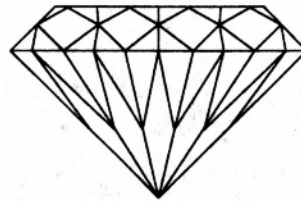


# Watertown Country Club



Celebrating Our "Diamond Anniversary"  
1922 - 75 Years - 1997  
April 12, 1997

Welcome by President Dale Ninmann

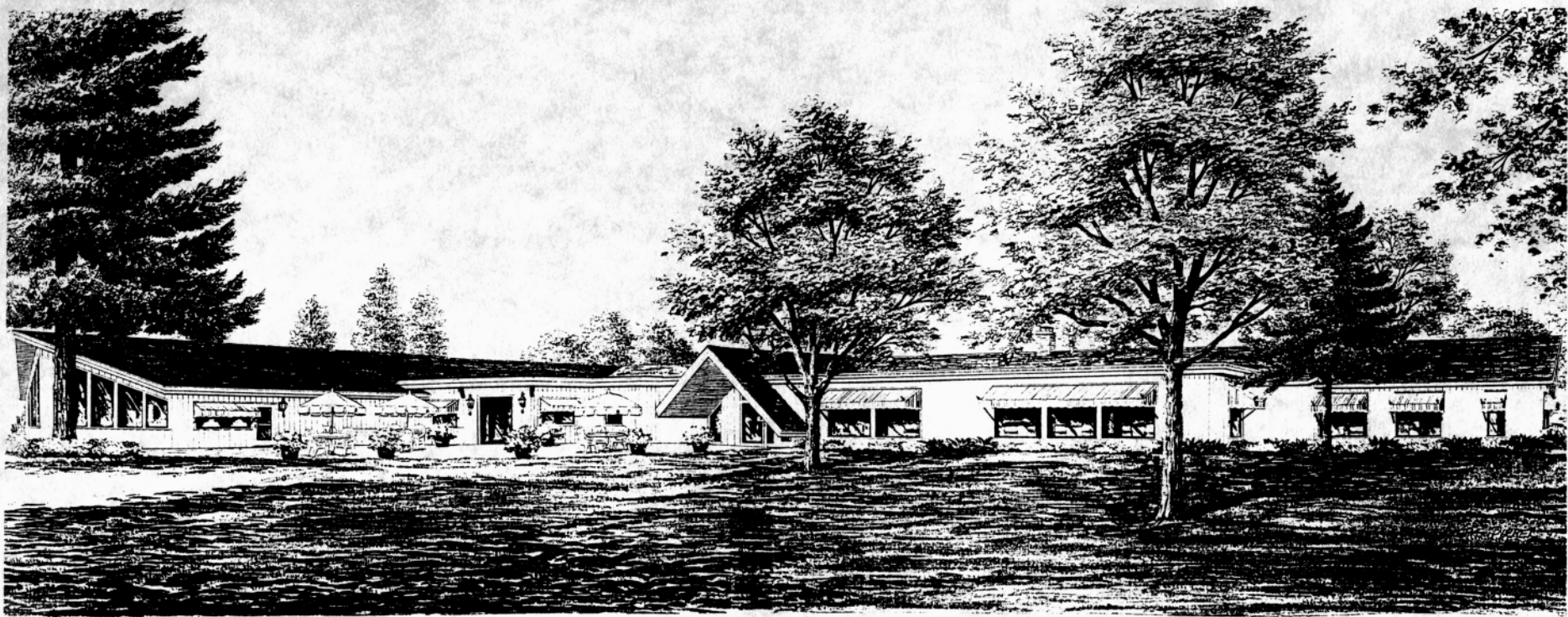
Introduction of Guests

Brief Summary of Club History

Dinner

Raffles & Door Prizes

Dance



Watertown  
Country Club  
Diamond Anniversary  
1922 - 1997



## **WATERTOWN COUNTRY CLUB AN EXPANDED HISTORY**

The Watertown Country Club was organized June 3, 1922. At its first meeting on June 23 that year, 82 persons were elected to membership, including two women, Miss Minnie Sproesser and Mrs. L.L. (Lilla) Parks. Other persons were present who had previously agreed to become members. An initiation fee of \$25 was set with annual dues of \$15. The president elected that night to head the new organization was a local attorney, William H. Woodard.

