

THESE girls enjoyed
a tallyho ride to
Fort Snelling in 1892



Minnesotans *at Play*

BERTHA L. HEILBRON

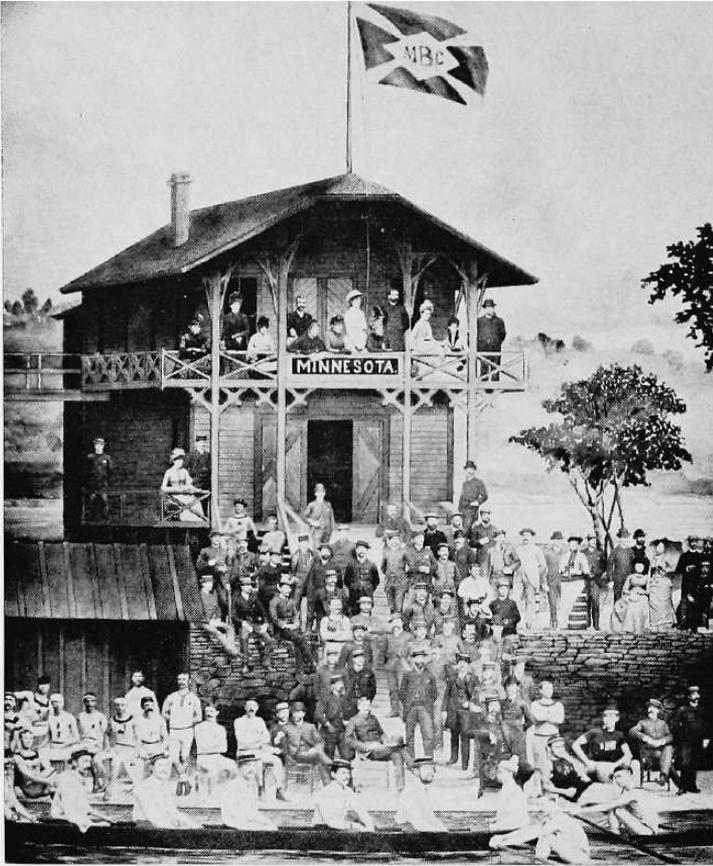
IN THE LATER DECADES of the nineteenth century, Americans were learning to indulge in the organized sports that one historian has termed the "safety valve" of an industrial society. Minnesotans followed the general trend by turning to outdoor recreation. Fads such as croquet and bicycling swept the country and filtered westward. The League of American Wheelmen, organized in 1880 at Newport, Rhode Island, had a Minnesota branch within two years. Golf and tennis made their national debuts in the 1870s and 1880s, and in the same decades baseball games, horse and boat races, boxing matches, and prize fights were attracting crowds of enthusiastic spectators. All became popular in Minnesota.

Interest in the "royal game of golf," for

MISS HEILBRON is the editor of this magazine. This illustrated narrative is drawn from a chapter in her forthcoming book, "The Thirty-second State: A Pictorial History of Minnesota," which is scheduled for publication by the Minnesota Historical Society in November. The pictures were selected from the thirty-one relating to recreation that will appear in the book.

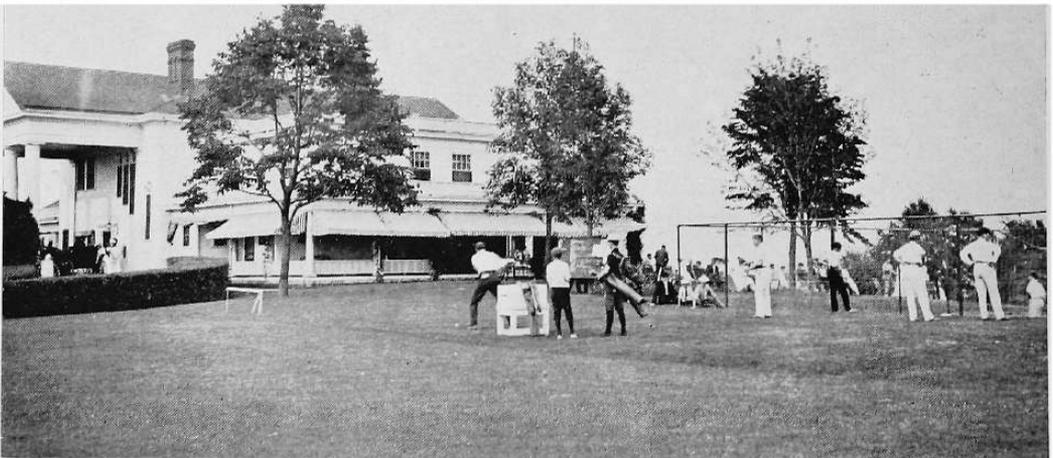
example, was closely associated with the rise of country clubs, which began to appear in Minnesota as early as 1888. In that year the Town and Country Club of St. Paul was established, and ten years later a group of Minneapolis men organized under the name Minikahda. Within another year Duluth had an association with facilities for archery, tennis, trapshooting, sleighing, skiing, and tobogganing, as well as golf. The latter, however, remained the chief interest of members of country clubs, and in time numerous public and municipal courses were established in the state. By 1957 Minnesota's golf enthusiasts had at their disposal no fewer than 150 public and private courses.

