

WPA-Built Golf Courses in Minnesota

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VICTOR A. CHRISTGAU WAS in a rare position during the later years of the Great Depression. He was hiring, when so many others were “firing.” From mid-1935 to mid-1938, Christgau was the Minnesota administrator of the Works Progress Administration (WPA), the largest and best-known New Deal public works program. The WPA was not a relief program. It put people to work, and during the late 1930s it was the biggest employer in the state.¹

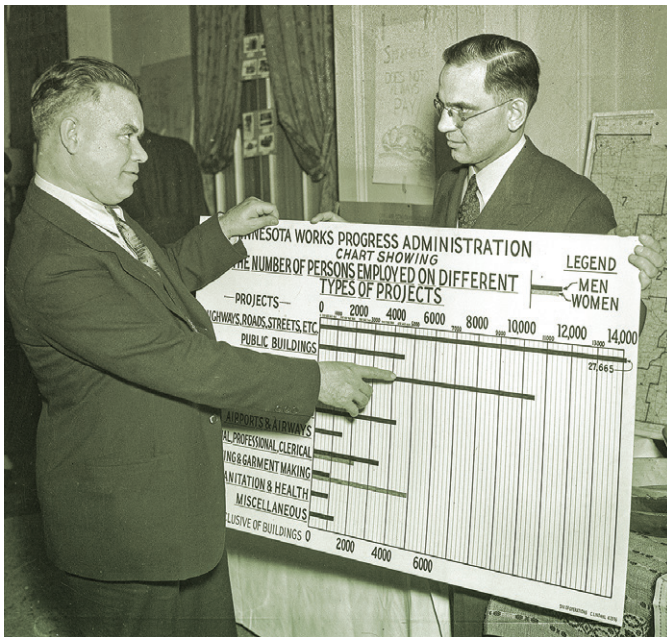
On October 24, 1935, Christgau’s busy schedule included making a call to J. C. McGowan of Benson, Minnesota. McGowan was not only the town postmaster and publisher of the *Swift County Monitor* but also the head of a booster group advocating to obtain WPA funds for municipal improvements in this small town (1930 population: 2,095). Christgau gave McGowan the good news that US president Franklin D. Roosevelt had approved application for a power plant and to improve an existing, privately

owned golf course that would be converted to public ownership. McGowan had positive news in return: a citywide bond issue had passed by a margin of six to one, which would meet the share the city was required to pay for construction costs. The necessary preliminary elements were now in place for a WPA-funded public golf course.²

Golf is usually thought of as a pastime for the wealthy and leisured, so the idea of the federal government using limited public resources, especially during the Great Depression, to build golf courses may seem surprising. Yet the Benson golf course was not an anomaly. Nationally, the WPA built more than 200 new golf courses and improved nearly 300 existing courses by May 1940. Of that total,

WPA workers filling in a low area at Keller Golf Course, Maplewood. Keller was one of two dozen existing Minnesota courses that were improved using WPA funds.





Victor Christgau (right), Minnesota administrator of the Works Progress Administration (WPA) from 1935 to 1938.

eight new and two completely redesigned private golf courses that were converted to public ownership (Benson and Detroit Lakes) were located in Minnesota. (Henceforth, these 10 will be described as “new.”) Another two dozen existing Minnesota courses were also improved.

These changes included resodding and installing new fairways, hazards, drainage, and landscaping.³

With the exception of a short-lived, flood-prone course in Mankato that closed in 1944, all of the WPA-built Minnesota golf courses are still in operation. The one in Benson still sports some features built by the WPA: a few of the course’s original holes, a stone wall that bounds the south side of the course, and the clubhouse, with its tall, arched ceilings.⁴

CREATED TO ALLEVIATE MASS UNEMPLOYMENT, the WPA hired people primarily to build public works projects. The labor-intensive nature of constructing and improving golf courses dovetailed neatly with, as one contemporary golf publication put it, the WPA’s primary objective: “to provide work on worthwhile projects of permanent value for employable persons on local relief rolls.” When federal WPA money became available in May 1935, golf enthusiasts in Minnesota and nationwide took to convincing their local elected officials to set aside municipally owned land, the first step to qualify for any WPA project, which would put dozens of local residents to work. Officials no doubt also recognized that golf courses would “increase real estate values through the reclamation of wasteland on which many of the courses are built, and through residential developments which spring up in their vicinity.”⁵





Benson's golf course (here, in 1970) was one of Minnesota's 10 new or wholly rebuilt WPA courses.

