The flood of 1973 left many parts of the Stateline Area looking like islands in a sea.
The All America City

The 1970s produced Beloit’s biggest natural disaster — a $25 million flood — and also one of its biggest triumphs ... designation as an “All America City.”

In the 1970s, the nation turned away from confrontation on foreign shores and began to look at its own problems.

It was a decade when the nation sought healing after the excesses of protest and the pain of the Vietnam conflict. But the 1960s would not be repeated, and the young adults of the post-World War II “baby boom” generation were frustrated in their quest for the American dream.

The Vietnam war drew slowly to a close, but its veterans returned without a hero’s welcome. The excitement of political radicalism turned sour, and a decade of protest culminated in three tragic deaths at Kent State University in Ohio.

America felt its economic machine stall, and the political bedrock trembled when a scandal that began with a hotel burglary led to the resignation of President Richard Nixon.

Many societal changes made in the political heat of the 1960s lingered on to the betterment of the poor and minorities in the 1970s, although most admitted that the work on their behalf was not complete.

Societal changes continued in 70s

The radicalism of the New Left made way for the more moderate feminist and conservation movements, and Americans at last began to notice the plight of the family farm.

Patriotism was gradually becoming fashionable again, just in time for the 1976 Bicentennial. This time, however, it seemed to strike a more positive note than the patriotism of the 1950s Cold War or the reactionary flag-waving of the 1960s.

America was insecure about its apparent loss of influence abroad, and beset by a weakened economy. The biggest cultural wave was nostalgia, for it was a time of transition, and the future was unpredictable.

The experience of Beloit in the 1970s was quite different.

Although there were setbacks in the local economy, the early 1970s were a time of overall growth, when it appeared that Beloit’s planning in the 1960s was going to pay off.

The city’s I-90 Industrial Park — greeted at first as a political folly — attracted large new plants and, more importantly, created jobs.

Beloit Memorial Hospital had moved into a brand new building in 1970 after a major fund drive completed the $12 million cost of the 260-bed facility.

Industries native to Beloit stayed healthy, for the most part, while those in other cities and states fell to the ravages of “stagflation” and recession.

But there were disasters here. Probably the most memorable event of the 1970s for many was the 1973 flooding of downtown Beloit and part of South Beloit from an unruly Turtle Creek. Industries and individuals were hit hard by flood damage.

Crime, too often a nagging problem for the city, increased during the 1970s, and in the middle of the decade, there was talk of police department morale on the decline.

Unemployment was high, at times over 10 percent. But this was not a disaster compared to what was happening in many other cities.

The celebrations were on early in the 1970s, as Beloit captured a coveted “All America City” honor. Then-Wisconsin Gov. Patrick J. Lucey, center, helped celebrate with Beloit City Manager H. Herbert Holt, left, and one of the architects of Beloit’s successful effort, the Rev. Gustav Nelson.

Continued on page 108.
Seventies

Continued from page 106.

A worldwide oil crisis had forced entire industries to cut back and eventually put stricter speed limits on America’s disgruntled motorists. But Beloiters found it easier to travel — at least to Milwaukee — with the completion of improvements to Highway 15.

The morass of deception and dissembling that became known as Water gate shocked the nation, but in Beloit, government seemed relatively stable least to Milwaukee — with the completion of improvements to Highway 15.

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H. Herbert Holt became the new city manager in March, 1971, succeeding Robert W. Quinlan. That same year, Daniel T. Kelley, a former council president, shifted roles to become city attorney.

In 1972 came more changes, when Walter Knight became the first black on the City Council, and Kay Grutzner became the first woman councilor.

"The council became much more populist in orientation and progressive in outlook," Holt said.

With that change came a change in the way the city’s bureaucracy operated. "It seems to me the city government became much more open," according to Holt.

He said Beloit was ready for change. "There was no development going on at all. Some of the industries had moved out," Holt said, while others had been slowly shrinking over the years.

