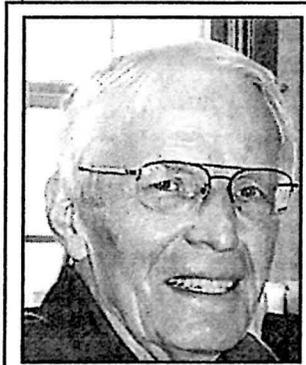


Washburn During The Great Depression—Celebrations -10

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Despite the depressed economic conditions of the 1930s, the people of Washburn usually observed the three summer holidays of Memorial Day, Independence Day and Labor Day. Memorial Day was commemorated under the leadership of the Legion Post with a program that included a parade, important speakers, who inspired their audiences with patriotic rhetoric, and "appropriate exercises over the graves of departed comrades of the three wars." The July 4th celebration in 1936, sponsored by the fire department, was billed as "An Old-Time July 4th." It included the usual parade of floats and bands, speeches, a reading of the Declaration of Independence, sports, and a water-fight in the afternoon, a "Ton of coal given away" at 5:00PM, and in the evening a band concert and "Two dances, old-time and modern rhythm." An elaborate Labor Day celebration in 1933 was attended by "Hundreds of people from Ashland, Bayfield and nearby communities." The day's program opened with a parade along Bayfield Street, followed by an exhibition by the Ashland Drum Corps, "which was received with great interest by the crowd." In the afternoon there were sports events, an exhibition by an Ashland tumbling team, a high school band concert, and a water fight between the fire departments of Washburn



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and Bayfield. The day's events closed with a dance at the Legion hall. The Christmas season was observed every year with window displays and building decorations along Bayfield Street, the Du Pont club decoration being quite elaborate. The city also usually erected a community Christmas tree on the corner of Washington Avenue and Bayfield Street. In 1936 the city and local businessmen contributed \$150 to purchase eleven strings of 30 colored light bulbs, which were strung at intervals across Bayfield Street from First Avenue East to Eighth Avenue West. The lamp posts were decorated with pine boughs, with lighted trees placed in the American Legion Park, at the east end of Bayfield Street, and in Wikdal Park, at the west end. A large illuminated star was also mounted on top of the court house dome. According to the Times, it was "One of the most striking bits of

Christmas decorations in Washburn can be seen in all parts of the city because of its height and brilliance." The U.S. Forest Service placed a "winter forest scene" in the window of the Legion Hall with miniature trees, buildings and fire tower, "all covered with a blanket of snow," behind which was a sign with "season's greetings," "framed in evergreen and flanked with two large electric candles." The biggest celebrations during the 1930s were the two homecomings, in 1934 and 1939. The 1934 "Golden Jubilee Homecoming," held on August 3rd, 4th, and 5th, celebrated the 50th anniversary of Washburn's founding. Bayfield Street was decorated in a "gala fashion" with light and telephone poles "draped with bunting" and "all business places decked out in gay flags, bunting and lights." The homecoming opened on Friday, August 3rd with an afternoon excursion trip around the Apostle Islands on the steamer, Montauk. At 7:00PM there was a water fight between the fire departments of Washburn and Iron River. This event was followed by a demonstration by the Ashland drum corps, then a concert by the Legion band, a night excursion on the Montauk, a "Homecomers' Welcome Ball" at the Du Pont club, and a torchlight parade on Bayfield Street at midnight. This busy schedule of events was continued on Saturday with sporting

events all day, an evening band concert by the high school band, and an "automobile dance" at the Legion Hall and Du Pont club, which ended at midnight with the awarding of a new "Chevrolet Standard Coach." Sunday began with a community religious service at 9:00AM at Memorial Park with the Reverend Christian Christensen officiating. The homecoming parade began at 10:00AM, led by the Washburn and Ashland high school bands and the Legion band, with many floats and decorated automobiles, followed by a "mass band concert" of the three bands in the Legion Park. The climax of the homecoming was a community picnic at Memorial Park in the afternoon, with "a crowd estimated at 5,000 persons in attendance," according to the Times. The afternoon's entertainment at the park included a demonstration by a tumbling team from Ashland, water sports, and a "speech program." The homecoming ended with a baseball game between teams from Washburn and Park Falls. The Coast Guard cutter, Crawford, berthed at the coal dock, provided an interesting attraction for many. The Times judged the homecoming "an outstanding success from every angle . . . everybody had a grand time and agreed that it was the finest celebration ever staged here."