



A. J. Turner Predicts...

Portage historian and newspaper editor, A.J. Turner wrote in 1904:

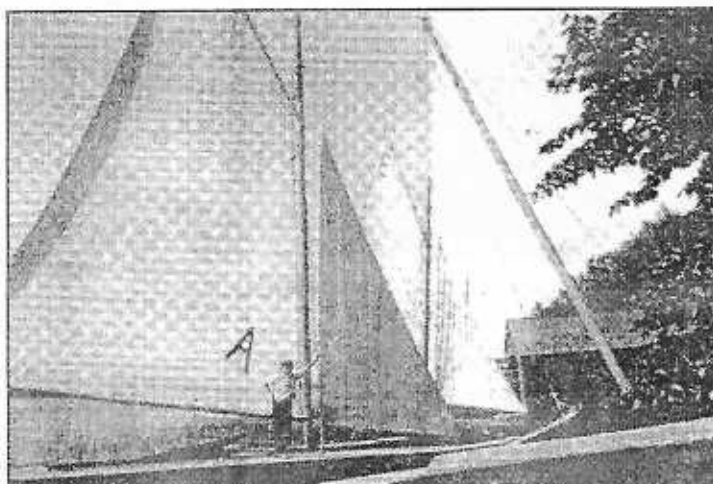
"Because of the constantly increasing demand for summer homes for the families of people living in larger cities, Swan Lake is sure to come at no distant day into prominence for its beauty and accessibility, both of which are bound to comment it to the public."

Remember when?...

In response to reader interest, we are devoting a majority of this issue to the history of Swan Lake: early activities, structures and how the area has evolved throughout the years. We are especially grateful for the photographs provided to us by Frank Rhyme, whose grandfather was one of those mentioned in early reports on the recreational mecca the lake became in the early 1900's.

An article in the June, 1969 issue of the "Daily Register" written by Dorothy G. McCarthy, chronicles the Lake's development. A brief synopsis follows, information which gives a wonderful perspective on development in the area.

In the 1830's, the area now occupied by the Portage Country Club was laid out as a platted city and given the name, "Ida" by Larned B. Harkness. He hoped that people, especially from the East, would invest in these homesites. Because of the oak woods, lake



July, 1906 - William "Punk" Rhyme at the Boat Landing
The three boats: Albatros, Emerala, Anita

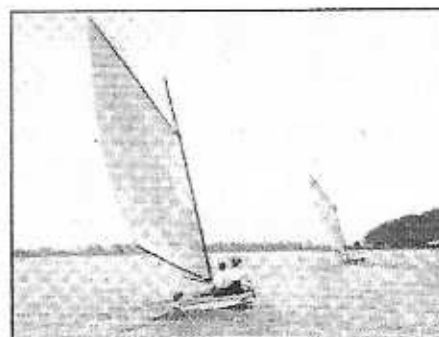
beauty and six mile distance to what was then the growing community of Ft. Winnebago, Ida was expected to thrive and prosper. Only Poynette, one of the halfdozen or so cities platted as Ida had been, came to prosper. (Frank Rhyme shares the following, additional detail about development during this time): In 1867, Henry Merrill sold the property surrounding the North Side to Charles Lindsay and his wife. Over the years, the Lindsays sold off various parcels and, until late in the 1930's, Charles Lindsay's heirs still owned a fair amount of the land from the Lake Shore to Hwy 33.

A mile or so up the lake, (approximately where the Berst home stood) was the John Cuff Resort; a 3-story white brick building with an elegant veranda. There were rooms and cottages available for rental and



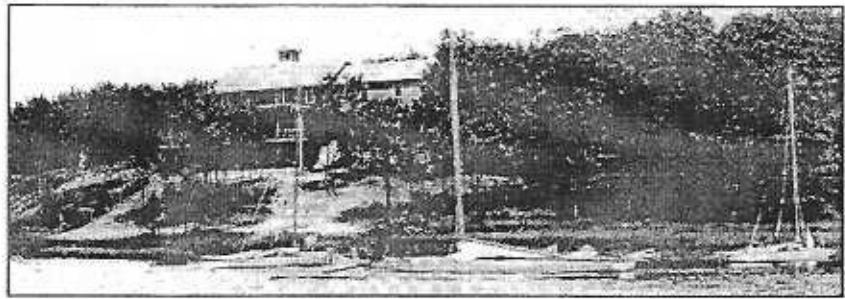
"Running Free" - circa 1906

even a "shoot the chute" which carried "screaming passengers" down the hill onto the lake. A launch carried visitors between Cuffs and Oakwood landing, site of the present country club.