"The City of Beloit has reached a critical stage in its development. Decisions must be made to reconstruct major portions of the city," wrote Daniel T. Kelley in 1970.

Beloit pushes for development

The city’s 100-acre industrial area was largely empty. Stores were moving out of the downtown area, leaving blighted buildings behind. Housing in some neighborhoods was poor.

Beloit was a bit behind other cities in the new flood of federal funding. In fact, 1970 and 1971, federal money seemed unavailable to the city.

The city applied under the new federal Neighborhood Redevelopment Program (NDP), which was to provide three-quarters of a $1.4 million program for downtown redevelopment and rehabilitation of housing.

The 600-acre area in the overall plan included the downtown, the near west side and the south portion of the east side.

Beloit’s application was late reaching the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), and it was unsuccessful. Planners shifted directions later in 1970, looking for 807,000 to be put into residential neighborhoods alone.

On June 22, 1971, the city was given a grant-loan of about $800,000 for its first year in the program.

There was also resistance from Beloit’s own citizens. "Initially, there was some fear on the part of some neighborhoods about urban renewal because they thought their homes would be taken by condemnation," Holt said.

The strongest resistance came from the upper Fourth Street area, where the city’s long-range plans proposed changes in zoning from commercial to residential and from residential to park use.

Controversy raged for about two months in 1971. A petition with 1,689 signatures made the City Council take notice, and the section of the Beloit Comprehensive Plan for the Fourth Street area was changed in October.

After the first year’s hurdles were over, the city took on several neighborhood upgrade projects throughout the 1970s, including a prominent overhaul in the Athletic Avenue or "Southfields" area, and the beginning of funding from Small Cities grants for the Merrill neighborhood in 1978 and 1979.

In 1974, the Beloit Redevelopment Authority lost about $150,000 in building repair loans because not enough homeowners had signed up for the program.

That prompted the resignation of the authority’s director, Thomas Donnelly.

Aside from that, there were few hitches in the city redevelopment efforts.

Then, the city took on the downtown. "I think there was a lot of interest in redevelopment. A lot of people were nostalgic about the downtown...how busy it used to be," Holt said. "I think there was a lot of wishful thinking that the downtown could somehow come back as the retail center of the community."

Downtown area was targeted

Downtown plans had been included in federal funding applications from the start of urban renewal here, but HUD clearly rejected the idea of funding a downtown mall in 1972.

In 1973, however, the city gained $2 million in federal money to buy and clear downtown property.

City officials haggled with local businesses and gradually comb out a tangled web of ownership questions. In 1977, two blocks on lower State Street were completely vacated.

The "Superblock" was razed for redevelopment that was never quite completed, in spite of years of planning and work.

A half-block area across from the project eventually housed the new Beloit Savings Bank building, breaking ground in November, 1978. But the Superblock itself remained undeveloped until plans came along for a much-debated new City Hall late in the decade.

A new three-story building for the First National Bank at 345 E. Grand Street was completed in 1978.

"It was a madhouse," Haskell said. "People’s attitudes probably improved through the years. At one time, they thought they didn’t have any say in city government.”

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A new three-story building for the First National Bank at 345 E. Grand Street was completed in 1978.
Renewal idea was pursued

Continued from page 109.

Executive vice-president of the Greater Beloit Chamber of Commerce.

Greeted away from Chicago and go to Milwaukee.

We wanted people in this area to turn south and go to Milwaukee, and a 100-car caravan was the first to try out the new route.

Federal money was also responsible for the beginning of the new Grinnell Senior Center. Sited in the little-used Grinnell Hall, a center for veterans funded by the legacy of Civil War veteran W.H. Grinnell, it opened in 1977 and soon offered education, travel and other activities to its 2,000 members.

Improvements were undertaken

The Beloit School District took on construction projects of its own in the 1970s, with new buildings at Royce, Gaston, Burdge and Merrill schools, and additions at McNeel and Waterman Elementary.