Over 50 acres of farmland bordering the Chicago & North Western railroad tracks about a mile-and-a half from the center of the city were purchased from Gustavus "Gust" Austin for the express purpose of creating a nine-hole course. The choice was made despite concerns that a nearby working quarry would probably shower the course occasionally with small rocks; there have been no reports during the intervening years that this ever happened.

The property included a farmhouse, a barn with a silo, and a shed. A screened porch was added to the farmhouse, and electricity and a telephone were installed in what was now the clubhouse. Spring water was piped to the oak grove adjacent to the building; picnic tables and benches were placed in the grove as well. In addition, 18 campchairs. The barn housed the course maintenance equipment.

The entire farmland was plowed, then earth-moving was done to create the course itself; the layout was frequently referred to as "links". Several portions of the land were tilled to afford better drainage. Since the initial seeding did not all grow, reseeding was necessary in many areas. In these early years the new facility was occasionally referred to as the Silver Creek Country Club or Silver creek Links, both titles coming from the name of the creek that wandered through the property.

The course opened for play on Saturday, July 1, 1922, under what must have been trying conditions. The initial tournament was held Sunday, August 5. Dr. H.P. Bowen took first place with a nine-hole score of 40.

Several women also took part in this opening competition. Winner among that group by shooting a score of 44 was a Watertown native now from Gainesville, Florida, who was back home visiting her family at the time, Mrs. Edward L. Brown.

From contemporary news stories, it's clear that a short, temporary layout with provisional greens was used much of the opening year or two. It was comprised of only eight holes. Par for the 16 – or possibly 18 – abbreviated holes was 60. The course at this point was so short that one golfer almost made a hole-in-one on the first hole. The planned layout for that hole placed the first tee next to the south edge of Silver Creek Road, with the green well over 500 yards away to the south.

Golf ball washers – the familiar wooden paddle type which had been invented locally by Len Mollart – were donated by the Watertown firm which manufactured them, G.B. Lewis Co. Members' clubs were stored in the farm shed. Two out-houses were built and three bridges were erected over the wandering creek for golfers and the movement of maintenance equipment. Presumably other necessary bridges already existed on this one-time farmland.

Club members were enthusiastic to learn how to play the game. So the club's first professional was engaged that summer, Otto Haase of the Grant Park course, Milwaukee. He appeared each Tuesday to give lessons.

The first club championship was determined through a series of matches that concluded on October 1, 1922. A.J. "Arnie" McAdams won the silver loving cup trophy with "a net score" of 71, the wording of the news story suggesting that it was probably some sort of handicap event.

The Spring of 1923 was so wet that play was impossible in mid-April, and at least two more weeks of drying out seemed necessary. By mid-May the permanent layout was still not operational. One news account stated that the course was also "inclined" to be "muddy". Moreover "roads to the links are still dangerous for automobiles to travel over". Despite these disconcerting goings-on, a watering system for the greens was installed in 1923.

That same year 25 special women's memberships were created with a lower initiation fee and lower annual dues. A beautiful Memorial Day brought out more than 100 players to enjoy their new facility. A "circuit riding" pro from the Tripoli Country Club in Milwaukee, H.E. Wilson was also engaged to give lessons each Tuesday. He apparently gave lessons at other clubs as well.

On July 6, the club's first real social event – the Sunset Picnic – took place. Women and children were invited to join the men. There were supervised games for the kids, including croquet. Dancing followed on the clubhouse porch in the evening.

One interesting aspect of early golfing was that both men's and women's teams would play teams from other nearby clubs, either at home or away. This pattern continued for many years.

Finances were an ongoing problem in the club's early years. Many members made low interest loans to it; a number were "forgiven" in later years as donations. Assessments, generally of \$10 annually, were made to help meet expenses. Dues initially were \$15 a year for regular members; green fees were \$1. Caddies carried golfers bags for 25¢ for each nine holes.

A full time greenskeeper, John Stiemke, was employed in the 1930's. How the course was maintained prior to this step is unknown. A 12-year-old schoolboy, Bill Kraemer, was able to get a work permit in 1931, and caddied for members. When he was older he was paid to live in the clubhouse from April through October. He guarded the club property as well as the members' clubs each summer for three years, 1934, 1936 and 1937. The owner of the farmland adjacent to the entire #2 hole was paid a stipend yearly to allow golfers to retrieve lost balls from his property.

