

University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire

Building Relations:
The Creation of Eau Claire's Town Gown Community

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It saddens me that those old garden plots have long since disappeared under mattered weeds. College students live on the big block now and college kids know tomatoes as a pink styrofoam slice in a whopper.

--Jean Quella Hazelton, *The Mayor of Water Street*

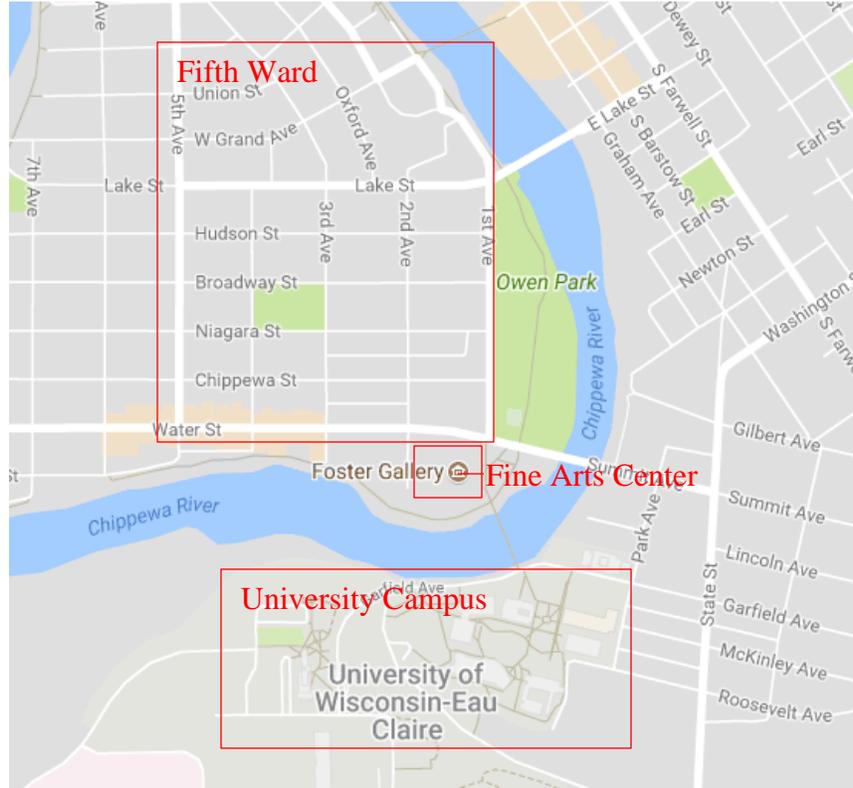
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Abstract

The University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire has had a large impact on the city it resides in. Through enlargement of the campus and increased student population, the University has been able to change the make-up of the downtown area. This can especially be seen through examining the changes the popular Water Street has gone through since the University was built. This essay will explore the increase in the student population and the growth of the University's campus and how that has directly affected the makeup of Water Street. Looking at the years 1920-1930, 1960-1970, and 1990-2000 it can be seen how Water Street has been reshaped to serve primarily the needs of the University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire and its students, faculty, and staff. This will be done by exploring changes in businesses, interactions between the community and the University, and residential patterns in the nearby area of Water Street. The analysis of documents by the city manager, historical data from the Eau Claire City Directories, and census data of the Water Street district provide the information to understand these changes. This paper contributes to the overall understanding of the impact that the University has had on the Eau Claire area in a non-academic way. Types of businesses that have come and gone and how houses and their residents have changed all impact Eau Claire overall, and they are the result of the University.

Introduction



Map of Eau Claire Including Downtown Fifth Ward and University Campus
<https://www.visiteauclaire.com/plan/maps/>

Most notably during the decades 1920-1930, 1960-1970, and 1990-2000, Water Street and the surrounding neighborhood was reshaped to serve primarily the needs of the University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire and its students, faculty, and staff. Eau Claire, Wisconsin, established in 1856, had an early history as a lumbering industry. The Chippewa River that flows throughout the city was the ideal place for lumber mills to be set up, and the biggest names in town were lumber company owners. The demographic makeup of the town also indicated the city's largest industry. Immigrants, primarily from French Canada and Ireland, flocked to the city for the lumber job opportunities.¹ By the 1870s, Eau Claire's most notorious street, Water Street, was being developed into the main street it would later become. The No. 1 fire department, which

¹ Barland, Lois. *Sawdust City* / by Lois Barland. 1960, 36

started as two steamers in 1870, grew to become a 21 man, two-story force in 1886.² Pioneer Block, which still resides from 401 to 409 Water Street, was built in 1881 and was the start of the business center on the street.³ The area surrounding Water Street reflected a different Eau Claire than the blue-collar city the lumber industry created. While many household heads were still involved in the lumber industry, an economic census reveals a larger concentration of white-collar, middle-class workers.⁴ Instead of being single or young men, the ‘Fifth Ward’ was primarily a family neighborhood, and less than 40% of heads of households were foreign born.⁵

In the early 1900s, Eau Claire began transitioning from lumber to the manufacturing industry and automobiles were increasing in popularity, hinting at the pattern of modernization that continued in the post-war period of WWI. Jane Hieb wrote in her book *Eau Claire: Heartland of the Chippewa Valley*, “autumn of 1926, Eau Claire claimed to be experiencing the greatest industrial prosperity of any city in the state.”⁶ The twenties saw the improvement and production of roads and highways and home building reached its all-time high until after the Second World War:⁷ “1927 Eau Claire had the largest period of new construction with the addition of 140 new homes and fourteen new factories.”⁸ During this time, Water Street also benefitted from the growth of manufacturing, with an increase in automobile repair shops.

