

Year Population Notable Event

1835	5	First European settlers come to Janesville.
1842	215	First bridge across Rock River at Janesville.
1843	333	“Upper dam” built in Janesville.
1845	817	First saw and grist mills established; first school started.
1847	1,485	
1848	1,812	First telegraph office opened in Janesville.
1850	3,100	Irish immigrants come to Janesville to work on the railroad. Norwegian immigrants publish a Norwegian language newspaper.
1851		Janesville is the site of the first Wisconsin State Fair.
1853	4,800	First passenger train comes to Janesville. Wisconsin State Legislature passes Janesville’s Charter, and Janesville is incorporated as a city. Janesville’s first municipal election is held.
1855	7,118	Janesville High School opens.
1850	7,703	
1864	7,627	
1870	8,789	Second Rock County Courthouse built.
1875	10,115	Janesville Cotton Mills dedicated.
1880	9,018	Janesville Electric Company brings electricity to the city. Harris Manufacturing exports agricultural reapers to Mexico. A national depression affects Janesville.
1885	9,941	Janesville Street Railway started.
1890	10,836	Streetcar suburbs -- Forest Park, Glen Etta, and Riverview --appeared
1900	13,185	New Rock County Jail built on Water Street
1902		Azel Hough moved the Hough Shade Corporation from South Butler, NY to Janesville. This company later becomes Hufcor.
1910	13,894	

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1920	18,293	Benson Avenue bungalows are built between 1919 and 1920 in response to the influx of families that coincided with the opening of the Samson Tractor factory (later General Motors).
1923		Janesville High school opens at 408 S Main St. The first completely assembled 5 passenger touring car came off the end of the line at Janesville's General Motors plant.
1930	21,628	WCLO begins broadcasting from the third floor of the old Gazette building . Chevrolet is making 450 cars per day--a number that will increase to 700 per day in May--and adds a new 1.5-ton truck to its Janesville assembly line.
1940	22,992	
1950	24,899	Janesville sets a residential construction record: 210 new houses, bringing to 717 the number built since World War II's end. The Rock County Airport provides passenger airline service.
1955		Janesville High School moves to Randall Avenue.
1960	35,184	Prosperous Rock County has industry and farms: it has bloomed as one of the state's most vigorous areas; Beloit and Janesville are manufacturing centers; dairy farmers ship milk to Chicago.
1968	46,000	Parker High School opens on Mineral Point Avenue. The high school on Randall Avenue is renamed Craig High School
1970	46,426	GM strike in Janesville over wages, cost-of-living increases, and retirement. Autoworkers' wages are \$4.02 an hour plus another \$1.75 in benefits
1973	47,390	
1974	49,448	
1975	49,656	
1976	50,043	
1977	50,509	
1978	50,135	
1979	51,500	Parker Pen's world headquarters (One Parker Place) gets renovated.
1980	51,071	National recession affects Janesville. However, Simmons USA establishes a mattress and bedding firm in the city
1981	51,101	
1982	51,165	Unemployment in Janesville is 21 percent. Because many people have exhausted their benefits, the true rate is closer to 30 percent. Mortgage rates in Janesville average 18.5 percent.

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1983	51,095	<p>Janesville Public Library becomes automated, putting its card catalog and circulation records on computer.</p> <p>1700 second-shift workers return to the line at the Janesville GM plant, bringing the plant up to full production with 6500 employees. Current hourly wages are \$12 an hour for assemblers, \$14 for skilled workers.</p> <p>Bliss Family celebrates 100th year of owning the Janesville Gazette.</p>
1984	52,085	<p>GM announces that pickup truck-building operations will be moved to a factory in Fort Wayne, Indiana. More than 1,250 Janesville workers accept the transfer offer.</p> <p>First Baptist Church celebrates its 140th anniversary.</p>
1985	51,926	<p>Janesville celebrates its sesquicentennial, 1835-1985.</p> <p>Parker Pen announces the sale of its pen business. The new owners close the corporate headquarters downtown.</p>
1986	52,202	
1987	52,336	<p>GM employs 5,600 people, 1,500 fewer than the plant’s peak employment of 7,100 in 1980.</p>
1988	52,381	
1989	52,826	
1990	52,210	<p>GM of Janesville builds its last Chevrolet Cavalier and begins renovating the assembly line to make full-size sport-utility vehicles.</p> <p>Mercy Hospital adds a sports medicine clinic and centers for cancer treatment and plastic surgery.</p>
1991	52,538	
1992	53,358	<p>Racism put the city in the national spotlight with several Ku Klux Klan rallies.</p>
1993	54,022	
1994	54,553	<p>The birth of Miracle, the white buffalo calf, brings national attention to Rock County.</p>
1995	56,141	
1996	57,928	<p>The Janesville Public Library – renamed Hedberg Public Library to honor its major donors – opens its new facility.</p>
1997	58,639	<p>Janesville is the fastest-growing Rock County community in the 1990s.</p> <p>The city planner attributed the growth to “new jobs coming into the area along with the overall vitality of our retail and industrial base.”</p>
1998	59,223	
1999	59,626	
2000	60,200	<p>Census Bureau puts Janesville’s population above 60,000 for the first time: a 14% jump since 1990. Good economic times, low unemployment, good schools, low housing costs, and proximity to I-90, Madison, and Rockford are all explanations given for this growth.</p>

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2001	60,483	Janesville Performing Arts Center opens.
2002	60,775	
2003	61,110	
2004	61,130	
2005	62,130	
2006	62,540	Wal-Mart opens SuperCenter in Janesville.
2008	63,540	General Motors closes its Janesville facility.
2009	63,500	
2010	63,600	
2011	63,515	
2012	63,480	SHINE Medical Technologies selects Janesville site for its medical isotope facility.
2013	63,600	
2014	63,525	
2015	63,510	
2016	63,470	
2017	63,215	Rock River Parking Plaza that straddled the Rock River between Milwaukee and Court Streets is demolished and removed. The parking deck was first built in 1963 and expanded in 1965. The Hough family sells Hufcor to OpenGate Capital.
2018	63,570	
2019	63,433	The Jackson Street façade of the former General Motors plant, one of the last structures still standing on the enormous brownfield site, was demolished. The Bliss family sells the Janesville Gazette newspaper to Adams Publishing and radio stations WJVL and WCLO to Big Radio.
2020	65,615	Pedestrian bridge over Rock River between Milwaukee and Court Streets opens
2021	64,198	
2022	66,206	The last 28 Hufcor workers are abruptly laid off. The company goes into receivership.

Population Statistics sources: US Census (all decade years, ending in 0); State of Wisconsin WDOA Population Estimates (1971 forward); City of Janesville Development Department

This list is provided by the Janesville Community Development Department and updated by Hedberg Public Library. Statistics are based on State of Wisconsin WDOA Population Estimates (as of January 1st each year).