection with their boarders. Each kept a "house of ill fame," and their lodgers claimed the occupation of "pleasure girl."⁸⁶

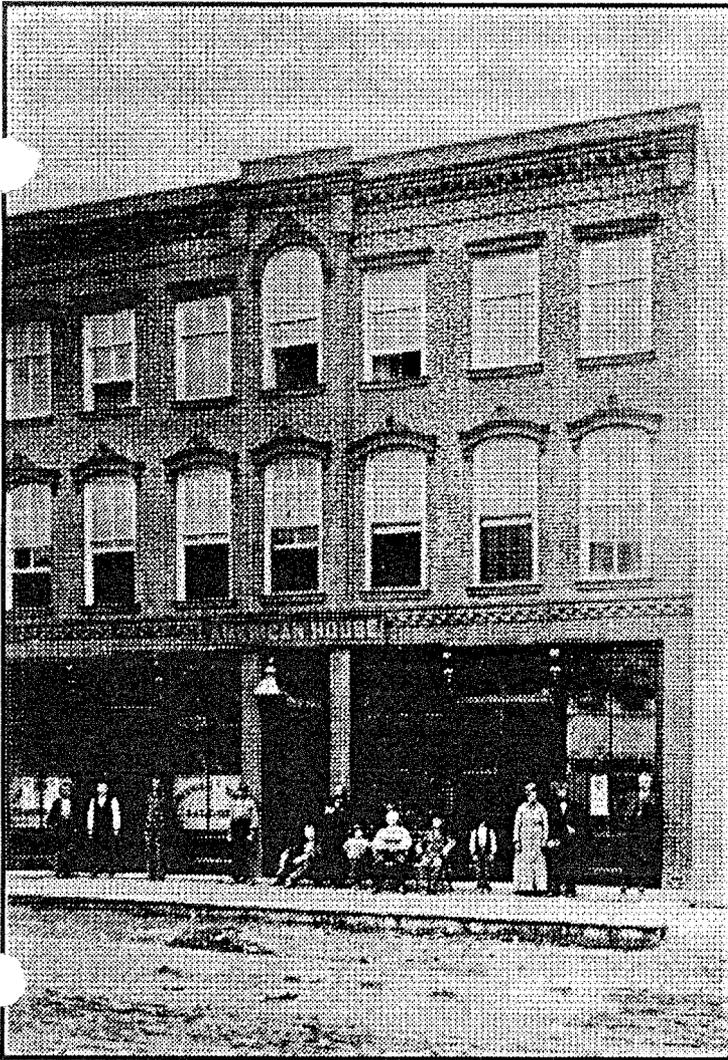
This examination of the phenomenon of lodging in La Crosse during one decade of the nineteenth century represents only a fragment of the data available to social historians. Much of this information is yet untapped, or has been passed over in the search for prominence that has been the trend until late. But the real history of La Crosse is beginning to emerge. It is a history of the people who lived here: the people who worked in the mills and the breweries, those who drank and dined, and even those who just passed through.



Burlington House, 2nd & Pearl, ca. 1887.
Photo courtesy of The Area Research Center, UW-La Crosse.