One of the greatest impacts on Eau Claire since its establishment was the creation of the Eau Claire Normal School in 1916. Normal schools were secondary schools that were created specifically to train new teachers due to the increased emphasis on education in the country.

² Barland, 91

³ Barland, 95

⁴ Inderberg, Cathy Mikkelson. Social Determinants of Housing in Eau Claire, Wisconsin, 1880-1920 / by Cathy Mikkelson Inderberg. 1993, 41

⁵ Inderberg, 63

⁶ Hieb, Jane. and Perkins, Elizabeth. *Eau Claire : Heartland of the Chippewa Valley : An Illustrated History* / by Jane Hieb. Partners in Progress / by Elizabeth Perkins. First ed. 1988. 71

⁷ Barland, Lois. *The Rivers Flow on : A Record of Eau Claire, Wisconsin from 1910-1960* / by Lois Barland. 1965, 207

⁸ Hieb, 73

Starting out with less than 200 students, the Normal School transitioned into the third largest University in Wisconsin, with an undergraduate population of about 10,000 students. The school faced a multitude of challenges in its earliest years, from World War I, budget cuts, and the Great Depression. Despite these set-backs, and a state-wide move away from Normal Schools, Eau Claire has continued to prosper – first as a state University and then a part of the UW system -- for one hundred years. In the 1960s, the University saw significant growth both in its student enrollment and in its campus. Enrollment more than tripled between 1960 and 1971 and a dozen new on campus buildings were built. This time of growth had a large impact on the nearby residential areas, more specifically, the aforementioned ‘Fifth Ward’. More students living off campus and greater access to the downtown area to those living on campus not only affected housing but also businesses on Water Street. By the 1990s, this influence of the University had altered the makeup of the area so much that it would hardly be recognizable to those who had lived there in the 1920s.

One of biggest influencers in the way that UW-Eau Claire has been able to develop has been its town-gown relationship with the city of Eau Claire. Tension between the two has waxed and waned since the 1920s, and in the school’s earlier days, the negative relationship restricted its plans for expansion. As the university gained influence and grew in size, it became a more powerful force in the city and no longer depended on community approval to expand beyond its original borders. Today, the town-gown relationship between the university and community is arguably better than it has ever been. Since the movement to suburbs in the 1960s, the city of Eau Claire has worked to redevelop its downtown area. One of the most recent, and largest, attempts in doing so was through the creation of the Eau Claire Confluence Arts Center, a

University-City-Country-State collaboration to provide a 21st century Arts and Performance Center in downtown Eau Claire.

This paper utilizes Eau Claire City Directories that list the businesses located on Water Street, city manager notes that outline the expansion of the University, and census data of the residential area to document the large impact that the University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire has had on the Water Street district. This in turn will illustrate the overall influence that the University has had on the city outside of its educational mission.

This paper explores these by looking at the Fifth Ward area, Water Street, and the University during three transformative decades. The 1920s, which reflects how the economic and cultural life in the Ward before the Normal School; the 1960s, the period of time when the now State University experiences great growth and as a result directly affected Water Street; and the 1990s, when the changes in the '60s has taken affect and the makeup of the ward and Water Street truly show the influence of the 10,000+ students and the University.

Literature Review

Looking at the history of Water Street, there are various levels of context that should be considered along with it. It is helpful to look at information specific to Eau Claire and the area surrounding the street, as well as the broader information on Main Street, USA in general. Then there is looking at the influence of the local University and how it affects the Street itself along with the town-gown relationship. *Tourism in University Cities: The Role of Universities in Place Branding* by Pereira Brando Albino focuses on how a university can affect the city it is in. *Town-Gown Relationships: Exploring University-Community Engagement from the Perspective of*

Community Members by Stephen D. Bruning, Shea McGrew, and Mark Cooper, takes a look at how the relationship between a university and the community can be strained and what can fix it. Finally, *Sawdust City and The River Flows on* by Lois Barland, *Building Excellence: University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire 1916-2016* by Robert J. Gough and James W. Oberly, and *Social Determinates of Housing in Eau Claire, Wisconsin 1880-1920* by Cathy Mikkelson Inderberg provides some local history to the subject, while *Downtown America* by Alison Isenberg give the history of main streets.

The city of Eau Claire has become known as a university town since the University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire was built (originally the Eau Claire Normal School) in 1916. Albino concludes in her research that a university can have a significant role in place branding, and provide tourisms to the city through its name. Often times the school and the cities utilize this branding as a way to improve their image. Schools emphasize the university and the community are a package deal when you attend school there, and the community uses education buildings as cultural centers.⁹ This would especially apply to Water Street in both senses. The school advertises having shopping and food centers within walking distance from campus, and any student attending the University knows of the nightlife reputation of the area. Business on the street also capitalize on being so close to where students are living. Clothing stores sell discounted Eau Claire apparel, many places offer student discounts, and bars enjoy consistent business from students.

