

# A History of Jules Iverson Memorial Park, Stevens Point

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Jules Iverson Memorial Park, the largest of Stevens Point's city parks, was born from the waters of the Plover River. The flowing river carved a valley through the sandy soil, forming a flat floodplain surrounded by relatively steep hills, some of the only true topography near the city. The idyllic setting, known as "Plover Hills," has always attracted people. Early residents of Stevens Point flocked to several popular swimming holes that lined the river to escape the summer heat. The Plover River was a much cleaner and safer alternative to the polluted Wisconsin River. But it was water flowing below the ground that really made an impact on city residents, with wells tapping into the first pure source of drinking water. This earned Stevens Point the nickname, "The City of Wonderful Water."

While water and hills created the ideal setting, it was the vision and dedication of many Stevens Point residents that developed the area into "one of the finest recreational areas of any city in the state" (*Stevens Point Daily Journal*, April 27, 1936). Edward B. Robertson, president of the Stevens Point Water Commission, led the way by establishing the first recreational facilities, going above and beyond his primary duty of supplying clean drinking water to the city. Jules Iverson, a local businessman, purchased and donated 60 acres of land that he dedicated to the children of Portage County. This donation more than doubled the size of the park. Hundreds of men working for the Works Progress Administration during the Great Depression built the beautiful stone buildings, bridges, and stream channels that define the rustic ambiance of the park today.

The following history of Iverson Park was compiled through newspaper articles and other resources listed at the end of the document.

## Swimming Holes Era (1916-1927)

### Red Bridge and The Stump Swimming Holes

The current beach, picnic areas, and playgrounds on the north side of Iverson Park developed around two traditional swimming holes in the Plover River: the Red Bridge and The Stump swimming holes.

The "Red Bridge" was an early landmark for Stevens Point, located east of the city limits in the Town of Hull where the Highway 66 bridge now crosses the Plover River (see air photos on pages 24 and 25). This road was originally known as the Waupaca or Hull Road; it became State Highway 18 in 1917, U.S. Highway 10 in 1926, and State Highway 66 in 2009.

In 1856, Edward Dexter Brown acquired forested land along the Plover River and operated a lumber mill just 30 feet north of the Red Bridge. The mill ceased operations in about 1878.



Jefferson Street Iverson Park Memorial, built by the WPA in 1938 (photo 2013).

The deeper water between Brown's mill and the Red Bridge was always a popular swimming hole for kids from Stevens Point. A *Stevens Point Journal* article on June 22, 1897, complained about boys "bathing in public places":

*Now that vacation jollification is at its height, many of the boys take daily trips to the Plover and Wisconsin rivers, which in its place is a very commendable and innocent pleasure, but many of those who thus cleanse the outer man are not so careful to seek the traditional "shady retreat along the river's mossy bank," but disport themselves in prominent places, making it very uncomfortable to passersby. Several days ago two ladies attempted to take a drive into the country by way of the Waupaca road [now Highway 66], but were obliged to turn back because of a large crowd of men and boys, who were using the Plover [river] bridge as a diving place and made no move to make themselves scarce, when they saw the team approaching.*



The current Highway 66 bridge is the site of the original "Red Bridge," a popular swimming hole for early residents of Stevens Point (photo 2013).

Another *Stevens Point Daily Journal* article on July 31, 1916 describes how the boys improved the swimming hole:

*Some of the boys have been swimming at the "red bridge" on the Hull road east of the city. With spades and aided by the current they have formed a considerable hole in the Plover above the bridge and now have a diving place "where they don't hit their heads."*

When former Stevens Point resident Harry Claflin visited Stevens Point in July of 1923, he went back to see the old swimming hole where he used to swim before leaving in 1887. He said:

*We stopped on Red bridge, and it was the same old swimming hole. I saw it had not been changed in 37 years, and I wanted to jump right in then and there.*

In August of 1916, the park commission sought assistance from the sheriff in regards to the Red Bridge swimming hole, which:

*...has become a popular resort but it is said has of late become the scene of considerable rowdyism, which is much to be regretted and should be remedied (*Stevens Point Daily Journal*, August 5, 1916).*

"The Stump" was another swimming hole that was located about 350 feet downstream of Red Bridge, where the first beach would be developed in Iverson Park. These swimming holes didn't have amenities such as bathhouses or concessions until the Water Commission began making improvements in the mid-1920s. Therefore, Cashin's swimming hole (described in the next section) was a more popular destination in these early days.

While the original Red Bridge was appropriately sized for the limited horse and car use of an earlier era, as traffic and speeds increased, residents became concerned about its safety. In May of 1923, the Chamber of Commerce appealed to the county board to replace the narrow bridge and its approaches before a serious accident occurred. In August 1926, the stretch of Highway 18 (now Highway 66) east of Stevens Point was paved, and the old Red Bridge was replaced with a wider and safer structure.

## Cashin's Swimming Hole/Bathing Beach Park

Another popular swimming hole was located in what would become the southern undeveloped portion of Iverson Park. Cashin's swimming hole was located on the Plover River at an east extension of Dixon Street (see map on page 33). This deeper area of the river provided a convenient place for Stevens Point residents to cool down on hot summer days.

In the summer of 1916, the popularity of Cashin's swimming hole soared when Anton E. Flugaur began offering amenities for swimmers. Calling the area "Bathing Beach Park," he operated a lunch and confectionery stand and offered changing tents for swimmers. An advertisement stated, "Bathing Suits for rent, Ice Cream, Lemonade, Fruit, Cigars, Etc." He also invited bands to play concerts for the crowds.

A *Stevens Point Daily Journal* article on July 31, 1916 stated:

*Sunday hundreds of people lined the river for miles, particularly at Cashin's swimming hole. Estimates of the crowds on the river within a few miles of this city run as high as 2000 persons... Cashin's has but one fairly deep hole, the average being two or three feet in depth. Weber's band gave a concert there during the afternoon.*

An August 5, 1916 article in the *Merrill Daily Herald* provides a further description of Cashin's as told by Merrill residents who had visited family in Stevens Point:

*While at Point the young people took a trip to the Plover Creek which is at present the only bathing beach the city possesses... Plover Creek is about two and a half miles from the point and it is estimated that over 400 visit the place daily. The local young people who visited there yesterday stated that there were more than 200 in the water at all times while others sat around enjoying the refreshing air. Many of the Stevens Point people walk to the place daily while a jitney bus is also in operation. A large band furnishes music at the beach every Sunday afternoon while refreshment stands are also within reaching distance. Tents are erected on the beach for the use of bathers and suits, towels and other paraphernalia can be rented. Life savers are ever on the watch although... there is not much danger of any fatalities.*

In 1917, Flugaur again leased the grounds with major plans for improvement, including the construction of a bathhouse with individual apartments, dredging a portion of the river for deeper swimming, and erecting a "chute-the-chutes" water slide. A new dance pavilion was constructed in July, with music played by the Minneapolis Symphony Orchestra at the grand opening.

No references could be found to Cashin's swimming hole or Bathing Beach Park after the summer season of 1917 for about 10 years. But interest in the area was renewed in 1927 when a group of workingmen headed by A.J. Sprague, a Soo Life engineer, purchased 96 acres on both sides of the Plover River and requested donations from Stevens Point citizens for recreational improvements. A *Stevens Point Daily Journal* article on May 7, 1927 published a letter from the citizen group:

*Realizing the public necessity of a park and playground for the benefit of the people of our city, especially our children, we have purchased the Miller property at the foot of Dixon Street, known as Cashin's*



*Stevens Point Daily Journal*, July 29, 1916

swimming hole. It will be opened to the public as a park and playground in the very near future. Whether or not this will be a developed park site depends upon the support given by the public.

The swimming hole was again opened on June 26, 1927, complete with bus transportation to the site and a concert by the Stevens Point band. An advertisement in *The Stevens Point Daily Journal* announced:

*The "Shoot the Chutes" are now ready at Cashin's Old Swimming Hole! Such fun! The water wheel, the water slides, the teeter-totter, the swings and land slide. One continuous round of fun and excitement. Don't Forget the Place—Cashin's Old Swimming Hole, Foot of Dixon Street.*

Again, no references could be found to Cashin's swimming hole after the 1927 summer season. During this same time period, the Stevens Point Water Commission was making major improvements to develop a beach and park area north of the swimming hole, adjacent to the city's pumping station. It is likely that the old Cashin's swimming hole was abandoned as beachgoers enjoyed the new facilities to the north. In August of 1959, the city purchased a portion of the Miller property, including Cashin's swimming hole, as the last purchase to be added onto Iverson Park.

## Announcement

The "Shoot the Chutes" are now ready at Cashin's Old Swimming Hole!

Oh Boy! It's a screech! a scream! thrilling riding, splashing, skipping, coasting, and a dip into the cool water—then do it all over again!

Such fun! The water wheel, the water slides, the teeter-totter, the swings and land slide. One continuous round of fun and excitement.

### GRAND OPENING SUNDAY

**DON'T MISS IT!** The Stevens Point band will furnish music for the occasion, weather permitting. The Bus Line will run to and from the park grounds, charging only the regular city fare. Come out and see the happy faces of the little ones as they come down the "shoots." It will make you laugh, and it will do you good.

Don't Forget the Place—Cashin's Old Swimming Hole, Foot of Dixon Street.  
**PARK COMMITTEE.**

*Stevens Point Daily Journal*, June 22, 1927

## Water Commission/Robertson Park Era (1921-1934)

### The Need for Clean Drinking Water

From 1887 to 1922, city residents received their drinking water from a private company called the Stevens Point Water Company. Located in what would become Bukolt Park, the company pumped water from the Wisconsin River which was distributed to city residents through 11 miles of mains.



The quality of the water was often questionable. Rumor had it that water was being drawn into the intake past the remains of animal corpses (divers were sent down to clear away debris and prove that the rumors were unfounded). Living matter was said to have been piped into local homes with the water. Regardless of the rumors, major pollution from run-off, sawmills, and factories along the river definitely did degrade the quality of water for drinking.

By the early 1920s, Stevens Point residents were demanding a better quality water supply. In July 1921, the Chamber of Commerce sent "Let Us Know" questionnaires to Stevens Point residents that asked, "What in your opinion as a good citizen is the thing of first importance for the Chamber of Commerce to do for the good of the community at large?" Above all other municipal projects, residents responded that they wanted a pure water supply.

Earlier in 1921, under the direction of City Attorney W.E. Atwell, the City of Stevens Point began placing test wells in the Plover River basin to determine the quality of the water. They also began investigating the cost of purchasing the private Water Company to determine the feasibility of transitioning to a water utility managed by the city. The test wells in the Plover Hills area, just south of Red Bridge, showed that the water supply was pure and plentiful. Mr. Atwell began negotiating with the private land owner, F. Danielski, to purchase 43 acres of land on both sides of the Plover River that included the well test sites. Although the city didn't need the full acreage for pumping purposes, it wanted to acquire the land as a buffer to protect the water supply, a forward thinking proposition for the time. As this area was known to be a popular swimming hole, Mr. Atwell reported that the city "might sometime in the future provide facilities for bathers using the Plover River at Red Bridge."

### **The Need for a Municipal Swimming Beach**

Although the swimming holes in the Plover River were popular on hot summer days, Stevens Point had no developed municipal beaches. A *Stevens Point Daily Journal* article on July 1, 1920 stated, "In spite of the fact that local bathers are handicapped by the lack of a beach or swimming pool, the Wisconsin and Big Plover rivers...have been proving favorite places for swimmers during the past few hot days."

