

# History of West Bend

## A Short History of West Bend:

Before the arrival of European settlers in Southeastern Wisconsin, the Potawatomie and Menominee Indians inhabited the land now occupied by the City of West Bend.

In 1845, the Wisconsin Territorial Legislature authorized the building of a road connecting Fond du Lac and Milwaukee. Byron Kilbourn, one of the highway commissioners and Jasper Vliet, a surveyor, were responsible for determining the route of the highway. Another task they were assigned was to identify a halfway point for travelers. That road is now Hwy. 45 and that rest stop is now West Bend.

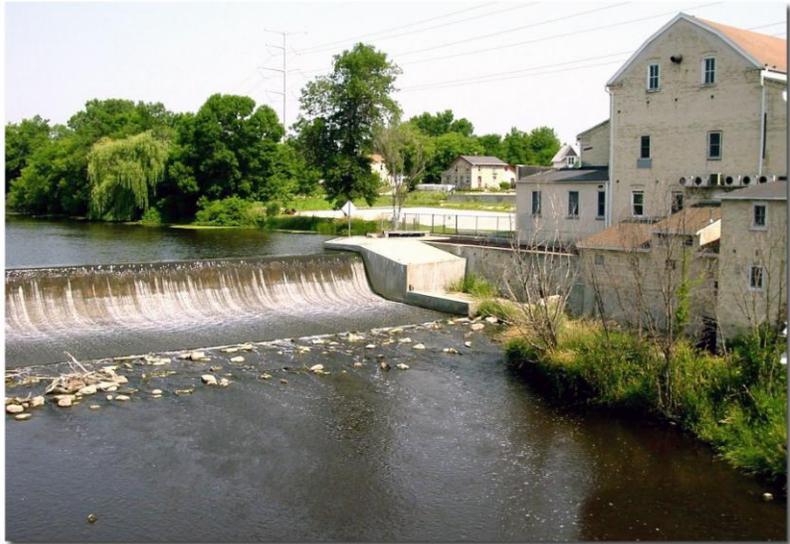
Many people utilized the rest stop and eventually it became a popular area. Part of the attraction of this land to the settlers was the Milwaukee River. The River produced enough energy to power the saw and gristmills located next to the river.

The railroad arrived in the area in 1873 bringing with it more settlers and industrialization. At this time West Bend saw an amazing growth spurt.

The City was incorporated in 1885.

In 1845, early settler Barton Salisbury while on a surveying trip up the Milwaukee River found a rapids which he believed would be a good source of power for a sawmill. He built a log hut on the west side of the river and the village of Barton was born.

On November 1, 1961, the city annexed the Village of Barton.



## **The Founding of West Bend**

(By Carl Quickert – 1945)

Halfway between Milwaukee  
And Fond du Lac, or so,  
Three men stopped in a woodland  
A century ago.

Their mission was to measure  
And carefully stake out  
Between the two points mentioned  
The shortest wagon route.

A lovely day of autumn,  
A cool and grassy glade,  
Overhead the tinted foliage  
That furnished sun-flecked shade;

Near by the famed Milwaukee  
Rounding its greatest bend –  
Such was the scene the trio  
Found at their half-way end.

Such as the scene that prompted  
The thought to come atop,  
To build a town and make it  
A restful half-way stop.

Then Wolcott, Kilbourn, Kneeland,  
The trio, at the end  
Of some discussion named it  
From the river's course, West Bend.

But thousands since have made it  
A place that few can top,  
A home that freely offered  
A fortunate full-way stop.

*Source: The West Bend News Aug. 1945*