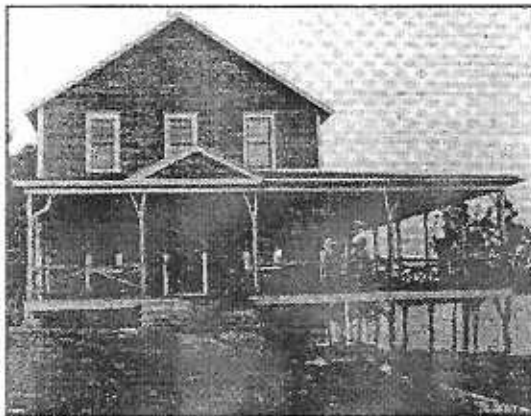


Sailing East - circa 1906

However, in the 1900's, a group of sailing enthusiasts who had been gathering at the lake each summer to sail from Cuff's Resort, moved their club to Oakwood Park (which eventually evolved to become the Portage Country Club). Among the leaders were Frank A. Rhyme (grandfather of current Country Club member, Frank A. Rhyme) and T.H. Cochrane. They bought three 28' long, 6' wide custom boats of identical size and design to avoid unfair advantage in their races.



Country Club House - 1907 - 3 sailboats docked



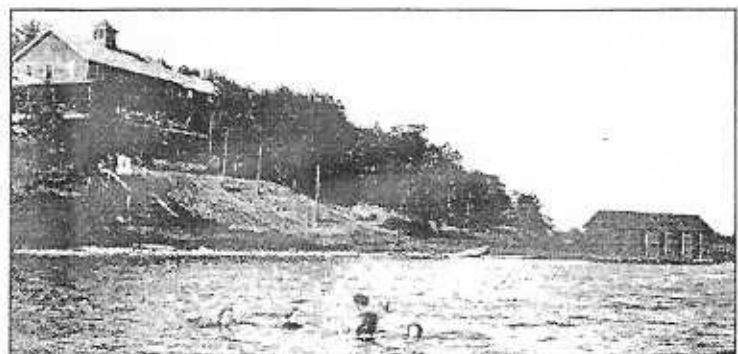
Country Club, West End - circa 1909

was an ice house in the basement of this building which kept ice for use during the summer months.

The early 1900's were a time of great social activity, including sailboat racing, fishing, swimming and general recreation. A few cottages were moved from Cuff's resort, over the ice to Oakwood Park and to another development to the West: Lakeside Park. (Identified by Jim Watson, Sr. as Warren & Dorothy Rebholz's "old" green cottage and the one currently owned by Dr. Gary Kuhl two houses to the East were two of these cottages.) In Oakwood Park, the Taylors bought a home in 1926 (which had been built around 1897 for the Roehms who used it as a get-away for fishing and hunting). There were also two cottages between this house and the Club House:

The Portage Country Club area came into being in 1897-98 when Harry Purdy platted it as "Oakwood Park". Pleasure seekers reached Oakwood via twice daily trains that travelled between Portage and Horicon, or by horse and buggy or bicycle. (Fare one-way to Oakwood from Portage was 11 cents!) Camping was popular at Oakwood Park and groups of young people spent long vacations in the tranquil setting.

