


Fore! Ward

The History of Wisconsin Golf

By Jerry Poling

*A Wisconsin-shaped
green with a
Lake Michigan-
shaped sand trap
greet golfers at the
first hole of Lake
Breeze Golf club,
Winneconne,
Wisconsin.*

Photo courtesy of
Lake Breeze Golf Club

An aerial photograph of a golf course, showing a large green fairway and a smaller green in the foreground. The grass is a vibrant green, and the overall scene is captured from a high angle, looking down on the course.

In August of 2004, in the sparsely populated village of Haven, Wisconsin, the waters of Lake Michigan in view, three men walked intently down a grassy path each with the same goal: to advance their small, white ball with more efficiency than the other two men.

They were playing a game invented centuries ago in Europe known as “goff.” Their game of “golf,” as we know it today, was, for the most part, the same one that became popular in Scotland in the 1700s. Ultimately, these men would fail or succeed based on their ability to swing a metal implement with absolute precision.

However, some things had changed with the game of golf since the 1700s. Attesting to the game’s popular appeal, thousands of people surrounded the three men. The crowd buzzed in anticipation of each swing, was hushed during the torqueing of the players’ bodies, and cheered wildly as the ball arched skyward. Millions more people watched on television sets around the world in homes, bars, and golf course clubhouses. The consequences of their competitive match were of great personal concern to each man, pride, of course, being among them, but possibly not the foremost of their motivations. The winner would not only have his name engraved on a coveted silver trophy but would earn \$1,125,000. These men, Vijay Singh of Fiji, Chris DiMarco of New York, and Justin Leonard of Texas, were the focus of arguably the greatest moment in the long and proud history of golf in Wisconsin: They were in a playoff for the Professional Golfers Association Championship, one of four major world golf events held each year. They were playing at Whistling Straits golf course in Haven, north of Sheboygan.

When Singh made a two-foot par putt on the final playoff hole to win the four-day PGA tournament, he finished a week of golf and festivities that brought 300,000 spectators to Whistling Straits, an estimated \$76.9 million to Wisconsin’s economy, and worldwide media attention to the state that is best known for its progressive politics, dairy products, northwoods resorts, and pro football team. The 2004 PGA at Whistling Straits, part of a complex of four acclaimed public golf courses owned by the Kohler Company, thrust upon the nation’s consciousness that Wisconsin was a great place to play a round of golf.



WHi(S65)62

Three golfers hit the links in Wausau, ca. 1913. Two caddies tote the men's clubs from hole to hole. The flagstick lies at the feet of the young man on the right.

Wisconsin residents and visitors have known that the state's varied terrain—from northern forests to southern plains, crossed and dotted with rivers and lakes, rolling with hills and bluffs—is a perfect match for a game whose attraction and challenge are determined largely by the lay of the land. They have known it since the 1890s, when the state's first golf courses were carved out of farm fields and woods, when tomato cans were sunk in the ground for cups, and golfers in white shirts and ties and dresses swung away with hickory-shafted clubs.

Wisconsin's golfing history parallels the growth and acceptance of the game nationally. It began with private country clubs and expanded to a much more public game in the twentieth century. Along the way, golf in Wisconsin produced famous players and attracted prestigious events and notable people, reflecting a pastime that grew right along with the state.

Putting Down Roots

Just five years after the United States had its first organized golf club in Yonkers, New York, in 1888, Wisconsin had its own. According to Gene Haas, the author of *Playing Through: A History of the Wisconsin State Golf Association*, the founder of golf in Wisconsin was Alexander Galbraith. In 1893, Galbraith donated part of his farm near Janesville to help build a nine-hole golf course named Sinissippi, the Indian name for the nearby Rock River. Galbraith was a businessman who frequently visited Scotland, home to St. Andrews Golf Course. The modern game traces its roots from this prestigious course. Galbraith and five of his friends laid out their Janesville course and began using the fifteen clubs and the balls Galbraith brought back from Scotland.