Public school teachers went on strike for the first time in Beloit in September, 1972, closing schools for 11 days but finally settling for an 8 percent increase in wages and benefits.

Another change for the schools came in 1974, when state law went into effect that specified guidelines for special education for physically, emotionally and mentally handicapped children.

Blackhawk Technical Institute board members faced stiff opposition from taxpayers when it announced plans for a $2.7 million central campus in the Town of Beloit near Prairie Road, but the facility was open for the 1975-76 school year.

Taxpayers had turned down a $3.9 million bond referendum for the campus in 1972. When state law changes for that type of borrowing.

Cost of urban renewal in the downtown area were floated during the 1970s, but the more grandiose ideas never came to fruition. One of the proposals called for turning major portions of the downtown area into a mall-like setting, as illustrated in this drawing from 1972.

Many proposals for urban renewal in the downtown area were floated during the 1970s, but the more grandiose ideas never came to fruition. One of the board borrowed $800,000 in promissory notes to fill the bill, less than a year before a state law was passed banning that type of borrowing.

Not all the new influence of state and federal governments on local authorities was welcomed.

It was a time when Americans became more conscious of their natural environment. Concern about pollution led to protest. Protest led to political action. The results were new laws controlling waste.

Wisconsin pollution control standards and new sources of industrial waste in the city required Beloit to perform special work on its sewage treatment plant at a cost of about $2.5 million, completed in the mid-1970s. Fortunately, federal and state money was there to help.

Beloit ran afoul of the State of Illinois in 1975, when that state's Environmental Protection Agency closed down the city's Roscoe landfill, calling it a hazard to groundwater purity.

Despite court action, the city had to spend $350,000 to close down the facility, and was temporarily left with no place to put its garbage.

Canoes in demand in April, 1973

The weather forecast in the Beloit Daily News on Friday, April 20, 1973: Cloudy with rain likely tonight. Mostly cloudy Saturday with showers and thunderstorms likely.

It was an unflinching prediction, but there was also heavy flooding downstream on the Rock River and its tributaries. Motorboats were seen racing down Ventura Avenue in Loves Park, Ill.

Sally Kramer, director of the American Red Cross, Beloit Chapter, said she heard the early flood news on the radio. "I remember I said to myself, 'Boy, I'm glad that's not in Beloit.'"

Beloit had only four inches of rain by press time, and although there were
Robert Gilliam worked toward a better Beloit

He was the first black elected to public office in Beloit, and he said it was all because of his children.

Robert Gilliam's son Mark, 15 years old in 1970, was affected by the tone of the times, the unrest and anger over the plight of blacks in American society.

"He was very caught up in the revolution... very, very militant," Gilliam said.

His own philosophy was quite different. Gilliam, appointed the first black firefighter for the Beloit Fire Department in 1961, had been involved in community activities for years, and believed in working within the system for change.

"You can't create change by being on the 'outside' and throwing rocks toward the 'inside,'" Gilliam said.

Elected county supervisor

Beginning in 1970 at the age of 40, Robert Gilliam served three two-year terms as county supervisor. He won his first election easily, with a vote of 221 to 114, unseating 18-year veteran T.M. Parriello.

Other blacks had run for office before in Beloit without success, although Ambrose Gordon became a member of the South Beloit school board in 1964. Gilliam believed his election helped pave the way for others by developing a grass roots power base for black politics in the community.

"I see it as encouraging people to be active, to be involved," he said. He also believes religion is necessary, "but I don't think that makes me a minister," he said.

Purpose accomplished

In the end, Gilliam believed he accomplished his original purpose, to teach his son about the means to change.

Fifteen years after his 1970 victory, his son Mark was entering the 'system' with a degree in criminology.

Robert Gilliam
Greater Beloit was hit hard by rampaging flood waters

Continued from page 110.

streets flooded, cars stalled and phone lines out early on Saturday, “the situation appeared under control by mid-morning,” the newspaper reported.