For the promotion of individual sports, other organizations came into being in great variety. St. Paul had a boat club as early as 1870 and Duluth followed suit in 1886; three curling groups were active in the state in the 1890s; a hunting lodge at Hallock was a rendezvous for sportsmen from the East in the 1880s. With the growth of motor transportation, automobile associations were organized after 1900,



*THE Minnesota Boat Club
on Raspberry Island
in the Mississippi River
at St. Paul, 1884*

THE Minikahda Club of Minneapolis had a golf course and tennis courts in 1901



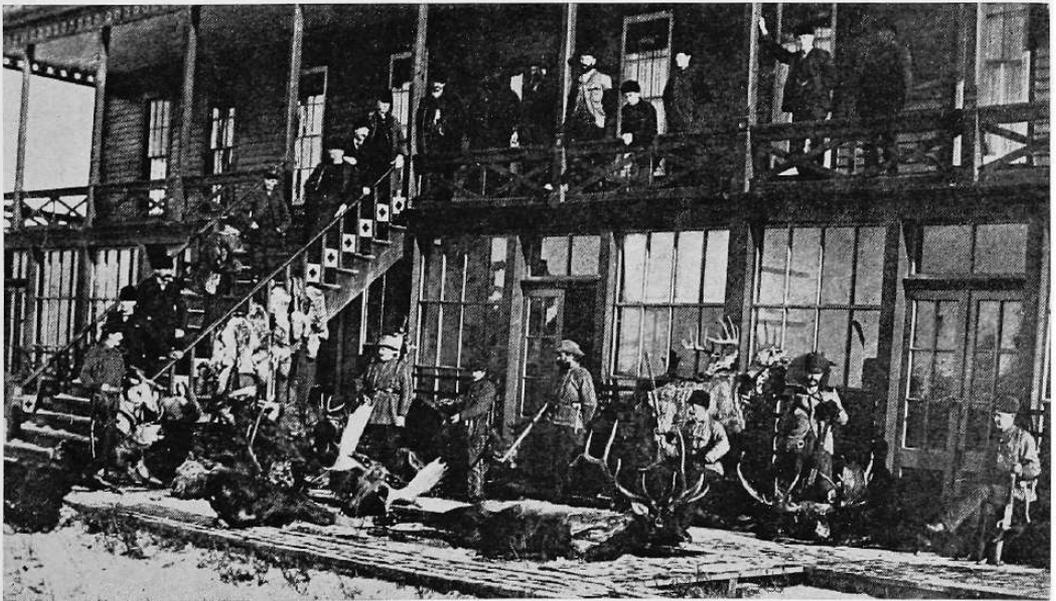
more than a hundred existing in the state at the height of their popularity; athletic clubs for city dwellers opened in Minneapolis in 1915 and in St. Paul in 1918. The nation's pioneer ski group was organized by Norwegian settlers at Red Wing in 1883, half a century before this exciting winter pastime acquired appeal for large numbers of Minnesotans. Among other immigrant groups who brought their sports with them from Europe were the Czechs and the Germans, whose Sokol and Turnverein organizations specialized in gymnastic achievement. The New Ulm Turnverein had other objectives, too, for it staged theatrical performances, formed a singing section, and supported a fire department.