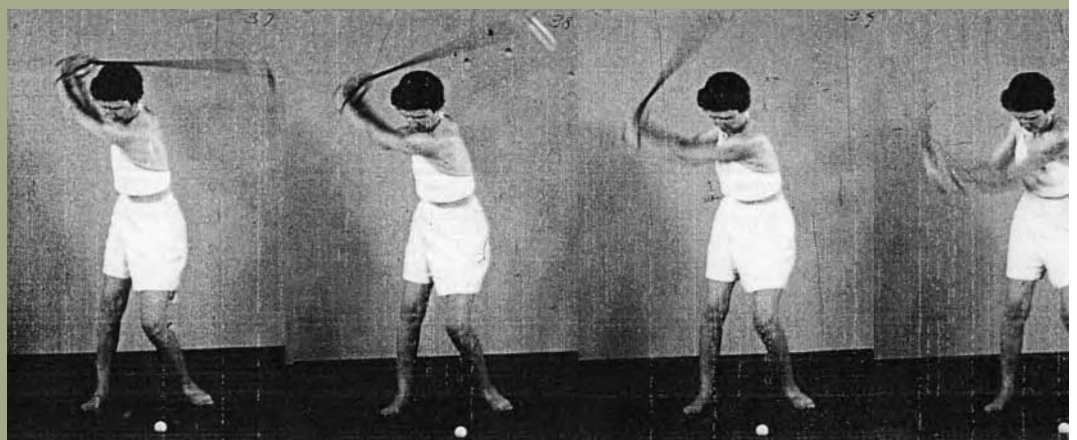
That same year, another Wisconsin resident, Dr. Victor Kutchin, opened his own nine-hole course near Green Lake next to the Maplewood Hotel that he owned. Kutchin soon changed his mind and did away with the course, not seeing a future for the game of golf. In 1896, however, some golf enthusiasts moved remnants of the Maplewood course nearby and started a course named Tuscumbia in Green Lake. Tuscumbia had humble beginnings, just five holes that used tomato cans for cups. It expanded to nine holes in 1905 and eighteen holes in 1918.

Also in 1893, just west of Milwaukee, the roots of another course were being planted at Eagle Springs resort at Eagle Lake. William Tuohy wanted a golf course to complement his hotel so he asked his friend Albert Goodwill Spalding to help. Spalding, player and manager for the Chicago White Stockings (eventually renamed the Chicago Cubs) helped design some of the golf holes. Spalding is best known for the sporting goods company of the same name that remains in business today.

Officially, the game of golf had a foothold in Wisconsin one year before the United States Golf Association, the governing body of golf in the country, was founded in 1894. The state of Wisconsin was forty-five years old.

Remarkably, in a fickle business that depends on good

UW-Madison's Department of Kinesiology studied the mechanics of motion by studying a series of photographs, like this one, of a woman swinging a golf club.



M2001-186





WHS Name File

Hall of Fame pitcher for the Chicago White Stockings and co-founder of the Spalding sporting goods company, Albert Goodwill Spalding also found time to design some of Wisconsin's earliest golf holes at Eagle Springs.

weather during a relatively short Upper Midwest playing season as well as a good economy, Sinissippi (now the Janesville Golf Club), Tuscumbia, and Eagle Springs remain open for business, along with many of the other courses that were established by 1900. These include country clubs in Milwaukee (1894), Kenosha (1898), Appleton (Riverview, 1898), Oshkosh (1899), Madison (Maple Bluff, 1899), Racine (1900), and La Crosse (Schaghticoke, 1900), which was renamed the La Crosse Country Club and is currently known as Forest Hills golf course. In 1901, according to *Playing Through*, those courses, with the exception of Eagle Springs, were the nine founding members of the Wisconsin State Golf Association, the governing body of golf in the state. A separate organization, the Wisconsin Women's State Golf Association, formed in 1909.

Some of the state's early courses have peculiar histories that reflect the fledgling nature of the game. Riverview, in Appleton, was founded at a drugstore and was located on land rented from a farmer for \$35 a year. Maple Bluff, in Madison, began on six acres of land rented from a farmer. Some early players arrived at the course via boat on Lake Mendota. Schaghticoke started as a three-hole course below scenic Granddad's Bluff. The Milwaukee Country Club, according to *Wisconsin Golfer* magazine, used horse-drawn mowers and 200 sheep to trim its grass until gas-powered motors arrived shortly after the turn of the century. Most early courses in Wisconsin were either private or were built in resort areas for the

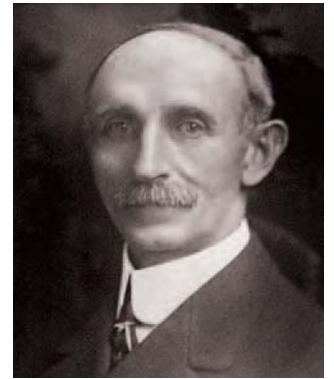
summertime entertainment of wealthy, vacationing Chicago and Wisconsin residents. Golf had a reputation in the first half of the twentieth century as a game that catered to wealthy, white businessmen. That reputation began to change in the 1920s.

