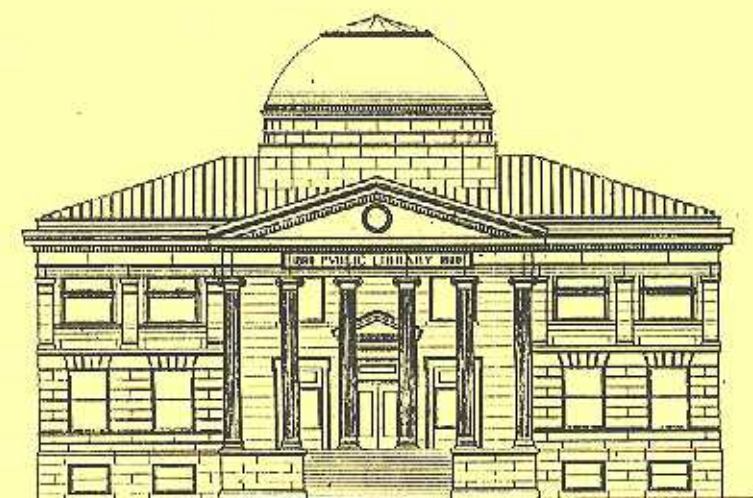


# Guide to William Waters' Work in Oshkosh



Oshkosh Public Library  
designed by William Waters and constructed in 1899.

## William Water's Biography

Few American cities can look with admiration and pride at many of their historic buildings having been designed by a single architect. Oshkosh is one city that enjoys such a distinction. William Waters, architect, lived and worked here for fifty years, from 1867 to 1917. He left the mark of his talent everywhere in Oshkosh, the Fox River Valley, and in many other areas of Wisconsin.

Waters came to Oshkosh as a young man from the state of New York, where he was born in Franklin County in 1843. After attending various schools there, this son of a merchant enrolled at Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute in Troy, NY. He completed three semesters of a four-year course in civil engineering, and then decided to seek his fortune "West." Attracted to Oshkosh by reconstruction opportunities after the great fires that ravaged the city from 1859 on, Waters began immediately designing important buildings such as the State Normal School (1869), and the Brooklyn Firehouse (now Wisconsin Sign Service), also in 1869. A successful career followed.

His greatest recognition came when he entered and won a contest for state architects to design a Wisconsin building for the 1893 Columbian Exposition in Chicago. His three-story building, over 14,000 sq. ft., was huge and impressive, and gave him state-wide recognition.

From 1867 until his death in December, 1917, Waters continued to leave his mark on Oshkosh. Today, we see the Grand Opera House, Oshkosh Public Library, Public Museum, most of our older schools, beautiful churches, downtown buildings, and some of our finest residences (all the design of William Waters). His great success was tied to "being in the right place at the right time," combined with a natural talent for architectural design. Oshkosh was enjoying lumber wealth, and the "barons" wanted homes reflecting not only their personal affluence but also the diversity of their lumber's beauty. Many residences show this, with varied woods in each room. His work in Oshkosh and other cities was varied, including court-houses, schools, banks, opera houses, churches, hotels, stores, and homes. In total, he designed over 150 buildings.

In his own time, Waters was a respected citizen who often shared his good fortune with those who were needy. His obituary tells that he helped as a landlord by leaving rent uncollected during hard times, and supplying free coal and firewood.

Today, William Waters Plaza, across from the Oshkosh Public Library (his design) honors his Memory.

William Waters

1843-1917

"Dedicated to a Master Architect

Who Left Many Elegant Public and Private Edifices

which stand as Monuments Throughout the City of Oshkosh."

William Waters is buried in Riverside Cemetery with other members of his family.

For further information, the Oshkosh Public Library has a complete bibliography of their information on Oshkosh history and historical architecture. The bibliography includes the following books on Oshkosh history.