In *Town Gown Relationships* by Bruning, McGrew, and Cooper, the authors look at how the town-gown relationship, or the relationship between the communities a university is located in (town) and the university itself (gown), has been strained throughout history. A big part of it,

⁹ Pereira Brando Albino, Sara, and Shaw, Gareth ; Brito Henriques, Eduardo Manuel. *Tourism in University Cities : The Role of Universities in Place Branding*, 2015, 95

they say, is that universities tend to isolate themselves from the rest of the city. This was especially true from 1945-1990:

“when the vast majority of American universities adopted the campus model...self-sufficient ‘cities’ where students could eat, sleep, be entertained, and have nearly all their needs met without ever leaving the borders of campus.”¹⁰

This could be seen on Eau Claire’s campus during the 1960s and earlier, before there was easy access to the downtown amenities of the city. There were resident halls and a cafeteria and many on-campus activities and clubs, but little interaction with the rest of Eau Claire. However, according to the authors, the 1990s called for more involvement in the community as budget cuts made a positive relationship with the surrounding area necessary.¹¹ This change is also seen at UW-Eau Claire with Chancellor Schnack being involved in housing developments and more concerned with student participation in the city.

Isenberg’s writing in *Downtown America* discusses the importance of the housewife in reconfiguring the downtown area. In the 1920s, women’s shopping habits in small towns were analyzed and attempted to be predicted because their consumer choices had big impacts on their local communities.¹² House wives became a big influence on retail because they were seen as the ones who chose which products were in their house. Female shopper density also influenced the mapping of 100% districts, which were designated areas where business were allowed to be located, leaving other designated areas reserved for only residential buildings. These were seen to be peak areas for retailers to set up shop.¹³ There were other factors that contributed to changes in the makeup of downtowns. Increased bus and car transportation gave shoppers greater

¹⁰ Bruning, McGrew, and Cooper. *Town-gown Relationships: Exploring University-community Engagement from the Perspective of Community Members*. Public Relations Review 32, no. 2 (2006): 126

¹¹ Bruning, McGrew, and Cooper, 126

¹² Isenberg, Alison. *Historical Studies of Urban America : Downtown America : A History of the Place and the People Who Made It*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2014., 79

¹³ Isenberg, 81

mobility, which threatened small town main streets, and encouraged out of town big name retailers, like Sears.¹⁴ Zoning also became a factor into where retail shops could be set up. In the 1920s, cities wanted to keep the scattering of businesses to a minimum. So, they created new zoning laws that kept commercial and residential areas separated.¹⁵ It not only determined where current commercial buildings could be built but also any future ones (like Water Street or the Central Business District in Eau Claire).

Lois Barland's *Sawdust City* has long been seen as the most comprehensive written history of Eau Claire. With personal accounts mixed in its timeline, Barland not only provides a chronology of Eau Claire's past, but the social context of living there as well. *Sawdust City* walks through the history of Eau Claire's lumbering industry, the city during the cold war, and the decades of the 1870s-1890s. This books provides useful insights because it gives background information of the creation of Eau Claire, and more specifically, the beginnings of Water Street. It discusses a few of the earliest buildings on the street that are still there today, often in a repurposed form.

The Rivers Flow On is Barland's second installment on the history of Eau Claire, focusing on the 1900s rather than the 1800s of *Sawdust City*. It takes a look at the city through the World Wars, the Great Depression, and its switch to a greater focus on manufacturing. This is important for understanding the topic in looking at how Eau Claire changed in ways unrelated to the University. Businesses that changed may have been because of the push towards manufacturing or because of the overall effect of the wars. Barland is be able to provide that context so it is more easily deciphered what is because of the University and what is not.

¹⁴ Isenberg, 81

¹⁵ Isenberg, 101

Building Excellence by Robert Gough and James Oberly was written by two UW-Eau Claire professors for the centennial celebration of the founding of Eau Claire Normal. It takes a look back through the one hundred years of progression the school has made from the perspective of its Chancellors and their administrations. It not only helps provide insight on what was going on at the university, such as budget cuts and building expansions, but also how the school and its staff interacted with the community. Their book documents a similar change to what Bruning, McGrew, and Cooper discussed in their research, with the school starting as an independent entity and becoming integrated force in the city.

The area near Water Street discussed by Inderberg in *Social Determinants* encompass First Avenue to Fifth Avenue, and goes up until West Grand Avenue. This chunk of land is known as the Randall Park District, or the Fifth Ward.¹⁶ Inderberg concludes that the area, overall, was a middle class, family neighborhood, and the changes between what she outlined and what it is like today shows a changing neighborhood that could influence Water Street. This district has gone through many physical changes in housing. First of all, a third of the houses from before 1900 no longer exist.¹⁷ Tall, intricate Queen Annes have been replaced with more modest cottage style houses. This could be because of fires burning down the traditionally all wood homes more so than tearing them down. Their replacement, though, represents changes in the economic prosperity of the city. As stated by Pierce Lewis, “people will not change [their] landscape unless they are under very heavy pressure to do so.”¹⁸ These simpler cottages were cheaper to make, and therefore only found popularity during an economic downturn at the end of

¹⁶ Inderberg, Cathy Mikkelson. *Social Determinants of Housing in Eau Claire, Wisconsin, 1880-1920* / by Cathy Mikkelson Inderberg. 1993, 9.