Growth in the 1920s

In 1923, the game's growing popularity affirmed, the first state high school golf tournament was held in Racine with eleven teams competing. Racine won the championship and Hartland took second place, according to the Wisconsin Interscholastic Athletic Association.

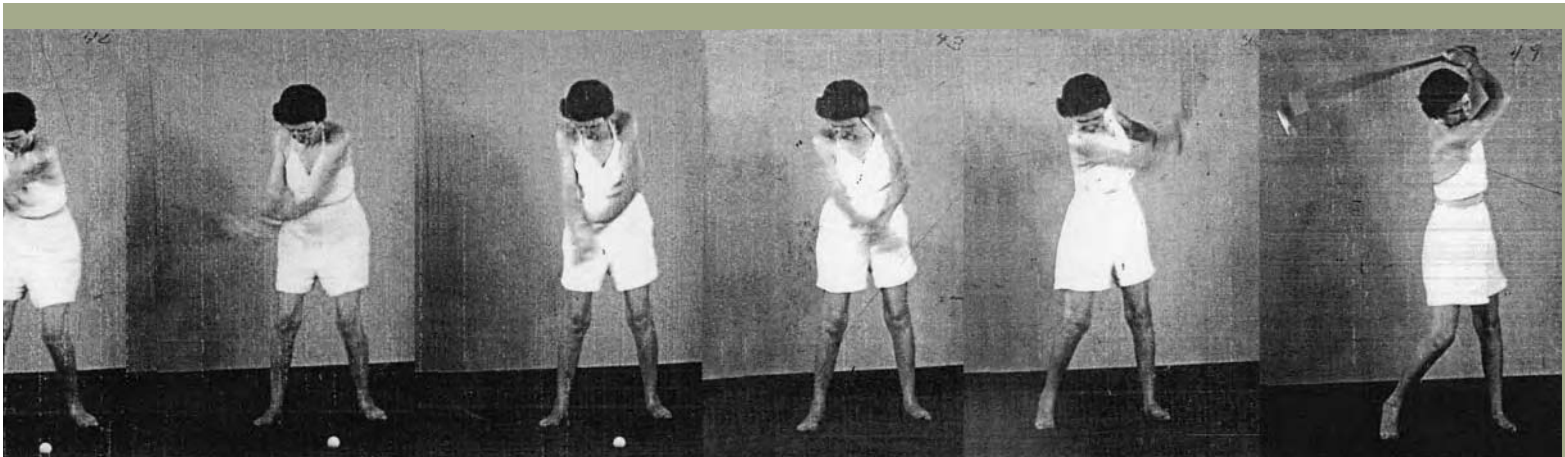
In the 1920s, the number of courses in the nation mushroomed from 1,000 to 5,000. In Wisconsin at least ninety-seven courses opened. Of those ninety-seven courses, seventy-three were open to the public charging daily greens fees to play, according to the WSGA. When the first fourteen courses in the state were open at the turn of the century, only two allowed public play. Despite increasing accessibility to the game and its growing popularity, the WSGA did not allow African Americans to play in its tournaments until the 1950s, according to *Playing Through*. The WSGA changed its policy when the USGA began allowing blacks in national tournaments.

In the far north, golf represented the end of one era and the start of another. Trout Lake Golf and Country Club was built near Arbor Vitae in Vilas County on Wright Brothers logging company land. The lumbering era that had sustained the northern Wisconsin



Janesville Country Club

Businessman Alexander Galbraith introduced Wisconsin to the game of golf when he brought a set of clubs back from Scotland. He started the Sinnissippi Golf Club known today as Janesville Country Club.



WISCONSIN MAGAZINE OF HISTORY

RULES

Officers, Brevets, the Chairman and Members of Sanating Committees and the Club Professional are charged with the responsibility of enforcing the rules of the Course.

