

In June 1914 an assassination in Sarajevo, Bosnia, an insignificant event in the everlasting political and social turmoil in the Balkan states, triggered the obligations of the great European powers, under the two interlocking military alliances to which they were parties—Great Britain, France, and Russia in the Triple Entente, and Germany, Italy and Austria-Hungary, in the Triple Alliance. By early August 1914 they were engulfed in a war that was to attain an unimaginable level of ferocity and horror, the Great War of 1914 to 1918, 25 years later to be known as World War I. In Washburn no reports about the descent of Europe into war appeared in the newspapers. But the war in Europe would fuel a new boom in Washburn, fostering hope that the prosperity of the old boom would return, this time permanently.

The link between Washburn and the war in Europe was the Du Pont explosives plant. With orders from the Allied Powers and the federal government, which was undertaking a precautionary mobilization, the plant greatly expanded its operations and labor force, which eventually grew to several thousand. The lumber mills also increased production and hired workers. The business district along Bayfield Street also revived. Many new businesses were established, ranging from a jitney bus to carry people around the city in the evening, to a steam laundry, a roller rink, and the Fashion Shop, selling tailor-made clothing. Other businesses remodeled, installed new equipment, or changed ownership or location. In addition to reoccupying vacant buildings, several new buildings were constructed

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along Bayfield Street by the expanding business community, including the Estabrook-Downs Building, on the south side of the street, between First and Second Avenues West; the Anderson Building, one lot west of the Estabrook-Downs Building; and the large Hanson Building, on the south side of the street, between Washington Avenue and Second Avenue West, adjacent to the Lien Building, all of which still exist. Four small plants were also established during the boom, a creamery, on the southeast corner of Bayfield Street and Second Avenue East; a pickle salting station, located along the Omaha right-of-way, between Central Avenue and First Avenue West; a soft drink bottling plant, on the north side of Bayfield Street, between First and Second Avenues East; and a plant to make potash from the ashes from the lumber mill boilers, near the Omaha right-of-way, between Sixth and Seventh Avenues West.

In 1915 the city council approved the paving of the commercial district, including First Avenue East, from Omaha Street to the intersection with Bayfield Street, and from there to Third Avenue West. The decision as to the type of paving was left to the property owners, who would pay for it through assessments. They chose red brick to replace the muddy main street that was lined with util-

ity poles. Work began in June 1916 and was completed in November. As work on the paving progressed, the council approved a proposal of the Commercial Club that the businessmen along the newly paved Bayfield Street pay the costs of purchasing and installing lights along the street, while the city would maintain the system. Forty black, ornamental iron light posts were installed along the street, creating an imaginative "white way." (One of the surviving light posts is on the grounds of Nordic Bay Resort.) There were probably more than a few in the western district, provided with the less expensive and unattractive asphalt paving and no lighting, who thought that they were being treated as second class citizens.

In addition to the "white way" project, the city, its financial position much improved by the prosperity of the boom, carried out extensive improvements of the city's infra-structure. These public improvements were accompanied by private property improvements, including

the remodeling and construction of numerous houses and buildings. Many old and dilapidated buildings were also torn down. These public and private improvements were complemented by a campaign, in 1915, to clean up and beautify the city, with the slogan, "A City Beautiful." The mayor issued a long proclamation, designating one week as clean up and paint up week for the City of Washburn. People were encouraged to clean up their houses and property; to paint their houses, if necessary; to abolish all places that might breed flies and mosquitoes; to eliminate noxious weeds; and to help clean up vacant lots. Even school children were mobilized for the campaign, the high school civics class taking it on as a special project.

The "white way" and the many public and private improvements throughout the city were expressions of the confidence of the people in the future, now that Washburn had awakened from its long torpor.