The list of new courses built in Minnesota by WPA-funded laborers reveals that all were located in small towns outside of metropolitan areas. Only two of the towns—Mankato and Anoka—were larger than 10,000 people, and neither of those exceeded 20,000. Within metro areas, the WPA funded improvements at a number of courses (Columbia and Hiawatha in Minneapolis and Como Park and Highland in St. Paul, for a few examples). Besides putting a lot of people to work for a year or so, golf courses provided a sense of civic pride, adding status to small towns while also being a tourist draw. Local newspapers enthusiastically reported on construction progress in a manner they might not have in larger cities. The local links became part of the fabric of the small town. This fit into another goal for WPA projects: they needed to be of permanent value, provide lasting results, and not become an eyesore.⁶

Rise of golf as a popular sport

BEFORE WORLD WAR I, golf had attained considerable popularity among the leisure class. By 1910, approximately 800 golf courses had been constructed nationwide, with most in large cities. Just 24 of these courses were publicly owned. Over the next decade, the number of public courses “slightly more than trebled.”⁷

Sociologist Jesse Steiner described the 1920s as the “beginning of [a new] expansion of interest in outdoor games and physical contests.” Among the factors that led to this expansion were “the increased amount of leisure, higher standards of living for large numbers of people, the breakdown of traditions against Sunday recreation, the growing belief that strenuous sports were a means

to health, and the emphasis upon wholesome outdoor games during the period of the World War.” Golf was one of those outdoor games: “So insistent has been this demand that large areas of our public parks have been turned into athletic fields and golf courses.”⁸

By the time of the Great Depression, golf had spread to the masses, becoming a popular and affordable sport. By 1931, the number of American golf courses

had exploded: 5,856 private and 543 municipally owned. In Minnesota, some 110 courses dotted the state in 1930. Fees were low. For example, in 1937, when the WPA-funded Anoka course was brand new, its fees ranged from 25 cents for nine holes to 40 cents for 18 holes on weekdays. (The average price of a pound of butter in 51 large American cities was 40.7 cents in February 1937.) “The spectacular growth of golf during recent years is unparalleled in the history of American outdoor sports,” wrote Steiner. “The new enthusiasm for outdoor recreation for adults as well as children which developed during and immediately following the [First World War] greatly stimulated public interest in golf and strengthened the demand for more playing facilities.”⁹

Golf was also an important component of Minnesota's growing tourist trade. State officials made the most of golf's popularity, as can be seen in the state's Department of Conservation 1938 annual report: “It is an established fact that more tourists make use of Minnesota's golfing facilities than those of any other recreation offered, including fishing. Taking advantage of this fact, the Bureau has during the past season distributed throughout the middle west, hundreds of attractive golfing photographs.” By 1942, tourism was the third largest industry in Minnesota. Only agriculture and mining were larger.¹⁰

Americans spent an ever-growing amount of money on golf equipment, another measure of golf's popularity. The advent of mass-produced equipment replacing hand-produced balls and clubs lowered prices. Another advantage of mass production was that it turned out better made and more uniform equipment, which enabled golfers to improve their play. The value of golf equipment sold in 1929 was 37.4 percent of all sporting

Teeing off at Detroit Lakes about 1940. Growing numbers of women players contributed to golf's popularity.

and athletic goods, representing 33 million golf balls and 3 million clubs. By 1938, golf was estimated to be a billion-dollar industry.¹¹

Women contributed to golf's popularity as well. Nationally, in 1930, women accounted for 12 percent of the total increase of 20 percent in players. One sports author went so far as to incorrectly predict, based on the rate of growth of women players from 1925 to 1930, that more women than men would be playing golf by 1940. Most local papers covered women's golf matches.¹²

Throughout these decades of golf's rise in the United States, Minnesota was a hotbed. St. Paul's Town and Country Club, established in 1893, is the second oldest course in the US still being played on its original land. The US Open Golf Tournament was held twice in Minnesota in this era:

in 1916, at Minikahda Club in Minneapolis, and in 1930, at Interlachen Country Club in Edina. Keller Golf Course, a municipal course in the St. Paul suburb of Maplewood, hosted some of the sport's biggest names in its annual Keller Open tournament.¹³ Keller could also boast of being the site of the first US tournament covered by a live remote radio broadcast (by KSTP), in 1931.