¹⁷ Inderberg, 13

¹⁸ Inderberg, 31

the 19th and beginning of the 20th century.¹⁹ More notably, though, are the little changes to the exterior that indicate single family homes being converted into apartment style complexes. Stairways leading to new second stories that are haphazardly attached and multiple doors leading to various additions are the biggest pointers to these multi-family homes.²⁰

Inderberg also looks at occupational patterns in the ward. According to her statistics on the 1920s, when this projects begins, it can be seen that the heads of households are primarily white-collar or skilled workers.²¹ Although, the blue-collar workers in the area would also occupy some of the larger, more expensive houses.²² Inderberg also finds that a majority of heads of households in the district were born in the United States.²³ This is interesting to note because many of the other areas in Eau Claire at this time have significant numbers of unskilled immigrants who migrated to work in the lumber industry. This could mean that those settled in this area were not drawn there due to the lumber boom.²⁴ That would also explain the majority of households belonging to white-collar workers. Finally, married or widowed heads of households made up over 90% of the heads of households, which indicates that the district was considered more of a family neighborhood.²⁵ This connects to Isenberg's argument that the housewife was a determiner of nearby shopping opportunities, as the Fifth Ward was largely composed of housewives, and that is reflected in the businesses on Water Street.

Water Street's history is not only seen through the residential area around it, but also by the popular downtown practices of its time. As seen through Inderberg's research, the Randall

¹⁹ Inderberg, 29

²⁰ Inderberg, 14

²¹ Inderberg, 46

²² Inderberg, 56

²³ Inderberg, 63

²⁴ Inderberg, 66

²⁵ Inderberg, 58

Park district, that Water Street is located in, had a history of being a white-collared, family focused neighborhood. That, according to Isenberg, influenced the kind of business that would have been attracted to Water Street. Barland and Gough and Oberly help provide background as to what was going on in Eau Claire and the university during various decades. Lastly, Albin explains the overall impact a university can have on a community, and the studies of Bruning, McGrew, and Cooper look at the relationships between the two. From this, it can be seen why it is important to focus not only on the local history, but the broader, contextualized history as well.

The 1920s

By the 1920s Eau Claire had been established and developing as a city for 70 years. It had reached a total population of over 35,000 people, and housed one of the largest lumber mills in the country.²⁶ By this time, Water Street had become more than a fire house and a block of brick store fronts, and was serving the needs of the area around it. The Randall Park District, also known as the “Fifth Ward”, ranged from First Avenue to Fifth Avenue, and up to West Grand Avenue, was named after Eau Claire founder, Adin Randall.²⁷ The housing makeup had changed greatly since the city’s creation with many houses destroyed from fires, but no matter what replaced it, the structures in the area represented the family demographics that lived there. In 1920, 93.6 percent of the population living in the Fifth Ward was either married or widowed, and family sizes of three or more made up almost 70 percent. 22.8 percent of households only had a two person family which also represents the young age of many heads of households.²⁸ This adds to the overall makeup of the Fifth Ward because it shows the young age of many heads of

²⁶ Social Explorer (2015), *US Demographic 1790 to Present* [data file], retrieved from <https://www.socialexplorer.com/a9676d974c/explore>

²⁷ Barland, *Sawdust City*, 12

²⁸ Inderberg, 58-59

households. This is most likely because of the job occupations held by most heads. Of the 31 blocks the area observed, 27 are composed of primarily skilled workers or higher, and 15 are white-collar workers.²⁹

The University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire was only just beginning. It had been established as the Eau Claire State Normal School in 1916 and only had 303 students at this time.³⁰ Its influence on the city was fairly limited with having simply one campus building, now known as Schofield Hall, and a majority of students were from the Eau Claire area and lived at home. Since the school did not have a wide outreach, Water Street was a small commercial area for the surrounding family neighborhood during the decade. The school was also going through its own struggles in staying afloat during the 1920s. Normal Schools were not a part of state government, and Eau Claire's budgeting was stopped for a two year period of time.³¹ The 1920s also saw a call to repurpose Normal Schools back into focusing only on being teachers colleges, which Eau Claire did in 1927.³² The school got a big break in 1930, though, when its local competitor, Eau Claire County Normal School, closed, leaving Eau Claire State College as the only post-secondary school in the area.³³

The first tensions in the city and university's town-gown relationship appeared during the 1920s. President Schofield wanted to build an athletic field on what is now known as upper campus. The attempt was blocked by a local judge whose house was located near the desired site. The judge feared that the athletic field would reduce his property value, a general fear of Eau Claire residents in face of the school's expansion. Instead, Schofield had to build the new athletic

²⁹ Inderberg, 46

³⁰ Eau Claire, City Manager. Register of the Eau Claire (Wis.). City Manager: Subject Files, 1950-1970, 1950.