By 1941 the entire 100 member roster was full. Improvements were badly needed by that time to the clubhouse and the dilapidated barn. The onset of World War II, with its shortages of materials and resultant high costs delayed expansion plans. One very special event took place at the club on September 5, 1943. That evening a jamboree was held in the grove, with a steak supper, a huge bonfire, singing of old songs and new, and finally burning the club's mortgage in the fire "amid proper ceremonies... in the tradition of the best college fraternity".

Soon after the war, a new clubhouse was planned. It was approved by the membership in late 1949, and opened the following spring. The clubhouse was further expanded in 1955, and again in 1966, once more in 1980-81, and still again in 1994.

The long-time dream of an 18-hole course became a reality in 1961 when the second nine holes were opened on the 70 acre site that had been purchased two years earlier. The farmland had been owned previously by Edwin Hinze.

During the next several years a full sprinkler system was installed over the entire course. The two nines have been changed up at various times in their sequence; the present front nine is made up of the original nine holes.

A number of major changes have been made to the course itself over the years. The #1 tee is now in its third location. Three towering trees that once stood at the creek in the middle of par 3, #5 fairway were removed. Also taken down was the huge tree that was centered midway along the par 3, #6 fairway. The par 3, #9 hole was originally very short – about 135 yards – but was lengthened later. The shape of the replacement green and its traps is now in its third configuration. The course of the creek adjoining #10 was changed to widen the fairway and make it more level.

Many very large oaks had to be removed from the vicinity of the #14 green to permit proper growth of the green itself; sunlight could simply not penetrate to it. During the past 30 years or so, new trees have been planted every year, particularly on the back nine. There have literally been hundreds in total. Some are replacements for those lost to lightning, wind, disease, age and the like. Others simply enhance the challenge of the course. Adding to the fun are the multiple traps and berms that have been created in recent changes to the overall layout of the course.

Motorized golf carts owned by members came on the scene in 1955; they are also available for rental through the pro shop.

During its first 75 years, 31 members have been the men's champion golfers. Most dominant by far has been James Wade; he has won that honor on 18 occasions spread over 33 years between 1953 and 1986.

Women's championships were not begun until 1934, even though the ladies had been golfing from the very first years. Ramona "Mona" Hackbarth has won that title on nine occasions and Mildred "Millie" Kehl on seven.

Throughout its entire history, the club has had ongoing support from women golfers and wives of members. They have been responsible for many of the club's social functions, in addition to supplying many of the clubhouse furnishings and decorations. They have their own officers, and their own golf and social events.

For more than 60 years the Watertown Country Club has had full-time greenskeepers. The heads of those operations have been John Stiemke, Walter Kaddatz, George Wuestenberg, Joe Bahr and Ron Grunewald. In its earliest years part-time golf pros served the needs of members looking to improve their golfing skills; a full-time pro was a little longer in coming. The first was Art Huebner in 1967 followed by Gene Frank, Bob Duncan, Chuck Alto, Jim Handy and Mike Wietor.

Food service in the club's early years was intermittent; it was prepared by Adela Kraemer. Hattie Strahota later served for many years as the club's cook. Gene Fendt, and later his brother Gary Fendt were long-time bar managers, caddie masters and overseers. The first house manager was Elmer Molzner. Earl and Gloria Witte took over that responsibility in 1974 and continue in it today, aided by their son Rand as assistant manager.

The Watertown Country Club was annexed, together with other nearby properties, to the City of Watertown in 1989.