In July 1921, the same Chamber of Commerce "Let Us Know" questionnaires revealed a major need for the development of a municipal swimming beach. This influenced two members of the chamber, A. M. Copps and F. Lenlle Body, to meet with F. Danielski, the property owner south of Red Bridge. The gentlemen signed a three-year lease, which included a 350-foot long driveway that paralleled the Plover River along its west shoreline, running from Highway 18 (now Highway 66) to the popular swimming hole known as "The Stump." It also included about one acre of land that extended to the water's edge.

The land would be used not only as a swimming area and beach, but also as a park and picnic grounds. Funds would be raised by public subscription for the construction of two bathhouses.

This lease was signed shortly after the city had voted to acquire the 43-acre tract from Danielski. The lease would ensure that the public had access to the beach area and facilities, in case the land acquisition deal fell through. On July 13, 1921, the newly leased grounds were opened for public use.

### **The Water Commission and "The City of Wonderful Water"**

On January 3, 1922, the Common Council approved the purchase of the private Stevens Point Water Company for \$159,000 to be paid over 20 years, subject to the outcome of a referendum held in February. Stevens Point citizens were largely in favor of the purchase (435 to 158), and the city became the new distributor of water.

A new city Water Commission was created, headed by Edward B. Robertson, which was charged with supervising the construction of the Plover River pumping station and laying of mains into the city, and taking over the distribution of water once the facility was built. The final purchase of the private



This photo (taken in the late 1940s-50s?) viewing north from the parking lot, shows the original pumping house and a flower bed “fountain” that is prominent in air photos (courtesy of Portage County Historical Society).

Stevens Point Water Company took place July 1, 1922. On the same date, the city bonded for another \$100,000 to finance the construction of the new pumping plant in Plover Hills.

The laying of a new water main to connect the pumping station with the original city pipe network was completed in November of 1922. Pure well water began being pumped through the mains to Stevens Point in February of 1923. The old waterworks plant in Bukolt Park was left in working order for six months to ensure the new pumping station was effective.



The original pump house, built by the Water Commission in 1922-1923, still stands in Iverson Park near Highway 66. The building is now used for storage (photo 2013).

In winter of 1922-23, an attractive sandstone **pump house** was built at the base of the Highway 18 hill (now Highway 66) to house the two electric water pumps. The building featured stylized gable walls on its front and back sides that extended above the roof line. This design would be used as a template for future buildings constructed by the WPA. It was completed in January of 1923. The building still stands and retains its unique stone gable walls. It is now used for storage by the parks department.

Not long after the pumping house went into operation,

Stevens Point citizens began talking about the potential of developing the 43-acre tract of city land into a municipal swimming beach and park. In April of 1923, the area was proposed as the center of a bird refuge along the Plover River. “...the Plover river valley is a natural haven for bird life of every description and in a comparatively short time, under the rules which ban shooting and hunting, many more birds would be attracted there.” No less than 160 acres were required for the bird refuge, and it seems that this early attempt at a bird refuge didn’t gain much traction.

In April of 1924, the Chamber of Commerce initiated talks about park development in the city. Of the several proposed sites, unanimous support was given to the Plover Hills area as being ideally suited for development as a park. The participants at this time also discussed purchasing additional land as far south as Cashin’s swimming hole, which would become a reality 11 years later with Jules Iverson’s

donation. As a side note of the meeting, the Chamber also suggested changing the city's slogan to advertise the newly found supply of pure drinking water. Shortly after this, Stevens Point would be known as "The City of Wonderful Water." These words, built in stone sometime between 1936 and 1940, are still visible today on the east-facing hill along Highway 66 in Iverson Park.

The need for a developed public swimming area was still being demanded during this time. On July 13, 1925, the *Stevens Point Daily Journal* reported that hundreds of people were using the Red Bridge swimming hole to cool down, and:

*...with each succeeding season there comes more talk of the need of a community bathing place. With a small timber dam to raise the water a foot or two, Red Bridge could be made a real place to swim. Our park board could find plenty of less popular projects to work on. If the board is planning anything in the line of a public swimming place, we'd be pleased to hear of it.*



"The City of Wonderful Water," spelled out in stone during the WPA era, can still be seen in Iverson Park (photo 2005).

## **Water Commission Improvements to Red Bridge Park**

Starting in 1926, the Stevens Point Water Commission began improvement projects around the pumping station that would lead to the development of a public park area. By August of 1926, workers had cleared a large area of brush and undergrowth on both sides of the Plover River, leaving just the large trees standing for shade. A beach with shallow water for youngsters was created just south of the Highway 10 (now Highway 66) bridge along the west bank. A deeper swimming area was dredged further downstream "where the current cuts diagonally across from northeast to southwest" for older children. This swim area was about 200 feet north of where it is today, upstream from the bridges that span the channels.

By the summer of 1927, two bathhouses and a parking area had been erected for beach goers and several picnic tables were placed in the groves of trees. In August of that year, two sandstone pillars with electric lights on top were erected near the pump house on Highway 10 (now Highway 66) to mark the entrance to the parking lot. A wall was constructed along the west shore of the Plover River to prevent the banks from wearing away. White pond lilies were planted in a small pond to the east of the river.

In 1928, the bathhouses were cleaned and repainted, a covered screen porch was built in front of each, and electric lights were installed. The first lifeguard, William Rellaban, was employed to watch over the beach area. Additional tables and benches were added. And two springboards were installed for diving into the river.

## Robertson Park

As the park area developed, it was known locally by several names, including Red Bridge Park, Plover Hills Park, and New Waterworks Park. On June 6, 1929, the Water Commission formally named the area **Robertson Park**, in honor of Edward B. Robertson, the president of the Water Commission, who had the vision to transform this area into a playground for Stevens Point residents.

A *Stevens Point Daily Journal* article that day announced:

*The pretty little park on the Plover river, at the foot of Plover hills, has been given a name by a majority decision of the members of the city water commission and will henceforth be known as Robertson park, in honor of Edward B. Robertson, the original promoter of the plan to make the beauty spot a pleasure ground for Stevens Point residents.*

In 1930, the American Legion and Kiwanis Club began sponsoring free bus service for transporting Stevens Point boys and girls to and from the swimming hole at Robertson Park. The park was located quite a distance from where most Stevens Point residents lived, and the new “concrete highway” made it dangerous for children to reach by walking. Discussions began for the construction of a sidewalk to the park.

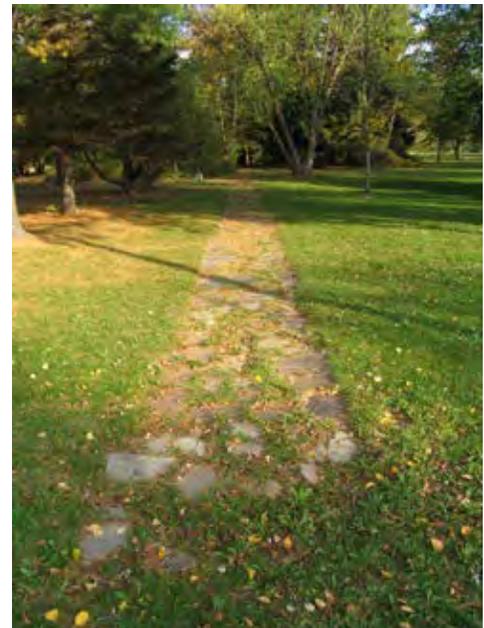
On July 20, 1932, a record temperature of 101 degrees led to the swimming area in Robertson Park being open until midnight, “where hundreds of people are crowding the municipal beach. Flood lights are left on and the gate is open until that time. Formerly the beach closed between 9 and 10 o’clock in the evening” (*Stevens Point Daily Journal*).

In June of 1933, the Water Commission again dredged the pool at the swimming hole to clean out accumulation of mud and deepen the part of the river used for swimming. In October, 1933, B. L. Vaughan’s Sons was contracted to excavate along the east bank of the Plover River to double the capacity of the swimming pool (it had the winning bid of \$348 for the project).

## Transfer of Robertson Park to the City of Stevens Point

In April of 1934, the State Public Service Commission declared that it was illegal for the Water Commission to continue expending water department funds for park recreation purposes. Approximately \$2,500 a year was required to maintain and improve the park. The Water Commission requested that the City of Stevens Point take over all responsibility for the maintenance and improvement of Robertson Park. The City Council approved this request, and the maintenance of Robertson Park became the duty of the city manager. A parks department was created with a budget not to exceed \$3,500.

During spring of 1935, the Robertson Park portion of the land was cleaned up, the roof was removed from the bathhouse dressing rooms, several fireplaces were built, flower beds were laid out, trails were paved with cobblestones, and flagstone paths were constructed. Two of these flagstone paths were installed from the parking lot to the beach area. In 2013, these paths were excavated from beneath the turf by the Parks, Recreation, and Forestry Department, and following them leads to the site of the original beach, 200 feet north of where it is today.



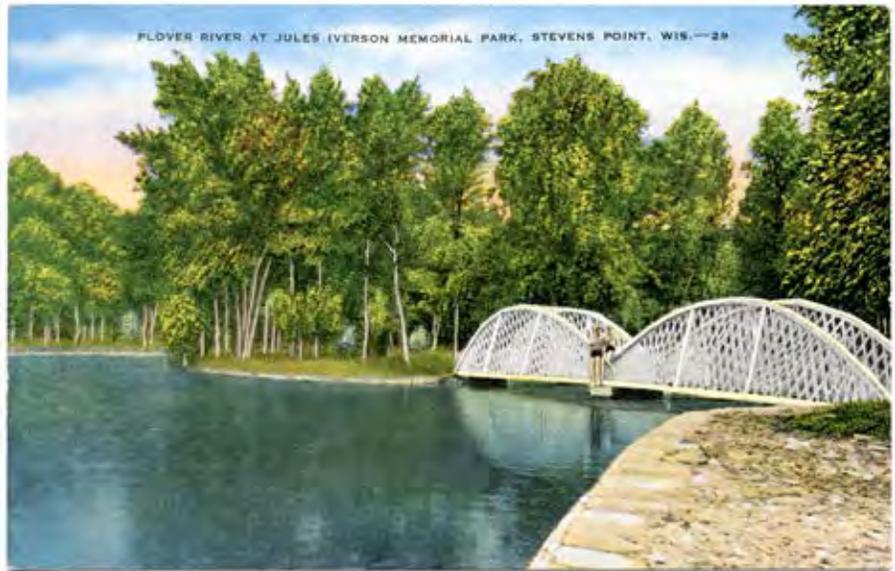
This flagstone path, excavated in 2013, leads to the old Robertson Park beach site (photo 2013).

Other park improvements completed by January of 1936 included construction of a dam to control the Plover River water level, rustic bridges over some of the small channels (possibly those that are built of stone), bridges over the Plover River to access the east side, a cooking fireplace, and a large modern bathhouse. It is unclear whether these improvements were made by the Water Commission, the City of Stevens Point, or were part of the new Works Progress Administration (WPA) program (see page 11).

