

The Joy of Ice Skating

By Ruth Gardner

In the winter, our baseball field was turned into a field of slick ice by the gentlemen of the Manitowish Waters Fire Department, a task that was performed by our parents before we had a fire department. Students studying the three R's waited anxiously for the recess bell to ring. A mad dash to the cloak room to put on our winter coats, hats and mittens, and then out the door to head for the warming shed to put on our skates. Just joyfully skating or a fast game of Pom Pom Pullaway or Crack the Whip, we relished our time on the ice.

"Skating party tonight!" rang out on the weekends, and whole families would turn up at the little schoolhouse. Someone would flip the switch on the floodlight, and one of us would grab an ice scoop, set at the perfect angle, and zoom across the ice removing any fallen snow. Someone would build a fire in the little pot-belly stove inside the warming shed. People appeared with large brown paper bags filled with buttery popcorn, and atop the stove sat huge kettles of hot cocoa. Skating is thirsty business, though...at the corner of the school building, there was a pipe that when turned on sent out the coldest, iciest water you ever tasted!

My first pair of skates had double runners on them. My parents carefully pushed me along the side of the rink until I could maneuver on my own. After many falls, I finally graduated to single-bladed figure skates. I was now a grown-up and could whirl around the ice with the big kids!

Other Activities from Days Gone By

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Cake walks, dances, strawberry socials and come-as-you-are parties. School events brought out the whole town, even if you didn't have children in school. Christmas pageants, pancake suppers, smelt fries. These were the social events of our little town. At one point, our PTA was told by the state that we had too much money in our account and that it must be spent!