³¹ Gough, Robert, and Oberly, James Warren. Building Excellence : University of Wisconsin--Eau Claire 1916-2016 / Robert J. Gough and James W. Oberly, Maps by Ezra J. Zeitler. 2016. 30

³² Gough and Oberly, 33

³³ Gough and Oberly, 35

field near the main building.³⁴ Schofield was frustrated over having to use land that would be valuable for campus buildings, and the community felt threatened by the attempts of the university to expand past its original borders. The university buying up land and houses will become a consistent source of conflict between the community and the school, even up to the present.

Water Street was still mostly houses with a few businesses mixed in between. Despite being located within the Fifth Ward, the residents living on Water Street did not display the same patterns. Many residents lived above businesses in small apartments, and those that lived in the small houses surrounding were more working class. Many more wives were seen working, often times as salesladies for grocery stores, and the men worked in the local factories or truck drivers. Often those living on Water Street were also those working on Water Street, with many working in the various auto shops down the street. Another indicator of being more blue-collar living is the many men working in at the local tire factory.³⁵ Uniroyal Tire Company was opened in 1917 and soon became the largest employer in Eau Claire.³⁶ But while there was not a large number of businesses, the ones that were established represented the family structure of the rest of the Fifth Ward rather than those that lived on the actual street. One of the indicators of the makeup of the area were the auto companies lining the street. Jacobson Auto Company and Hills Auto Paint Shop provided easily accessible car maintenance during a time when the American family were making the permanent switch to automobiles.³⁷ While Ford's 'Model-T' made cars were more affordable for the average American, they came to represent middle class living. This was

³⁴ Gough and Oberly, 47

³⁵ 1930 United States Census Data, Eau Claire, Wisconsin, retrieved from www.ancestrylibrary.com

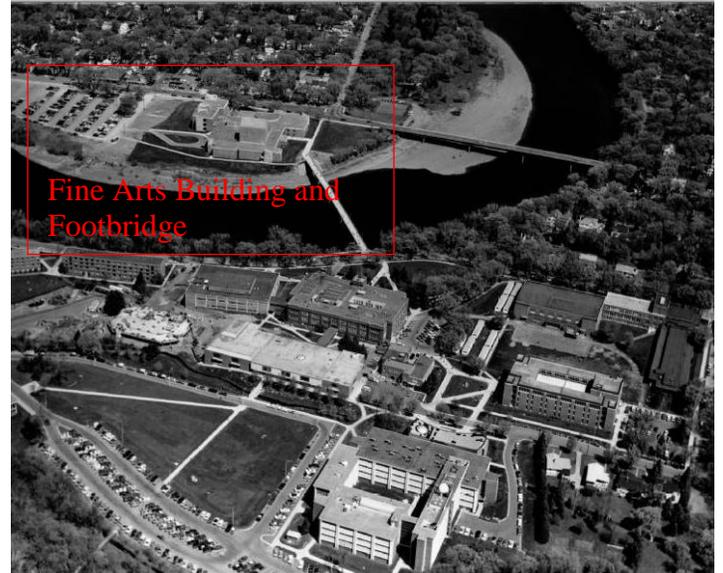
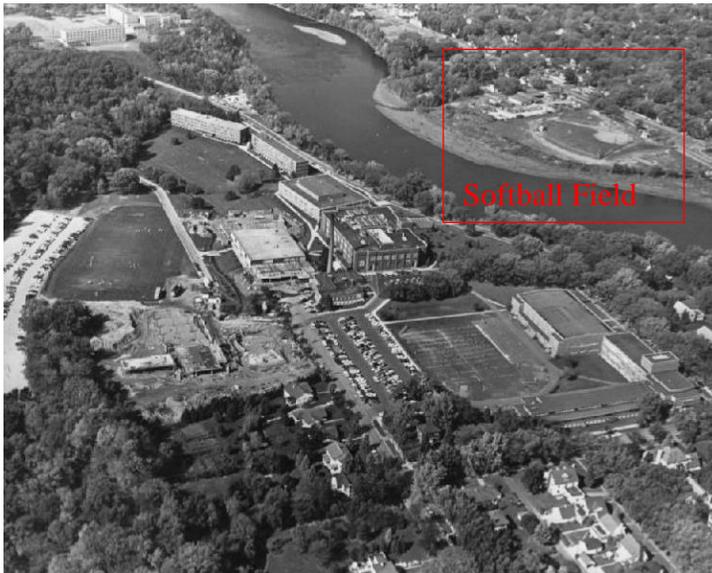
³⁶ *25 Years Ago Uniroyal Factory Closed in Eau Claire*. WQOW TV: Eau Claire, WI NEWS18 News, Weather, and Sports, 21 Jan. 2016, retrieved from www.wqow.com/story/31025498/2016/01/Thursday/25-years-ago-uniroyal-factory-closed-in-eau-claire.

³⁷ *Eau Claire City Directories*. St. Paul: Wright Directory Co., 1920

because they were able to afford the luxury of leisure time that a car provided. The fact that even in 1920 there were multiple shops dedicated to the automobile show that the neighborhood nearest to Water Street, the Fifth Ward, was composed on middle class families.