One of the bridges, a white wooden double-arch bridge spanning over channels from the west shore to an island (see air photos on pages 24 and 25), served as an icon of Iverson Park for many years, appearing in postcards and photographs. Unfortunately, the bridge deteriorated over time and was removed for safety reasons. A modern metal arch bridge was installed in its location in 1973.



Two women pose on the double-arch bridge in the 1940s (courtesy of UWSP Archives/Portage County Historical Society).



This double-arch bridge served as an icon of Iverson Park starting in the early 1930s (courtesy of the Portage County Historical Society).



This modern bridge, installed in 1973, spans the channels in the same location as the original white double-arch bridge (photo 2013).

## Jules Iverson Donation (1935)

In May of 1935, the American Legion was still concerned about the safety hazard that traffic on Highway 10 posed to children walking to Robertson Park. The organization suggested that the city purchase additional land along the Plover River between Highway 10 and Dixon Street, which would allow the park entrance road to be moved south. This land was owned by Mrs. Theresa Green, who was willing to sell it for \$5,000. The city councilmen were reluctant to authorize such a large expenditure for the land purchase.

Jules Iverson was a native of Denmark and came to Stevens Point in the 1870s. He opened a small watch repair business on Main Street, which grew into a successful jewelry business. Iverson later sold sewing machines, organs, and pianos, and invested in real estate. He eventually became one of the city's most wealthy men. He contributed a great deal of his wealth to community projects in Stevens Point. On June 21, 1935, Jules Iverson purchased the 63 acres from Mrs. Green and donated the land to the City of Stevens Point as a park. According to a *Stevens Point Daily Journal* article on June 24, 1935:



Jules Iverson (courtesy of UWSP Archives/Portage County Historical Society)

*This is not the first time Mr. Iverson has manifested this generous spirit. Often in recent years he has contributed liberally to various public projects and frequently has been the sole sponsor of causes for the especial benefit of children. He has not been satisfied to be merely a "good citizen." Under his philosophy it is the duty as well as the privilege of the citizen to share with his community the fruits of material success.*

The donation by Iverson increased the Plover River park size to over 100 acres. The agreement between Iverson and the city specified several requirements, including: (1) the property would be perpetually maintained and improved for recreational purposes "for the children of Portage County, in particular, and the public at large," (2) Jefferson Street would be extended to serve as an alternate and safer entrance to the park, and (3) a stone monument dedicated to Iverson would be erected at the entrance. The newly donated land was named **Jules Iverson Memorial Park**. For several years after the donation, the adjacent 43 acres developed by the water commission was still referred to as Robertson Park.

In appreciation of his philanthropy and dedication to youth causes, thousands of children gathered in November 1938 to express their gratitude in a unique way:

*That the children of the city appreciated [Iverson's] kindly acts was demonstrated at Thanksgiving time when schools were dismissed and 2,000 boys and girls massed on North Third street, under his apartment windows, to serenade him. To the accompaniment of the high school band they sang "Hail, Hail, the Gang's All Here," "Good Morning to You" and "Happy Thanksgiving to You." (Stevens Point Daily Journal, March 9, 1939).*

Jules Iverson died on March 9, 1939, just a few weeks short of his 83<sup>rd</sup> birthday. The front page of the *Stevens Point Daily Journal* announced, "Death Takes Children's Friend."

## Works Progress Administration Era (1935-1940)

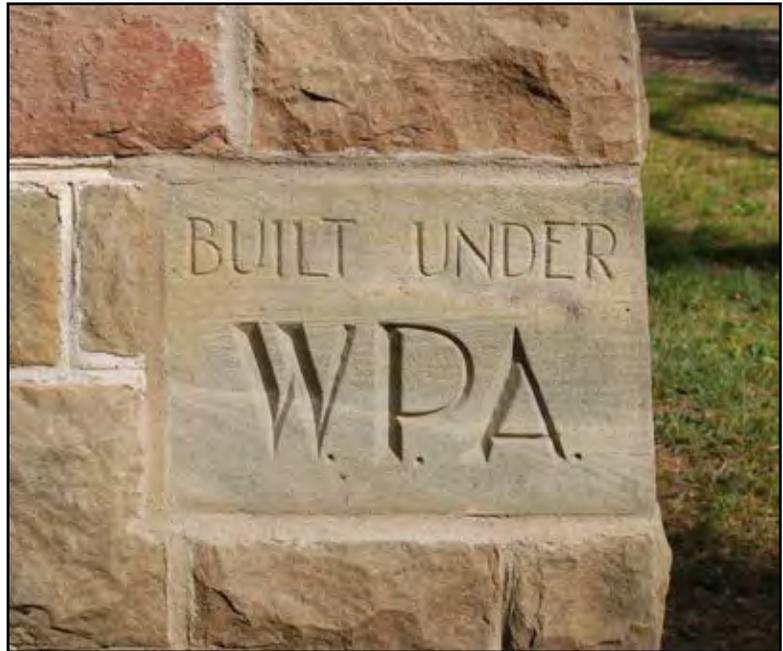
### Great Depression and the Works Progress Administration

In 1931, as the price of potatoes fell in Portage County and the Wisconsin State Bank in Stevens Point failed, central Wisconsin slipped into the Great Depression. By 1932, when Franklin Delano Roosevelt was elected president, 1,442 county residents were on public relief. By 1934, 3,322 county residents, nearly 10% of the total, were on public relief. In response to the Great Depression, Roosevelt enacted several programs as part of his New Deal to employ citizens who had lost their jobs.

The Works Progress Administration (WPA), enacted in 1935, was the largest and most ambitious New Deal program, employing millions of citizens to carry out public works projects throughout the country. WPA project funding included provisions for recreational park developments and improvements; this would prove to be essential in the development of parks in most urban communities, including Stevens Point.

In July and August of 1935, the Stevens Point City Council authorized the city manager to apply for WPA program funding from the federal government. The first projects submitted for the request included: dredging the Plover River and filling low areas in Iverson Park (Federal cost, \$3,699; city cost, \$329) and brushing in Iverson Park (Federal cost, \$4,731; city cost, \$120), erecting a stone memorial to Jules Iverson, remodeling the bathhouses, and constructing shelters and a toilet building. Representatives from the Izaak Walton League also requested the dredging of a bass rearing pond and an island on which pheasants could be raised. With all of the dredging projects, the city manager requested permission to purchase a “sand sucker” dredging pump for Robertson Park, which was approved.

The city’s application for WPA project funding was accepted by the Federal government, and by January 31<sup>st</sup> of 1936, 395 Stevens Point residents were employed through the WPA program.



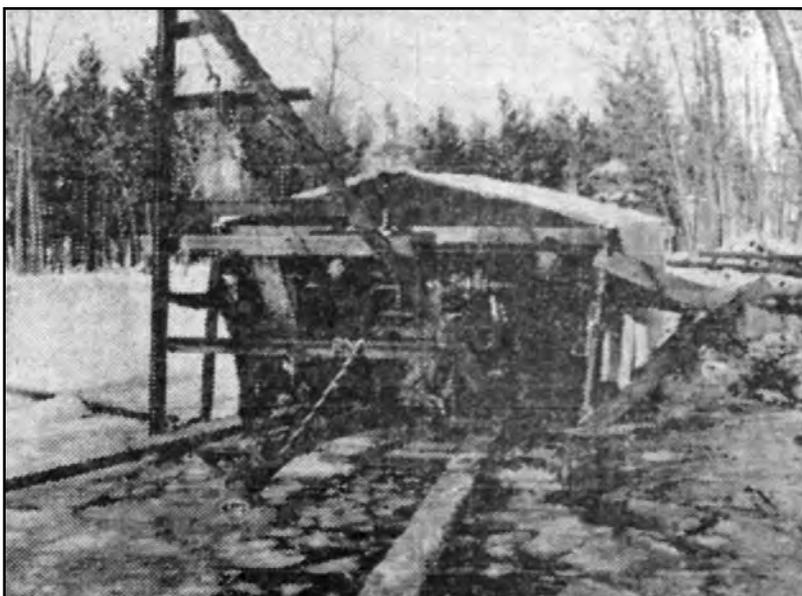
Cornerstone of the Izaak Walton League Caretakers building, built in 1937 (photo 2013).

### City Purchase of Quarry for Native Sandstone (November 1935)

On November 6, 1935, the city purchased the O’Connor stone quarry on St. Louis Avenue (now W. Quarry Street on the west side of Wisconsin River) for \$6,000. This served as another opportunity for unemployed men and provided building stone for numerous public building projects in Stevens Point. By December, 50 men were employed at the quarry, many of whom were apprenticed to become skilled stone cutters and finishers. The sandstone from this quarry was used to construct all of the buildings, bridges, and pillars in Iverson Park.

### **Dredging Plover River and Brushing Iverson Land (October 1935-April 1936)**

In October of 1935, the WPA program employed nine men to dredge the Plover River at the former Robertson Park site and 62 men to brush the newly donated Iverson land. The brushing was completed by early winter of 1936. Dredging resumed in April of 1936, including the swimming pool area for deeper water and a bass rearing pond.



A "sand sucker" dredge being used to create a bass pond in Iverson Park (*Stevens Point Daily Journal*, January 31, 1936)

### **Wooden Bathhouse Renovation (December 1935-April 1936)**

The bathhouse at the original beach site, just south of the Highway 10 (now Highway 66) bridge, was remodeled to include a 13 by 22-foot sandstone terrace on the west side of the building and the installation of showers and chlorine foot baths for sanitary reasons.



Robertson/Iverson Park swimming beach photo (facing south) on June 30, 1936, showing the newly dredged swimming area in the Plover River. This was much further north than the beach today, closer to the Highway 66 bridge. The recently renovated wooden bathhouse can be seen in the background, along with the double-arch wooden bridge and another wooden bridge that spanned the Plover River but was removed by 1940 (courtesy of Wisconsin Historical Society, PH Mss 847 #2285).



In this photo of the Iverson swimming area, taken on June 25, 1936, notice the diving boards and Pump House #2 in the background.



This photo from May 28, 1937 shows children at the north end of the bathing beach enjoying the annual public school picnic at Iverson Park (*Stevens Point Daily Journal*)

### New Highway 10 Entrance and Iverson Memorial (October 1935-April 1936)



The Jules Iverson Memorial Park monument taken on September 22, 1936 (courtesy of Wisconsin Historical Society, M79-298 #2285).

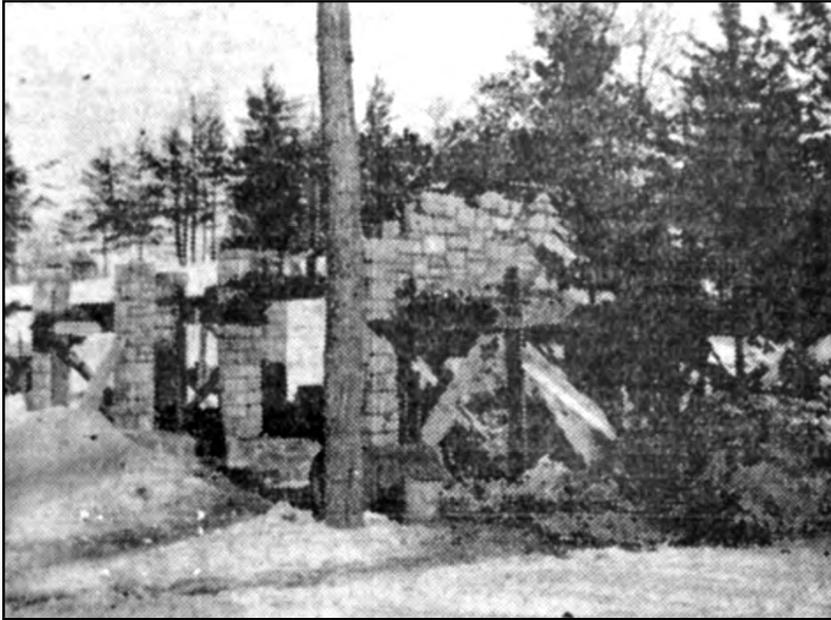
Also in fall of 1935, work began on two projects that would redefine the entrance to the park area, which was originally at the base of the Highway 10 hill adjacent to the original pumping house.

