

## McAllen FARM ON LAKE POKEGAMA HAD FIRST GOLF COURSE

George Wood lives on the old McAllen place and he can remember when it was a part of the local sporting scene.

"The nine hole golf course was between the lake and county road 13. It was a private course and people played here by invitation," he said.

Remains of the sand greens are still visible in level spots on the property as are the raised edges of the racetrack that was also part of the old McAllen farm.

P.W. McAllen was a colorful Pine City character. He was vice president of the First National Bank in 1912 and his farm estate on Lake Pokegama was always the site of hospitality and good times from what can be gleaned from old newspapers.

He built a half mile long race track near county road 13 and some of the best harness racing in the state took place there. Some of McAllens own stock included horses that were descendants of the famous Dan Patch.

Frank Waffield remembers learning to golf on the McAllen course.

"It was a difficult course and I can still remember asking dad to take me golfing one day and he said no.

" McAllen has raised the green fees from 15 cents to a quarter and that's too much," Warfield Sr. said.

Frank laughed recalling the incident.

Later on attempts to establish a golf course on the fairgrounds failed and ~~when~~ it seemed like Pine City would never have this

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recreational asset that is so important to a resort area.

Through the combined efforts of a few hard working people the Pine City golf club first opened its doors in September of 1969 and play began on the course in the spring of 1970.

Promoting and building a golf course in a town that in former years rejected a hospital, would not approve a swimming pool and continued to vote down a new school building was classed as sort of ~~as~~ a minor miracle at that time.

It all began in ~~197~~ 1962 when Ron Wanless read an article about a town in Wisconsin that was getting federal funding to build a golf course. He thought, "Why can't Pine City get in on this?"

Wanless approached the businessmen suggesting that a golf course could be an asset to the community and a selling point in recruiting industry to locate in the area.

At that time there were approximately 25 active golfers in all of Pine City and the surrounding area. The idea of a golf course was not new but there was never enough interest to get private funding.

With the possibility of federal help, new enthusiasm was aroused. Together with Wanless, the original Board of Directors including Hoyt Haycock, James D'Acoust, Robert Carlson, John Nygren, Howard Ledin and Dr. L. W. Onken, set out to investigate the possibility of making it go.

"We knew that without community interest and support it would never be possible," said Haycock, first president of the Pine City Golf Club.

"We held meetings with all the civic organizations in town hoping to gain support from these groups. We could get F.H.A. financing if we could raise 20 percent of the overall cost on our own,"

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" Estimated construction bids were around \$125,000. ~~Twenty-percent of the overall cost~~ That meant that \$25,000. had to be raised locally and that was a lot of money in a small town."

It was decided to sell stock in the Pine City Golf Club. Normally stock in such a venture would sell for \$100. to \$200. per share but at that price the committee knew they would not get the entire community to participate. They needed and wanted wholehearted community involvement.

The Pine City Golf Club from the very beginning was meant to create the feeling that everyone was welcome and it was to be everyone's club.

They didn't want the exclusive snob image so many clubs encourage. They needed the skills and talents of people from all walks of life. For this reason it was decided to sell stock in a price range available to everyone, \$50. a share.

An option was taken to buy property off Highway 61 south of town for the location of the new golf course. When it was time to close the deal there was not enough money available. Once again it seemed like a golf course in Pine City would not materialize. The F.H.A. cooled off and the issue died.

One day Representative Blatnik and Jim Oberstar were attending a meeting in the courthouse. Wanless, still convinced there was some hope left for the golf course, went to that meeting.

He asked the government officials what was holding up Pine City's application for funds to build a golf course. They told him they would check into the matter when they returned to Washington.

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Persistent, Wanless replied, "We've waited long enough. We have to know now."

Blatnik left the room to make a phone call. When he returned he assured Wanless the loan would be forthcoming.

With the money on the way new life was pumped back into the project. Jim Connaker solved the land problem. The freeway had cut through his farm and he offered his property on the east side of it at a fair price.

Jim D'Acoust, assisted by Wanless, spent countless hours designing the course. Their plans were presented to an architect who officially put them on paper. When the land was surveyed it was found to be unsuitable for the conventional layout of a clockwise course. Therefore, it was built in a unique figure 8 design.

The architect estimated it would cost \$230,000. to build the course and clubhouse. By building a simple structure and with the help of local contractors and volunteer work of many of the men and women in the area, the project was accomplished for \$103,000.

Businessmen became super stock salesmen. People that never golfed in their lives and never intended to, bought stock. Farmers who formerly would never think of golfing during their busy season bought stock and many of them took up the game .

Newcomers and summer people bought stock and everyone dug deep when donations were requested for equipment, trees, decorating, supplies, and F.H.A. payments.

Golf teachers volunteered to give free lessons to people wishing to learn the game. Almost everyone was a "duffer" so no

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the benefits of everyone starting together.

In those early days it was not unusual to see 75 to 100 men and women out picking up rocks on a Sunday afternoon helping to prepare the course for seeding.

It was over a year before the grass grew hardy enough to risk playing the course. The first two years the payments and expenses were met by receipts from parties that were held in the clubhouse.

Alice Tollin Piotrowski, first club manager, can look back and laugh heartily at incidents that weren't very humorous at the time.

Alice and her husband had been retired just 10 months from the resort and restaurant business when they were contacted by Wanless with a proposition to move their mobile home out to the golf course and take over management of the clubhouse.

"We agreed to start them out," Alice said. "I will never forget the first party if I live to be 100," she said.

"The building was still under construction and Harriet Appleby asked if it would be possible to book a party for a group of 100 women on their way home to Rochester from Duluth following a bowling tournament.

The clubwomen promised to help in the kitchen and several of the men volunteered to tend bar. The party was scheduled for Sunday, April 19. They wanted to be fed and back on the bus within an hour.

"On Wednesday I went out to check to see how the kitchen was shaping up and I almost had a heart attack," Alice laughed.

"The stoves were in the middle of the room, chunks of cement were all over, dishes were just comin in all packed in boxes. I couldn't see how we could possibly serve a meal for 100 people by Sunday."

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She put out the call for help and as usual, help came from the members.

The women washed and put away the dishes and the men scrubbed the floors and set up tables.

Alice prepared most of the food at home and carried it out in tubs of ice.

"The meal went off without a hitch and the ladies said it was the greatest. They loved my homemade breads and asked to buy some if there was anything left to sell. At \$2.50 a plate the club rang up its first receipts."

Fortunately during those first struggling years the Golf Club was the only place in town that could handle large groups for private parties and weddings. The Lions and Christian Womens Clubs made it their regular meeting place and so many people came to the monthly steak fry parties there was scarcely room to dance.

"Right in the middle of one big party the cupboards fell off the wall," Alice said. "They weren't braced to hold the load of so many dishes. Boy, did that cause excitement,"

The Pine City golf club now has one of the finest courses in the area. Inflation has caused them financial problems and just last fall the community again rallied to help them keep their head above water. They are operating this season with a lot of volunteer help recruited from the membership by Mary Haycock.

Almost everyone in town can look at the Golf Club with pride and know that somehow, some way, through their involvement either by donations of time and money, stock purchases, memberships and patronage, they became part of an "impossible dream" and saw it come true.

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