

Wawanesa Milestones

Culture and Recreation

Culture and recreation have been important aspects of Wawanesa's life from the origins of our community in 1890. Winter sports have been a defining feature from the earliest years, with our first open-air ice rink flooded in 1892. The river even was used early on for skating, and even for horse racing in 1897. The first enclosed rink was put up in the early 1900s, and our first annual curling bonspiel was held in 1909. A new building went up in 1929, with three curling sheets and a large skating area. A brand new facility was opened in 1975. Tennis was a popular sport in the 1890s through to the 1930s, with courts on the Ellis farm and at the Criddle/Vane farm. A six-hole golf course was also established for a time at the Ellis farm, from 1933 until 1942.

Wawanesa organized its first agricultural fair in 1898, with displays of livestock and garden produce, cooking, needlework, canning, school work and paintings. The first horse race took place in 1893 and in 1902 a race track was developed. The fair ceased in the 1920s.

Cultural pursuits were numerous. A.G. Scott organised local theatrical productions, especially of Shakespeare's *As You Like It* and *Twelfth Night*. A chatauqua arrived in town in the summer of 1917 and for many years after was set up in a tent near the cenotaph. Ernest Thompson Seton, the famous naturalist based for a time at Carberry lectured here in early 1900s. Piano lessons were early on provided by Mrs. Anderson

and then Mrs Nield. The first silent movies were shown in the winter of 1908, and the Wawanesa Legion purchased the first picture machine in 1929.

The first public space for recreational activity in Wawanesa was provided by the second floor of Patterson Brothers Implement dealership, until the IOOF Hall was built in 1900. All local service clubs used this facility (including the Sons of England Benefit Society, Returned Soldiers Association, Masons, Knight of Pythias), which also housed any number of other public and political functions. The building was destroyed by fire in 1922 but was rebuilt and still stands.

Right: Wawanesa Cenotaph and band shell in the 1920s; below: hockey on the river around 1900.