To increase safety for vehicles turning into the park from the "concrete highway", the hill on the north side of the park was cut away, and a new entrance roadway was constructed into the park from the top of the Highway 10 hill (where the entrance currently exists). This employed 24 men in October 1935. The roadway and entrance was 80% completed in March 1936.

Adjacent to this new entrance road, WPA workers constructed a 15-foot high monument to Jules Iverson from the city quarried sandstone. The nameplate on the front read: "Jules Iverson Memorial Park-1935" and on the back: "Dedicated to the Children of Portage County." The monument was completed in March of 1936. It still stands, marking the Highway 66 entrance to the park.

## Stone Shelter Building and Toilets on East Side of river (November 1935-April 1936)

In fall of 1935, construction commenced on a native sandstone picnic shelter, 20 feet square, on the east side of the river. The structure was designed by James Parks and featured a large fireplace.



The stone shelter building under construction on the east side of the Plover River, January 31, 1936 (*Stevens Point Daily Journal*).

Construction also began on a stone toilet building, also located on the east side of the river. In March of 1936, a newspaper article reported that the shelter and stone toilet buildings were complete, except for the roof and concrete floor.

During the same time period, a flagstone road was also constructed on the east side of the river “for the convenience of people who wish to drive their cars across the river.”

The small shelter and toilet building still stand and serve their original purposes. The fireplace in the shelter was bricked over in 1972 due to misuse.



The graceful stone shelter still stands on the quiet east side of the Plover River, its rustic ambiance the perfect place for picnics or taking photos (photo 2013).

The stone toilet building, located just west of the shelter, still serves its original function (photo 2013).



## Water Department-Park Building/Pump House #2 (March-May 1936)

In 1930, the water commission installed a second well and pump east of the original pump house building. In February of 1936, the city manager reported that additional jobs were needed for the 60 Stevens Point men employed through the WPA who were completing other projects. The city council approved the construction of a Water Department-Park Building in the former Robertson Park to house the second pump. The building was planned at 31 feet by 47 feet and would cost \$5,800. The building would also serve as storage for water department and park equipment.

In March of 1936, work began on the construction of Pump House #2/Water Department-Park Building, which was built with native sandstone and designed to replicate the unique style of the original 1923 pump house with extended gable walls. The building was nearly complete in April of 1936. The building still stands, but the gable walls have been cut into a normal triangle shape to fit beneath the roof line.



Photo of Water Department-Park Building/Pump House #2, taken on September 22, 1936 (courtesy of Wisconsin Historical Society, M79-298 #2285).



The Pump House #2 building still stands, but the design of the building has been altered. The gable walls and top stone decorative features have been cut into a normal triangle shape to fit beneath the roof line (photo 2013).

## Community Building/Iverson Lodge (April-July 1936)

In February 1936, the city manager also recommended the construction of a community building in Iverson on the west side of the river, south of Jefferson Street at the base of the hill. The stone structure would be 28 feet by 44 feet and contain a porch, central assembly room, bunk rooms, kitchen, toilets, and fireplace. It would be available to any group of boys and girls as long as they had proper supervision.

Foundations were poured and stone started to be laid for the community building in April 1936. That spring, the city also built several fireplaces and placed picnic tables at various locations in the park. In July 1936, the stone community building was completed for a cost of \$9,000.

The community building was formally dedicated as **Iverson Lodge** in August 1937 by City Attorney Lyel Jenkins. A nearly life-sized portrait of Iverson was hung in the lodge. Iverson was described as “a man who never sought compliments” and “a man who loves to be simple.”



Photo of Community Building/Iverson Lodge, taken on September 22, 1936 (courtesy of Wisconsin Historical Society, M79-298 #2285).



Iverson Lodge (also known as the Boy Scout Lodge) looks much as it did nearly 80 years ago (photo 2005).

The community building still stands, and its exterior and interior remain largely intact. It is available for rental through the Stevens Point Parks, Recreation & Forestry Department.

WPA funding also supported the construction of a 30-foot diameter stone council ring, located just west of the community building near the shoreline of the Plover River. The council ring no longer exists.

Photo of the Council Ring taken on September 22, 1936 (courtesy of Wisconsin Historical Society, M79-298 #2285).



### **Large Stone Shelter Building on West Side of River (August-November 1936)**

In August of 1936, work began on a large stone shelter house on the west side of the river. The shelter would be 34 feet by 60 feet with a double fireplace at each end, built of native sandstone with a roof supported by stone arches. Two 10-man WPA crews were employed on the project. In November of 1936, the large shelter building was completed.

The stone shelter building still stands, although its two fireplaces were bricked close in 1972. It continues to be a popular gathering place for picnics, family reunions, and other group events.

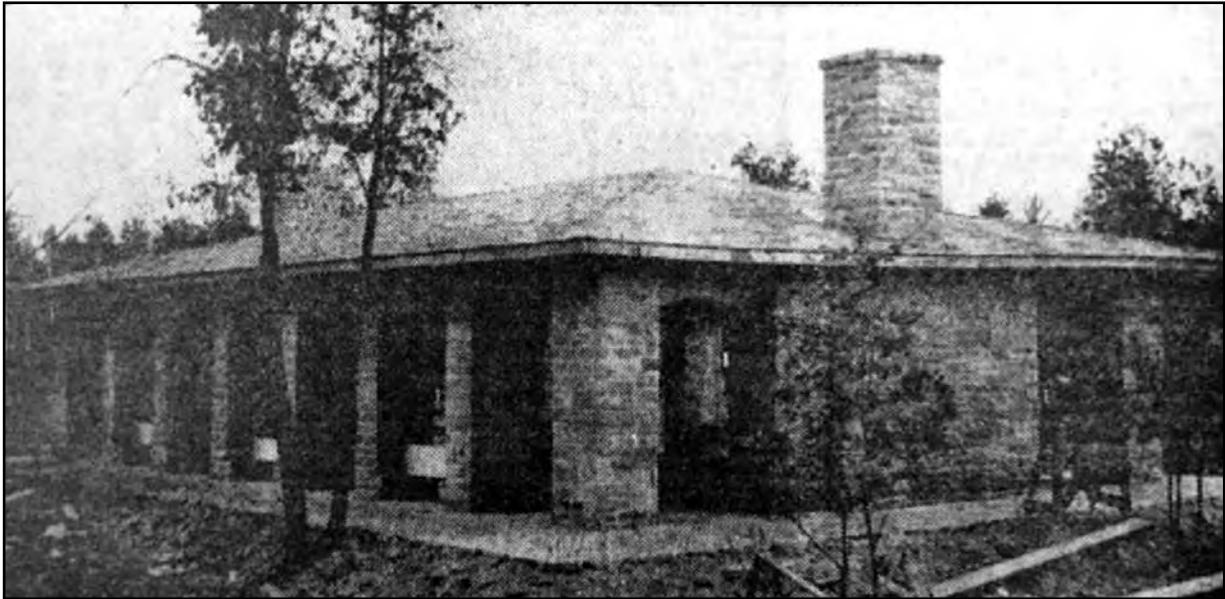
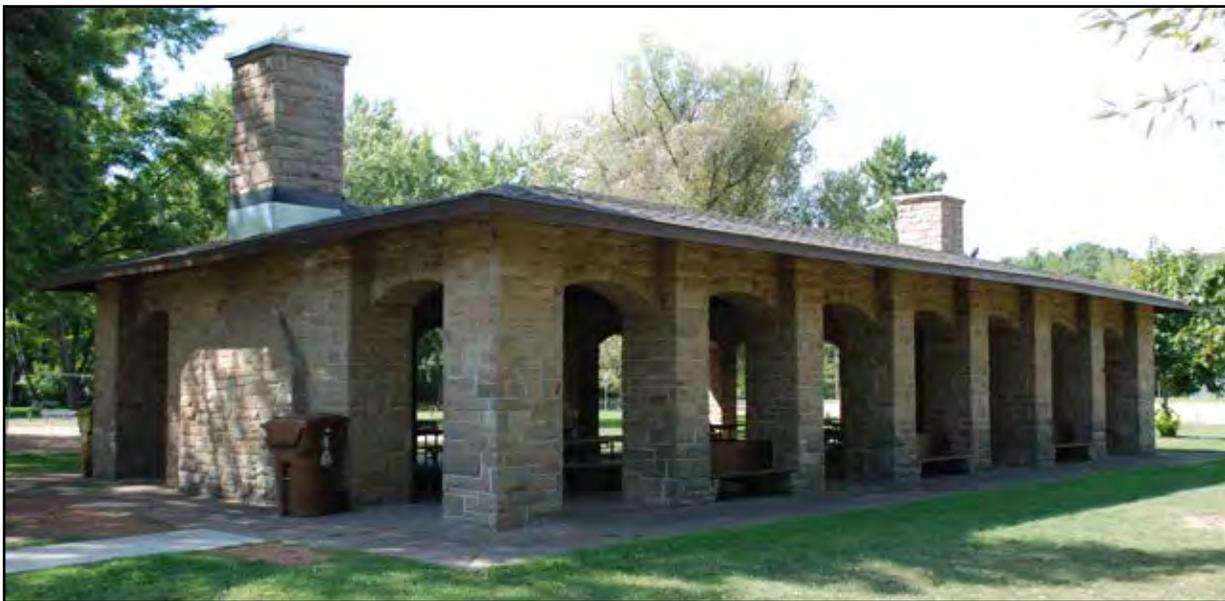


Photo of the large stone shelter building on the west side of the Plover River, taken in November 1936 shortly after its completion (*Stevens Point Daily Journal*, December 10, 1936).



The bold stone shelter still stands and continues to be a popular gathering place for groups (photo 2013).

## Izaak Walton League Caretaker's Home and Clubhouse/Girl Scout Lodge (October 1936-September 1937)

In October 1936, work began on a combination caretaker's home and clubhouse for the Portage County Chapter of the Izaak Walton League on a hill on the east side of the river. A WPA project was also approved to construct six pheasant rearing pens and a large trout rearing tank (90 feet x 9 feet wide), which the new building would overlook. A juvenile fishing pond was nearly completed and stocked with fish.

While the clubhouse started as a WPA project with the city making an original contribution of \$500, the Izaak Walton League chapter put in an additional \$2,500 to complete the building when the original funding ran out. In September 1937, the building was completed. It included a meeting room on the ground floor and a clubroom in the basement, both with fireplaces. A bedroom, kitchen, and bathroom were also located on the ground floor. The building was used Izaak Walton League meetings. The first caretaker who lived in the building was Otto Zimprich.