1. All players shall register at the Clubhouse before playing on the course. Score cards should be returned to clubhouse.
 2. Play must start at No. 1 tee. Tee between the plates
 3. Children are not allowed on the course.
 4. A ball lying in a wagon track, in a hole and unplayable, in casual water, against a stone, in the stone fence, in a bush, on ground under repair, near a sand box, water pipe or connection may be lifted and dropped over the shoulder a club's length away, but not nearer the green. No penalty. A tree is a natural hazard.
 5. The ditch across No. 9 fairway is a hazard, and a ball driven into it must be played. If it lies against or near a stone, it may be lifted and dropped over the shoulder in the hazard.
 6. Out of bounds limits are indicated by stakes. If a ball be played out of bounds from a tee another ball must be teed. If a ball be played out of bounds from a fairway the player shall drop another ball as nearly as possible in the place from which the play was made. Penalty: loss of stroke and distance.
 7. Lost ball. The player shall return as nearly as possible to the spot from which the ball was played and drop another ball. Penalty: one stroke. A ball is considered lost when it has not been found after a search of five minutes.
 8. A ball lying on a green not being played for must not be played from that position. It must be lifted and dropped over the shoulder to either side of the green at a point nearer the tee from which it was played. No penalty.
 9. Balls in bunkers (traps) cannot be lifted. If a ball should lie in a footprint it is your misfortune, due to the negligence of other players. Smooth out all footprints.
 10. Members are not permitted to bring residents of Madison as guests more than six days in any one year.
- All plays are governed by the Rules of the Western Golf Association.

Etiquette of Golf

The following established Rules of Golf Etiquette should be observed by all players on the Course:

1. No one should stand close to or directly behind the ball, move, or talk, when a player is making a stroke. On the putting green no one should stand beyond the hole in the line of the player's stroke.
2. The player who has the honor should be allowed to play before his opponent tees his ball.
3. No player should play from any tee until the party in front has holed out and moved away from the green, except on Nos. 4 and 9, where players must wait until the preceding players have played their second strokes and are out of range. Use care in play so as not to endanger other players.
4. Players who have holed out should not try their putts over again, or otherwise delay other players who are following them.
5. Players looking for a lost ball should allow other matches coming up to pass them. They should signal to the players following them to pass, and having given such a signal, THEY SHOULD NOT CONTINUE THEIR PLAY until THESE PLAYERS HAVE PASSED and are out of reach.
6. If a match fails to keep its place on the green, and lose its distance more than one clear hole on those in front, it may be passed on request being made.
7. Replace divots and thus do your share to preserve the turf. Turf cut or displaced by a player should be at once replaced and pressed down with the foot.
8. Caddy bags must not be allowed to lit on the greens or tees. Matches, cigarettes, paper or other refuse must not be dropped anywhere on the course.
9. A player who has incurred a penalty stroke should promptly intimate the fact to his opponent.
10. Matches constituted of twosomes, threesomes or four somes shall have the precedence of and are entitled to pass any other kind of match. Parties consisting of a larger number of players are not permitted to play on the course. A single player has no standing and shall give way to all matches.

PLAY THE GAME

PH 2724

Although few duffers have to deal with wagon tracks today (see rule 4), the rules and etiquette for the game remain quite similar to those listed on this vintage score card from Nakoma Country Club.



Janesville Country Club
A century old trophy is just one of the treasures to be found at the Janesville Country Club.

The starting point for every hole-in-one is the often overlooked golf tee. This box is preserved for posterity in the Wisconsin Historical Society's Museum.



WHSMuseum1978.404.77



Janesville Country Club

J. H. Tweedy, a Scotsman from Chicago, was the first professional golfer to play at the Janesville Country Club circa 1902.



Janesville Country Club

A bit larger than the traditional foursome, this group taking their swings at Janesville's Sinmissippi Golf Links, show that golf is enjoyed by men and women alike.

economy for decades had come to an end. Horses and plows dug in and developed an eighteen-hole course between the Trout River and Trout Lake. According to *Wisconsin Golf Getaways* by Jeff Mayers and Jerry Poling, the logging company farmhouse was turned into the golf course clubhouse.

