

BHS NEWSLETTER

B L O O M I N G T O N H I S T O R I C A L S O C I E T Y

The Bloomington Golf Club Minnesota Valley Country Club

100 years ago, the 18-hole golf course opened at the Bloomington Golf Club in May 1925.

The Bloomington Golf Club was developed in the early 1920s. Land was leased by a group of Minneapolis Auto Club members, who wanted a golf course nearby. The land was across Old Bluff Road (now Auto Club Road) from the Auto Club. It is one of the earliest golf clubs in the Twin Cities.



The site was made ready by using horses and scrapers. Pipes were laid in the fall of 1924 for use in watering the greens. The water was drawn from wells on the property. The barn on the property became the locker room for golfers.

In early May 1925, the course opened. Memberships were sold and the course reserved for them on the weekends. The public was allowed to use it during the week. Many members rode the Dan Patch Railroad to get to the club, getting off at the Masonic Home or Auto Club stops and walking to the clubhouse. Farmers were able to mow the rough for hay.

In the depression years of the 1930s, times were tough. Slot machines were brought in and stayed until they were outlawed by Minnesota law in 1948. In 1938, the name was changed to Minnesota Valley Country Club.

During World War II, memberships dropped as men went off to war and gas was rationed. War efforts took members' time. Women's golf programs were added in the 1940s.

The front and back nines were reversed during the 1950s, buildings and additions were added, a driving range was created and motorized carts were in use.

In the 1970s, a covered bridge was built off the 17th tee by a water hazard. Money was raised for a new sprinkling system. Wells on the property were able to pump out 800 gallons per minute.

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A Most Unforgettable Meeting

*From our
archives:*

*This springtime
short story was
written by
Bloomington
author Nell
Nesbitt in 1987
and was
recently
donated to our
family archives..*

One day in the spring of 1949 when the Minnesota River had overflowed its banks, my husband said, "Let us go over to see how far the river has gone over the land. Get Lynn ready and I'll get the boat and motor ready!"

"O.K.!" said I. "We'll be ready in five minutes."

And away we went, Jim and Lynn and I.

The river had indeed become a vast lake, covering former corn fields and soy bean fields as well as threatening several homes; what a sight!

We launched the boat carefully. Jim had to take great care in maneuvering the boat among the fallen trees and stumps and debris as we moved along.

Many trees were almost covered with water. There were old barrels, wire, snags and branches, old tires, an over turned boat, a man's jacket, a chair, and many other floating rubbish piles.

As we carefully neared a tree that was half submerged in water, Lynn suddenly cried out, "Oh, look, look!"

She pointed to a branch and on it huddled a dark figure. It lifted its head and stared at us. We stared back, wide-eyed.

Yes, it was! But yet it couldn't be! It was! There, hunched up and eyeing us was a large raccoon! Jim stopped the motor and we drifted closer. The boat came to a halt right at the base of the tree. We stayed there a moment, watching, and then the strangest thing happened.

The raccoon stirred, rose slowly, and moved toward us. He made no hesitation coming to the side of the boat. We stared unbelievably as he crawled slowly into the boat, settled himself under the seat where Lynn sat and lay perfectly still.

No word was spoken. But our eyes spoke as we looked at each other! We really wanted to squeal with joy and laughter. Jim, however, paddled ahead, and wonder of wonders! At the next half-submerged tree, another raccoon appeared hunched up in the crotch of two large branches.

Again, no word was spoken and again our eyes were wide with astonishment, and AGAIN a raccoon came slowly, without hesitation down the tree trunk. The boat was now at the base of the tree.

This second raccoon crawled slowly over the edge of the boat and settled himself quietly near our first masked passenger, just as though we had invited him to do so!

Now we had two raccoon passengers! Now there were broad smiles on our faces, but still no words were spoken. We could scarcely keep from shouting and laughing. We reached the bank and made a quiet landing.

The raccoons rose quietly, as if ordered to do so. They crawled to the side of the boat, climbed over it with ease and in another moment were waddling on the bank with their ringed tails dragging.