Golf legends: Minneapolis native Patty Berg (left) rose to national prominence during the 1930s. In 1938, the year this photo was taken, she was named Associated Press woman athlete of the year. Right, Bobby Jones at public links golf championship, Minneapolis, 1930.



LEFT: KSTP radio broadcast at Keller Golf Course, 1931, the first live remote radio broadcast of a US golf tournament.



RIGHT: St. Paul's Harrison R. "Jimmy" Johnston (far right) was the US Amateur Golf Champion in 1929. Here he joins Charles E. "Chick" Evans, Jim Barnes, and Tom Varden (l to r) and part of the gallery at the Evans-Barnes match at White Bear Lake golf club in 1925.

Minnesota also claimed its own superstar golfers, including champion amateur player Harrison "Jimmy" Johnston, who once beat the immortal golf legend Robert T. "Bobby" Jones Jr. (Jones won the National Open at Interlachen in 1930, further intensifying golf's popularity in the state.) Minneapolis native and Ladies Professional Golf Association cofounder Patty Berg rose to national prominence during the 1930s, beginning with the Minneapolis City Championship in 1934. By 1938, the Associated Press named her woman athlete of the year. Berg's 15 major title wins remain the all-time record for a female golfer.

Many of the state's high schools and colleges had golf teams. Hibbing Junior College was Northern Junior College Champion six years in a row, from 1934 to 1939, and the University of Minnesota won the Big Ten Golf Championship in 1938.¹⁴

How were WPA projects chosen?

WHILE THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT provided funding, local governmental units—counties, cities, villages, townships, school districts—initiated applications for WPA projects, with the proviso that the project had to be on public property. Applicants sent their proposals to the state WPA office for review; those that qualified were then forwarded to federal WPA administrators and, finally, to the US president for ultimate approval. Projects could be rejected at any stage of the process. To ensure that projects had local support, localities had to provide about 12 to 25 percent of a project's total cost to trigger federal funding. Local funds were used to pay for materials and other non-labor costs.¹⁵

Private groups, such as golf club booster organizations, could not act as sponsors, but they could cooperate unofficially with a project's government sponsor. Local golf boosters often took the first step by buying land for the course, then donating it to the government sponsor (as was the case in Fergus Falls and Mahanomen), or donating an existing course (as in Benson and Detroit Lakes). The booster groups then shepherded the projects to make sure the golf courses were built and, upon completion, pitched in where needed to maintain the course. In Roseau, for example, after WPA funds were exhausted, locals oiled and sanded the last greens in order to finish the course. (Early golf courses did not have grass greens but were actually built with sand; fuel oil was poured into the sand to make a smoother surface and minimize the amount of



Newly rebuilt golf course, Detroit Lakes, 1936. All the WPA courses built in Minnesota were located in small towns outside the metro area, like Detroit Lakes.



WPA work on Pierz course, May 25, 1936. The tiny town was the first in the state to have its proposal for a golf course approved by the WPA.

allocated for, state senator Elmer E. Adams of Fergus Falls introduced a bill in the Minnesota legislature in May 1939 that said a city could not spend public funds on recreational projects that were not within or contiguous to the city limits until the question had been submitted and approved by the municipality's voters. Fergus Falls was the only location that might have been affected by this stricture at the time. The Fergus Falls attorney ruled that the city could spend the money that had been allocated before the bill was passed.²⁰

When work on the course, named Pebble Lake Golf Club, finally got underway, an alderman and park board member came up with a creative solution to save the \$150 needed to plow the ground, funds that would have had to come out of the city's sponsorship fund. In May 1939, the services of six local farm implement dealers were enlisted. Each was allocated 25 acres, and local farmers were invited to watch. "Allis-Chalmers Tractors Easy to Run—A Banker Can Run One in His Spare Time" proclaimed the headline of a newspaper account, which reported that hundreds of observers came to watch the plowing. The recreational area originally included the golf course and spaces for tennis, archery, skeet shooting, and more. The 20 WPA workers used stones collected from the field during site preparation to build the wall that bordered the golf course. That stone wall still stands.²¹