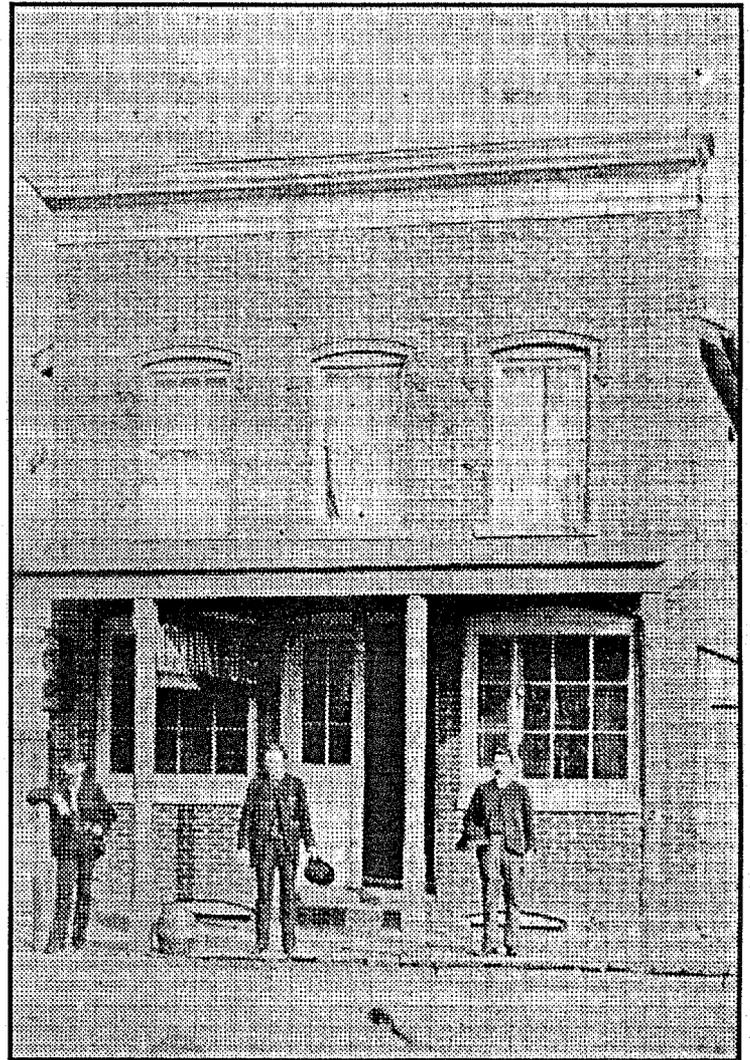


European Hotel, 223-227 S. 3rd., ca. 1880.
Photo courtesy of The Area Research Center, UW-La Crosse.



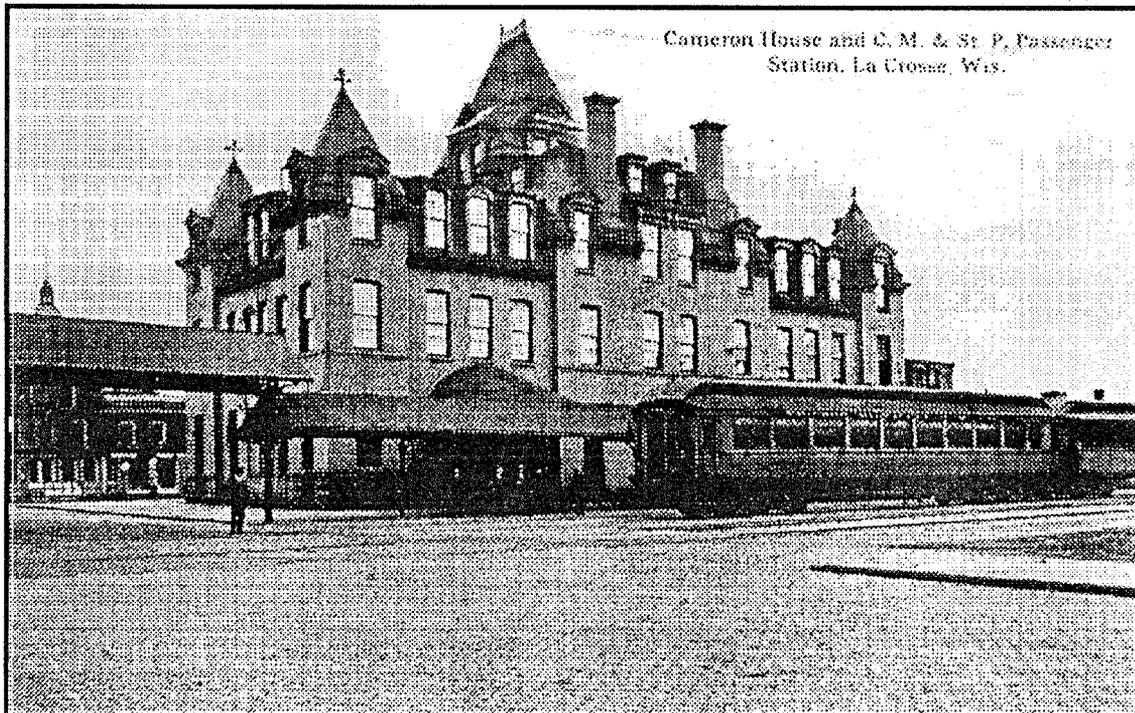
American House, 1880's.

