

Manitowish Waters becomes four-season vacation area

Located on the western edge of Vilas County, and surrounded by lakes, Manitowish Waters is attractive to vacationers.

Built along a chain of lakes, Manitowish Waters is ideal for fishermen and water-sport enthusiasts.

Once a logging and railroad town, Manitowish Waters has developed into a four-season resort community. The area offers ice

fishing, snowmobiling and cross country skiing in the winter, along with camping, fishing and hiking in the summer.

At one time, it was the logging industry here that kept Manitowish Waters booming, but the big logging activity ceased between 1911 (when the last Yawkey-Bissell activity ceased; that firm's last local camp was near Mud Lake, now Fawn) and 1914, (when the last logs had been shipped from the hoist at Star Lake.)

In 1919 the Milwaukee Road removed its track along the north side of the chain; the spur to the C&NW was quietly taken up around the same time.

The lone sawmills to operate after that era in the area were operated by Bob Loveless, who cut timber in the few pockets of Virgin

Forest during the 1920s, and Marvin Loveless, who ran a small mill into the 1940s or 1950s.

The resort business developed alongside the homesteading that brought the early settlers to this area. First to offer hospitality to sportsmen and other visitors in a lodge was Abe LaFave. In 1892, George Buck settled some land at the narrows between Spider and Manitowish lakes, probably by homesteading it. He too developed a resort business, which stayed in the Buck family until it was sold in 1916 to the Koerners, who began operations under their name the next year.

What is now Deer Park Lodge was begun in the 1890s by one J.A. LaMotte of Wausau; its succeeding owners included Jay A. "Dad" Paine, Max Engemann and Charlie Doriot. After spending several summers camping here, Henry Voss built his first cottage in 1909, and opened an American Plan resort in 1911.

By 1927, area residents were chafing at what they felt was neglect by the town of Flambeau, to which the

present day Manitowish Waters then belonged, and they succeeded in having the state Legislature pass a bill creating the new Town of Spider Lake. The new town built a town hall during the next biennium and a modern school soon after. That school was outgrown and was enlarged twice before it was replaced in 1971 by a new, complete plant on Highway K that is a consolidation of the grade schools for several North Lakeland communities.

The town board also authorized a community cemetery in 1935, and the first burials date from 1936.

The Thirties brought the

town new distinctions. One was the distinction of having its own fish hatchery, said to be the only municipal fish hatchery in the state.

It was also in the early 1930s, 1934, to be exact, that desperado John Dillinger brought the area instant notoriety. Detected hiding out at Little Bohemia, he fled lawmen in a shootout that cost two lives.

Manitowish Waters was a more appropriate name for the chain of lakes area, and in 1937 the name of the town was changed from Spider Lake to Manitowish Waters.

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