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Nell Nesbitt in 1958

We watched them until they disappeared in the brush. Then we began to laugh and shout and wave our arms, giving vent to our pent-up glee! Our laughter filled the valley and we were thankful no other people were nearby.

We had experienced and seen close at hand the phenomenal fact that in time of disaster, animal and man have not fear of each other and rather seek aid or shelter, whether it be floods or fires.

True, we would have been greatly delighted had our two raccoon friends turned, at least once, when they were on dry land, and looked at us, and so thank us. But they did not. We saw them free and happy, and that was our reward. Somewhere in the woods near the Minnesota River are two raccoons and we call them our kindred brothers.

Visit in person, or from home

Selected items from our collection can be seen online! There is a link on our website directly to MNCollections.org. Scroll down just a short way and click on Bloomington Historical Society. Browse what's new, or use the search box to find something specific. Click on the photo of an item, and get even more information about it. What a wonderful way to bring Bloomington History to you! New items are being uploaded weekly. Funding was provided through a grant from the State of Minnesota Arts and Heritage Fund through the Minnesota Historical Society.



Upcoming Events

Sat. April 26, at 2, 3 and 4 PM:

Bloomington History 101

Essential Bloomington History in 15 minutes! Karl Feind will cover major points of Bloomington history that every local history enthusiast should know.

Sat. May 10, at 2PM: Poetry Reading

Come join Ronald J. Palmer and other poets to celebrate the publication of his book, *Parkinson's and Other Denials*. Other readers include authors Cyril Mukalel Thomas, Errol Rubenstein and Charles Kausalik-Boe. (*This will be a livestreamed event.*)

Sun. May 18, at 2PM: Masons in Minnesota

Mark Campbell will discuss freemasonry in the local area, with special focus on the history of the Minnesota Masonic Home, located on the MN River bluffs in Bloomington.

Watch for us at **Bloomington Farmers Markets this summer**. We'll be there as often as we can. If you would like to help staff our table please let us know so we can set a schedule.

THANK YOU FOR BEING A MEMBER!

- Not a member already? Join today! \$30 individual, \$50 family.
- Your financial support keeps the Old Town Hall Museum open—with free admission and free history programs throughout the year.

New volunteers are always welcome!

There are so many different things to do at the Bloomington Historical Society! Our website lists quite a few ideas where new volunteers are needed. Send us an email with your interests and let's get acquainted!

BLOOMINGTON HISTORICAL SOCIETY

**Old Town Hall Museum**

Penn Avenue at Old Shakopee Road
10200 Penn Ave. So, Bloomington, MN 55431

Open Wednesdays and Saturdays 1 to 5 pm

Thursdays 1 to 8 pm

Additional open hours by appointment

Email: Bloomitarian@gmail.com

Website:

WWW.BloomingtonHistoricalSociety.org

Founded in 1964, the Bloomington Historical Society is dedicated to the discovery, preservation and dissemination of knowledge about the City of Bloomington.

Our mission is to collect, preserve and hold in the public trust the many artifacts, photographic images, memorabilia and life stories of the people who have lived in Bloomington.

The organization is run entirely by volunteers and we depend entirely upon your donations for our operations, programs and displays. We are grateful for your on-going support.

(Golf continued from page 1)

In addition to golfing, events took place at the MN Valley Country Club. A 1988 report claimed 42 weddings, 68 bridge groups, 23 outside golf events, 102 company and special occasion events, and 7 member parties.

The original Golf Club, now Minnesota Valley Country Club, celebrated 100 years of existence in 2024 and unveiled a renovated clubhouse. Many parties and special events were held to celebrate including an auto show with cars from the past 100 years, an outdoor concert and more.

Over the years, additional features have been added, buildings torn down and rebuilt, bunkers and tees adjusted. Ownership changed hands a number of times. In 1986, the Club was purchased by its members and Minnesota Valley remains member-owned to this day.

Information gathered from Minnesota Valley Country Club, From Farms to Fairways by Laraine Tracy. MN Valley Country Club. Photos from Museum archives and MNVCC.

Mailing address:

**Bloomington Historical Society
1800 West Old Shakopee Road
Bloomington, Minnesota 55431**