Manual labor vs. mechanization

A GREAT DEAL OF EFFORT goes into carefully sculpting land into a golf course that will challenge golfers while also emphasizing the area's natural attractiveness. By the time of the Great Depression, mechanized implements were being used to build and modernize courses. Tractors and bulldozers facilitated fairways construction, converting sand greens to grass greens, and installing pipes for watering systems to keep the grass both green and soft. WPA golf courses, however, relied on manual labor, by design. Noted golf architect A. H. Tull of Emmet, Emmet and Tull observed in 1938: "In the mechanics of golf course construction, those entrusted with this work in the future will find a vast improvement possible and necessary. Except for courses built under W.P.A. auspices, under which *the use of labor-saving machinery was practically barred*, there have been few courses built in recent years" [emphasis added].²²

The WPA goal was to provide employment for as many people as possible, and mechanization interfered with this goal. The critical feature that made constructing golf courses so attractive to the WPA was that they required the labor of a lot of men who, more often than not, were unskilled or had skills for jobs that no longer existed. Newspaper accounts reported as many as 60 or 70 men working on courses. The work was hard and went on year-

THE CLUBHOUSES

After golf course construction was complete, attention turned to building a clubhouse—essential for storing maintenance equipment, selling golf supplies, giving lessons, and offering a “nineteenth hole” for postgame refreshments and commiseration. Clubhouse construction provided another opportunity to employ the unemployed. As with the courses, in order to engage the maximum number of WPA workers, clubhouse designers were encouraged to use methods that would require the “least amount of mechanized equipment consistent with efficiency.” As one architect noted, “All we had learned in school about choice of materials for design was out the window; the guidelines on WPA projects required us to use the most labor-intensive means of conserving material costs.”¹

Many of the 20-some clubhouses built by the WPA are still serving their original purpose. Ortonville’s clubhouse is an architectural gem with features associated with WPA design—a grand fieldstone fireplace, large wooden beams, and wainscoted walls. Other buildings still functioning as clubhouses include those at Columbia Golf Club in Minneapolis and the Hawley Golf and Country Club in northwestern Minnesota, originally the WPA-built bathhouse.

Two of the most intriguing, however, are gone: Anoka’s Greenhaven and the Moorhead Country Club. The Moorhead clubhouse, built entirely out of ashlar-coursed fieldstone and timbers, was considered for nomination to the National Register of Historic Places before it was torn down. At 100 by 26 feet, the clubhouse at Anoka’s Greenhaven Course was large enough for community gatherings and a variety of nongolf activities. It not only had a dance floor and fully equipped kitchen, but also a four-lane bowling alley in the basement. In addition to the golf course, the recreation area included two skeet shooting fields, four trap fields, an archery field, and an outdoor bowling area. When the Anoka clubhouse was demolished, the chimney was preserved and incorporated—along with a commemorative plaque—into the new Anoka clubhouse.²



Benson Clubhouse, exterior and interior, 1939.

Notes

1. Rolf T. Anderson and MNHS, National Register of Historic Places Multiple Property Nomination Form, Oct. 9, 1990, Historical and Cultural Society of Clay County; “Federal Relief Construction in Minnesota, 1933–1941”; National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet, Moorhead Golf Courses Country Club/Oakport Township Community Building, Section E-59, Historical and Cultural Society of Clay County; WPA Administrative Files: Reports, Progress Reports, 1940, MNHS; WPA E.R.A. Acts, 1938–42, National Archives and Records Division, Washington, DC.
2. Steve C. Martens and Alice Ritari, “Historical Significance of Fieldstone WPA Structures in West Central Minnesota,” 7, MNHS; Ronald L. M. Ramsay, personal interview with Marius Houkom, n.d., Historical and Cultural Society of Clay County; “New Golf Course Was Opened Saturday,” *Anoka Herald*, July 21, 1937.



Anoka Recreation Center, Aug. 1, 1937. The original fieldstone chimney seen here was preserved and incorporated into a new clubhouse when this WPA-built one was demolished. Demolished also was this four-lane bowling alley located in the basement.