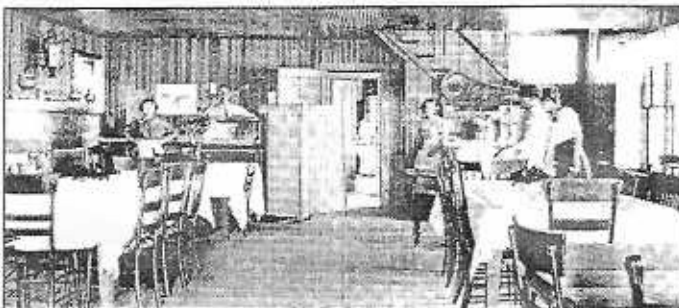
Harry Purdy built a two-story wooden building between the railroad tracks and the lake shore on what is now the Country Club parking lot. This building was originally intended as a resort hotel. It was eventually purchased by a group of Portage men who moved the building closer to the lake, dug a basement and new foundation and opened it as the Swan Lake Yacht Club. Interesting to note is that this original building, with some alterations, is used today as the Portage Country Club Restaurant and locker rooms. Dr. Stewart Taylor recalls that there



1909 - Portage Country Club

"Swanee" and "Dublin Inn" (used by two families, hence "dublin inn").

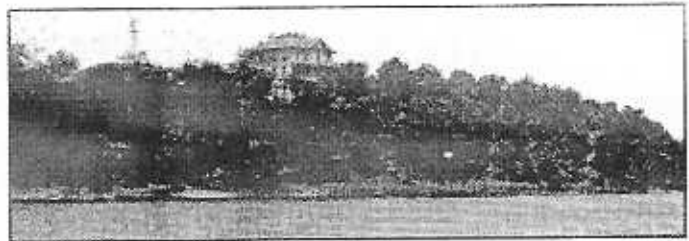
After WWI, "a few of the fellows began batting a few golf balls around the adjacent pastures." Named as these first golfers were H.B. Rogers, W.S. Stroud, Wm. Rhyme and the Rev. Herman Rockstroh. Sailing was on the wane and when the club nearly floundered in 1919, something new had to be dreamed up to keep interest alive! A five-hole golf club emerged, later enlarged to nine holes. (Until the course was laid out, the golfers practiced at the fairgrounds.)



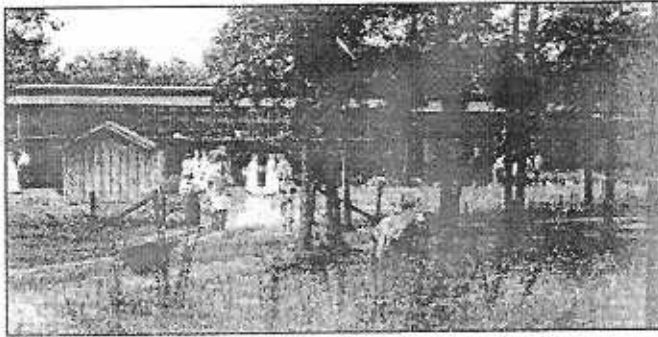
Country Club Dining Room - circa 1909

James A. Carroll was said to be one of the officers who kept the club solvent and progressive; also being responsible for the new road access to Hwy. 33 and acquisition of property for holes 7 & 8 across the tracks.

The Portage Country Club survived the depression years, refinancing and problems so common to clubs over the years. Today, it is a thriving center of social and recreational activity with a ever-improving 18 hole course, floating dock and sand beach in addition to a popular



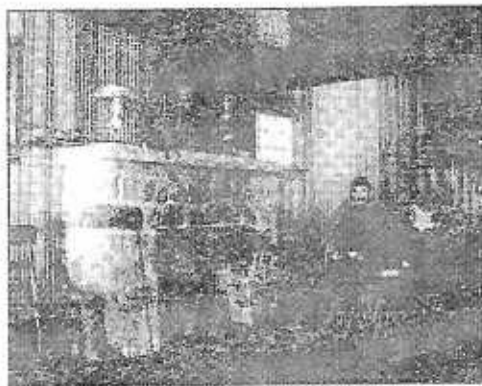
Cuff's Resort - early 1900's (Current Saddle Ridge bluff area)