Another indicator was the number of grocery related stores in the area.³⁸ As Isenberg mentioned in her book *Downtown America*, the American housewife was a large determiner as to where businesses were established because they were the primary shoppers for their family. Housewives were the keepers of homes, which included grocery shopping. Easy access to meats and produce would be a high priority for these women. This shows not only the family dynamic of the area, but again the middle class nature as well. This is because those that could afford to raise families on a single-family income were generally middle or upper class families

The 1960s



Aerial View of Lower Campus, 1962 (Before Fine Arts Center Built)
University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire, Digital Archives

Aerial View of Lower Campus, 1971 (After Fine Arts Center Built)
University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire, Digital Archives

THE 1960s FOR THE UNIVERSITY WAS FILLED WITH CONSTRUCTION AND CHANGING ATTITUDES. IN

1964 Eau Claire changed from being a state college to a state university, and the name changed

³⁸ *Eau Claire City Directories*, 1920

to Wisconsin State University-Eau Claire (WSUEC).³⁹ Leonard Haas became president of the school in 1960 and worked to increase the status and size of Eau Claire State. He began implementing policy to turn Eau Claire into a liberal arts university, and in order to try and decrease the high freshman failure rates, Haas incorporated midterm grades as well as implemented the use of the ACT to determine eligibility of students to attend.⁴⁰ He also removed the two year program for rural teachers, making Eau Claire a four-year university. While the failure rates did not see real decrease until the 1970s, these raised standards worked to encourage students to stay longer. In his inaugural address, Haas declared that the school and its staff and students must strive for a “culture of excellence” and worked for nearly two decades to see that it happened.⁴¹

The 1960s also saw the first use of the ‘Most Beautiful Campus in America’ slogan that is still used today.⁴² According to Albino, the aesthetic makeup of a campus plays an important role in encouraging students to enroll in a school.⁴³ With Eau Claire officially becoming a four-year university, they now had to compete with the state university in Madison. Still developing in academic prestige and undergoing massive construction projects all across campus, the new slogan would be used to try and encourage students across the state of Wisconsin to give the new university a chance.

The biggest focus of Haas, though, was expanding the campus to accommodate the large influx of students that enrolled during the 1960s. Enrollment went from 2,500 students in 1962, to 5,326 in 1966, to 8,600 students in 1971.⁴⁴ The make-up of the students were still relatively

³⁹ Gough and Oberly, 131

⁴⁰ Gough and Oberly, 125

⁴¹ Gough and Oberly, 131

⁴² Gough and Oberly, 139

⁴³ Albino, FIND PAGE #!!

⁴⁴ Eau Claire . City Manager, 1966

the same, with over fifty percent coming from Eau Claire or surrounding counties, and less than five percent from out of state.⁴⁵ Eight on-campus dorms were built from 1961 to 1967 in order to keep up with the growing population, but even with the addition of the Towers dorms in 1967 there was only enough space for about 3000 students on campus.⁴⁶ While many were able to live at their parent's home or a nearby relative, those seeking a more independent college experience found it increasingly difficult. This was not only because there was not enough on-campus housing to accommodate every student, but the living off-campus was strictly regulated.

According to an article in the 1966 *Spectator*, the University's newspaper, in 1964 the Office of Student affairs enforced a set of rules limiting off-campus housing availability to only rooms approved by the office. Rules stated that only university students may rent a given house, the home owner must live on the premises, the home owner must report names of all students that move in and out, women must sign in and out, and a president would be assigned to each house to report discrepancies.⁴⁷ In 1965, 1100 students sought off-campus housing, but only 183 rooms met the list of requirements. Added to this, in 1967 all students not a senior and not living in a relative's home were required to live in the dorms.⁴⁸

Because of these regulations in the 1960s, the student population was low in the Water Street District. There was very little off-campus housing options in general, and those that were available were generally closer to the south side of upper campus or within the Third Ward area of Eau Claire, which had closer access to campus during the time. The family structure was still present in residential neighborhoods near Water Street, with about 40 percent of households having a mother and father with at least one child under 18 present. Occupations were also still

⁴⁵ Gough and Oberly, 134

⁴⁶ Eau Claire, City Manager, 1966

⁴⁷ Russel, Dick. *No Provision Concerning Age of Student Appear in Rules*. The Spectator, Eau Claire, WI, 1964

⁴⁸ Gough and Oberly, 155

primarily white-collar with about 35 percent of workers over the age of 16 working in professional, sales, or management jobs, and 20 percent working in clerical jobs.⁴⁹

Water Street itself was moving away from being primarily a residential street, and instead had been further developed into a business center catering to the growing technological advances that were introduced into family households.⁵⁰ The number of auto shops grew to eight on the four block street, but that is not surprising given the widespread use and availability of cars after the 1940s. The main addition was the television service shops. After the Second World War televisions became the new popular item for middle class families to have, especially after the introduction of color television in the 1950s. Families in the Fifth Ward are the most likely to own a television given that they were still more of a luxury item. Despite there not being a large student population, hints of the growing influence of the university could also be seen. The addition of a motel on the Second Avenue block could serve as convenient housing for visiting parents or prospective students. Also there was the addition of multiple taverns.⁵¹ The stereotype of college students drinking and partying was prevalent in the sixties, with accounts of students littering beer bottles across the city parks and going on ‘panty raids’.⁵² These taverns could have been to appeal to the growing student population, which is even more likely given the seemingly un-family friendly atmosphere they provided. For example, Harry’s Bar on 401 Water Street had accounts of bar fights and being fined for selling alcohol to minors.⁵³

The end of the 1960s saw one of the most important expansion projects for the University in terms of affecting the city of Eau Claire. In the 1970 a new fine arts building was opened

⁴⁹ Social Explorer (2015), 1970

⁵⁰ Occupational information for the street unable to be collected for 1960s and 1990s due to privacy protection.

