

# *First Impressions*

of

*Fennimore, WI*

*by Ellsworth, WI*

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*A program for community improvement*

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1. What was my perception before visiting the community; What did I expect?

Farming community.

Few I knew approximate size, that the community was near Platteville, and that one of the motels was listed in the AAA Tour Book for Wisconsin.

None.

I had heard about the mouse. (It was smaller than I expected.)

2. Approaching the community, what do you notice first? (Evaluate EACH entrance)

A very nice wayside two miles before town. Signs coming into town (state green rectangular, with population) and very good roads which I came on 18 from the west. Motel is two miles out of town which was well kept up. When entering Fennimore the houses were old but in good shape. A new library.

There were farms in the city limits on both sides of the road. Cheese factory on 61 was clean, neat & well kept up lawn. Streets were like new last year or two years ago.

This ridge (west of town) is quite a drive.

3. As you drive around town, your comments on:

**APPEARANCE**

**1. Downtown**

The store fronts have been overhauled and looked good.

Very Clean — buildings in good shape.

Post Office very good looking on 18, 2 blocks east of Main St.

Businesses are really up to date; they've really fixed up the storefronts.

Clean; good streets and lighting.

take off the 1950's vintage metal facades over Fennimore Hair Designs and the Yard & Yam Shop; get them back to the brick designs of the other buildings downtown. (The only thing that I thought needed attention downtown.)

Very attractive old library, looks well kept. The gazebo out front by the sidewalk is great, very inviting, much more so than a bench; it says "stay a while!" On a sunny day like Thursday, it was very welcome.

This town looks like it has a lot of things happening.

## **2. Residential**

Lots of old houses, but on West side's the new part of town with lots of nice new houses,

Only saw one new home under construction. Only saw about 3 For Sale signs. There was a lot of painting and roofing activity, though.

Nice old house with stained glass, NE corner of 9th & Jefferson, needs the lawn mowed and needs a fixup. Otherwise all housing looked well kept, lawns cut, very inviting.

Some older, beat up wooden ag buildings on Jefferson near the residential area. Can these be reused or facelifted?

## **3. Industrial Park**

The land is level with sewer, water & electricity. One large industry employing 400-500 people on three shifts.

CESA # 3 and a large John Deere dealer nearby.

Some hills to deal with, a little like Ellsworth. Roads are paved, unlike ours. Nice addition. I'd want to have a phone number on the sign.

No information on lot acreage. It looks like a large potential user (50+ acres) might not find enough space.

## **4. Parks**

Two parks in town; all mowed. Toilets. Playground equipment which was in good shape. One park next to the school (good location) and the other next to the Good Samaritan Home.

Nice east vista from Marsdel park. Park is wooded, very nice all around.

Pool, diving boards, wading pool, nice facility. Crowded, busy.

## **5. Schools**

Middle School, 8th grade only with 50-60 students. Interesting grade arrangement!

Schools looked very good (like new!) with a swimming pool outdoors next to the school.

A technical college looked like new towards the industrial Park. Beautiful.

High school is very attractive, looks like good athletic fields.

**6. Infrastructure (sidewalks, street, lighting, etc.)**

Very good condition, clean & wide. 18 East is new last year and very nice with new trees on each side.

12th Street is in just perfect condition.

**7. Other**

No railroad but a local truck line with 17 large trucks and a terminal.

Good Samaritan Home with 80 beds, employs 50-60 people.

Golf course north of town, very nice.

A lot of public investment: schools, vo tech, library, CESA, good parks, swimming pool, tennis courts, fencing.

**B. SIGNING**

**1. Community entrance/exit signs**

There is a sign but not too big and not what I expected.

No signs on what to do in the area; maybe these could be placed in the state wayside area?

Entering from the East there's a nice Fennimore High School sign with championships indicated.

No welcome sign, just the green state issue.

Kiwanis/church signs on all entrances.

Incoming from the south and west I noticed very rusted peddlers & solicitors ordinance signs. If I was a peddler I'd plead that I couldn't read the sign. This is the only complaint I could come up with on signage; public, private signs are all in great shape.

Kiwanis signs from each direction, as are Kent Feeds signs. (Possible option: add a "welcome to Fennimore" sign to tach Kent Feeds sign, save the new sign expense?)

**2. Streets**

Signs all adequate, readable.

Directions to Hospital/Parks/etc.

Didn't see any.

Sign on Main St. for the nursing center.

Found the parks by driving around, no directions to park.

#### **4. Storefront signs**

Pretty well fixed up in the last 3 years.