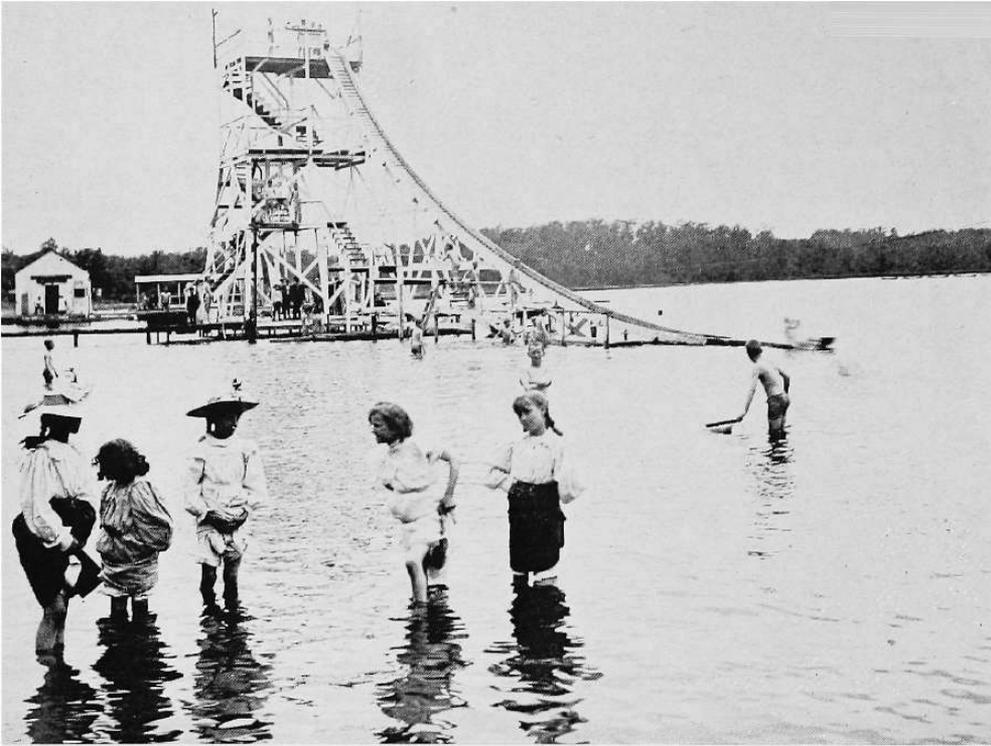
Winter sports received a boost in 1886 when the first St. Paul ice carnival was staged, ostensibly to correct a general belief that Minnesota was a "hyperborean region where existence is a burden during the winter months." Repeated in succeeding seasons, the carnivals, which centered about glittering ice palaces with skating rinks and toboggan slides near by, attracted thousands to the Minnesota capital. In 1916 the winter festival was revived,

and it soon became an annual event featuring parades and sports like skiing and skating. A contrasting summer festival, the Minneapolis Aquatennial, has been taking advantage of the city's lakes to feature water sports each July since 1940.

Outdoor summer activities like boating and swimming, which depend upon Minnesota's more than eleven thousand lakes, helped to promote the founding of resorts. They first attained importance in the state shortly after the Civil War, and their rise in the years that followed was greatly stimulated by a widespread belief that Minnesota's climate was beneficial to invalids. As the state became known for the "health-restoring properties" of its "cold, dry, invigorating air," health-seekers, particularly consumptives, made their way northward by the thousands. To accommodate these newcomers, hotels, boardinghouses, "retreats for invalids," and resorts were established in growing numbers. The Winslow House, once a popular St. Anthony hostelry, was transformed into the Western Hygienic Home for Invalids; the Oak Grove House at Cedar Lake invited health-seekers to partake of its hospitality;

THE Hallock hunting club attracted big game enthusiasts in the 1880s





WADERS
at Wildwood,
White Bear Lake,
about 1905

hotels erected at White Bear Lake and Lake Minnetonka, within easy reach of the state's largest cities, let it be known that they could make invalids comfortable.

These resort hotels soon became popular among Minnesotans seeking relief from city heat, as well as with tourists from the South and East. In 1881 people from New York, Missouri, Kansas, and Iowa were registered at Minnetonka hotels. By that time resorts had been opened also at Lake Elmo, Prior Lake, the Dalles of the St. Croix, Lake St. Croix, and Frontenac, which was described as the "Newport of the Northwest." These establishments, most of which catered to those looking for health as well as for pleasure, were the forerunners of some forty-five hundred resorts which welcomed vacationing tourists to Minneosta in the mid-twentieth century.