Photo courtesy of The Area Research Center, UW-La Crosse.



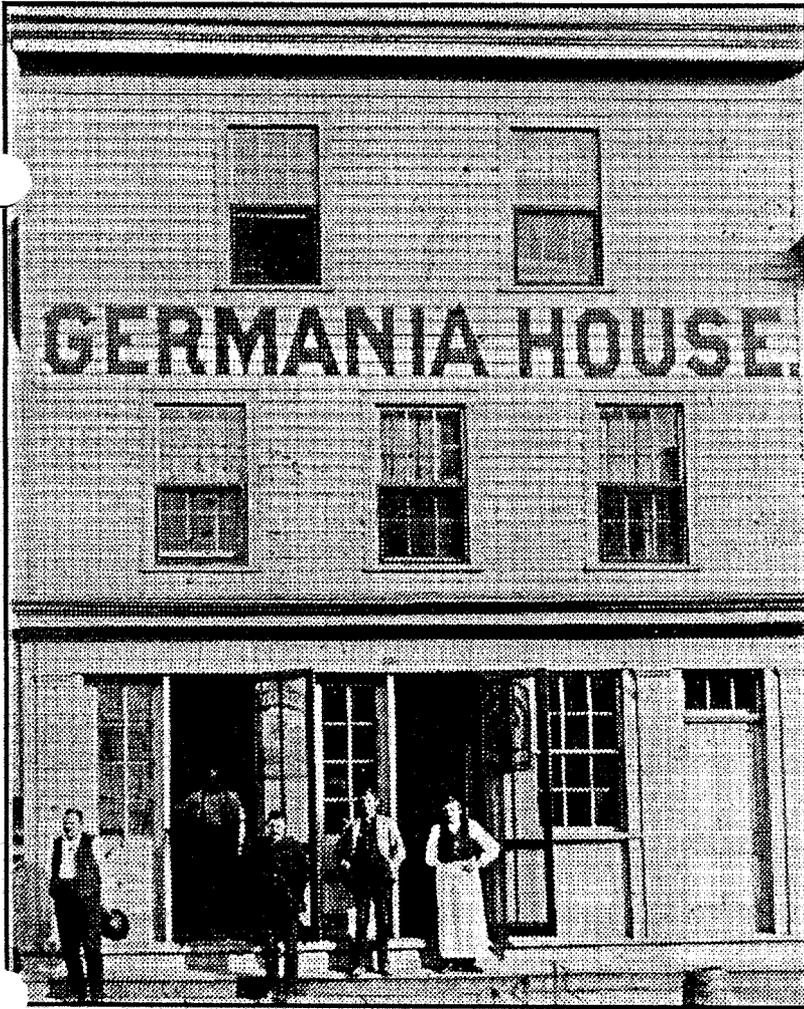
Normanna House, 216 N. 2nd, ca. 1885-6.

Photo courtesy of The Area Research Center, UW-La Crosse.



Cameron House, photo taken ca. 1910.

Photo courtesy of The Area Research Center, UW-La Crosse.

