

# FLOATING FREIGHT on LIQUID HIGHWAYS

The Menomonee River Valley helped make Milwaukee a center for shipping and trade. From 1870 to 1890, the river was straightened and canals were dredged to aid commerce. Factories built right up to the banks made it easy to load and unload cargo directly from the water. Schooners carried Wisconsin lumber, iron ore, and other products to the world. In the 1860s, Milwaukee was the world's largest shipper of wheat.

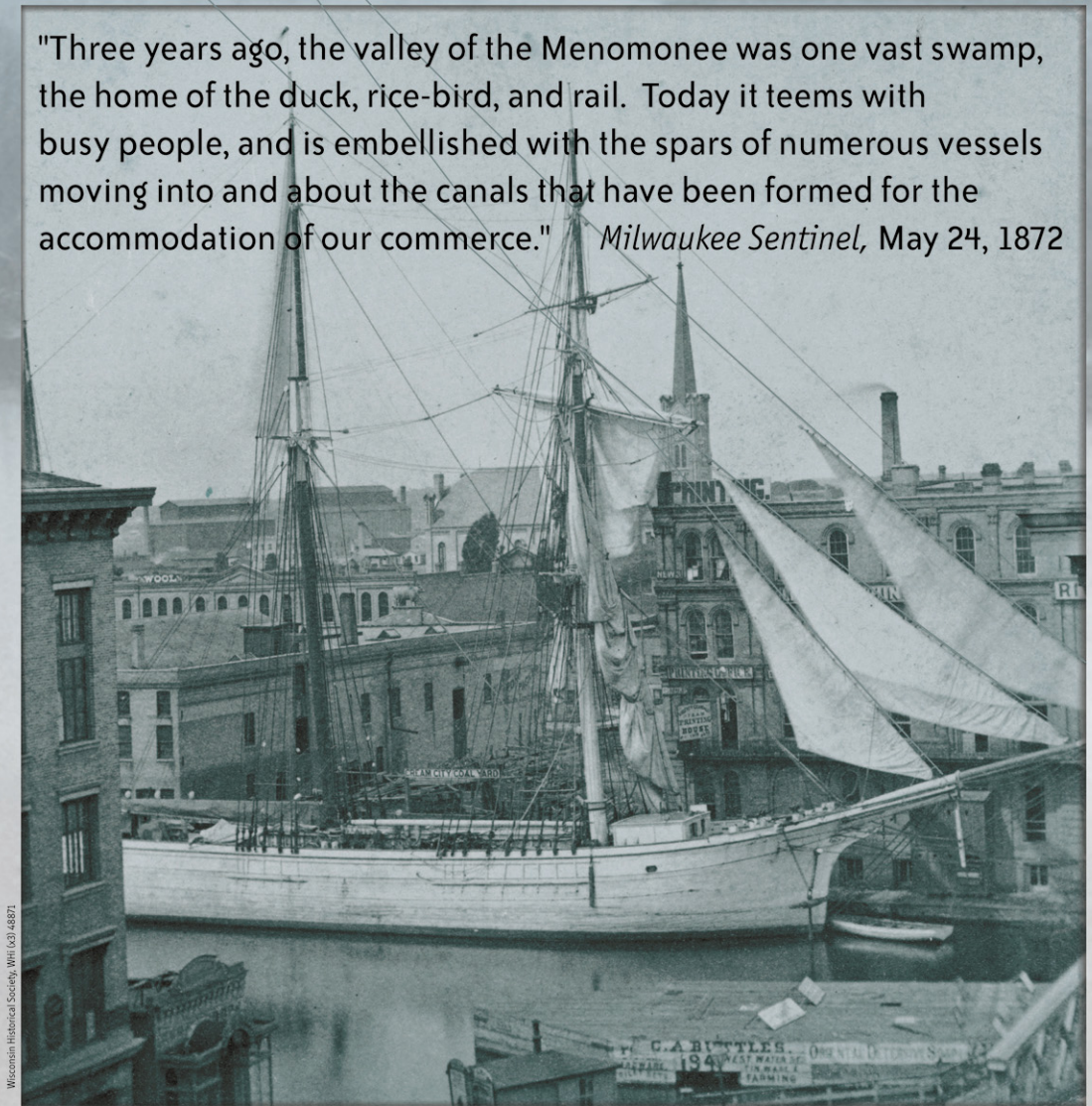
Schooners were the "semi-trucks" of their day — the large-hulled sailing ships filled Milwaukee's waterways by the hundreds. Schooners were popular because they were inexpensive and easy to operate. However, they were often loaded ten feet high with cargo, which made them top-heavy and dangerous.

Many European immigrants got their first glimpse of Wisconsin on schooners and steamships. By the turn of the 20th century, steamships replaced schooners on the liquid highways.



Milwaukee County Historical Society

"Three years ago, the valley of the Menomonee was one vast swamp, the home of the duck, rice-bird, and rail. Today it teems with busy people, and is embellished with the spars of numerous vessels moving into and about the canals that have been formed for the accommodation of our commerce." *Milwaukee Sentinel*, May 24, 1872



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Background photograph courtesy Milwaukee County Historical Society

## LEARN MORE, DO MORE...

Visit our local schooner, the *S/V Denis Sullivan*, on the lakefront at Pier Wisconsin.

Learn about Great Lakes maritime life at the Wisconsin Marine Historical Society.

## HANK AARON STATE TRAIL

Hank Aaron State Trail sign panels supported by the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources, Menomonee Valley Partners, Inc., the Wisconsin Coastal Management Program and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, Office of Ocean and Coastal Resource Management under the Coastal Zone Management Act, Grant #NA03NOS4190106