Fishing was perhaps the most popular pastime among early visitors. Many a sportsman chose to vacation in Minnesota after hearing reports of fabulous catches like that of a party which landed eighty black bass and thirty pickerel in two hours on Lake Minnetonka. As such exploitation depleted the stocks in the lakes of the

south, sportsmen followed the railroads into the less settled northern part of the state, where both fish and game continued in plentiful supply until long after the advent of the automobile made that area easily accessible. More than three hundred thousand fishermen from other states now visit Minnesota each year, and well over a million residents purchased fishing licenses in 1956.

In order to broadcast information to tourists throughout the nation, the Ten Thousand Lakes of Minnesota Association was organized in 1916, and in 1923 the Minnesota Arrowhead Association was founded to advertise the beauties and advantages of the state's northeastern section with its Lake Superior shore and unique border wilderness. There, in the nation's largest national forest, twentieth-century voyageurs find complete seclusion and escape from the industrial world and its problems. With canoes as the only means of transportation, they can paddle for days on end over lakes and streams bordered by stately pines, portaging between waterways and camping under the stars at night. The state tourist bureau and the Ten Thousand

Lakes and Arrowhead associations have distributed tons of literature about Minnesota's resorts, its canoe country, and its state parks. The beginning of the extensive system of parks that flourishes in modern Minnesota can be traced to 1891, when Itasca State Park, which embraces the source of the Mississippi, was founded as a result of the persistent and devoted efforts of Jacob V. Brower, its first superintendent. Itasca is not only the oldest but the largest of the thirty-eight state parks now scattered throughout the commonwealth.

Spectator sports, amateur and professional, have long received enthusiastic support in Minnesota. An example is horse racing, which reached a climax in the exploits of the great pacer, Dan Patch, after he was purchased by M. W. Savage of Minneapolis in 1902. The popularity of this unique animal may be judged from the fact that ninety-three thousand spectators

watched his performance at the Minnesota State Fair of 1906, when he paced a mile in 1:55—a record that has never been broken. Amateur baseball teams, some of which were active in Minnesota as early as 1857, began to play competitive games about 1865. Only a year after the pioneering National League of Baseball Clubs was organized in New York in 1876, the Minneapolis organization made its bow to the Northwest. A decade later, both St. Paul and Minneapolis could boast of professional teams, which under the nicknames of "Millers" and "Saints" have become local institutions. Beginning in the 1890s, basketball figured in the athletic programs of Minnesota secondary schools and colleges. With the growing popularity of the game, the Mill City acquired a professional team known as the "Lakers" in 1947.

It was football, however, that was first developed to a high degree after athletic activity became important in Minnesota

THE *Lake Side Hotel*
on *Lake Pepin*
at *Frontenac*, 1868



colleges. Although students in the University of Minnesota played the game as early as 1878, they did not compete with teams from other states until 1890. During several decades games refereed by officials wearing Prince Albert coats and high silk hats were played off the campus, taking advantage of facilities like those provided by the Minneapolis ball park. Then in 1899 the university acquired its own Northrop Field, and in 1923 it was replaced by Memorial Stadium, which was typical of the vast arenas springing up on campuses throughout the nation at the time. Under the leadership of great coaches like Dr. H. L. Williams and Bernie Bierman, Minnesota has produced some championship teams and numerous all-American players.

Not only at the university, but in various other Minnesota schools and colleges, student athletes have attained a high degree of skill in such sports as track, baseball, basketball, and hockey. Admissions

for school sports competitions purchased by Minnesotans in 1949 totaled more than four million, and professional events in the state drew almost as many spectators in the same year.

Thousands of the state's citizens engage in participating sports like gymnastics, skiing, skating, tennis, golf, hunting, swimming, fishing, canoeing, iceboating, motorboating, and surfboard riding. The popularity of water sports is only natural in a state where ninety-five per cent of the people live within five miles of a lake or stream. The ever-growing number of Minnesotans who depend on industry for their livelihood enjoy easy access to the safety valve of outdoor recreation.

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THE state championship Waseca baseball team of 1901





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