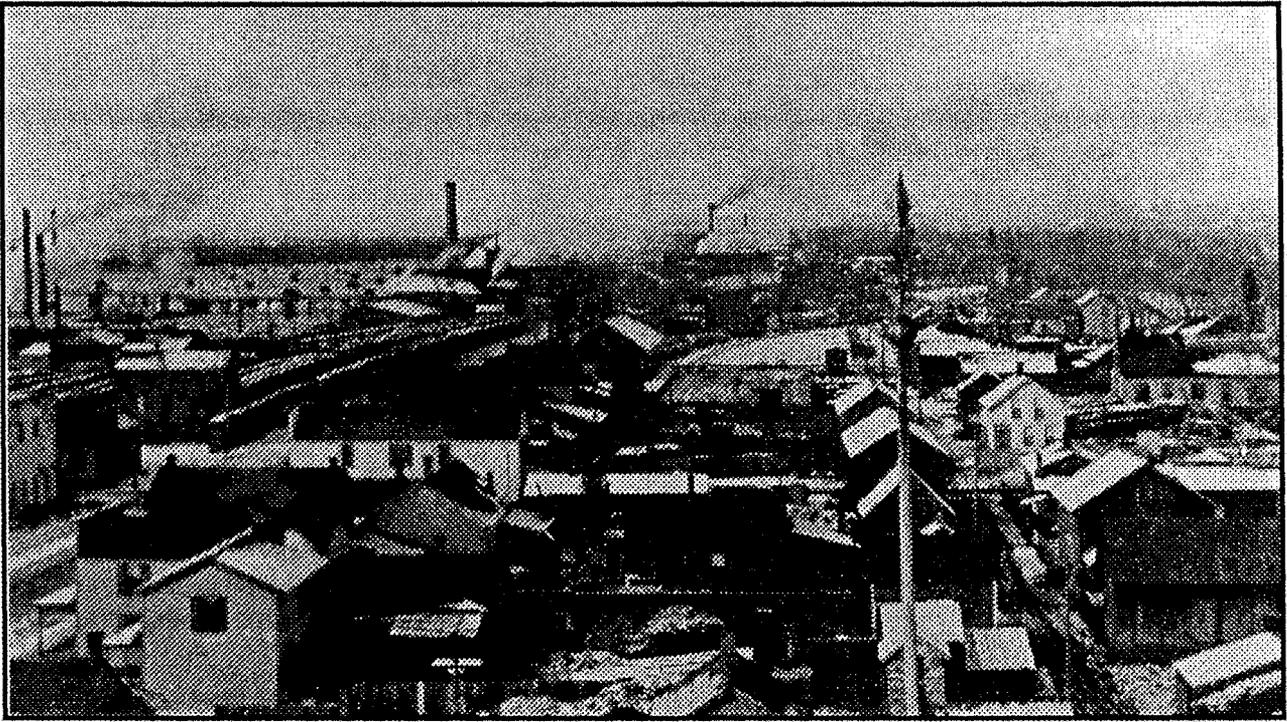


**Germania House, 228 N. 2nd, ca. 1888.
Proprietor John Dresen at far left.**

Photo courtesy of The Area Research Center, UW-La Crosse.



**International Hotel, Front & Pearl, ca. 1880's.
Photo courtesy of The Area Research Center, UW-La Crosse.**



North La Crosse, 1880's.

Photo courtesy of The Area Research Center, UW-La Crosse.



St. Nicholas Hotel, 701 Copeland, photo 1975.

Photo courtesy of The Area Research Center, UW-La Crosse.

NOTES

¹ Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, Tenth U.S. Manuscript Census of La Crosse County, Wisconsin, City of La Crosse, (Washington D.C.: Bureau of the Census, 1880).