At 7:45 a.m., the Beloit fire department was called in to rescue four people stranded at the Turtle Creek Campgrounds.

At Beloit College, the spring commencement went on without interruption, and 230 students had a soggy graduation.

Then, at about noon, Turtle Creek showed signs of trouble.

Witnesses saw about 60 tires and pieces of wooden fencing zipping by the Park Avenue bridge at 20 mph. The creek water was gaining momentum.

By 11:45 a.m., flooding had begun in homes at White Oaks Drive. Twenty-five off-duty Beloit firemen were called in.

Mrs. Kramer was painting walls in her Town of Beloit house early that afternoon, unaware of any trouble, when she started getting phone calls. The people calling wanted to know where to get sandbags.

“I couldn’t comprehend it,” she said, until someone called at about 12:30 p.m. asking “Where’s the Red Cross? Don’t you know there’s a flood?”

She stopped at the Red Cross offices to pick up supplies at about 1 p.m., then went to the South Beloit American Legion Hall to begin setting up a shelter with the help of the American Legion Auxiliary.

Flood took toll on city

By that time, the creek was over its banks. At 1:30 p.m., William Schmitz, president of Freeman Shoe Co., left the company’s plant on Mill Street and Shirland Avenue, and everything looked all right.

On the other side of the creek, Jerry Chapel and five employees, who had early warning, had been working since morning to move wine bottles from the basement of Everett’s Liquor Store on Gardner Street.

Greater Beloit was swamped by floodwaters in 1973, creating millions of dollars worth of damage. One of the hardest hit places was the Freeman facility, top photo. For others, it was an occasion to take a spin down the street in a rubber raft.
"We were all standing here, not knowing what was going to happen, and we looked down the street and saw a wall of water coming down," Chapel said.

Logs and whole trees were carried by the rush of muddy water. Inside the liquor store, the six felt the building shudder as the wave hit, splashing completely over the ground floor windows.

Chapel and the five others knew immediately that they were trapped in the liquor store. He called his wife, Helen, and told her they would need a boat to get out of the place.

The basement was 80% full, and about 1 1/2 feet of water was flowing through the store. Chapel shut off the power, and the six escaped to the second floor, then the roof. Water had almost covered the cars in the parking lot.

Soon rescue came when a friend pulled up in a semi with a trailer behind, and Chapel and the others got off the roof with a three-foot jump to the top of the trailer. Water spouted like a fountain from the exhaust pipe of the truck as it pulled away.

At 3 p.m., Freeman employees called the company's president to say water was flowing through the streets and lapping at the doors. He rushed back to the plant.

Soon after, the water was pouring into the Freeman complex, soaking valuable computers and wetting or washing away about 150,000 pairs of new shoes.

The Freeman plant was to sustain the most damage of any Beloit business, with a toll of about $2 million.

The flood crested at about 6 p.m. The flood was 14 blocks wide, covering a 40-block area of Beloit and South Beloit. The creek was up nine feet and the Rock River up at least a foot.

Hundreds of homes were flooded — later estimates showed at least 500 families were evacuated. Basements and many ground floors from Athletic Avenue and Broad Street in Beloit to Washington Street in South Beloit were filled with mud and debris. Shoes from the Freeman plant floated down State Street. Many store owners and employees were trapped in their downtown buildings.

A dozen kids out for the Majestic Theater matinee were trapped temporarily on the theater's stage by the rising water. Several dogs and cats at the animal shelter waited for rescue in cages placed well above the water line by a foresighted caretaker, Joe Poston.

Using a fire department boat, several helped save the animals, including City Manager Herb Holt. "One thing I could never understand," Holt said. "The calls to the city were running 10 to one with concern about the dogs rather than the kids."

"Blackhawk Boulevard was like a river," Mrs. Kramer said. "And mud! Man, there was mud around... and the rain was coming down in sheets."