Wee House - Passenger stop near present 18th tee

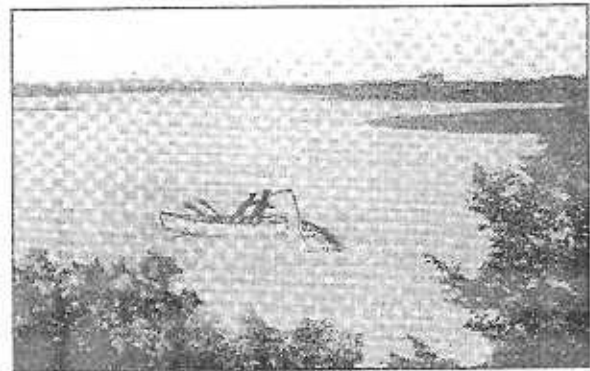
restaurant. It's a long glance backward to the Oakwood Park days of mosquito netted campers and kerosene stoves!

In talking with Jim Watson, Sr., he recalls, among other things, how ice boats raced on the lake, that the slide described in Cuff Hotel history was a wooden structure with pilings on the lake bed that, perhaps, could be found today. The "Wee House" in the photograph at the train stop was located at the side of the tracks at the approximate location of #18 tee box. Eventually, the Wee House ended up on property owned by Jerry Van Ness, who recently gave the structure to the Country Club and it can be found today on the hill near the # 7 tee box and # 8 green.



Frank & Alice Rhyme enjoy the fire (Grandparents of Frank A. Rhyme)

Another interesting aspect of Swan Lake is the marl bottom, with the shells, which was removed from the two bays adjacent to Saddle Ridge in the early 1900's. The marl was used as a fertilizer for soils deficient in lime and also as feed for chickens.



Fishing is Good in Swan Lake, Portage, WI
Early postcard (from Saddle Ridge looking east)
(publisher John Graham, Jim Watson, Sr. grandfather)

from my perspective.... Frank Rhyme

A number of Portage residents, including my grandfather Frank A. Rhyme, were avid sailors. They formed the Swan Lake Yacht Club with it original docking facility at Cuff's Resort. About 1906, the sailors decided the dock at Cuff's was not the best, so they purchased the area at Oakwood Park which became their headquarters and, ultimately, the Swan Lake Golf Club. They moved a partially finished building to the present site, finished the interior, including a large kitchen, porch, paneled dining room several rental rooms on the second floor and an ice house underneath the kitchen. Also on this land were a number of campsites which, along with the several cottages moved from Cuff's (on ice during the winter), made for great summer living for several Portage families, principally the members of the Yacht Club.

Thanks to Dorothy Rebholz and Nan Rebholz for the preparation of this issue of the Swan Lake Association Newsletter. Additional 'thanks' to Frank Rhyme and Jim Watson, Sr. for their valuable assistance with our 'historical overview'! We are also appreciative of the article written by Dorothy McCarthy from which we gleaned so much of the history. Harold Rebholz also assisted with the reproduction of Frank Rhyme's wonderful pictures.

STATEMENT OF THE SWAN LAKE CLUB:

In 1893, the following statement was submitted to members of the Club. Among the more interesting entries:

Taking two boats to lake.....	\$2.00
Half dozen camp chairs	\$1.50
Rhyme, new pier	\$40.00
Fishing Tackle, poles, etc.	\$1.10

Times are a-changing...