² Edwin Hill, ed., A Checklist of La Crosse Hotels and Motels 1840s-1967, Publication of the Area Research Center, Special Collections, University of Wisconsin-La Crosse, 1978.; La Crosse City Directory, (La Crosse: Morrissey and Bunn, 1880-81, 1881-82, 1885, 1888, 1890).; Sanborn Fire Insurance Map of La Crosse, Wisconsin, (New York: Sanborn Map and Publishing Co. Limited, January, 1884).; The La Crosse Chronicle, 31 Jul. 1880, 1 Jul. 1884, and 24 April 1887, advertisements.; Nord Stern, 1 Jan. 1885-8 Dec. 1887, advertisements.; The Wisconsin Labor Advocate, 27 Aug. 1886, advertisements.; The La Crosse News, 17 Nov. 1888, advertisement.

³ I borrowed this term from Herbert G. Gutman, Work, Culture, and Society in Industrializing America, (New York: Vintage Books, 1977), 42. The definition as stated in this paper is mine, however, because it applies to data peculiar to the 1880 U.S. Census of La Crosse.

⁴ 1880 U.S. Census (La Crosse).

⁵ Hill, Checklist.

⁶ Nell Irvin Painter, Standing at Armageddon: The United States 1877-1919, (New York: W.W. Norton and Company 1987), 86-87.

⁷ Albert H. Sanford and H. J. Hirshheimer, A History of La Crosse, Wisconsin 1841-1900, (La Crosse: La Crosse County Historical Society, 1951), 156.

⁸ Myer Katz, Echos of Our Past: Vignettes of Historic La Crosse, (La Crosse: The La Crosse Foundation, 1985), 359.

⁹ 1880 U.S. Census (La Crosse).

¹⁰ Hill, Checklist.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Philip Taylor, The Distant Magnet: European Emigration to the U.S.A., (New York: Harper and Row, 1971), 103.

¹³ Sanford and Hirshheimer, 206.

- 14 George T. Flom, A History of Norwegian Immigration to the United States, (Cedar Rapids: The Torch Press, 1909), 226.
- 15 Sanborn Map, sec. 2.
- 16 Sanford and Hirshheimer, 207.
- 17 Mrs. T.S.V. Wroolie, "An Immigrant's Memories," La Crosse County Historical Sketches: Series Seven, (La Crosse: La Crosse County Historical Society, 1945), 78-79, 82.
- 18 Ibid., 79.
- 19 1880 U.S. Census (La Crosse), Second Ward, 20, 36-37.
- 20 Nord Stern, 1 Jan. 1885, 3, advertisement; 5 Feb. last page, advertisement.
- 21 Flom, 225.
- 22 Taylor, 103.
- 23 Hill, Checklist.
- 24 Sanford and Hirshheimer, 156. Sawmill output actually reached its second-highest level of the decade in 1883 (225 million board feet).
- 25 The La Crosse Sunday News, 2 Dec. 1883, 1.
- 26 Hill, Checklist.
- 27 Sanborn Map, sec. 3.
- 28 La Crosse Illustrated, (Art Publishing Company, 1887), n.p., n.a., 29, 41.
- 29 Hill, Checklist.; Sanford and Hirshheimer, 157.
- 30 Sunday News, 12 Oct. 1884, 4.
- 31 Ibid., Oct.- Nov. 1884.; Sanborn Map, sec. 13.
- 32 La Crosse News, 17 Nov. 1888, advertisement.
- 33 La Crosse Illustrated, 41.
- 34 Hill, Checklist.
- 35 Ibid.