In 1921, the state of Wisconsin joined the golf boom when Peninsula State Park in Fish Creek, Door County, opened a course. Park manager Albert Doolittle laid out a nine-hole course near the Lake Michigan shoreline with sand greens, an early alternative to grass greens. Sand greens were flat, hard, oiled surfaces. After finishing the hole, golfers typically used a heavy rug attached to a handle to drag the sand surface smooth for the next players. Today, the park has an eighteen-hole course with grass greens. Sand greens were common prior to 1950—courses in New Richmond and Cumberland also opened in the 1920s with sand greens—but gradually gave way to grass greens, which were more expensive to build and more difficult to maintain but were more aesthetically appealing and allowed challenging, contoured surfaces. Only a few courses with sand greens remained in Wisconsin by 1980.

One of Wisconsin's first great public venues for golf, Brown Deer Park in Milwaukee, opened in 1929. The course was one of five designed in the 1920s in Milwaukee County by young golf pro George Hansen. Hired by the Milwaukee County Park Commission, Hansen first designed Grant Park in South Milwaukee overlooking Lake Michigan in 1919. The last in his series of courses was Brown Deer which was built on rolling farm land. Brown Deer's design remained a championship location for decades. The United States' Golf Association Public Links Championship, for golfers who belong to public courses, was at Brown Deer in 1951, 1966 and 1977. Brown Deer, where the fairways wind through stands of tall trees, was considered one of the top ten public courses in the country during that period. Today, after a 1987 facelift, the course holds the U.S. Bank Championship (formerly the Greater Milwaukee Open) on the men's pro golf tour. With this second wave of course construction in Wisconsin in the 1920s—soon after the state capitol was rebuilt in 1917—golf greens and fairways were firmly rooted in the state landscape.

In what may have been a sign of things to come for golf in Wisconsin, several of the first great names in the game helped design early Wisconsin courses. Tom Vardon, brother of the early golfing legend Harry Vardon of England, helped plot the Eau Claire Golf & Country Club when its existing course was built in 1928–29. Vardon was paid \$115. He also laid out the first nine at the Spooner Golf Club in 1930, including a par-4 finishing hole that is considered one of the best in the state. In 1909, one of the northernmost state courses, Plum Lake near Sayner in Vilas County, was partly designed by Louis James, the 1902 U.S. Amateur champion. Charles A. Goodyear, who helped start Goodyear Tire Company, was a



Janesville Country Club

A cartoon from 1960 celebrates Carol Sorenson's early accomplishments. She was named Wisconsin's athlete of the year in 1964 and was elected into the Wisconsin State Golf Association Hall of Fame in 1983.

charter member at Plum Lake, according to *Wisconsin Golf Getaways*.

Donald Ross, considered one of the finest American golf course architects, and his design company built the Oconomowoc Country Club in 1916 and rebuilt the Kenosha Country Club in 1922. Both courses are par 70 and about 6,500 yards long. In 1930, Leonard Macomber, who tutored under Ross, and another prominent early architect A.W. Tillinghast, designed the North Shore Golf Club in Menasha.

Scottish architect Tom Bendelow was among the people who left their mark on Wisconsin's golf landscape. Bendelow designed more than 400 courses in the United States beginning in 1885. At the turn of the century, he created Blue Mound, Oshkosh, and Racine country clubs. Later, in 1920, he designed Old Hickory Country Club near Beaver Dam. In 1925, Bendelow designed Quit-Qui-Oc, a public course that benefited from tourists in Elkhart Lake and Nakoma Country Club in Madison. Bendelow went on to design the



Courtesy of Fashions of the Hour
Marshall Field & Company

CF 9325



PH 2744

The main attraction at the Moor Mud Baths may have been the natural spring water, nevertheless, the health resort added a golf course in 1915.

As golf gained mass appeal, it did not lose its more elite players. A Marshall Fields ad from 1925 showcases golf fashions for its upscale customers.

acclaimed Medinah Country Club #3 course in Chicago in 1928. It hosted the 1949, 1975, and 1990 U.S. Opens and is considered one of the nation's top 100 courses.

The Scottish influence on early Wisconsin golf went beyond course design. Many of Wisconsin's early club professionals came from Scotland. Among them was Francis Gallett, a pro at Blue Mound Country Club in Wauwatosa, who won five State Open championships, according to *Playing Through*. In northwest Wisconsin, Tagalong Golf Resort (1923) in Birchwood not only was patterned after Scotland's St. Andrews golf course with its deep grass bunkers, but Scottish grasses were imported along with Scottish workers to build the course.