THE COURSE DESIGNERS

The men who designed the WPA-built golf courses ranged from a local dentist (F. L. Zehnpfenning of Pierz) to regionally and nationally known architects and golf course designers. Paul N. Coates, Ramsey County's civil engineer, was engaged to plan the Pebble Lake course in Fergus Falls. Coates also designed Keller Golf Course in Maplewood (a municipal course) and the second nine holes of the Stillwater Country Club. Oscar Oman, the golf professional at the Alexandria course, designed the Ortonville course. Architect Ray Gauger, whose firm specialized in courthouse and jail architecture, designed the clubhouse. Landscape architect and engineer Hugh Vincent Feehan, designer of the North Dakota Peace Garden on the North Dakota–Manitoba border and the football stadium at the University of St. Thomas in St. Paul, designed the Detroit Lakes course. He also designed the pre-WPA course in Virginia.¹

Even golf course design luminary Albert Warren “Tillie” Tillinghast, who worked on no fewer than 265 courses in the United States and is in the World Golf Hall of Fame, needed assistance during the Great Depression. His touchup work on the Highland (St. Paul) and Rochester courses was funded by the WPA.²

Notes

1. On Zehnpfenning and Pierz: John Liese, “Depression Spawns Pierz Golf Masterpiece,” *St. Cloud Daily Times*, July 21, 1981; Ralph Thornton, “Pierz Layout Pretty, It’s Frustratingest,” *Minneapolis Star*, July 7, 1973;



Paul Coates uses maps to explain golf course architecture, maintenance, and construction at the Minnesota PGA golf clinic, 1940.

Robert J. Voigt, *Pierzana: The Religious and Secular History of the Community at Pierz, Minnesota* (n.p.: The Author, 1965); Dan Stangl, historian of Pierz Golf Course, interview with the author, June 15, 2012. Design services and materials were paid from the percentage of the project's cost each city was required to pay: Martens and Ritari, “Historical Significance of Fieldstone WPA Structures,” 7. On Coates: “Keller Golf Course,” Wikipedia; Stillwater Country Club, “About the Club,” www.sccgolf.com. On Oman: “First Round of Golf Played on Local Course,” *Ortonville Independent*, Oct. 2, 1941. On Gauger: Ortonville Golf Club Monument, Ortonville Clubhouse, 1941; Alan K. Lathrop, *Minnesota Architects: A Biographical Dictionary* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2010). On Feehan, “Buildings of the University of Saint Thomas,” <http://www.stthomas.edu/libraries/special/archives/buildingsoftheuniversity>; “Virginia Golf Course,” http://www.virginiamn.us/departments/golf_course/playing_the_course.php.

2. David M. Lilly, speech, Dinner Meeting (Minnesota) of the Newcomen Society in North America honoring the Toro Company, Sept. 25, 1974, transcript, box 2, David Maher Papers, MNHS; Philip Young, *Tillinghast: Creator of Golf Courses* (Pearl River, NY: Future Classics of Golf, 2005).

round. Workers moved truckloads of dirt and cut trees and brush. In Anoka, both the course and a two-acre lake were carved out of sandy soil and swampland. At best, horses, not automated machinery, aided the laborers. For example, in Pierz, the WPA rented five teams of horses from neighboring farmers to move and scrape the dirt on the course. Even as late as 1941, a man was using a horse to prepare the site in Ortonville.²³

To construct the Roseau Oakcrest Golf Course, the WPA workers had to use handsaws and axes to remove hundreds of mature oak trees—work now routinely done with power equipment. The crew cleared somewhere between 300 and 500 (and possibly more) of the namesake oak trees to open up the course. When funds ran short, club members enlarged the greens and improved them with oiled sand. Later, golf course staff used sheep to keep the undergrowth down and save on mowing the grass.²⁴

After an initial WPA crew of 20 cleared the land for the Blackduck Municipal Golf Course, which included dynamiting large pine stumps, an additional 20 men who

had been slated to work on gravel country roads that were not yet thawed were moved to the golf course job in April 1936. The extra men worked on building fairways during two pay periods before resuming the road project. As in Fergus Falls, local businessmen in Blackduck were crucial to creating the course. First, they pitched in \$90 to buy 70 acres of tax-forfeited land to donate to the city; then they measured and laid out the course with a 100-foot surveyor's chain; and finally, after the course was built, they mowed the fairways.²⁵