⁵¹ *Eau Claire City Directories*, 1960

⁵² *Little Loot Obtained in Burglary of Office*. The Daily Telegram, Eau Claire, WI. May 23, 1969

⁵³ *Council Action Annexes 240-Acre Area in Town of Union to City*. The Daily Telegram, Eau Claire, WI, June 14, 1967
Man Injured in Fight at Tavern Here, The Daily Telegram, Eau Claire, WI. May 24, 1961

across the Chippewa River on Water Street, marking the merging of campus with the Fifth Ward. This project was the crown jewel of Chancellor Haas's, who believed that a strong musical program was key to the development of a liberal arts college. He dreamed of a building with a grand concert hall with dozens of classrooms to teach future musicians.⁵⁴ Talk of creating the fine arts hall began in the mid-1960s, and was estimated to cost \$2,700,000 with the expectation that the WSU-System would provide one million dollars and the city of Eau Claire the rest.⁵⁵ The city, however, did not see this as being a mutually beneficial project, seeing it instead as the University trying to get a fancy new music building at half the cost. This reflects a growing strain between WSU-Eau Claire and the community. This town-gown tension had been growing since the 1940s when the school began purchasing houses and land that were residential or owned by the city. It did not help that a part of the creation of the fine arts building required the purchase of private land and the relocation of a park.⁵⁶ So in the end, the fine arts building had to be scaled down considerably in order to fit the million dollar budget it did have.⁵⁷ But it did end up having a great impact on the way Water Street and the Fifth Ward evolved. In order to create easy access to the new fine arts building, a footbridge across the river was added. This not only made it easier for music students to get to class, but also for students living on campus to get to Water Street. This footbridge, of course, only being necessary because of the campus crossing the river, merging the community with the campus. In attempt to gain more funding, Haas wrote to the city manager at the time arguing for the benefits the building would have on the city, of which included encouraging the development of Water Street. Haas stated that many businesses already

⁵⁴ Gough and Oberly, 111

⁵⁵ Eau Claire . City Manager, 1966

⁵⁶ Eau Claire . City Manager, 1966

⁵⁷ Gough and Oberly, 114

expressed interest in adding locations to the Water Street area because of greater student access.⁵⁸

While it is not during the decade in question, the change that the footbridge and the fine arts building caused was already being seen in 1974. Storefronts associating themselves with the school, such as University Musicians Supply and Discount and Campus Book Store, popped up to entice students to purchase their school supplies from them. Fast food restaurants like McDonalds and Big Boppers Submarine Inc. appealed to the poor college students looking for a cheap meal. Finally, there was the establishment of She-Nannigans and The Joynt, bars that are still popular college student destinations forty years later.⁵⁹ The sixties were not necessarily significant because it completely changed the way Eau Claire citizens lived, but because it set the roots for the changes that occurred during the following twenty years.

The 1990s

By the 1990s, the University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire had solidified itself as one of Eau Claire's biggest and most influential institutions. In 1991 the Uniroyal Tire Factory had been shut down, suddenly making the University the biggest employer in the city:⁶⁰

“The combined spending effect of salary and wage income for more than 1100 employees and the expenditures by 11,000 students made the university a leading economic force in the region after 1992.”

The chancellor at this time, Larry Schnack, saw this new position as not only being an opportunity for the university, but also as a responsibility. He became chair of Eau Claire Area

⁵⁸ Eau Claire, City Manager, 1966

⁵⁹ *Eau Claire City Directories*, 1974

⁶⁰ Noga, Robert, *Uniroyal Kingdom Reduced to Bits and Pieces*. The Leader-Telegram, Eau Claire, WI. August 25, 1991

Economic Development association, which sought to grow local businesses and attract external ones.⁶¹

The University campus did not expand during the nineties. The last addition to the campus was in 1981 with the completion of the Human Sciences and Services building, located next to the fine arts building, now known as the Haas Fine Arts Center.⁶² While the population of the school dropped due to the recession, it still maintained its status as the third largest Wisconsin university with 10,400 students in 1995.⁶³ Despite the massive construction projects in the sixties that led to the creation of eight new dorms, there were only enough beds to accommodate approximately 3000 students.⁶⁴ This difference in numbers was more significant than in the sixties though, because there was more demand for the available dorm space. More students came to Eau Claire from around the state and from nearby states (Minnesota in particular). This, plus the relaxing of the strict off-campus housing rules in the seventies, spread university students across downtown Eau Claire.⁶⁵