*History of Oshkosh* by William Dawes

Oshkosh, One Hundred Years a City

History of Winnebago County, by Richard J. Harney

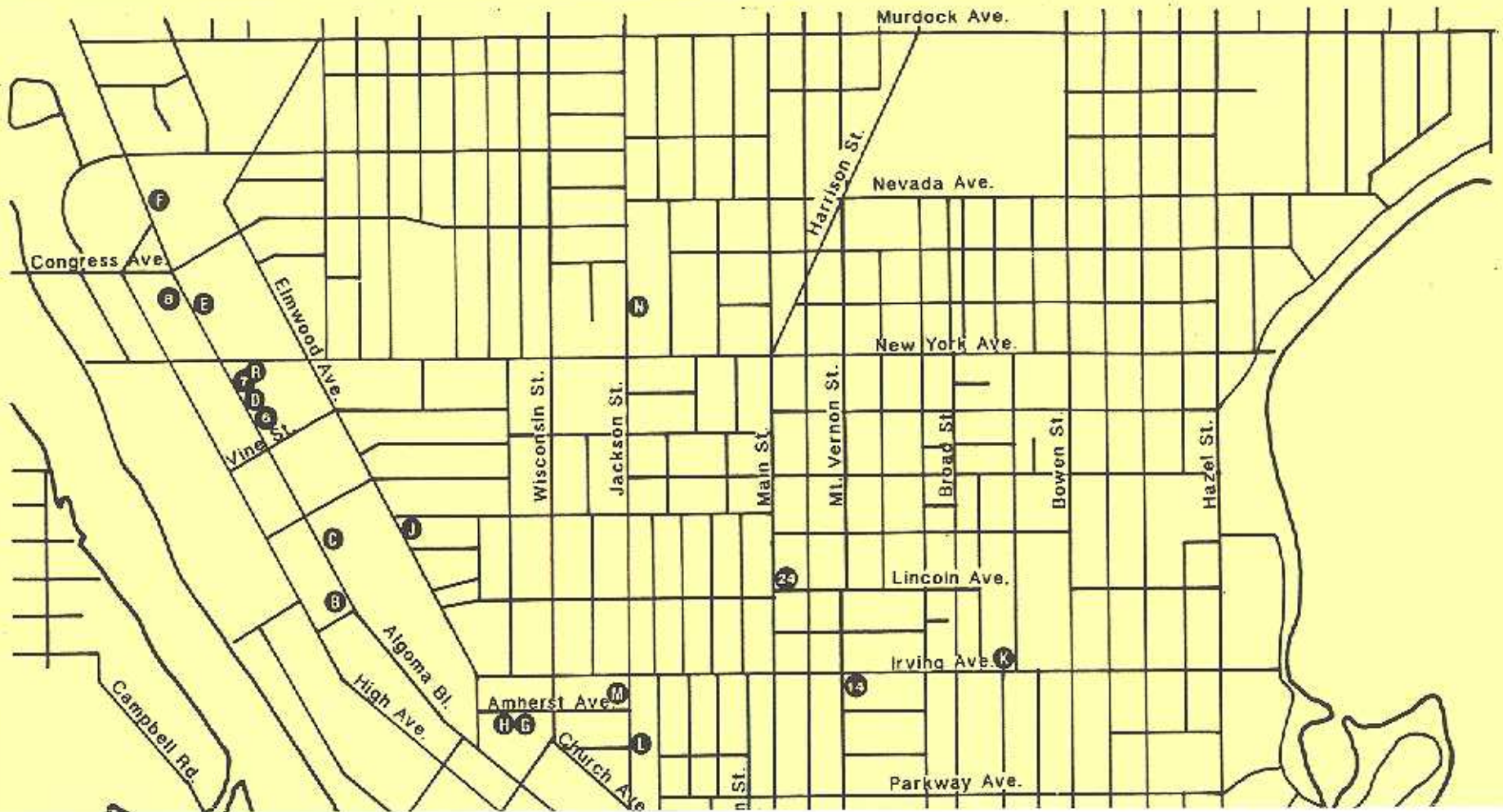
History of Winnebago County, Wisconsin: Its Cities, Towns,

Resources, People, ed. P.V. Lawson

Illustrated Atlas of Winnebago County by George Randall

The library also has a copy of the Intensive Historic Survey done in Oshkosh in 1981. This survey contains information on hundreds of individual structures in Oshkosh by street address.