She said South Beloit Mayor Gary Pierce displayed a carp he caught by hand in a stroll across the street.

By 5:30 p.m. the makeshift Red Cross center was packed with people. It would house or feed at least 500 people that first night. But the Red Cross had plenty of help.

"Everybody banded together. You didn't have to ask," Mrs. Kramer said. Food, clothing, blankets were all donated. Volunteers called by the dozens, offering assistance, some arriving by boat.

Along with rescue efforts, firefighters would spend much of their time in a seemingly endless effort at pumping out over 100 basements, some of them working around the clock.

A full contingent of police officers was soon working, too, and they reported their worst problem was keeping the curious out of the flood area. Through the day, there were no reports of looting.

Civil Defense, police reserves, out-of-town officers, government workers, citizens — everyone pitched in.

At 7 p.m., while thunderstorms raged, the water began to subside, and was down to normal levels four hours later. The first night, about 500 people stayed at the Red Cross shelter. Mrs. Kramer was up around the clock, with a 24-hour break at home to make Easter baskets for her children.

About 100 were at the shelter for breakfast. Many continued to stay there for the next five nights while working to clean up their homes during the day.

Remarkably, there was only one fatality in the flooding. Terry Miller, 20, of Roscoe, was apparently driving across the Love Road Bridge near Roscoe when
Community pulled together to deal with the flood crisis

Continued from page 113.

his car was swept away by a flash flood, and he drowned.

Highway 51 north of Beloit was washed out, along with several other area roads. The Highway 2 bridge near the state line sustained about $1 million in damage. Murphy Bridge on Shopiere Road was saved by highway crews working to shore it up with gravel and rock.

Flood waters were blamed for nine minor accidents in Beloit. South Beloit's Holiday Inn lost over $100,000 to the flood. The Beloit Foundry was heavily damaged. South Beloit's sanitary sewer took on so much water that it ruptured, and much later the city was forced to bond for $475,000 worth of new lines under Gardner Street to keep groundwater from overloading the system.

Losses were considerable

Most people in the area had no flood insurance, even though $25 could have bought $10,000 in insurance with federal backing.

Many businessmen returned to their stores on Easter Sunday to find a nightmare.

"When I walked in, the sight of it was really an experience," Chapel said.

"Everything was turned upside down... Everything was mud, that thick, black mud, from one end of the store to the other.

Hundreds of bottles of pop and beer at the liquor store had to be dumped, but most other sealed bottles were relabeled and sold for $1 each in a very, very popular sale.

The thousands of damaged shoes from the Freeman warehouse were set out in gymnasiums all over town to dry. The week after the flood, the state approved a new site in the floodplain for the company's planned new factory-warehouse complex. Freeman, understandably, opted for high ground at the Industrial Park.

Residents also faced problems of sanitation, as well as clean-up. Groundwater had to be boiled because of contamination from the surface water. Food was spoiled by the flood, too.

In 1971, Beloit residents won an All-America City award by telling the judges they could work together. If any doubt remained in 1973, the volunteer effort during the flood was proof. An editorial in the Beloit Daily News said it best:

"Dark as it was for many, the time that elapsed between the rise and fall of the flood waters covered some of Beloit's finest hours. Literally thousands were heroes to those who needed help."

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The rampaging flood brought Beloiters to action, trying to save as much property as possible from damage, often by sandbagging (above). But from the air, there was no mistaking the extent of the disaster and its effect on the community. Property was flooded, roadways were damaged, and rural land was swamped.
Beloit wanted development
Continued from page 114.

The business of Beloit in the 1970s was business.

As the decade began, the state's tax system didn't please industry, and there was talk that the state government was driving business south to Illinois.

But things changed somewhat in 1973, when the state Legislature afforded new techniques of economic development specialists were competing for it.

The city had invested $905,196 in 103 acres of land in 1969 for an industrial park. It was a controversial decision, and the City Council split 4-3 on its vote, said Everett Haskel, a councilor at the time.