Tuckwood House is 1 block off Main, wouldn't have known it was there if I didn't wander that way. Maybe a folding sandwich sign over on Main?

#### **5. Industrial Park**

Stone base with metal; OK Brown color doesn't do anything for me. No telephone number for information; no details on acres available.

#### **6. City Hall, Police, etc.**

A very nice large building. Nice fire department equipment.

Large sign. Easy to find.

#### **7. Billboards/advertising, etc.**

Not too many. Signs mostly on front of buildings.

From the south: several business billboards some for Boscobel. Igor greets you, a nice welcome Business billboards appear new, attractive (Silent Woman casual dining--headless woman got me curious), DQ Boscobel, Hotel Boscobel, Fennimore Cheese, Napp's Motel, Kent Feeds. etc.

Did not notice the usual beer company/tavern signs hanging around Main Street. Unusual!

#### **4. Visitor/Community Information**

##### **A. CITY/VILLAGE HALL**

Is there a street mag?

Yes. Hotel had one also.

Yes.

##### **2. Community brochure/directory**

Yes, brochure.

##### **3. Community profile (including business & industrial opportunities**

Just the brochure...good text. Not much on business & industry.

**4. Recommendations on place to stay/eat/visit....etc.**

Napp's had several recommendations. (The motel was very clean.) Didn't ask at City Hall.

**3. Contact people and addresses listed if I want more info.**

Recommended the chamber person down the road.

**6. Complimentary items (postcards, bookmarks, coupons, etc.)**

None that we found.

**B. CHAMBER OFFICE/VISITOR INFO CENTER**

**1. Easy to locate (and did people refer you to it?)**

On Main Street, easy to locate. Nice building.

A sign hanging off the front over the sidewalk would have helped, not a big deal.

Information Center looks nice, closed when we were there.. The activity with the train and the building nearby looks good.

**2. Comments on info available (street map/brochures/community profile/etc.)**

Maps & community brochure of the town available.

The Chamber office had brochures for Grant County, Platteville, Dahl, Fennimore Schools, Fenway House; article reprint on the Silent Woman; Ag Daze events list. Good array of information. Visitor Info kiosk looks well stocked.

No details on the industrial park.

**3. Recommendations on places to stay/eat/visit etc.**

WCC crew was very knowledgeable, wide range of recommendations.

**4. How prepared/helpful were they?**

I just missed Linds P. (lunchtime). The woman working next door was about to close and lock up for lunch, but she was willing to let me in and browse and pick up literature. She mentioned that the city map was being updated.

### **5. Convenient hours?**

Closed at lunchtime.

### **C. INFORMATION FROM GENERAL COMMUNITY (service station, motel, bars, restaurants, shop employees, etc.)**

#### **1. How knowledgeable about the community were they?**

**a** Dinner at Cottonwood Diner; very good meal and nice people. Waitress went out of her way to *make* sure we were taken care of. Left a card with her name on it at the table. Good information on where else to visit.

**b.** Fenway House & Bar; had a drink and visited with the bartender. Very polite, told us about the town. Told us that used homes were hard to find; not so with lots.

**c.** People at Napp's Motel; very nice & hard working. Also run a store. Said that three years ago this was a "dead" town. Then the guy from ~~Maribor~~ came in, bought the old theater and made it into the Fenway Hotel; bought a couple of other buildings, restored the storefronts and he got things going.

Several people noted that tourists come through on their way to the dog track.

Visited with a former farmer now working for the Township of Fennimore; reported some difficulty with milk prices down but otherwise "things are really booming." Good to hear!

Woman at the Tuckwood House wasn't completely aware of other places to visit in the town.

Librarian knew much local history, details on the library building. Very helpful & personable.

#### **2. Did they refer you to someone else who could help?**

**Yes.** Real helpful & polite. Told us good places to eat (in town).

**Yes,** everyone seemed to know Linda Parrish!

#### **3. Attitude, appearance, etc.**

100% positive. Friendly, helpful, took an interest in your question.

**Many** smiles. Passersby say hello almost all the time.

#### **4. Other Comments**

The town had many apartment buildings, we could not help but notice how big and how many for a small town.