Ortonville was the last of the WPA golf courses, built between 1941 and 1943, at the tail end of the WPA's existence. (It officially ended June 30, 1943.) Because of the labor shortage caused by US entry into World War II, it was difficult to field a WPA crew to finish the course. Workers excavating a basement for the clubhouse opened a Native American burial mound on the site, exposing two skeletons. Golf course workers contacted the Minnesota Historical Society, which sent archaeologist G. Hubert Smith, who removed the remains. According to contem-



Hard labor by these WPA workers was required to carve the Anoka course and dredge this two-acre lake out of sandy soil and swampland.

porary newspaper reports, the skeletons were sent to the University of Minnesota, where they were “reassembled and studied.” A presumably empty new “burial mound” was reconstructed in “the size and shape of the original, thus preserving the external appearance of the original mound for interested visitors.” The final report of the Ortonville mound was the first work done under the newly formed Minnesota Statewide Archeological and Historical Research Survey, also a WPA project. Some parts of the Ortonville course built by the WPA still exist, albeit retouched: small elevated greens, elevated (dual) tee boxes, and narrow fairways.²⁶

THE WPA IS GENERALLY RECOGNIZED for improving the nation’s infrastructure, but during its eight years of operation, from 1935 to 1943, it also created a lasting legacy of some 500 new or improved golf courses across the country, including those in Minnesota. As state WPA administrator from 1935 to 1938, Victor Christgau served during the program’s busiest period, when the nation’s unemployment levels were the highest. At its peak in January 1936, the WPA provided employment for up to

64,000 men and women workers in Minnesota. By January 1938, Minnesota had obtained \$85 million in WPA funding for a variety of projects ranging from bedside nursing in Freeborn County to a bass rearing pond in Hinckley. Because golf course–related expenses were sometimes not broken out within cities’ project budgets, it has not yet been determined how much of Minnesota’s WPA funding went toward golf courses.²⁷

Christgau cited the WPA’s tangible benefits: “a long list of public improvements which have been carried out in every county of the state.” He also noted the intangible benefits: “the vast army of men and women to whom jobs have been supplied and who, except for the work relief program, would have been idle and dependent upon home relief or private charity.” In 1940, *Golfdom* magazine declared, “As a result [of the WPA], golf as a popular recreation thrived through depression years, with more and better courses in the country today than there were in 1929.” The somewhat improbable relationship of the Works Progress Administration and golf courses was mutually beneficial and an important part of the WPA’s legacy both nationally and in Minnesota.²⁸ □

Notes

1. Victor Christgau, “What Is the Purpose of the WPA?” transcript of radio speech, fall 1935, KSTP, Victor Christgau Papers, box 23, MNHS; S. L. Stolte to Miss Ella Finger, Dec. 30, 1942, box 19.

2. Victor Christgau, monthly calendar and Report on Office and Telephone Calls, Oct. 24, 1935, Victor Christgau Papers, box 18.

3. “WPA Big Factor in Golf Growth,” *Golfdom*, May 18, 1940, 18; Randy LaFoy, Minnesota’s WPA Golf Courses, www.mnwpagolf.com.

4. The Mankato course flooded four out of its first five years, not surprising since it was built on an area locals called “the slough.” The city council decided in August 1943 to not spend any more money on the course. By 1944, it went down the

drain. “WPA Crew Building Municipal Golf Course,” *Mankato Free Press*, Mar. 7, 1941; “Willie Putt Retaliates for a Boat Ride,” *Mankato Free Press*, Apr. 22, 1935; Joe Bissen, *Fore! Gone. Minnesota’s Lost Golf Courses, 1897-1999* (Stillwater, Minn.: Five Star Publishing, 2014).

5. “Dirt to Fly Soon on New Projects, Christgau States,” *Detroit Lakes Tribune*. Aug. 1, 1935;

Works Progress Administration (WPA) (1935), *The Living New Deal*, livingnewdeal.org; "WPA Big Factor in Golf Growth," 18.

6. For a comprehensive list of Minnesota's WPA Golf Courses, see www.mnwpagolf.com; "New WPA to Open District Office Soon," *Detroit Lakes Tribune*, Aug. 1, 1935, 8.