City government spent over $1,654,776 through 1975 to develop the property, adding sewer, water, streets and expanding its sewage treatment facility.

With rail service and easy access to I-90 and the coming Highway 15 renovation, the location was a natural.

The years proved that the council had the right idea, Haskell said. By 1980, the city was considering an industrial park expansion to end a shortage of suitable land.

City officials, with the newly-formed Beloit Economic Development Corp. (BEDCOR), courted business leaders in the effort to keep present employers here and bring in new jobs.

"Everybody thought Beloit did the best job of anybody in Wisconsin, and we did," Haskell said.

Industrial Park begins paying off

The businesses at the industrial park, by 1977, were generating about $500,000 a year in new tax revenue, and were keeping close to 2,000 people in work.

Lots ranging in size from six to 27 acres had been sold to Frito-Lay, Inc., the Freeman Shoe Co., George A. Hormel & Co. and the Broaster Company.

Along with OMC Parts and Accessories on Prairie Avenue, which moved onto 30 acres of city-purchased land, developments totaled about $20 million in taxable investment in the city before periods of national recession in the late 1970s began to affect the city.

In 1971, the city was facing a loss of 1,776 jobs over the last year. The unemployment rate was 10 percent — had enough that the Federal Emergency Employment Act went into effect here, funding new government jobs.

That year, BEDCOR was organized, growing out of the Greater Beloit Association of Commerce, and funded at $30,000 for its first year of operation.

Richard Konicek, who was later to become the city's first community development director, was hired to direct the new organization.

Frito-Lay Inc. was the first triumph of economic development here. The company announced plans in 1971 for a $1.6 million, 120,000 square foot plant on 15 acres, hiring 250 employees. Eventually, the plant would employ 600 workers.

In 1972, Geo. A. Hormel & Co. followed, with plans for a 250,000 square foot plant employing 50 workers.

Retail business was moving in that year, too, with a new K-Mart department store and Sentry Foods supermarket for Prairie Avenue.

And in 1973, the Freeman Shoe Co. announced that it would not move out of the city, as was rumored, but would relocate in the industrial park with a 180,000 square foot warehouse, 125,000 square foot plant and large office building.

As the Frito-Lay plant opened and the Hormel plans continued, the banner year for Beloit was 1973, despite the disastrous flood.

A Beloit Daily News editorial said, "When the totals are balanced, it is a winning year for the Stateline Area... a vintage year, with a promise of even better years to come."

With 1974 came inflation. The city's 1975 budget was to rise 21 percent over the 1974 rate. Consumer goods prices were up about 12 percent in the city, and Wisconsin Power and Light Co. and Beloit Memorial Hospital both had rate increases.

Inflation and its accompanying high interest rates were blamed for the loss of a potential new business. The Olympia Brewery, hoping to build a 600-worker brewery in the industrial park, said no on Sept. 6, 1974, and eventually took over facilities in the Twin Cities instead.

Two weeks later, the Adams Corp. folded because of rising costs. At its
In search of development, Beloit created an Industrial Park at the I-90 and Hwy. 15 interchange, a move still paying dividends.

peak, this company had employed 145 people.
Two major employers of Beloiters — Chrysler and General Motors — announced indefinite layoffs of workers in Belvidere and Janesville that year, and 3,300 auto plant workers were unemployed.

New firms moving in

But there were gains. New plants were underway for U.S. Furniture and Tang Industries in the area, and Economics Laboratory Inc. planned to hire 40 to 50 more workers. Colt Industries and the Beloit Corp. had stable years.
Beloit once again lost jobs between May, 1975 and May, 1976, at the rate of 511. But plans were announced in 1975 by OMC to move from Galesburg, Ill. to its Prairie Avenue site, in a highly automated plant. Another 75 jobs would be created by D.M. Manufacturing, established here in 1976, and 63 jobs by Champion International Corporation, established here in 1977.