## **5. General**

**A. Do residents know their community history/events/directions etc.**

Yes. Knew about the Fenway House history, Bahl Baby Swiss story (if he's really the one who developed it, maybe you could "sell" that!). **Many interesting stories to be told about the local situation, e.g. some people's reaction to when Stan came in with the theater restoration project. "He's going to own the whole town" attitude. Didn't work out that way!**

**Learned about downtown's railroad motif, shake awnings--all volunteer, no ordinance requiring it.**

**People knew a lot of details about what's been happening here. Learned that you paid \$50,000 to get the Dinky up here from the WCC crew. Looks like a good project. The worker how about the old depot, jail, plans for a community museum and wainscoting from the old opera house,**

**Some good history from the Parker Librarian**

**B. Services...variety of retail...lodging facilities...**

**Good variety of retail; grocery, clothing, motels/hotels, gas stations, Deere dealer, taverns, barber shop, body shops, bakery, vet clinic, furniture, meat, cement plant, newspaper, etc. We did not notice an automobile dealer; curious. Two in Ellsworth.**

**I did not notice but one bar. (Welcome change.)**

**C. m a there public restrooms?**

**Yes, in the parks.**

**Yes, in city Hall.**

**D. Pay phones...are they working, phone books intact.**

**Yes, three pay phones that we saw; in good shape,**

**E. Industrial Park...does it look active & attractive.**

**The land is fairly level and very nice with water, sewer, and electricity; streets are blacktopped, The lawns also are mowed.**

**One other building besides Rayovac would make a big difference. CESA, Tech College nearby are attractive buildings that add to the overall impression.**

**Good highway access.**

**F. What does the community TASTE like? (specialty restaurants/bakeries/etc.)**

Cottonwood Diner: good food. Stuffed pork chops, salad bar, soup, and the price was right. A lot of people there.

Bakery was closed (p.m.). A & W stand also closed.

Had breakfast at the Soup'R Cafe. We sat in the booth a while before we found out that you have to go up to the window and order!

The Silent Woman was EXCELLENT. I had no idea that you could get cajun specialties, very well done, in a small rural community like this.

**G. What does the community SMELL like?**

Good farming town, smells good!

The Tuckwood House was very much scented, unique for me, liked it.

No negatives at all.

**H. What SOUNDS did you hear?**

Lots of kids at the pool, noisy, happy. Good feeling to it.

Main Street traffic, sounds busy, sounds good.

**I. What did the community FEEL like (emotional response, warm/cold, crowded/deserted, inviting, etc.)?**

Farms close to town, in the city limits; all around the city. Corn chest high this time of year. Super farming country!

Last night we saw no children out on the street. A lot of teenagers and folks sitting on the porch, at home. No hotrodders running up and down the street raising hell. Very quiet. Everybody looked like they were more homebodies. Couldn't get over it.

It has the feel of a city with a lot of projects underway.

Busy but not crowded, overall a very positive feel to the town.

DESCRIBE THE PEOPLE YOU MET (friendly, helpful, etc.)

We talked to many different people; very friendly, told us anything we asked.

Very warm, friendly, helpful, just about everywhere.

ADDITIONAL COMMENTS/OBSERVATIONS:

Main Street had garbage containers on light poles—2 feet off the ground and not very large. I thought they were neat! Unlatch to empty, not in anyone's way.

The brand new F & M Bank is large and rock-faced, very attractive.

Two trailer parks for mobile homes; looked well kept up.

Lines painted on parking along street were good. Took us a while to figure out that they help you position your car in the parking space. Great idea! Yellow lines were needed.

No camping. Maybe you could catch some of the RV's coming through town; we saw a lot of them while sitting on the bench outside of the Legion Hall.

WHAT WILL YOU REMEMBER ABOUT THIS COMMUNITY SIX MONTHS FROM NOW

Friendly helpful personable people. Really made you feel at home. A great place to visit.

Gazebo/resting place outside the Library off Main Street. Small item but it really made an impression on me.

Interesting interior, good food at the Silent Woman. I will probably revisit the area and try to stay at the Fenway House sometime. I had never been to this part of Wisconsin and found much that was very attractive and inviting.

## 6. Doing it Right!

A List the **5** MOST important things you observed about the community.

1. Positive, helpful attitude. Found it all over.
2. Lots of investment evident, public & private, interesting earth sheltered designs at CESA and the technical college.
3. Dinky installation and the whole railroad theme. Unifying aspect, catches your interest. Well worth the effort,
4. Neat, clean, well kept area.
5. Good looking farm country with great vistas all over.

B. Describe ONE idea that you will steal for use in your own business/community and describe the steps you will take to implement it within the NEXT 72 HOURS!

Lines on the street for parking. I took a picture and will discuss with the Chamber and Village, and the timing is right since the state is planning a reconstruction of Main Street in the next two years.

School ~~District~~ brochure. Comprehensive information, useful, really puts Fennimore schools in a good light, Very important to have this. I have ~~some~~ of the ~~most~~ basic information but will contact the district to fill in the gaps.