7. Jesse Frederick Steiner, for the President's Research Committee on Social Trends, *Americans at Play: Recent Trends in Recreation and Leisure Time Activities* (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1933), 70. The first public course in Minnesota was Glenwood (now Theodore Wirth) in Minneapolis, built in 1919, followed in 1924 by Phalen in St. Paul: Tom Ryan, "Inside the MGA: The History of Minnesota's Golf Courses Includes Stories at Every Club," *Minnesota Golfer Directory 2012*, Minnesota Golf Association, 46.

8. Steiner, *Americans at Play*, 61.

9. Steiner, *Americans at Play*, 70; William D. Richardson and Lincoln A. Werden, *The Golfer's Year Book 1930* (New York: The Golfer's Year Book Co., Inc., 1930), 410-17; Ryan, "Inside the MGA," 46. By comparison, in 2014, there were about 520 golf courses in Minnesota: Shannon Prather, "Elk River Man Plays Every Golf Course in Minnesota," *Minneapolis Star Tribune*, Oct. 1, 2014; "New Golf Course Will be Open to the Public Tomorrow," *Anoka Herald*, July 14, 1937; US Bureau of Labor Statistics, *Retail Prices* (Washington, DC: US Government Printing Office, 1932), <https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=mdp.39015073250451;view=1up;seq=39>.

10. Department of Conservation, State of Minnesota, *Fourth Biennial Report (for Biennium Ending June 30, 1938)*, Jan. 1, 1939, 212, MNHS; Department of Conservation, Tourist Bureau, State of Minnesota, *Third Biennial Report, Fiscal Years 1935-36*, Dec. 1935, 269; "Tourist Business in State Source of Big Income, Third Largest in Minnesota This Year," *Hibbing Daily Tribune*, Nov. 30, 1936.

11. Steiner, *Americans at Play*, 74; equipment figures compiled from the US Census of Manufactures, 1929; Grantland Rice, "The Billion Dollar Game," in *Golfer's Yearbook 1938*, ed. Grantland Rice, William D. Richardson, and Alex J. Morrison (New York: National Golf Review, Inc., 1938), 7.

12. Herb Graffis, "1930 Golf Leaves 3-Point Legacy to 1931," *Golfdom: The Business Journal of Golf* 5, no. 1 (Jan. 1931): 10; "History of Golf in Minnesota: WPA Golf Courses in Minnesota, Part 3," Rick Shefchik interview conducted by Randy LaFoy in Stillwater, MN, published Feb. 28, 2014, YouTube.

13. Rick Shefchik, *From Fields to Fairways: Classic Golf Clubs of Minnesota* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2012), 5, 7; James E. Kelley, *Minnesota Golf: 75 Years of Tournament History* (Minneapolis: O. H. Dahlen Co., 1991), 12.

14. Johnston won the Minnesota Amateur title seven straight years (1921-27) and won the Minnesota State Open twice (1927-28). His biggest win came at the 1929 US Amateur Tournament. He was elected to the Minnesota Golf Hall of Fame in 1988. Johnston was the son of archi-

tect Clarence H. Johnston Sr. "Patty Berg," Wikipedia; "Hibbing Wins Northern Jaysee [sic] Golf," *Hibbing Daily Tribune*, June 5, 1939; "Minnesota Golf Champs Prepare for a 1939 Drive," *Hibbing Daily Tribune*, Apr. 4, 1939.

15. Christgau, "What Is the Purpose of the WPA?"; "Works Progress Administration (WPA) (1935)," *The Living New Deal*.

16. "WPA Big Factor in Golf Growth," 18; "New Roseau Golf Course in Fine Shape," *Roseau Times*, Aug. 20, 1936; "Golfers to Be on Course Soon; Is Being Improved," *LeSueur News-Herald*, Apr. 14, 1937; "Membership of Local Club Is Growing Fast," *LeSueur News-Herald*, May 5, 1937; "State of Minnesota, WPA Projects Involving Construction and Improvement of Recreational Facilities," expended to Sept. 30, 1936, Davison files, Natural Resources papers, Parks and Recreation, Minnesota State Archives, MNHS.