- 36 Sanborn Map.
- 37 Katz, 214-217.
- 38 Sanborn Map.
- 39 Robert C. Nesbit, The History of Wisconsin Volume III: Urbanization and Industrialization 1873-1893, (Madison: The State Historical Society of Wisconsin, 1985), 138-139.
- 40 Hill, Checklist.; Sanborn Map.
- 41 1880 U.S. Census (La Crosse), Second Ward, 15, 20, 36-37, 38.
- 42 Ibid., 19, 34, 35.
- 43 Nord Stern, 1 Jan. 1885, advertisement. The actual text read thus: "Das 'Lasker' wird nicht nur dem Ramen bes großen Staatsmannes Ehre zu machen suchen, sondern auch in jeder Hinsicht eine angenehme Heimath für das Reisende Publikum, sowie für das benachbarte Farmer sein."
- 44 Sanborn Map, sec. 4.
- 45 1880 U.S. Census (La Crosse), Second Ward, 24, Fifth Ward, 6.
- 46 Ibid., Second Ward, passim.
- 47 Chronicle, 31 Jul. 1880.; Morning Chronicle, 24 April, 1887, advertisements.; Sanford and Hirshheimer, 211-212.
- 48 1880 U.S. Census (La Crosse).
- 49 Chronicle, 31 Jul. 1880, advertisement.
- 50 Sanborn Map.
- 51 Katz, 214-217.
- 52 Ibid., 215.
- 53 Sanborn Map. sec. 3.
- 54 1880 U.S. Census (La Crosse).
- 55 Sanborn Map.
- 56 Ibid.
- 57 1880 U.S. Census (La Crosse), Fourth Ward, passim.

- 58 Robert F. Fries, Empire in Pine: The Story of Lumbering in Wisconsin 1830-1900, (Madison: The State Historical Society of Wisconsin, 1951), 126, 206-210.
- 59 1880 U.S. Census (La Crosse), Fifth Ward 37, 59.; Sanborn Map, sec. 17.
- 60 Alice Kessler-Harris, Out to Work: A History of Wage-Earning Women in the United States, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1982), 50.
- 61 Ibid., 64, 142, 162.
- 62 Sanborn Map, secs. 2, 4.
- 63 Ibid. sec. 4.
- 64 1880 U.S. Census (La Crosse), First Ward, 7, Third Ward, 69.
- 65 Kathleen Neils Conzen, Immigrant Milwaukee 1836-1860: Accommodation and Community in a Frontier City, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1976), 56-57.
- 66 Commissioner of Labor, Third Annual Report of the Commissioner of Labor 1887: Strikes and Lockouts, (Washington D.C.: GPO, 1888), 608.
- 67 1880 U.S. Census (La Crosse).
- 68 Ibid.
- 69 Ibid., It must be noted that a considerable amount of overlap existed with regard to ethnic and occupational distinctions. This paper attempts to examine the **primary** connection between boarders and heads. Given this, "ethnic connection" refers to boarders and heads who shared the same ethnicity but dissimilar occupations. "Occupational connection" denotes boarders and heads whose primary relationship was their work (e.g. "Marble Merchant"/"Marble Cutter," First Ward, 59). This distinction may or may not include ethnic similarities.
- 70 1880 U. S. Census (La Crosse).
- 71 Ibid., First Ward, 26, 48, 59, Second Ward, 26, 27.
- 72 Ibid., passim.
- 73 Conzen, 55-59.
- 74 Sanford and Hirschheimer, 206.
- 75 1880 U.S. Census (La Crosse).

76 Ibid., Fifth Ward, 1, 2, 9-11, 13-17, 20, 23, 28, 29, 37, 41, 46, 59.

77 Conzen, 55-57.

78 Edward A. Steiner, On the Trail of the Immigrant, (New York: Arno Press and The New York Times, 1969), 114-115.

79 Egid Hackner, "Records and Reminiscences", La Crosse County Historical Sketches: Series Seven, (La Crosse: La Crosse County Historical Society, 1945), 12.

80 Ibid., 12-13.

81 1880 U.S. Census (La Crosse), Second Ward, 27, Third Ward, 45.

82 Ibid., First Ward, 37, Third Ward, 12.

83 Ibid., Fourth Ward, passim.

84 John Modell and Tamara K. Hareven, "Urbanization and the Malleable Household: An Examination of Boarding and Lodging in American Families", Journal of Marriage and the Family 35 (1973): 478.

85 1880 U.S. Census (La Crosse).

86 Ibid., Second Ward, 30, 31.

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