The downtown was literally “all shook up” in the mid-70s as heavy pilings were driven into the bed of the Rock River for later, the city helped out by ground to the job.

The Station Area was once again affected by a plant closing in 1978, when the Rockwell International plant in Harvard closed, laying off 950 workers. After an early peak, the economy of Beloit was once again fluctuating. But with the efforts of BEDCOR, the city government, the chamber of commerce and other local leaders, the city came out of the decade’s economic battle with fewer scars than many manufacturing-based communities.

“We were holding our own,” said Herb Holt, the 1970s’ city manager. “There was kind of a major turnaround during that period.”

At the turn of the decade, Beloit College was feeling a financial pinch. It was listed as part of 78 percent of colleges nationwide that were in trouble, even though another poll showed it to be the most expensive college for students in Wisconsin.
The college’s three-term system gave more academic choices to students, but more choice for students meant less predictable budgets. In addition, summer enrollment began to decline, and by the mid-1970s, only a few hundred were attending summer courses.
In 1975, Dr. Miller Upton, the leader of the college for two decades, resigned. His replacement, Martha Peterson, was the first woman in that position. She would bring a strong financial background to the job.
The mood at the college in the mid-70s was “not so much unrest as I would say uneasiness,” said Robert Irmann, professor emeritus of history at the college.
In the last half of the decade, he said, “I think the operation was one of trying to but the college back on solid ground financially... It was not a time to experiment.”

Miss Peterson had the know-how. She increased the college’s endowment, cut back to a traditional two-term system and oversaw a reduction in faculty. By 1979, the college was back in the black.

A period of rebuilding

She inspired confidence from the start, according to Irmann.
“She had great social graces. Very open, an exceedingly pleasant person... no pretention whatsoever, but a very keen mind.”

Students had various reactions to the changes put into effect which eliminated programs from the earlier 1970s. In the summer of 1978, the last summer term, students organized a “Wake for the Summer Term.” Once that particular feature of the calendar was eliminated, many students felt, the character of the campus permanently changed.
Before the financial rebuilding began, another kind of building was going on. In June, 1975, the college dedicated its new Laura Aldrich Neese Theatre and the William Simpson Godfrey Anthropology Building.
The structures were part of a $5 million building program, a scaled-down version of a $13 million one-building complex planned in the early 1980s.
For students at Beloit College in the late 1970s, activities were not bounded by the edges of campus, with many social events taking place off campus. With many living in nearby neighborhoods and college activity funds available to support parties even off campus, students made more forays into the surrounding town than they did later in the 1980s.

On-campus events included concerts and lectures. Performing artists ranged from the rock band Kansas and jazz guitarist Larry Coryell to renowned double-bassist Gary Karr. Campus productions continued providing outlets for students, the normal theater offerings augmented by a new dance program initiated by Geri Houlihan. A student gallery was created in the Union, a small space which featured both student and alumni art.

It was the decade of the "Me Generation," and like other Americans, young Beloiters began to look out for "number one."
Health food and exercise was the new prescription for the ills of a generation, and jogging and aerobic dancing gradually turned into running and daily workouts for enthusiasts.
But at the same time, the "junk food" business boomed, and passive television watching was more popular than ever as Beloiters tuned in to the M.A.S.H., miniseries and Mary Tyler Moore.
A new interest in cable television Continued on page 118.
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markets brought uncurt movies to living rooms via Home Box Office and other pay television enterprises. But new fare on television took business away from movie theaters.

By the end of the decade, the theaters of America had begun a counterclockwise. Prairie Cinemas, one of the newest styles of multiple-screen theater houses, started in 1978 with a screening of "Superman." Three movies could be shown in the same building to smaller audiences by one projectionist — a less costly alternative to the old grand theaters.

Meanwhile, the old downtown Ellis Theater fell to the wrecking ball, and the Majestic Theater, with a capacity of 750, was still operating, showing "Every Which Way But Loose."