17. WPA, Administrative Files, Harry Phinney, "Radio Talk for Harry Phinney, Willmar—Board of Public Welfare," transcript, MNHS; National Register of Historic Places, Multiple Property Nomination Form, Historical and Cultural Society of Clay County, "Federal Relief Construction in Minnesota, 1933-1941," 14; "WPA Projects on Top Speed," *Detroit Lakes Tribune*, May 28, 1936.

18. "City Accepts Golf Course as Gift of Country Club," *Detroit Lakes Tribune*, Sept. 5, 1935; "Park Board Asks Council to Lease Golf Course Here," *Detroit Lakes Tribune*, June 11, 1936; John A. Pfaender, *The First Hundred Years at the Town and Country Club* (St. Paul: The Club, 1988); *Detroit Country Club* (Detroit Lakes: Becker County Historical Society, 1988); "Don Carman Wins Pine to Palm Title," *Detroit Lakes Tribune*, Sept. 3, 1936; "Speaking engagement accepted," July 1, 1937-Oct. 1937, letters, Victor Christgau Papers.

19. Form for Project No. 4-422, "Build Village Park and Golf Course," WPA Central Office, E.R.A. Acts: 1935-1936-1937, A-21, microfilm, copy at MNHS; "Golf Course Project to Start Work Next Week," *Mahnomen Pioneer*, Nov. 22, 1935; "30 Men Start Work on Golf Course Jobs," *Mahnomen Pioneer*, Nov. 29, 1935.

20. "Recreational Project Endorsed by Council," *Fergus Falls Tribune*, Oct. 6, 1938; "Adams Takes Picks on New Project in Bill," *Fergus Falls Tribune*, May 4, 1939; "Park Board Answers the Silly Charges of Critics," *Fergus Falls Tribune*, Jan. 18, 1940. "Council Grant to Project Okayed," *Fergus Falls Tribune*, May 11, 1939.

21. "Dealers to Plow Golf Course," *Fergus Falls Tribune*, May 25, 1939, 1; "Preparing the Sod for the Golf Course," *Fergus Falls Tribune*, June 1, 1939, and "Allis Chalmers Tractor Easy to Run—A Banker Can Run One in Spare Time," *Fergus Falls Tribune*, June 8, 1939; WPA, Administrative Files: Reports, Accomplishment Reports, 1940, Ottertail County, MNHS; "Progress Is Being Made on Golf Course," *Fergus Falls Daily Journal*, June 24, 1939; "Winter Sports Are Pulling Them to the Recreation Center," *Fergus Falls Tribune*, Feb. 6, 1941.

22. A. H. Tull, "Modern Golf Course Construction," in *Golfers Yearbook 1938*, ed. Rice, Richardson, and Morrison, 186. WPA workers in the Twin Cities, who worked on improving, rather than building, municipal courses, concentrated on converting greens and installing watering systems.

23. WPA Administrative Files: Reports, Progress Reports, 1940, State WPA Offices, MNHS; John Lieser, "Depression Spawns Pierz Golf Masterpiece," *St. Cloud Daily Times*, July 21, 1961, 3D; "Certification of Sponsors' Contributions," Ortonville, MN, payment for team of horses (and driver), June 1-30, 1941, City of Ortonville archives; "Fence Being Put Up Around Golf Course," *Northern Minnesota Leader*, June 4, 1936.

24. Carson Hedland, Roseau Golf Course groundskeeper, interview by author, 2012; "Village Council Puts in Night Session," *Roseau Times-Region*, June 4, 1936; "New Roseau Golf Course in Fine Shape," *Roseau Times-Region*, Aug. 20, 1936.

25. "Crew of 40 Men Now on Golf Project," *Blackduck American*, Apr. 29, 1936; Bicentennial Souvenir Book Committee, *Blackduck Golf Club 1936-1976* (Blackduck: The American Publishers, 1976).

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27. "Vic Christgau Reviews What State Has Obtained from \$85,000,000 in Federal Funds, Expended for Relief Work," press release, Jan. 6, 1938, 1, box 23, Victor Christgau Papers; "Minnesota WPA in Action: Statewide Projects" map, 1936, MNHS Collections.

28. "Vic Christgau Reviews What State Has Obtained"; "WPA Big Factor in Golf Growth," 18.

Map on p. 245, Percolator. All other images are from MNHS Collections.



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