

Clubs, Troops, and Legionnaires

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During the depression years the more prominent and socially active people in Washburn organized clubs for many different purposes. The burst of enthusiasm, with which they were founded, quickly waned, however, and few seemed to have survived the decade. Included among these many do-good organizations was the Washburn Rifle Club, organized in 1930. The club had an indoor shooting range in the basement of the Legion Hall and an outdoor range about nine miles from the city, on County Trunk C. The club held frequent shooting competitions with rifle teams from surrounding communities.

In September 1936 "small bore tourney" was held at its outdoor range that attracted "shooters" from as far away as Virginia and Duluth, Minnesota; and Eau Claire and Green Bay, Wisconsin. In 1933, a Wisconsin Conservation Club was established by local sportsmen "to lend our best efforts to the conservation, protection and propagation of wildlife". Not to be outdone by the men, in 1934 the women organized a Garden Club to stimulate interest in gardens and beautifying the city. Projects included the eradication of ragweed, beautification of vacant lots along Bayfield Streets, and building sunken rock gardens and flower beds with lattice fences, on a vacant lot, as a "show place for the club."

In 1935 a Washburn Civic Club was organized "to promote good fellowship among the citizens and to stimulate interest in civic affairs." The emphasis seems to have been on "good fellowship" with frequent banquet meetings. Finally, in 1939, a Lions Club was organized by the business and professional men of the city "to render an



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unselfish service to the community, working in cooperation with other civic bodies and groups in community betterment."

In May 1939, three Boy Scout troops were formed, sponsored by the Christ Lutheran Church (troop 44), the Methodist Church (troop 45), and the Catholic Church (troop 46). Later that year a Boy Scout camp was constructed on lakeshore land, made available by the Du Pont Company adjacent to Barksdale. Three Girl Scout troops were also organized, the girls pursuing a program of activities and community involvement.

For young women 18 years and older, a "Girls' Club" was organized. The club had its "headquarters" in rooms on the second floor of the Union Block, which were furnished with donated furniture and recreation equipment. Among its various activities, the club presented a "biblical drama" and was one of the promoters of the tennis court project.

The Legion post with its women's auxiliary was among the most active clubs in Washburn during the 1930s. The Legion sponsored many social events, carried out socially benevolent projects, conducted the Memorial Day observances,

and supported numerous other community activities. In 1932 the Legion established a George Washington Bicentennial Memorial Forest in the Moquah National Forest to commemorate the 200th birthday of the first president. The 20-acre tract is located about two miles west off County Highway C, on Brinks Road. It was planted with Norway pine by Legion members. This "Legion Forest" was dedicated in June 1932; an inscribed bronze plaque mounted on a large boulder marks the location. In 1934 the Legion created a park on its lots on the northwest corner of Bayfield Street and First Avenue East. Grass, flowers, shrubs, and trees were planted following a plan prepared by a landscape gardener from Ashland. Two asphalt pathways through the park and a flagpole completed the project. The park was dedicated with a program of speeches and music, as part of the 1934 Memorial Day ceremonies.

The biggest event of the decade for Chequamegon Bay Legionnaires was the Wisconsin Legion Convention in Ashland, August 12 to 16, 1938. Attended by thousands of Legion and Legion

auxiliary members from Wisconsin, Michigan, and Minnesota, it was graced by the presence of many notables, including Governor Philip F. La Follette and Admiral William D. Leahy, a native of Ashland. The climax of the convention was a "grand parade" on Monday that was reported to have been "several miles long" and viewed by 20,000 people—"City Rocks With Applause For Spectacle," the Ashland Press declared in a headline. The parade was an outstanding event for the area, Washburn's mayor even requested that businesses close at noon to allow everyone to attend the parade. Members of the Washburn Legion Post, and its women's auxiliary, entered floats in the parade, the auxiliary entry winning "second honors."

There were also several fraternal lodges, the Masonic Lodge and Eastern Star Lodge with their hall on the second floor of the Rait Building, and the Knights of Pythias with its hall in the former Episcopalian Church, being the most prominent. These lodges and the Lions Club were the most enduring of the many social organizations from the depression years.