For teen-agers, the Mid-City Outdoor Theater was still a popular place to bring a date, as was the new Pizza Hut on the east side.

Weekly teen nights at the YMCA were a boon to younger teens. Activities were free after a fee at the door, and there was often a band for dancing.

New wave and punk were the vanguard on the coasts, and the booming Sun Belt produced the briefly popular "urban cowboy" image and country rock. But many Beloit teen-agers preferred the punk-rock sound of local bands like "All God's Children," "Tomcat" and "Zula."

**State lowered drinking age**

On March 24, 1973, big changes came to the drinking age. The lowered age of Wisconsin's drinking age to 18. The older teen-agers had the right to vote since 1971, but could not possess alcoholic beverages in Wisconsin.

The Age of Majority Law went into effect at 12:01 a.m. and less than half an hour later, police were chasing an intoxicated 18-year-old driver on Prairiefire Avenue at 80 mph. Fights involving young men were reported in several bars. Many license plates from Illinois, where the drinking age was still 21, were seen in tavern parking lots.

One climax of the new law was the Pop House, an institution for teen-agers on Fifth Street since 1941. When the law was passed, the Pop House converted to a bar, but it became too much work for owner George Stankewitz, and the establishment went up for sale.

"The law didn't do the kids any favor. It made me feel as if something had been taken away from them," Stankewitz said at the time.

For older adults, a night out might include dinner at the Corral Restaurant, known for its good eating around the state in the circle mid-70s. The Manor and the Butterfly Club remained popular for discriminating dining.

The Affiliate Artists program brought great artists to the nation to the Beloit College for performances and instruction in the arts such as dance, instrumental music and opera.

There was a seamless side to the night life of Beloit, a side often ignored in the usual discussions of permissiveness in lifestyles and law made it tough for police to quash it.

The Riverside Health Spa made its debut in 1974, allegedly offering sex-for-pay to patrons. Rock County Sheriff's Department officers raided it in June in a controversial action that was thrown out of court. But the city found a way to shut it down through zoning laws.

The Affiliation Artists program, which was called "Superman," had little effect on the Exotic World News adult bookstore. In 1973, in fact, a company campaign began against the Salvation Army.

In reaction, the city government began asking local merchants to voluntarily ban sex-oriented material in their own stores.

Despite these efforts, the store stayed until the early 1980s in the city's downtown.

Other 1970s trends were followed for more innocent fun, including pet rocks, 1950s nostalgia and streaking.

One local streaker, who, for good reason, preferred not to be identified, recalls in 1973 an occasional run in the made with friends across Riverside Park tennis courts.

"They always had an ovation for us," he said.

Beloit had a knack for celebrating special events. The celebration was marked with Rock River boat races, with thousands lining the riverbanks to see the competition and buy barbecued chicken, boiled corn and beer.

The DownTown Council sponsored events every weekend to draw customers, from church choir singing to Ted Rose's weekly appearance as Santa Claus, and the city's recreation program, after a one-year absence in the early part of the decade, made a comeback throughout the decade.

In August, 1975, the city hosted two major events when the World Women's Softball Tourney gathered 64 teams at the King of Diamonds, and Drums Along the Rock marched to Strong Stadium for a major drum and bugle corps competition.

But these were only warm-ups for 1976, when Beloit pulled out all the stops

**Red, white and blue for 1976**

Bicentennial mugs, pins, stationery, place mats and other items were sold, many with illustrations of local landmarks.

The Beloit Area Bicentennial Committee, headed by Elizabeth Reinholz, chose one such landmark — the historic Tiffany Bridge — to be the focus of the local celebration. Subcommittees, with the help of large numbers of citizens, planned events like the Downtown Council Art Show and the August 27 Pagan, in which 16 decorated barges displayed the theme of energy conservation.

Fire hydrants were painted with patriotic themes in a contest that drew participants from age 5 to 79. An