RECEIPTS:			DISBURSEMENTS:		
No. of Shares.					
1. Geo. A. Voerrmann.....	1 share	\$20.00	July 12. Part payment H. C. Brodie's contract...	\$25.00	
2. C. C. Zisch.....	1 share	20.00	" 20. Balance " " " " " " " " " "	100.00	
3. J. Bolting.....	1 share	20.00	" 27. Fishing tackle, poles, etc.....	2.10	
4. V. Scholte.....	1 share	20.00	" 27. R. W. Moran, crockery.....	8.00	
5. McMahon.....	1 share	20.00	" 28. J. L. Wells, store.....	8.00	
6. Mahon.....	1 share	20.00	" 31. Warner Hardware Co., sundries.....	7.50	
7. Mahon.....	1 share	20.00	" 31. Mike Welsh, drayage.....	1.00	
8. Mahon.....	1 share	20.00	Aug. 1. Kieffer & Helmann's, insurance.....	2.00	
9. Mahon.....	1 share	20.00	" 2. Geo. Markson, furniture.....	10.00	
10. C. C. Zisch.....	1 share	20.00	" 14. Canvas, baking pan and table cloth.....	2.78	
11. Samuel Slater.....	1 share	20.00	" 20. H. H. Dyer, row-boat "Lady".....	22.50	
12. F. J. Michel.....	1 share	20.00	" 31. Geo. Voerrmann, row-boat "Ariel".....	20.00	
13. R. T. Rapp.....	1 share	20.00	Sept. 1. Repairing logs.....	2.00	
14. W. B. Rhyme, by subscription.....	1 share	20.00	" 2. Taking two boats to lake.....	2.00	
15. Emilberg Bros.....	2 shares	40.00	" 6. Wurdie, taking care of place.....	5.00	
16. R. A. Sprecher.....	2 shares	40.00	" 6. Half dozen camp chairs.....	1.50	
17. R. A. Sprecher.....	2 shares	40.00	Oct. 16. Additional insurance.....	1.00	
18. May 20, 1893, by balance.....		\$272.71			
		\$512.71			
			1892.		
			Mar. 20. Kershaw, rent April 1, '92, to April 1, '93.....	15.00	
			May 23. Mr. Moran, glasses.....	1.50	
			" 27. Livery, painting bludge, \$1.00-\$2.00.....	5.00	
			June 18. Kieffer, drayage.....	4.00	
			" 20. Warner Hardware Co.....	10.72	
			" 20. Kieffer, hauling out house.....	2.00	
			July 2. Out house, Schroeder.....	5.00	
			" 21. G. Marison, two coats and outfit.....	8.00	
			Aug. 20. Rapp, share bought of H. Bloom.....	10.00	
			Sept. 2. Warner Hardware Co.....	5.00	
			Nov. 2. Insurance, Kieffer & Helmann 10 Oct. 1892.....	3.00	
			" 17. Prentice & Mohr, lumber, pier.....	22.18	
			1893.		
			Apr. 3. Kershaw, rent to April 1, '93.....	25.00	
			" 20. Rhyme, new pier.....	40.00	
			May 3. Rhyme, balance, sail-boat.....	25.00	
			" 20. Kershaw, building fence.....	10.00	
				\$512.71	
			May 20, 1893, balance due.....	\$12.71	

NATURE NOTEBOOK... Dorothy Rebolz

For those of us who stay in the area year-round, this has been a year of variety! Ice began forming on Swan Lake November 19 (signal for the Watsons to take out their boat and pier!). The ice continued to form and melt until December 17 when it froze from shore to shore with only a few small, open pockets). Common mergansers were observed frequently during this period with approximately 90 of them swimming the day before the final freeze. By December 22, it was thick enough for Nan and I to ice skate (close to shore, of course!). April 3 was the "day the ice left", having signaled its imminent departure for several days. (The Watson pier was in on April 4!)

During the winter, Nan and Ted Rebolz stocked a tub of kernal corn in their yard and almost daily observed 4-6 deer happily feeding within 5 yards of their kitchen window. (Rabbits, squirrels and raccoon also took advantage of this "banquet".) The deer were often seen on the marsh area of Lakeside Park, heading down toward Salters to cut up to the "Rebolz Restaurant"! On March 26, two large, wild turkeys wandered through the Warren Rebolz yard, Jerry Van Ness reports having seen both gray fox and coyote during the winter months and four eagles were seen by Randy Davis on the bluff at Saddle Ridge.

The Hoffmanns and Humphreys spotted what they thought to be a young eagle. Don Hoffmann was able to get a photo of the bird sitting in one of his trees. Closer examination and "consultation" hints that the bird in question may be a large red-tailed hawk which was observed by several other residents on the North Shore throughout the winter.



Photo by Don Hoffmann