The pheasant rearing pens and trout rearing tank were removed in winter of 1938-39 by order of the State Board of Health, in order to avoid possible contamination of the city's water supply.

In July of 1940, the Izaak Walton League clubhouse was transferred to the Stevens Point Girl Scout organization for \$1,000.

The building still stands and retains much of its original appearance. It is available for rental through the Stevens Point Parks, Recreation & Forestry Department.



Photo of Izaak Walton League Caretakers Home and Clubhouse, taken on September 11, 1937, shortly after the building was completed (*Stevens Point Daily Journal*).



The Izaak Walton League Caretakers building (also known as the Girl Scout Lodge) retains its original appearance and can be rented for group gatherings (photo 2013).



Workmen place rip-rap along the banks of the bass rearing pond in this photo, taken on May 4, 1937. A wooden bridge connects to the island (Stevens Point Daily Journal).

### Bass Rearing Pond and Island (May 1937)

In May of 1937, a bass rearing pond was dug in Iverson Park under sponsorship of the Portage County Chapter of the Izaak Walton League. The pond was built near Highway 10 on the east side of the Plover River and was about 3 feet deep. The island in the center of the pond was landscaped and planted with trees and shrubs. Bass were obtained from the Wisconsin Conservation Department in spring, and distributed throughout the county in fall.

After the Izaak Walton League moved out of their clubhouse, bass rearing was abandoned and the pond was planted with lotus flowers, a scenic addition to the park. In 1966, citizens were worried that the widening of Highway 10 into four lanes would destroy the northern portion of the lotus pond. Apparently, this came to fruition, as Marguerite Baumgartner would write on May 6, 1970:

*Out in the quiet lagoons are the famous lotus flowers, rearing their lemon-yellow heads well above the surface of the water...I know of only one stand, in the horseshoe lagoon at Iverson Park. The widening of Highway 10 made a dirty puddle of this lovely spot. We can only hope that the plants will recover and make Iverson Park a sanctuary again for this interesting and beautiful flower.*

The pond and island can still be seen just after crossing the Highway 66 bridge, although the size and water depth are much diminished due to the highway expansion and constant siltation. The island is affectionately known as “heart island” by locals.

### Pump House #3 (October-December 1937)

In October of 1937, work began on a third pump house in Iverson. The building would be 20 by 30 feet, built of native sandstone and again replicate the design of the original pump house with its extended gable walls. Eighteen men would be employed for about 2 months at a cost of \$3,326.

The building still stands and today houses a nature center and equipment rental business. Like pump house #2, the extended decorative gable wall was cut into a standard triangle to fit below the roof line.



The Pump House #3 building still stands, and in 2014 houses a nature center and recreational equipment rental business (photo 2013).

## Jefferson Street Entrance and Iverson Memorial (December 1937-Summer 1938)

As part of the Iverson donation, the city was required to extend Jefferson Street as a safer alternative entrance into the park. A stone pillar entranceway with a memorial to Iverson would mark this new access point. In December of 1937, grading was underway for the new memorial entranceway. The sandstone memorial was built at the top of the hill, 30 feet back from the property line, and stood in the middle of the road. Two stone archways bordered by massive pillars provided safe passage for pedestrians on both sides of the road. Between the arches and the memorial were two lanes for vehicle traffic.



Photo of the Jefferson Street Iverson Memorial, date unknown (courtesy of UWSP Archives/Portage County Historical Society).

The memorial entranceway still stands at the top of the hill at the east end of Jefferson Street/Hillcrest Drive. Per the white marks painted on the edges of the pillars, it is apparent the traffic lanes around the monument are a bit narrow for modern vehicles.



Jefferson Street Memorial Entranceway (photo 2013).



First swim of the season at Iverson Park, May 4, 1949. The swimming area was moved to its current location in 1938 (courtesy of the Portage County Historical Society).

## Swimming Area Moved South (December 1937-June 1938)

In December of 1937, the city council approved additional WPA projects to improve the swimming facilities in Iverson. Since 1926, the beach had been located just south of the Highway 10 (now Highway 66) bridge. To avoid possible contamination of the city's water supply, in spring of 1938, the beach and bathhouse were moved about 200 feet downstream on the west side of the Plover River, where they are located today. The river was deepened upstream from

the beach for older swimmers and divers. Steel pilings were installed along the banks to reduce the accumulation of sand washed downstream.

Diving was never very safe in the shallow Plover River. Several headlines from the *Stevens Point Daily Journal* over the years alerted residents to the dangers:

***Local Young Man Breaks Neck in Dive at Park.*** Einer Olson, 23... suffered a broken neck Thursday night... when he made a dive in shallow water in the Plover river at Iverson Park. Olson dived from the landing at the beach into about three and one-half feet of water. July 10, 1936

***Boy Injured in a Dive at Iverson Park.*** Vernon Anderson, 13, suffered a dislocation of the fifth vertebra in the neck this afternoon when he dived in the Plover river at Iverson park and struck his head on the bottom. September 1, 1937

***Dives at Iverson Park Sunday, Cuts His Head on Rock.*** Alfred Frasch suffered a laceration on the top of the head Sunday afternoon when he dived off the bank at Iverson park and struck a rock. May 8, 1939

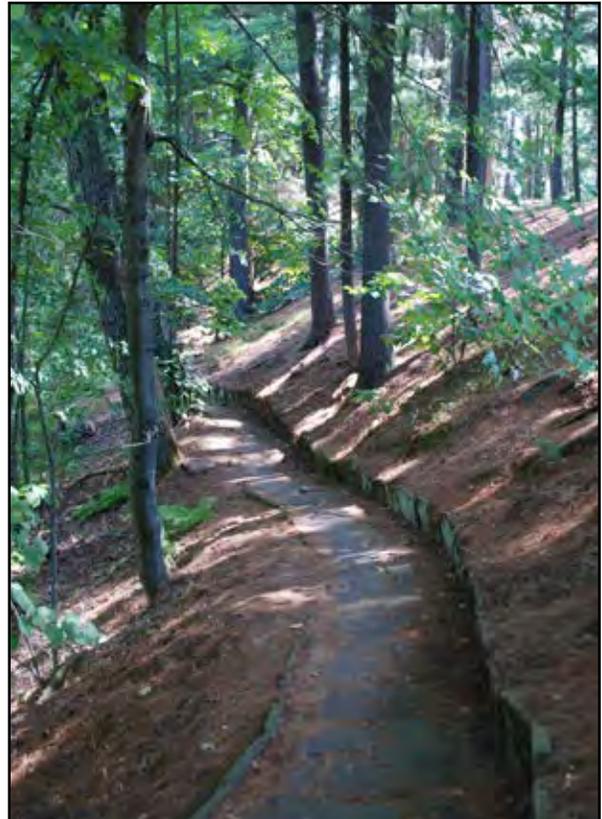
### **Stone Bridges, Rip-Rap, Flagstone Walkways (October 1938-June 1939)**

In October of 1938, a resolution was passed to authorize the continuation of WPA projects in Iverson and Bukolt parks. The “Park and Playground Improvement” program included: asphalt surfacing of park drives, placing stone rip-rap along river banks, laying of flagstone walks, placing sod along rip-rap, installing guard posts along driveways, filling swampy areas, trimming and brushing 30 acres, and constructing a stone masonry entrance, a bathhouse, three highway bridges (stone masonry and concrete), four pedestrian bridges (stone masonry and concrete), two shelter houses, five fireplaces, one toboggan slide, a tree nursery, two lily ponds, and three flower beds. Since Bukolt had few trails or stream channels, it is likely that Iverson was the recipient of the majority of flagstone walks, rip-rap, stone pedestrian bridges, bathhouse (Bukolt already had one), and at least one stone highway bridge (for vehicles over the Plover River).

The City Controller described the projects as a “backlog” for extra labor which the city had from time to time, and the work would be completed as funds became available.

While the exact dates when these improvements occurred are unknown (an article described stone walls being laid along the Plover River in May 1939), an air photo taken in June of 1940 shows well-defined rip-rap edges along the Plover River and channels, several bridges spanning the channels, fresh flagstone trails and fireplaces on the island and along the east shore, and white guard posts lining the road and parking lot.

It is possible that some of the bridges were constructed prior to 1936, as an earlier *Stevens Point Daily Journal* article lists the “installation of rustic bridges over some of the small channels” as one of the



A portion of a meandering flagstone trail, built during the WPA era, was excavated on the east side of the Plover River. It follows a ridge between the stone toilet building and the Izaak Walton League Clubhouse (photo 2013).

park improvements (January 31, 1936). However, the article doesn't indicate if the bridges were built as part of the WPA program, or if they were built previously by the Water Commission or City of Stevens Point. The only reference to WPA stone bridges found was in the October 1938 resolution.

Several beautiful stone bridges still reach across waterways in Iverson Park: one that spans a channel on the east side of the river, two that span a channel on the west side, and a wider vehicle bridge that spans the river at the current beach area. The stone foundations of a bridge on the east side of the river, just west of the bass pond, now support a wooden replacement bridge. Another small stone footpath bridge is also located southwest of the small shelter on the east side of the river.



WPA bridge that spans a channel on the east side of the Plover River (photo 2005).



WPA bridge that spans a channel on the west side of the Plover River leading to the beach (photo 2013).



WPA stone foundations hold a wooden bridge where a stone bridge once stood, just west of the bass pond (photo 2013).



This WPA stone bridge spans the Plover River at the beach area and once allowed vehicles to access the east side (photo 2013).

## Stone Bathhouse (June-?, 1940)

In September of 1939, the city council authorized the last WPA construction project in Iverson Park, a new stone bathhouse. The bathhouse, built out of native sandstone, would replace the wooden bathhouse that had been used for many years. Lumber from the original bathhouse would be reused in the new structure, and the estimated cost to the city would be \$300 to \$500. Construction on the bathhouse began in June 1940 and was completed sometime before the end of the year.

The bathhouse still stands as a scenic backdrop to the beach area, but is no longer open to visitors.



The 1940 stone bathhouse still stands behind the Iverson swimming beach (photo 2013).

## End of the WPA Program and its Legacy

In the early 1940s, preparation for World War II led to economic growth and increasing employment in the private industry. The federal government could no longer financially support the New Deal programs. In 1943, the Works Projects Administration (name changed in 1939) was phased out. Over the course of the program, nearly \$318 million was spent in Wisconsin, and an average of 43,000 Wisconsin residents were employed per year.

The WPA was vital to the improvement of parks in communities throughout the state, and its legacy lives on in Iverson Park where many of the original stone buildings, bridges, and pathways still exist. These are considered to be some of Wisconsin's best examples of stone "Rustic Style" park buildings that were funded by the Federal government during the Great Depression (City of Stevens Point Intensive Architectural/Historical Survey-Final Report, December 2011). The intact designed WPA landscape in Iverson Park is unique and well preserved.



Stone footpath bridge (WPA era?) located on the east side of the river, southwest of the shelter house (photo 2013).