Names in the Game

Some of the people linked to golf in Wisconsin were known for other pursuits; among them architect Frank Lloyd Wright, President Eisenhower, and millionaire Frank Stout.

In 1923, Wright unveiled plans for a clubhouse at the Nakoma Country Club in Madison, at the club's request. Initially, the club's 400 members were excited about the unusual design which resembled a central Indian teepee and village. The main building, an octagon with a pyramid roof, would be 50 feet across and 55 feet high, with a four-sided fireplace in

the center. It was called "the most unique building in America" by Madison's *Wisconsin State Journal*. The cost was expected to be \$70,000. For reasons unknown, however, the Spring Green, Wisconsin, architect's design was not utilized and another, more traditional, clubhouse opened at Nakoma in 1930.

Nearly 70 years later, Wright's plans—posthumously—were revived at Gold Mountain golf course in Plumas County, California. Working with Taliesin Architects, Gold Mountain's clubhouse followed Nakoma's plans to a tee, opening in 2001. The clubhouse at Gold Mountain is called Nakoma.

Another one of the nation's most famous citizens, Dwight D. Eisenhower, U.S. president from 1953–1960, was a frequent visitor to Wisconsin's northwoods and the Minocqua Country Club before and after his presidency, according to the book *Northwoods Nostalgia* by Joyce Laabs. Just one year after World War II ended, General Eisenhower and his four brothers vacationed at Moody's Resort on Big Lake. It was the first of several trips to the Minocqua area, including 1948, 1965, and 1967, the latter two years before he died.

While up north, Eisenhower fished for bass and musky, enjoyed skeet shooting with his friend Howard Young of New York—one of the founding members of the club—and played

some golf. “Ike” became an honorary member of the Minocqua Country Club and of the Lac du Flambeau Chippewa tribe in 1965. At the country club, Eisenhower was particularly fond of the New England clam chowder and frog legs, often walking to the club alone for lunch and visiting the kitchen to compliment the staff on the food.

The nine-hole golf course and clubhouse, on a hill overlooking Lake Minocqua, originally opened in 1923 as Minocqua Heights Golf & Country Club. It was reorganized in 1934 as the Minocqua Country Club, according to *Early Times* by Dan Scrobell. The original nine-hole course no longer exists, but memories of “Ike” remain. Photos of Eisenhower at the old course hang in the clubhouse of the new Minocqua Country Club, a private, eighteen-hole course.

Eisenhower, a golf fanatic who played regularly during his presidency and even practiced on the White House lawn, has been credited—along with television and popular professional Arnold Palmer—with helping golf become a game of the masses in the 1950s. Approximately 3.2 million Americans played golf in 1953; by the end of Eisenhower’s presidency, that number had doubled, according to *First off the Tee* by Don Va Natta Jr.

Another successful man gave golf a boost in Wisconsin. In 1925, the grand opening of Tagalong golf course near Birchwood featured an exhibition round between the reigning U.S. Open and British Open golf champions, Willie McFarlane and “Long” John Barnes, respectively. Another prominent name was also on hand. The developer and owner of the course, Frank Stout, president of two railroads and a bank, and a hotel owner, was one of the richest men in Chicago at the time. For summer vacations he built an Adirondack-style family lodge on an island in Red Cedar Lake in Barron County. The lodge cost about \$1.5 million in 1915.

On the lakeshore, Stout built a public, nine-hole golf course for his pleasure, boating to the course when he wanted to play a round. Frank Stout was the son of Henry Stout, who was part owner of Knapp Stout, Co., of Menomonie, at one time the world’s largest lumber company. Frank’s brother, James, was a U.S. senator and started what is known today as the University of Wisconsin—Stout in Menomonie. Stout’s Tagalong course featured a stone clubhouse, part of which remains today, and was among the first in the state to

have irrigated fairways. His family retreat became a resort, Stout’s Lodge, and the golf course eventually expanded to eighteen holes.

Playing the Game

As the number of courses grew in Wisconsin and as the WSGA began holding state-level competitions, Wisconsin

began to produce successful golfers. Among the first great state players was Wilford Wehrle of Racine who was considered the top amateur in the country in 1940 when he took 33rd place in the Masters professional tournament in Augusta, Georgia, according to *Playing Through*.