The makeup of the Water Street district in the thirty years since the sixties changed drastically. It went from being a middle-class, family neighborhood to a lower-class renter's haven. In 1990, about 72 percent of the houses were rentals and about 52 percent of the population were college students. Also, almost fifty percent of the population living in the Fifth Ward live in poverty.⁶⁶ This could be explained by the large presence of college students, who often times can only work in part-time positions while in school. About fifty percent of homes

⁶¹ Gough and Oberly, 222

⁶² Gough and Oberly, 223

⁶³ Gough and Oberly, 227

⁶⁴ Eau Claire, City Manager, 1966

⁶⁵ Gough and Oberly, 155

⁶⁶ Vogeler, Ingolf. *UWEC geog367 Vogeler -- Settlement Geography of Eau Claire, Wisconsin, USA, 2000*, retrieved from wayback.archive-it.org/5258/20160413163042/http://people.uwec.edu/ivogeler/w368/368start.htm.

are also made up of two or more units. Splitting homes that initially would only accommodate one family into multiple units allows landlords to house more students without having to deal with the cost of purchasing and maintaining an entirely separate unit. The final indicator that the changes in living styles in the Fifth Ward is the result of greater student presence is that 71 percent of the homes in the area have seen new residents in the last ten years.⁶⁷ This is because the high number of rentals allows for easy occupation turnover. Students that reside in a rental take advantage of the flexibility of the housing in the area, staying for only the couple of years they are in school, or often times for less amount of time before moving to a new complex.

The increased influence of UW-Eau Claire has not only changed the nearby neighborhood, but Water Street itself. Continuing from changes seen in 1974, the number of bars and fast food restaurants increased. Businesses like the Pioneer Tavern and Erberts and Gerberts Sandwich Shop have continued to be popular staples in the Water Street experience. A significant addition to the street, though, was C and H Properties, a house rental and management company.⁶⁸ This is significant because it shows the increase in the number of rentals and how they are no longer done through a single landlord, but through an organization that controls multiple properties. Because of the significant number of rentals and students looking for housing, owning multiple units and working with students has now become seen as profitable for the area.

Conclusion

The suburban movement and additions of nearby malls moved the hub of Eau Claire in the 1980s away from downtown and to the outskirts of the city. In order to help the negative

⁶⁷ Vogeler, *UWEC geog367*

⁶⁸ *Eau Claire, Wisconsin City Directories*. Dallas: R. L. Polk & Co., 1990

economic effect that this had on downtown Eau Claire, the city has attempted to reinvent the downtown area to further attract business. The most recent attempt, the building of the Eau Claire Confluence Center, not only shows the use of music and arts to increase traffic flow, but also the community and the University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire coming together for a common goal. The residents of Eau Claire County voted in 2014 to contribute \$3.5 million to the \$41 million project.⁶⁹ This is in addition to the \$5 million the city of Eau Claire itself is giving. The University is also contributing not only staff but also funding for the project. The UWEC Student Office of Sustainability recently donated \$71,540 to provide LED lighting to the entire structure. UW-Eau Claire reasoning for the support of the Confluence building is because “the University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire will be able to provide their students with more opportunities to live, work and spend time in the downtown area” through the creation of the center.⁷⁰ This is a stark difference from the sixties when Haas was working to get the new fine arts building built under the pretense of both University and community gain, and the city refused to help pay for it. While the coming together of these two sides does indicate a better relationship, there is still a way to go before the relationship is ideal. Since becoming the highest employer in the city, UW-Eau Claire has not always felt the need to work with the people of Eau Claire in achieving its goals. The most prominent example is the addition of a new dorm on Water Street, the Aspenson-Mogensen Hall. The student housing the new hall provided was needed, but the location and appearance of the dorm was strongly opposed by the nearby residents.

The new dorm is just another example as to how downtown Eau Claire, Wisconsin, more specifically the area of the Fifth Ward and Water Street, was dramatically affected by the growth

⁶⁹ Rich Kemer, *Eau Claire Votes in Favor of Confluence Project Funding*, WPR News, April 2, 2014

⁷⁰ Confluence Project, *Confluence Arts Center Receives Financial Support from UWEC Student Office of Sustainability*, retrieved from <http://communityfortheconfluence.org/news/>

of the University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire. The nearby district spent a century as a family-oriented, middle class neighborhood and in a matter of thirty years completely switched to being an area oriented towards college students, and Water Street went from being a blue-collar residential street, to being the main college business hub in the city. This change occurred due to the expansion of the campus and the student population during the sixties that resulted in more students traveling from outside the Chippewa Valley area and for the campus itself to cross the river onto Water Street. The changes in the businesses on Water Street along with the changes of who lived in the neighborhood support that as the University grew, Eau Claire changed to serve the needs of the University. Businesses on Water Street switched from appealing to the nuclear family through grocery shops and technology, to appealing to college students through bars and fast food restaurants. The neighborhood switched from being primarily single family homes where the head of household was most likely a skilled or white-collar worker, to at least half the population being in poverty and the majority of homes being rentals. These switches occurred directly after the University increased its student population by nearly double, and created a new fine arts building across the Chippewa River and a foot bridge that provided easier access to Water Street, and vice versa to campus. This has ultimately caused tension as the university continues to grow in size and influence, but also creating new opportunities for collaboration in an ongoing town-gown relationship.

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