# IVERSON PARK, SPRING 1936

## Water Commission and Early WPA Projects



Whiting County Club  
(now Stevens Point Country Club),  
9-hole course, 1927

Shelter house and  
toilet building  
under construction,  
WPA, 1936

White double-  
arch bridge  
(now replaced)

Original  
bathhouse

Flagstone paths  
leading to beach  
(now excavated)

Storage shed &  
workyard  
(removed in 1936)

"Sand sucker"  
dredge

Pump house #2  
under construction,  
WPA, 1936

The stump  
Hole  
Swimming  
Hole

Original beach &  
swimming area,  
Water Commission, 1926

HIGHWAY 66 (formerly Highway 10)

Site of original  
Red Bridge  
(replaced by  
highway bridge, 1926)

Original pump house #1,  
Water Commission,  
1923

Original park  
entrance & pillars,  
Water Commission,  
1927

Fountain/  
Flower Planter

Current entrance  
roadway, WPA,  
1936

Jules Iverson  
Monument, WPA,  
1936

1936

1936

1936

1927

1923

1926

1936

1926

1926

1926

1926



# IVERSON PARK, SPRING 1940

## Later WPA Projects



- Izaak Walton League caretakers home & clubhouse, WPA, 1937 (transferred to Girl Scouts, 1940)
- Flagstone trail, 1939 (now excavated)
- Stone toilet building, WPA, 1936
- Stone bridge, WPA
- Small shelter house, WPA, 1936
- Stone vehicle bridge, WPA
- Moved bathhouse, 1937 (replaced by WPA stone bathhouse in 1940)
- Moved beach & swimming area, WPA, 1938
- Flagstone paths leading to old beach (now excavated)
- Flagstone trails and fire rings, WPA, 1939
- White double-arch bridge (now replaced)
- White double-arch bridge (now replaced)
- The Stump Swimming Hole
- Rip-rap, WPA, 1939
- Pump house #2 & Water Dept. building, WPA, 1936
- Original pump house #1, Water Commission, 1923
- Pump house #3, WPA, 1937
- Large shelter house, WPA, 1936
- Storage sheds? (removed)
- Fountain/Flower Planter
- "City of Wonderful Water" stone words
- Original park entrance, Water Commission, 1927
- Current entrance roadway, WPA, 1936
- Jules Iverson Monument, WPA, 1936
- Community Building/Iverson Lodge, WPA, 1936
- Council Ring, WPA, 1936
- Whiting Country Club (now Stevens Point Country Club), 9-hole course, 1927
- Red Bridge Swimming Hole
- Site of original Red Bridge (replaced by highway bridge, 1926)
- HIGHWAY 66 (formerly Highway 10)

## Summer and Winter Recreation Boom/South Expansion Era (1941-1970s)

### The Popularity of Iverson Beach

By the 1940s and 50s, Stevens Point residents had three municipal swimming beaches to choose from: Iverson Park on the Plover River, Bukolt Park on the west shore of the Wisconsin River, and Mead Park on the east shore of the Wisconsin River. Iverson was considered the cleanest and safest beach for swimming. The Wisconsin River was deep with swift currents in some places, and the brown-tinted water was uninviting to swimmers. The Plover River was clear and shallow, offering ideal conditions for families. The new beach facilities built by the WPA were extremely popular with Stevens Point

residents in the 1940s, 50s, and 60s. In fact, the only real complaints were the sheer number of people who flocked to the beach on hot summer days, numbering in the thousands.



Iverson Park beach, June 28, 1961 (courtesy of the Portage County Historical Society)

Iverson Park beach, 1960s (courtesy of the Portage County Historical Society)

Keeping the river deep enough for swimming, however, was a constant problem. After every heavy rain, the Water and Sewage Department had to dredge sand out of the swimming area. Pollution in the Plover River was also a growing concern. Coliform bacteria counts in the river were “erratic, unpredictable, and at times, unsatisfactory.” During the summer of 1956, the City Council authorized the use of a chlorinating mechanism that was installed upstream of the Iverson Park swimming beach to improve the quality of the water.

City residents began clamoring for a swimming pool that would be deep enough for diving and where the water quality could be ensured. In 1958, a new municipal swimming pool was constructed north of Goerke Park. The City Recreation Council recommended that beaches at Iverson, Bukolt,



and Mead Parks be closed. In January, many members of the Board of Public Works argued against the closing. Alderman Leo Mancheski said, "Those were always swimming beaches. Are we going to take them away just to save paying a couple of lifeguards?"

The board agreed to keep the beaches open at all three parks. However, due to the high cost of maintaining the swimming area at Iverson Park, they voted to stop dredging, remove the diving board, and post no-diving signs.



A busy beach and Plover River swimming area in Iverson Park, 1966 (courtesy of Portage County Historical Society).

The fear of polluted water was well-founded. In July of 1970, the coliform bacteria count in the Plover River was tested at double the amount considered safe. The Iverson Park beach was ordered closed for several weeks by the Stevens Point city sanitarian. The coliform bacteria counts were at safe levels during the summers of 1971 to 1973. But the beach was again closed in July of 1974 due to contamination from runoff following heavy rains.

Today, the Iverson beach and swimming area is still a popular gathering place for families on hot summer days, but it no longer attracts nearly the number of people that it once did. The diving boards,



Iverson Park beach, 1960s (courtesy of the Portage County Historical Society)

water slides, and concession stands are things of the past. But kids still jump off the old WPA bridge that spans the Plover River and poke at crayfish with sticks. Young and old alike soak up the sun on the sandy beach. And families share picnics beneath the shady trees lining the shore, watching the water flow.

## A Winter Playground

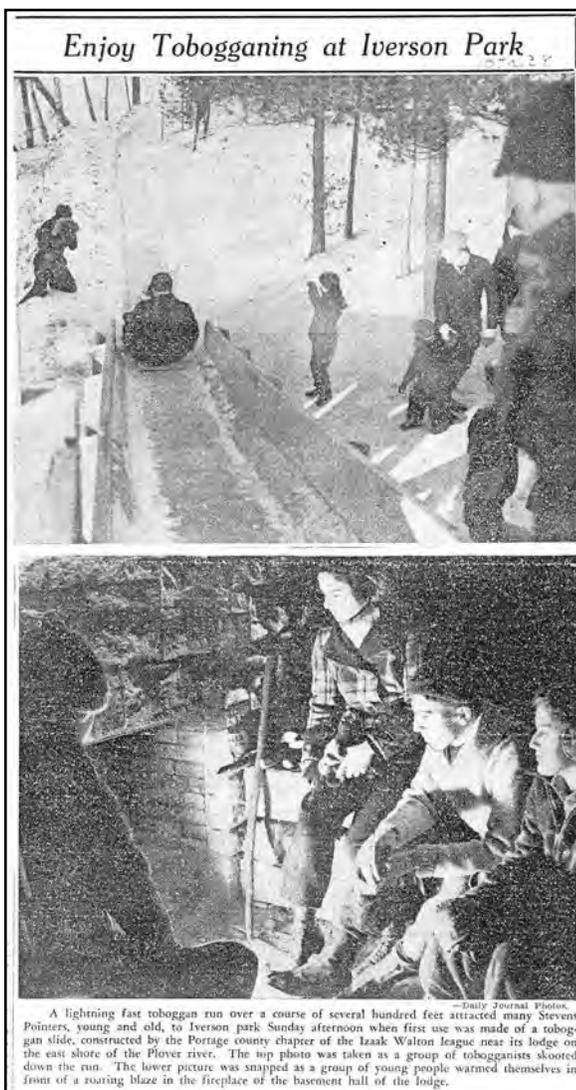
With some of the only steep topography near the city of Stevens Point, the Plover Hills area has always been a popular place for winter activities.

In winter of 1936-37, ski enthusiasts were thrilled when a 40-foot high ski jump scaffold was erected in the park on a hill near the Jefferson Street entrance. According to a *Stevens Point Daily Journal* article dated January 16, 1937:

*Always a center of activity during the winter months, [Iverson Park] will become even more popular next week when a 40-foot ski scaffold, now under construction, is completed. The scaffold, being erected by city workmen, stands near the Jefferson street entrance to the park.*



The 40-foot high ski jump in Iverson (courtesy of the Portage County Historical Society)



During the first winter of its operation, the average leap from the ski jump was 40 feet, with 63 feet being the longest jump recorded. Ski-jumping exhibitions were scheduled for February, with separate competitions for beginners, boys under 18 who were competing in a tournament for the first time, and for amateurs, boys under 18 who had competed in a tournament previously. Older jumpers were invited to make exhibition jumps.

In January 1938, the Portage County Chapter of the Izaak Walton League constructed the first toboggan slide near its lodge on the east shore of the Plover River. The run was several hundred feet in length and attracted many Stevens Point residents. The basement of the lodge was open for warming up by the fireplace.

December 30, 1950 marked the official grand opening of the "winter sports area" in Iverson Park. According to the *Stevens Point Daily Journal*:

*Coming hand in hand with the new year, Stevens Point's new winter playground on the ridges surrounding Iverson Park opened with a flourish. Since the grand opening Saturday, the toboggan runs, ski and sled trails and the ski jump have been in almost constant use.*

A January 10, 1938 article describes the first toboggan run in Iverson Park, built by the Izaak Walton League (*Stevens Point Daily Journal*)

The toboggan runs were still located on the east side of the Plover River, where the Izaak Walton League had constructed the first ones more than a decade before.

In December of 1953, a new toboggan slide was constructed on the west side of the Plover River near the ski jump at the east end of Jefferson Street. This was a fast, straight course, relocated from the east side of the river. Due to the height of the launching tower, it required a wooden trough to be built down the hill to keep the toboggans safely on track. The parks department nearly ran out of funds to complete the project, but the recreational council, the parks and playgrounds committee, and the Kiwanis club provided financial support. Local utility companies donated used poles.



City parks department workers construct the first new toboggan slide on the west side of the river near the ski jump. The platform and wooden supports for the run are visible (*Stevens Point Daily Journal*, December 19, 1953).



Kids enjoy a fast slide down the toboggan run at Iverson Park (courtesy of Portage County Historic Society).

A second toboggan slide, called “Big Bertha,” was also planned as a more curving gentle run. A sledding hill would also be built in the same area, along with a ski and toboggan tow. Iverson Lodge would serve as a warming house.

As the popularity of the west side winter recreation area grew, a portable trailer was hauled in each season to serve as a warming house. In 1962, a permanent all-purpose building was constructed on top of the hill near the ski slide and toboggan slides for \$11,138. The heated building served as a warming house and could be rented for private parties. The building was made of concrete block and designed so that stone facing could be added at a later date. The All-Purpose Lodge still serves as a warming house for the winter sports area and can be reserved by groups.

In winter of 1962, the Iverson winter sports area boasted a “sledding hill, large ski jump, junior ski jump, small downhill ski run (ideal for beginners), saucer slide, ice rink, two toboggan slides, ample parking facilities and a warming house” (*Stevens Point Daily Journal*, January 30, 1962).

For many years, the Junior Chamber of Commerce sponsored popular junior ski jumping tournaments in Iverson Park that attracted competitors from all over central Wisconsin. At an event in February of 1955, Dean Moberg had the two longest jumps of the day at 54 feet, but came in only second place due to his form score. Rand Pasezk of Wausau took first place.