Prepared by the Oshkosh Landmarks Commission 4/90.





# Locations of William Waters' Work in Oshkosh

## Non-Residential Structures

- |   |                              |    |                                       |
|---|------------------------------|----|---------------------------------------|
| 1 | 101 Algoma Boulevard         | 10 | 215 Church Avenue                     |
| 2 | 110 Algoma Boulevard         |    | Oshkosh City Hall                     |
|   | Algoma Building              | 11 | 244 E. 11th Avenue                    |
| 3 | 137 Algoma Boulevard         |    | Jefferson School                      |
|   | First Congregational Church  | 12 | 100 High Avenue                       |
| 4 | 203 Algoma Boulevard         |    | Grand Opera House                     |
|   | Trinity Episcopal Church     | 13 | 101 High Avenue                       |
| 5 | 240 Algoma Boulevard         | 14 | 207 E. Irving Avenue                  |
|   | Orville Beach Building       |    | Dale School                           |
| 6 | 1120 Algoma Boulevard        | 15 | 1395 Lampert Street                   |
|   | Read School                  |    | American Legion Memorial              |
| 7 | 1174 Algoma Boulevard        | 16 | 120-124 N. Main Street                |
|   | Algoma Blvd Methodist Church | 17 | 206 N. Main Street                    |
| 8 | 1331 Algoma Boulevard        | 18 | 223 N. Main Street                    |
|   | Oshkosh Public Museum        | 19 | 401, 405, 407 N. Main Street          |
| 9 | 138 Church Avenue            | 20 | 414, 416, 418, 420, 420 A N. Main St. |
|   | First Baptist Temple         | 21 | 422, 424 N. Main Street               |
|   |                              | 22 | 432, 434 N. Main Street               |
|   |                              | 23 | 502 N. Main Street                    |

## Rockwell Building

- |    |                                  |
|----|----------------------------------|
| 24 | 808 N. Main Street               |
|    | St. John's Evan. Lutheran Church |
| 25 | 1745 Oregon Street               |
|    | Smith School                     |
| 26 | 17 W. Sixth Avenue               |
| 27 | 106 Washington Avenue            |
|    | Oshkosh Public Library           |

## Residential Structures

- |   |  |    |                        |
|---|--|----|------------------------|
| A | 206 Algoma Boulevard/<br>415 Division Street | I  | 234 Church Avenue      |
| B | 751 Algoma Boulevard                         | J  | 858 Elmwood Avenue     |
| C | 842 Algoma Boulevard                         | K  | 622 E. Irving Avenue   |
| D | 1149 Algoma Boulevard                        | L  | 608 Jackson Street     |
| E | 1304 Algoma Boulevard                        | M  | 647 Jackson Street     |
| F | 1428 Algoma Boulevard                        | N  | 1232 Jackson Street    |
| G | 621 Amherst Avenue                           | O  | 1449 S. Knapp Street   |
| H | 627 Amherst Avenue                           | P  | 1703 Michigan Street   |
|   |  | Q  | 456 Mt. Vernon Street  |
|   |  | R  | 1446 W. New York Ave.  |
|   |  | S  | 303 Washington Avenue  |
|   |  | T  | 802 Washington Avenue  |
|   |  | U  | 816 Washington Avenue  |
|   |  | V  | 1122 Washington Avenue |
|   |  | W  | 1200 Washington Avenue |
|   |  | X  | 1246 Washington Avenue |
|   |  | Y  | 310 Waugoo Avenue      |
|   |  | Z  | 316 Waugoo Avenue      |
|   |  | AA | 421 Waugoo Avenue      |