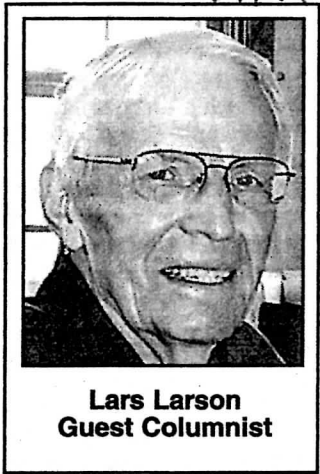


# Washburn During The Great Depression—Resurrection

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The question at the end of decade, as the depression petered out, was how Washburn could continue to survive as a community. In its special edition for the 1934 homecoming, the Times had published two articles that addressed the question of "what's ahead for Washburn." In one article, former mayor, Paul Ungrodt, noted that while "physical assets are important," what was more important was the psychological state of its citizens, the "faith and confidence in the hearts and minds of its loyal citizens." Washburn's future was "as promising as the talents and loyalty of its citizens will allow. It's entirely a matter of taking the assets which are at hand, meager as they may seem at the moment, and continuing to build on new foundations." In another article, Mayor Harry M. Hanson focused on the physical assets of Washburn, declaring that "our city might have been several times its present size had we developed what we have." His "inventory of our natural resources," not at all "meager" in his opinion, included "one of the finest harbors on the Great Lakes," "farm lands capable of producing an abundance of farm produce," "second growth timber which covers a vast area near us," and "our city as a vacation and recreation center." In his conclusion about how these resources could be developed, he called for leadership by "some one



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person furnishing the vision and enthusiasm and backed up by all of Washburn's citizens. Where is the leader? Can we find him? If so we are on our way to a better city." But it was not the psychological state of its citizens, a great leader, or its natural resources, which resurrected Washburn, but the Du Pont Barksdale Works, which expanded to fill orders for war explosives from the federal government and Allied powers.

The prosperity and optimism created by the plant's expansion provided a setting for Washburn's third homecoming, held on Friday, Saturday and Sunday, August 4th, 5th, and 6th, 1939. The celebration began at noon on Friday with a cacophony of bells, sirens and automobile horns, followed by a soap box derby on Washington Avenue at 4:00PM, a school reunion and bonfire at the high school athletic field at 7:00PM, and a torch-

light parade on Bayfield Street at 10:00PM. The big event on Saturday was the "Pioneer Days" parade, led by the "American Legion color bearers and a detachment of coast guardsmen from the cutter, Diligence" (which was berthed at the coal dock), and the "Superior [Wisconsin] federal band." There were numerous elaborate floats illustrating the old and modern days of Washburn. The Delta CCC Camp float, "representing modern forestry," won first prize, while the Beauty Box entry, consisting of a "group of girls in costumes on colorfully decorated bicycles, spelling out name of Beauty Box," won second prize. The Times reported that "Practically everyone who witnessed it proclaimed it to be the finest parade that have ever soon in Washburn."

At 3:00PM a "baseball program" was held at the ball park with ball throwing and base running contests, a five inning game pitting the Old Timers and Homecomers against the Rookies, and Washburn versus Bayfield, in a nine-inning game. This program was followed by a water-fight on Bayfield Street, between the Washburn and Ashland fire departments, won by Washburn. At 9:00PM an Old Time Dance was held at the Legion Hall with a contest for the best square dancers, and for the younger set, a Swing Dance, at the Du Pont Club with a contest for the

best Jitterbugs. The day concluded with the announcement at twelve midnight of the winner of the New York World's Fair all expense tour contest (the Times did not announce the winners of the dance competitions or the tour contest). The homecoming concluded on Sunday with a community picnic at Memorial Park, attended by an estimated 5,000 former and present residents and other visitors. An interesting program of songs and short talks was followed by boys and girls swimming races, canoe racing, and surfboard riding.

Four weeks after this happy celebration, on September 1939, Germany invaded Poland, triggering the second Great War, soon referred to as World War II. While officially neutral, the United States was an active belligerent, providing armaments to the Allied Powers and battling the German submarines in the north Atlantic, which were attacking convoys from North America to Great Britain. But war came from another unexpected direction with the attack, by Japanese naval air forces, on the Pacific fleet at Pearl Harbor, Hawaii, on December 7th 1941. As they had in the first Great War, the people of Washburn would contribute their share to, and would benefit from, the nation's war effort.