As interest in ski jumping waned and the conditions of the ski jump hill worsened, the ski jump scaffold in Iverson became a liability for the city. In 1972, the Common Council voted to dismantle the ski jump, which was in major need of repairs. The Park and Recreation Director, Harry Eskritt, stated that the hill was too short for skiers and that the scaffold was an “attractive nuisance for children.” At the same meeting, the council voted to remove open fireplaces in the park and block up the fireplaces in the WPA shelter houses:

*Large groups of young people gather daily, especially in the shelter houses, and burn large amounts of wood during the day and night. If firewood is not available, they use park signs, benches and break limbs from trees (Stevens Point Daily Journal, April 18, 1972).*



Iverson Park Ski Jump, 1973 (courtesy of the Portage County Historical Society)

Interestingly, the ski jump scaffold remained standing for several years after this vote. In January 1975, the Stevens Point Elks Lodge still sponsored a junior ski jumping event. But by December of 1977, the Park and Recreation Department was no longer maintaining the ski jump. In the early 1980s, the ski jump was removed for safety reasons, ending a legacy that had endured for over 40 years.

Renovations to the winter recreational facilities have been made many times in Iverson Park over the years. Stevens Point’s “winter playground” continues to be as popular as ever with three sled and saucer hills, a snowboard hill, an outdoor skating rink, two 300-foot-long toboggan slides, and a 2.5-mile cross-country ski trail.

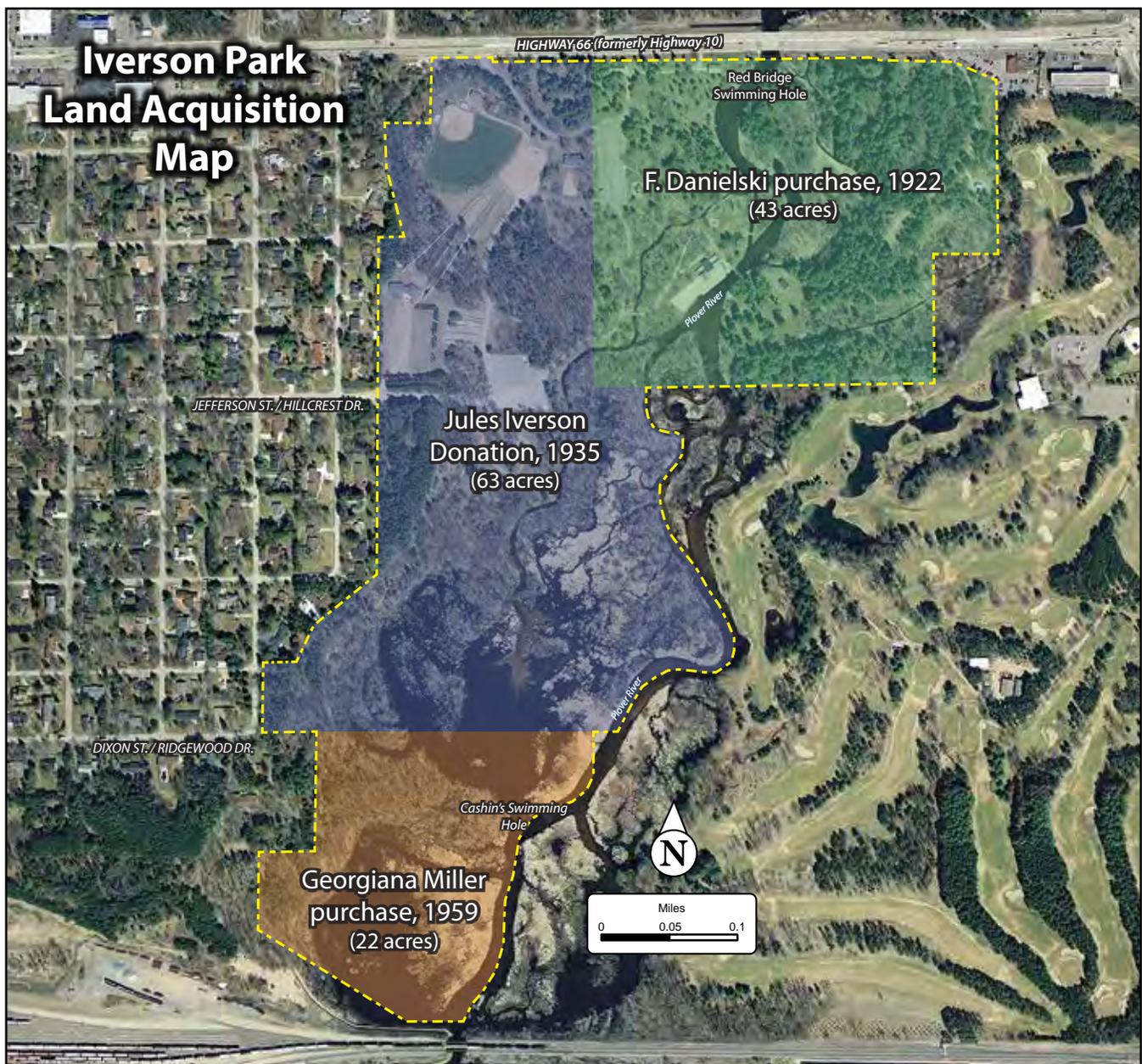


Iverson Park Ski Jump and Toboggan Runs, January 1973 (courtesy of the Portage County Historical Society)

## South Land Acquisition

In June 1959, Georgiana Miller, who owned the 90 acres that once included the popular Cashin's swimming hole, offered to sell 22 acres to the City of Stevens Point. The land was adjacent to the southern boundary of the Iverson donation (Dixon Street), on the west side of the Plover River, and extended nearly to the Soo Line tracks to the south. The city obtained an option for the purchase, allowing time to drill test wells that would determine the value of the area for future pumping of drinking water. In July 1959, the tests showed that the area would be "very good" as a potential water source. The Board of Water and Sewage Commissioners approved the purchase of the land from Miller for \$1,200.

The land was never utilized for water pumping purposes. Instead, it was added to the Iverson Park property, which increased the park's total size to 128 acres. Besides a small loop nature trail and the Green Circle Trail, this portion of Iverson Park remains in a natural state, providing ideal habitat for songbirds, waterfowl, and other wildlife species.

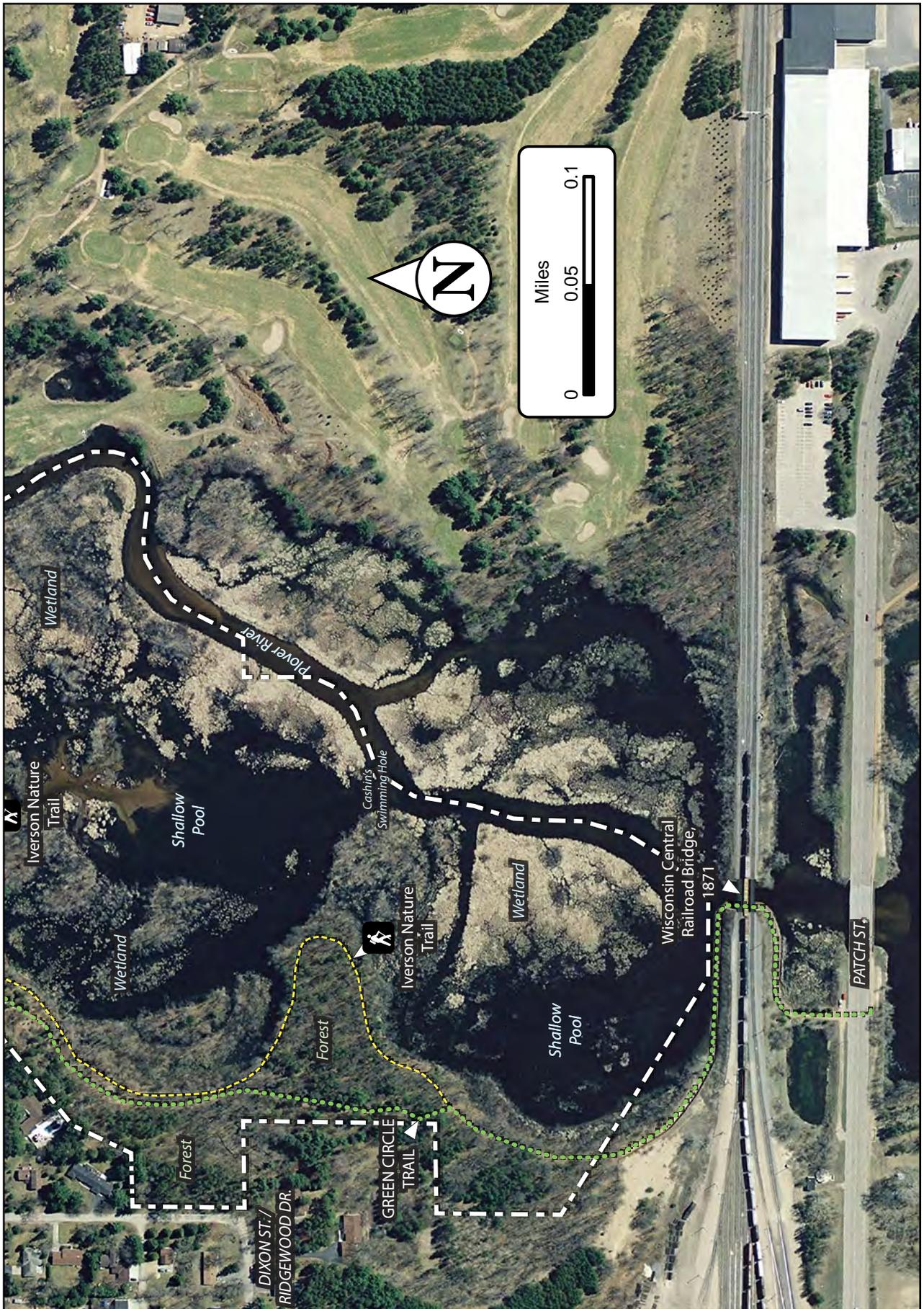


# 2010 Iverson Park Air Photo: Historic Features



North half of Iverson Park, historic features, 2014

South half of Iverson Park, historic features, 2014



## For Future Generations

Stevens Point residents are fortunate to have a park like Iverson in their backyard. Throughout the years, visitors to the city have acknowledged the beauty and amenities of this hidden gem. A *Stevens Point Daily Journal* article dated August 24, 1936 reveals an “outsider” perspective of the early park:

*Another beauty spot in Stevens Point... is Iverson park, where silvery birches mingle with green pines to make a picturesque spot along the Plover river. The fame of Iverson park has spread far and wide. Last week in a suggestion box... was found the following note: “Think your park beautiful and we have enjoyed our hour here as a passerby and do hope your citizens appreciate it and do their part to keep it beautiful. Mabel Binbridge and Signa Jorgensen, St. Paul.”*

*Earlier this summer three couples from Indiana, on their way north, stopped at the park for a morning swim. “We are just going to rest here a short while,” they told the caretaker. That evening they were still there, held by the beauty of the place. And two weeks later, their vacation over, they finally turned their faces homeward, perfectly satisfied that they had spent their whole vacation in such a lovely spot.*



Few other parks offer such a diverse mixture of preserved historic landscapes, rich natural habitats, beautiful river and hills scenery, and ample outdoor recreational opportunities. Iverson Park was created through the vision and dedication of Stevens Point residents. Efforts are currently underway to restore the original WPA channels, stonework, and trails that define the rustic character of the park. The preservation of the park for future generations will continue to depend on the foresight and support of the city’s citizens.