**WATERTOWN COUNTRY CLUB  
WINNERS OF MEN'S GOLF CHAMPIONSHIP**

1922	A.J. "Arnie" McAdams	1960	James "Jim" Timmel
1923	Arnie McAdams	1961	Jim Timmel
1924	Arnie McAdams	1962	Rog Simdon
1925	Arnie McAdams	1963	Rog Simdon
1926	Norman T. "N.T." or "Doc" Sundby	1964	Rog Simdon
1927	Doc Sundby	1965	Delos "Del" Hinze
1928	Doc Sundby	1966	Ronald "Ron" DeMuth
1929	Doc Sundby	1967	Ron DeMuth
		1968	Jim Wade
		1969	Rog Simdon
1930	Arnie McAdams		
1931	Steven "Steve" Parks	1970	Jim Wade
1932	Thomas "Tom" Lewis	1971	Jim Wade
1933	A.P. "Al" Hinkes	1972	Jim Wade
1934	Steve Parks	1973	Jim Wade
1935	Harley Whitmore, Jr.	1974	Jim Wade
1936	Steve Parks	1975	Jim Wade
1937	Richard "Rich" Stiemke	1976	David "Dave" Quanbeck
1938	Harvey Riedemann	1977	Jim Wade
1939	Harvey Riedemann	1978	Jim Wade
		1979	Louis "Louie" Kuckken
1940	Harold "Bud" Riffle		
1941	Bud Riffle	1980	Jim Wade
1942	Bud Riffle	1981	Jim Wade
1943	Roger "Rog" Simdon	1982	Timothy "Tim" Mallow
1944	David "Dave" Payne	1983	Ronald "Ox" Vaught
1945	Richard "Rich" Thauer	1984	Ron DeMuth
1946	John "Jack" Hirtz	1985	Ron DeMuth
1947	Steve Parks	1986	Jim Wade
1948	John Weaver	1987	Randall "Randy" DeMuth
1949	Paul Hibbard	1988	Mark Sellnow
		1989	Gregory "Greg" Hinze
1950	Robert "Bob" Weaver		
1951	Robert "Bob" Miller	1990	Mark Sellnow
1952	Kenneth "Ken" Usher	1991	Michael "Mike" Murphy
1953	James "Jim" Wade	1992	Mike Murphy
1954	Jim Wade	1993	Mike Murphy
1955	Jim Wade	1994	Eric Quanbeck
1956	Jim Wade	1995	Brian Lee
1957	Jim Wade	1996	Mark Sellnow
1958	Jim Wade		
1959	Rog Simdon		

**WATERTOWN COUNTRY CLUB  
WINNERS OF WOMEN'S GOLF CHAMPIONSHIP**

Women did not have a championship prior to 1934.

1934	Bernice "Bernie" Hefty	1970	Fran Freitag
1935	Bernie Hefty	1971	Sue Edward Wilkes
1936	Paula Gail Bowen	1972	Jane Stephenson
1937	Paula Gail Bowen	1973	Sue Edward Wilkes
1938	Josephine "Jo" Kehl	1974	Mona Hackbarth
1939	Paula Gail Bowen	1975	Sue Edward Wilkes
		1976	Phyllis Nitardy
1940	Unknown	1977	Mona Hackbarth
1941	Unknown	1978	Mona Hackbarth
1942	Mildred "Millie" Kehl	1979	Mona Hackbarth
1943	Millie Kehl		
1944	Millie Kehl	1980	Janet Boelter
1945	Millie Kehl	1981	Mona Hackbarth
1946	Adelle "Della" Richter	1982	Jeanne Hackbarth
1947	Winnie Terwedow	1983	Jeanne Hackbarth
1948	Winnie Terwedow	1984	Jeanne Hackbarth
1949	Winnie Terwedow	1985	Jeanne Hackbarth
		1986	Jeanne Hackbarth
1950	Millie Kehl	1987	Marlene Raether
1951	Millie Kehl	1988	Debra "Debbie" Peters
1952	Millie Kehl	1989	Marlene Raether
1953	Mary Hibbard		
1954	Janet "Jan" Dobbratz	1990	Marlene Raether
1955	Bernie Hefty	1991	Marlene Raether
1956	Ramona "Mona" Hackbarth	1992	Marlene Raether
1957	Mona Hackbarth	1993	Debbie Peters
1958	Audrey Pagel	1994	Marlene Raether
1959	Mary Hibbard	1995	Debbie Peters
		1996	Debbie Peters
1960	Mary Hibbard		
1961	Jane Stephenson		
1962	Jane Stephenson		
1963	Ruby Hardiman		
1964	Suzanne "Sue" Edwards		
1965	Jane Stephenson		
1966	Frances "Fran" Freitag		
1967	Mona Hackbarth		
1968	Mona Hackbarth		
1969	Bridget Braun		

