

When Waupaca Was Young, 1909  
By J.J. Johnson

The Waupaca Republican Post on March 25, 1909 announced that the city council had approved an ordinance to determine how to cover the costs to install a main sewer system and septic tanks. According to the Waupaca Record's publication the following day, the issue of the city bonding for a \$10,000 system to provide service to the First, Second and Fourth Wards was to be voted on. The referendum was the result of a petition turned in to the council in the first part of February.

In Waupaca's early days, businesses on the east side of North Main Street were built up to the river's edge and many owners constructed outhouses onto their buildings that extended out over the river. This practice had ceased long before the river's course, which was wider and contained two islands, was changed around 1933.

In 1907 a city-wide sewer system consisting of four sewer districts was planned and published in all the local newspapers that June. Besides establishing the boundaries for the sewer districts, the proposal specified that the sewer lines were to be placed in the middle of the streets. At that time Mayor Alfred Johnson vetoed the proposition on the grounds that it would require newly laid macadam streets to be torn up to install the pipes and he felt that would be a poor use of public funds. His veto was over-riden by the council.

The Record noted on June 20, 1907, "There is a general demand that a sewerage system, or at least the main sewer, be built as soon as possible on all the principle residence streets."

On March 26, 1909 the Record provided "a little information in regard to the payment of the bonds. The lot owners abutting the main sewer on each side of the street will pay fifty cents per front foot, the estimated cost of laying an eight inch sewer. Sewer districts will pay for the pipe in excess of eight inches in diameter and for catch basins, man holes, flushing tanks and sewers thru street crossings.

"The bonds will be given by the city officials but paid by the districts thru which the sewer runs. The Third Ward having a complete system of its own – and not to be built at this time – will not be obliged to pay any part of the loan.

"While the property owners in the Third Ward will bear none of the expense of this sewer there is nothing to prevent voters in that ward voting on this question if they feel so disposed, although it would seem no more than just for them to refrain from voting on a proposition on which they have nothing to pay."