Johnny Revolta, who was born in St. Louis but grew up in Oshkosh, won the 1935 PGA Championship in Oklahoma. He was the leading money winner on the men’s professional tour that year. Revolta also won the Wisconsin State Open four times and was head pro at several Wisconsin courses, including the Elks Club in Chippewa Falls.



WHI(X3)48477

Seen here at the Minocqua Country Club, President Eisenhower is one of many prominent individuals who have enjoyed Wisconsin’s golf courses.

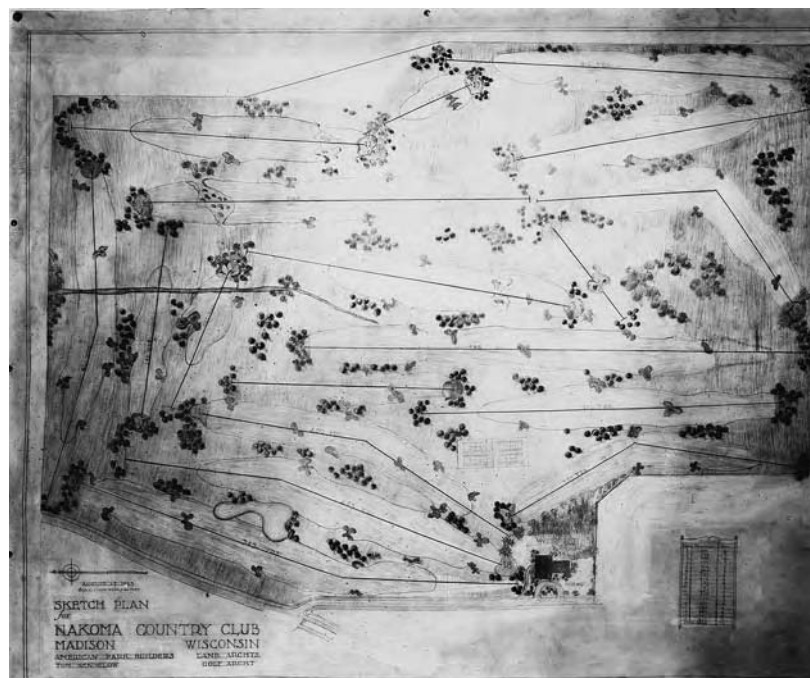


Image ID 26625

Tom Bendelow, once heralded as the “Dean of America’s Golf Architects,” designed Madison’s Nakoma Country Club golf course in the 1920s.



CF 9325

Walter Vilberg, Mount Horeb's golf champion of 1930, poses proudly with his clubs.



Image ID 16449

Only in her mid-twenties, Dorothy Page was already a dominant figure in Wisconsin's golf circles when Angus McVicar photographed her in 1934.

Andy North, who grew up playing Nakoma Golf Club in Madison, won two major pro championships, the 1978 and 1985 U.S. Opens, in Colorado and Michigan, respectively. Don Iverson, who grew up playing the La Crosse Country Club, won two professional events while playing PGA Tour in the 1970s.

Several Wisconsin women golfers competed successfully on the national level in the 1920s and 1930s. They included Frances Hadfield of Blue Mound Country Club, who won five state women's amateur titles and the 1925 Women's Western Amateur; Dorothy Page of Maple Bluff Country Club in Madison, who won the 1926 Women's Western Amateur in Chicago in 1926 and three women's state amateur titles; and Bernice Wall, a three-time state champion who played in the USGA Women's Amateur twelve times, once reaching the semifinals of match play.

In 1956, at W.A. Roberts golf course in New Berlin, Goldie Bateson of Brookfield was named head golf professional—believed to be the first woman to hold that position in the country. Joyce Malison of Waterford was among the first stars on the Ladies Professional Golf Association tour, winning six tournaments before leaving the tour at age 26 in 1961. Carol Sorenson Flemiken of Janesville won the 1964 British Women's Amateur, according to *Playing Through*.

Two men from Wisconsin have been president of the USGA, Lynford Lardner of Oconomowoc (1972–73) and Reed Mackenzie of Eau Claire (2002–2003). Both were accomplished players as young men, Lardner winning five WSGA State Amateur titles and Mackenzie playing in the



prestigious U.S. Amateur. Both were lawyers—Lardner in Milwaukee and Mackenzie in Minneapolis—when they began volunteering in their spare time with the USGA and rose through the ranks to become president.