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- "Plover Gets Notice." August 5, 1916. Page 8.
- "The Park Commission (Rowdy Swimming Hole)." August 5, 1916. Page 19.
- "Celebrate Plover River in Poetry (Poem About Cashin's Swimming Hole)." August 10, 1916. Page 3.
- "Society: Park Situation Reviewed." February 14, 1917. Page 3.
- "Flugaur Plans Larger Resort (At Cashin's Swimming Hole)." June 2, 1917. Page 29.
- "Dance at Bathing Beach." July 14, 1917. Page 10.
- "Have No Beach But Swimmers Are Many." July 1, 1920. Page 8.
- "Bathing Beach for the Public at Red Bridge." July 13, 1921. Page 3.
- "Council Votes to Acquire Site of Test Wells (Plover Hills)." July 13, 1921. Page 5.
- "Supervision of Water Job Goes to Water Board." May 3, 1922. Page 1.
- "Chamber Directors Promise to Support Potato Show... (Move Tourist Campsite to Red Bridge)." August 25, 1922. Page 3.
- "New Water Plant Now Connected Up With City's System (Work On Pumping Station)." November 24, 1922. Page 1.
- "Get New Water on February 1 Says Robertson." January 9, 1923. Page 3.
- "Bird Refuge Proposed for Plover Hills." April 6, 1923. Page 2.
- "To Ask Rebuilding of Narrow Bridge." May 4, 1923. Page 3.
- "Homecomers Guests of the Rotary Club at Enjoyable Session (Red Bridge Swimming Memories)." July 2, 1923. Page 1.
- "City Receives Many Benefits from Chamber (Appeal to Replace Red Bridge)." July 18, 1923. Page 8.
- "Plover Hills Favored for Park Project." April 23, 1924. Page 2.
- "Sportoscope (Need for Community Bathing Place)." July 13, 1925. Page 6.
- "Plover Hills Land Becomes Scenic Place (Work by Water Commission)." August 10, 1926. Page 4.
- "People's Park at Old Swimmin' Hole is Planned (Cashin's)." May 7, 1927. Page 1.
- "Announcement: Grand Opening Sunday (Cashin's)." June 22, 1927. Page 3.
- "Opening of Park at Swimming Hole is Set for Sunday (Cashin's)." June 23, 1927. Page 1.
- "Bus Schedule to Cashin's Swimming Hole." July 1, 1927. Page 5.
- "Building Entrance to Red Bridge Park (Water Commission)." August 3, 1927. Page 1.
- "Editorial Comment (Developing Plover Hills Park)." August 5, 1927. Page 8.
- "Plover Hills Park to Get Further Work (Water Commission)." July 13, 1928. Page 1.
- "Reminiscences by Tap Snilloc (Brown's Mill and Old Swimming Hole)." September 22, 1928. Page 4.
- "Reminiscences by Tap Snilloc (Michael Rousseau Acquired Brown's Mill)." March 23, 1929. Page 4.
- "Reminiscences by Tap Snilloc (Logging on the Plover River and Mills)." April 6, 1929. Page 4.
- "Beauty Spot at Plover Hills Now Called Robertson Park." June 6, 1929. Page 1.
- "Wild Mallards are Nesting in Robertson Park." May 24, 1930. Page 1.
- "Provide Free Bus Service for Bathers (To Robertson Park)." June 11, 1931. Page 1.
- "Waltons Plan to Rear Trout in New Tanks." February 18, 1932. Page 6.
- "To Make Start Soon, Use Part of Trust Fund: Aid on Trout Tanks." April 7, 1932. Page 9.
- "Official Proceedings of the City Council: A Resolution Providing For the Maintenance and Improvement of Robertson Park." April 21, 1934. Page 2.
- "City is Ready to Re-Submit Big Program (Federal Emergency Administration of Public Works)." January 22, 1935. Page 1.
- "Plover Basin Purchase by City Studied." May 14, 1935. Page 1.
- "City Accepts Land Offered by J. Iverson." June 22, 1935. Page 1.
- "WPA Program Explained by City Manager." July 24, 1935. Page 1 & 8.
- "Nine WPA Jobs Given O.K. of City Council." August 17, 1935. Page 1.
- "Official Proceedings of City Council: Izaak Walton League Requests." September 9, 1935. Page 2.
- "154 at Work On Five Local WPA Projects." October 24, 1935. Page 1.
- "WPA Speeds Up Work, 300 On Jobs Here." November 13, 1935. Page 1.
- "Work on Lake Improvements Begins Tuesday: Iverson Bass Pond." January 4, 1936. Page 1.
- "Local Parks Beauty Spots, Once a Swale: Improvements Over Period of Years Change Appearance of Plover Hills." January 31, 1936. Page 5.
- "\$17,000 Fund Will Be Used on First Unit: O.K. Park Building (Water Department-Park Building)." February 14, 1936. Page 11.
- "Board Lists for Election Are Approved: Welfare Report." February 5, 1936. Page 8.
- "Manager Reports Upon Projects in Answer to Hutter." March 4, 1936. Page 10.
- "Monument in Iverson Park is Completed: Cornerstone of New Community Building to Be Laid Wednesday." March 17, 1936. Page 8.
- "Public Works Summed Up in Annual Report: Parks of Stevens Point Beautified and Improved During 1935." March 31, 1936. Page 9.
- "List Projects for Week-End Tour of City (WPA Projects)." April 1, 1936. Page 2.
- "Monument at Park Entrance" (photo). April 3, 1936. Page 1.
- "City Projects Are Viewed on Council Tour (WPA Projects)." April 27, 1936. Page 1.
- "Many Projects On City's List for WPA Work." May 11, 1936. Page 1.
- "Increase Parking Space at Iverson Park, Remove Shed." May 21, 1936. Page 12.
- "Six Years of Walraven (Improvement Program in Parks)." June 15, 1936. Page 4.
- "Swimming Hole Popular on Hot Days" (photo). June 25, 1936. Page 1.

- "Warm Summer Days Bring Throngs of Swimmers to Local Bathing Beaches." June 25, 1936. Page 12.
- "Local Young Man Breaks Neck in Dive at Park." July 10, 1936. Page 1.
- "Iverson Park Building Open For Use Soon: Community Structure Made Of Stone as WPA Job at Cost of \$9,000" (photo). July 18, 1936. Page 5.
- "WPA Begins Work on Shelter House in Iverson Park." August 20, 1936.
- "Society: Beds of Flowers in Vicinity of Lagoon Add to Park Beauty (Fame of Iverson Park)." August 24, 1936. Page 3.
- "Waltons Here Given Praise for Work Done: Pheasant Pens." October 9, 1936. Page 7.
- "Shelter House in Iverson Park to Be Finished Soon." November 4, 1936. Page 6.
- "New Shelter House in Iverson Park" (photo). December 10, 1936. Page 9.
- "Heavy Snowfall Attracts Old & Young to Plover Hills to Try Luck on 'Wings of Wood' (photos). January 16, 1937. Page 8.
- "Sport Shorts: Large Group of Ski Jumpers Gradually Being Developed Here Since New Slide Was Set up at Iverson Park." February 12, 1937. Page 6.
- "WPA Sponsors Ski Exhibition Next Sunday." February 25, 1937. Page 7.
- "Bass Rearing Pond in Iverson Park Nears Completion (photo). May 4, 1937. Page 12.
- "Picnic Days Are Here Again for Students" (photos). May 28, 1937. Page 3.
- "Iverson Park Scene of City, County Picnic (Iverson Lodge Dedicated). August 23, 1937. Page 1.
- "New Home of Ikes' Caretaker" (photo). September 11, 1937. Page 3.
- "Federal O'kay Given for New Pump Building (#3)". October 12, 1937. Page 1.
- "River in Park to be Changed By WPA Project: Work Will Be Undertaken at Once; New Entranceway Job to Proceed. (Beach and Bathhouse Moved South)." December 22, 1937. Page 1.
- "Enjoy Tobogganing at Iverson Park" (photos). January 10, 1938. Page 10.
- "Echoes of the Past: Iverson Swimming Facilities Changed" (refers to June 2, 1938). June 3, 1963. Page 4.
- "City Blanket Park Project is Approved: Bukolt and Iverson Parks Included..." October 22, 1938. Page 3.
- "Official Proceedings of the City Council: Resolution Authorizing Continuance of Project 'Parks' (Multiple Improvements in Iverson and Bukolt Parks)." October 31, 1938. Page 2.
- "Week's Illness Fatal Today to Jules Iverson" (photo). March 9, 1939. Page 1.
- "Walton's Trout Tank in Iverson Park is Removed." March 31, 1939. Page 12.
- "Dives at Iverson Park Sunday, Cuts His Head On Rock." May 8, 1939. Page 2.
- "Rescue, Revive Two Girls at Iverson Park: Near Drownings in Plover River." May 29, 1939. Page 1.
- "Three Named By Mayor To Local Boards (Stone Walls Being Laid Along Plover River)." May 17, 1939. Page 8.
- "Shod Horses to be Barred on Oiled Streets (New Bathhouse Approved in Iverson)." September 6, 1939. Page 10.
- "Storm Sewer Program Given Council O.K. (\$46,000 Spent in Park Work)." November 21, 1939. Page 10.
- "This'll Be a Busy Place This Summer" (air photo of Iverson Park). June 4, 1940. Page 3.
- "Council O.K.'s Building For Bukolt Park (Iverson Bathhouse Footings)." June 18, 1940. Page 1.
- "Girl Scouts to Get the Use of Ike Clubhouse." July 16, 1940. Page 1.
- "Echoes of the Past (New Winter Playground in Iverson)" (refers to January 2, 1951). January 3, 1961. Page 4.
- "Financing Help Saves Toboggan Project At Park" (photo). December 19, 1953. Page 7.
- "City of Wonderful Water is Pumping a Lot of the Stuff..." (photo). July 28, 1954. Page 1.
- "Official Proceedings of the City Council (Chlorinating Mechanism in Plover River)." March 4, 1957. Page 9.
- "Vote To Keep Three Swimming Beaches Open (Dredging Ends at Iverson Beach)." January 9, 1958. Page 1.
- "Parks Feature Beauty and Pastimes for All (History of Stevens Point Parks)." June 28, 1958. Page 1.
- "'Wonderful Water' Label Was Earned Under City Ownership (History of Drinking Water)." June 28, 1958. Page 2.
- "Official Council Proceedings (Georgiana Miller Offers Land For Sale)." June 23, 1959. Page 11.
- "Board Approves Land Purchase For Pump Site." July 14, 1959. Page 1.
- "Official Council Proceedings (Test Wells on Georgiana Miller Land)." July 31, 1959. Page 9.
- "Find 'Excellent' Water In First Test Drilling." September 15, 1959. Page 1.
- "Bid Opening Next Week On Park Shelter House (All-Purpose Building)." April 28, 1962. Page 10.
- "New Building In Park Ready For Winter Sports Fans (All-Purpose Building)." December 8, 1962. Page 3.
- "The New Toboggan Slide..." (photo). January 3, 1966. Page 1.
- "Study '10' Widening Effects On Iverson." September 13, 1966. Page 14.
- "Meeting Spring—The March of Seasons (Lotus Pond in Iverson)." May 6, 1970. Page 18.
- "Iverson Park Beach Is Closed (Contamination)." July 21, 1970. Page 1.
- "Good Scores for Iverson Swim Beach (Coliform Count)." August 29, 1972. Page 1.
- "Jordan Beach Open Again (Iverson Closed Due to Contamination)." July 30, 1974. Page 1.