Famous golfers also came to the state to compete. Seventy-one years before the 2004 PGA was held at Whistling Straits, the 1933 PGA was held at Blue Mound Golf & Country Club in Wauwatosa. The winner was Gene Sarazen, one of golf's stars in the 1920s and 1930s. Blue Mound also held the 1916 Western Open—one of golf's most prestigious events at that time—with Walter Hagen, another of the nation's greatest players, taking home the title. In 1940, one of the first great women golfers, "Babe" Didrickson Zaharias won the women's Western Open at Blue Mound.

Three of golf's biggest names from the 1930s through 1950s, Ben Hogan, Sam Snead and Byron Nelson, played in the Little Lawtonia Open in Green Lake in the 1930s, soon after the Lawtonia Links course opened. Lawtonia was one of Wisconsin's first well-known public courses and first links-style courses which are distinguished by few trees, steep-faced bunkers, and distinctive land contours.

*The Minocqua
Country Club
nestles among
the rolling hills and
lush woods
of northern
Wisconsin.*



WHI(X3)48474

Since 1950, professional tournaments also have drawn top golfers to the state. They included the Pabst Blue Ribbon Open and Miller Open in the 1950s, forerunners to the PGA Tour's Greater Milwaukee Open, which began in 1968. The LPGA also held a tournament in Milwaukee from 1962 through 1967; among the winners were tour stars Mickey Wright and Kathy Whitworth.

The Modern Era

A golf course building boom began in the 1980s to accommodate a growing number of people playing the game in the United States. Between 1970 and 1990, the number of golfers in the U.S. more than doubled from 11.2 million to 23 million, according to the National Golf Foundation.

Following the national trend, golf in Wisconsin went from a largely urban, private game at the start of the twentieth century to a game that encompassed both urban and rural, private and public participants by 1980. Of more than 300 courses in the state by 1980, only about sixty were private. Wisconsin has about 510 courses today, with only about sixty-five of them private. The trend toward more public courses

was reflected in the fact that the WSGA held its first men's State Amateur tournament at a public course, Lawsonia, in 1980. The State Amateur was first held in 1901 at the Milwaukee Country Club.

Golf courses can be found in every geographical corner of Wisconsin, from Superior to Florence to Kenosha to Dickeyville and in all 72 counties. "There are so many great community courses. That's what has kept the game of golf alive in Wisconsin," said Bill Linneman, director of rules and competitions for the WSGA who previously traveled the state to measure and rate all courses for difficulty.

The game even reached two Wisconsin islands by 1970—Deer Run golf course on Washington Island at the tip of Door County in Lake Michigan and Madeline Island Golf Club, LaPointe, in Lake Superior. The course on Madeline Island was designed by renowned architect Robert Trent Jones Sr., and opened in 1968. Built on rocky, heavily forested land, the nine-hole course with views of Lake Superior, took three years and cost \$4 million to build.

Golf's statewide popularity also went beyond the most common nine- and eighteen-hole courses. The state had at least two lighted courses by the 1960s, Rib Mountain in Wausau and Hillview in La Crosse, enabling golfers to play at night. Both courses featured all par-3 holes. Also, numerous practice ranges and an offshoot of the game, mini-golf courses opened around the state. Mini-golf is a putting game played on artificial grass with artificial obstacles. Wisconsin Dells became known as the mini-golf capital of the world.

In the years to come, Wisconsin is sure to maintain its image as a state that loves its golf. In January, 2005, the PGA of America announced that, after the successful 2004 PGA, it will hold the 2010 and 2015 PGA Championship at Whistling Straits. The PGA will hold the prestigious Ryder Cup at the course in 2020. The Ryder Cup is a biennial match between top professional players from the United States and Europe. ❧

**For information on Wisconsin's nearly
500 golf courses, please visit
www.travelwisconsin.com or call 1-800-432-TRIP,
7 days a week, 24 hours a day.**

About the Author

Jerry Poling of Eau Claire co-wrote *Wisconsin Golf Getaways: A Guide to More than 200 Great Courses and Fun Things to Do* (Trails Books, 2001) with Jeff Mayers of Madison.

