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Up North on Vacation: Tourism and Resorts in Wisconsin's North Woods 1900-1945

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Source: *The Wisconsin Magazine of History*, Vol. 89, No. 4 (Summer, 2006), pp. 2-13

Published by: Wisconsin Historical Society

Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/4637185>

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*This North Shore  
Line poster  
evokes the  
tranquility,  
scenery, and  
recreational  
opportunities of  
northern  
Wisconsin that  
drew  
vacationers.*



# Wisconsin Resorts

by the NORTH SHORE LINE  
Rail and Bus Route

Poster Plus, Chicago





# UP NORTH ON VACATION

## *Tourism and Resorts in Wisconsin's North Woods 1900-1945*

*by Aaron Shapiro*

Seeking to escape the demands of urban life in 1920, Chicagoan H. Ware Caldwell began searching for a vacation destination, hoping for “a quiet home like place on some lake in the woods of northern Wisconsin” and a casual spot to fish. He and his wife found such a place at Warner’s Forest Home Summer Resort, where they could either pitch a tent or stay in a cottage. Forest Home advertised “a place for rest and comfort . . . where one can enjoy a real vacation.” The Caldwells were among a growing number of Chicago, Milwaukee, and Twin Cities residents who were seeking a rustic vacation experience during the interwar years, fleeing the industrial city for a brief respite in Wisconsin’s North Woods.<sup>1</sup>

From the turn of the century until World War I, access to Wisconsin’s North Woods had been limited and costly, with sportsmen from the upper class constituting the majority of recreational travelers. Transportation systems were chiefly rail links to cities, which provided the movement of iron from the Mesabi and Vermilion ranges of Minnesota, copper from Michigan’s western Upper Peninsula, and lumber from Wisconsin’s northern forests. Between the World Wars, however, the automobile replaced the railroad as the primary means of leisure travel. As a result, a growing number of middle- and working-class tourists discovered the North Woods as a vacation destination to escape the factories, smokestacks, and office buildings, which now dominated the urban skyline. Lodging operators and activities expanded the budding tourism industry to cater to this growing urban clientele made up of working- and middle-class families seeking relaxation in nature. No



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WHS Map Collection A GZ 902 1934



WHi Image ID 2093

*Although the democratization of travel allowed middle- and working-class families greater access to vacation destinations like the North Woods—once only the playground of the wealthy—the rich and powerful still found rest and recreation in Wisconsin. Here, President Calvin Coolidge floats down the Brule River, ca. 1928.*

longer was the focus solely on attracting the well-to-do angler or hunter.

While better roads and automobiles offered greater freedom of travel, factors such as the change of land use, new vacation policies, and increased promotion of the area also helped create tourism opportunities in the North Woods. The vast tracts of “cutover” land left by the lumber industry proved unsuitable for farming, paving the way for tourist industry entrepreneurs to buy land and build. At the same time, the growing number of Americans who enjoyed more leisure time expanded the market of potential tourists. In the growing consumer economy, advertisers tirelessly promoted Northern Wisconsin’s fledgling tourism industry to attract more visitors.

### **From Logging to Lodging**

From the St. Croix River on the west to Highway 45 on the east and from Lake Superior and the Michigan border on the north to Highway 8 on the south, the tourist area of the North Woods covers much of northern Wisconsin. Due to wanton felling of timber in the late nineteenth century, visitors in the early twentieth century encountered a barren, stump-filled landscape. As North Woods tourism increased in importance, so did a desire to regenerate the forests lost to clear cutting. As a result, tourism advocates often joined conservationists in urging reforestation of northern lands, but forest regeneration takes time. Despite this reality, advertisers’ promises of idyllic vacations influenced tourists’ perceptions of the landscape at the time. Tourists imagined a pristine wilderness where they could enjoy outdoor activities in nature while staying at one of the growing number of rustic resorts, lodges, or cottages.

Many resorts evolved from fishing camps and “took

advantage of the region’s superb natural beauty and recreational potential.”<sup>2</sup> Railroads benefited too, enticing vacationers from southern Wisconsin and Chicago with special weekend fares. By the early 1900s, northern Wisconsin residents began to view tourism as a salve for the declining lumber industry. In 1923, 700,000 tourists visited Wisconsin’s resorts, auto camps, and summer homes. They discovered “not city conditions, but the pleasingly novel conditions attending sojourns in the North Woods” and “an ideal vacation for ALL the family” at places like Ross’ Teal Lake Lodge.<sup>3</sup>

Advances in train and automobile transportation altered the regional landscape and established new connections between urban and rural communities. Such connections helped grow new businesses like Ross’ Teal Lake Lodge in the Hayward Lakes region and Herbert Warner’s Forest Home Resort near Minocqua. With numerous places to stay, both Hayward, located in northwestern Wisconsin’s Sawyer County, and Minocqua, located in north central Wisconsin’s Oneida County, developed as major vacation areas. In both these places, the high concentration of lakes, along with the growing number of individuals involved in promoting and developing tourism, helped produce a new regional identity and economy.

### **Tourism Pioneers**

In the late nineteenth century, North Woods residents began catering to vacationing guests. In the 1880s, Leonard Thomas opened the Lac Vieux Desert Summer Resort near the Wisconsin-Upper Peninsula border in Land O’Lakes. A decade later, Orrin Sayner followed with Sayner’s Resort on Plum Lake north of Minocqua, inaugurating northern Wisconsin’s tourist era. Sayner began his business somewhat by chance when, while operating his father’s farm in Eau Claire, he answered an 1889 Chicago newspaper advertisement that was seeking a guide to accompany a couple searching for a summer home location. After working in that capacity for two years, he settled on his own site. Three years later, the railroad located a station near his home and named the station in his honor.<sup>4</sup>

In 1894, Herbert Warner began as a guide and handyman at Sayner’s, and the experience led him to buy a large tract of cutover land and establish Warner’s Forest Home Resort on Plum Lake. Warner’s log lodge, separate guest cottages, and lakefront were typical of many resorts of the era. In the 1920s, Herbert changed the name to Herbert and Bert’s Resort to





WHi Image ID 37964

*A crowd of happy vacationers on the lake at Warner's Resort*



32777

THE PORCH AT WARNERS RESORT PLUM LAKE SAYNER WIS.

WHi Image ID 37961

*Northern resorts promoted relaxation and recreation to appeal to their customers. The rustic porch of the log lodge at Warner's resort offered a place to rest with all the advertised charms of the North Woods.*



32771

THE LOBBY WARNERS RESORT PLUM LAKE SAYNER WIS.

WHi Image ID 37962

*The nature-themed lobby at Warner's resort was designed for comfort.*





Ross' Teal Lake Lodge, Painting by Richard Schletty

*This bird's eye view painting by Robert Schletty shows the scenery and layout of Ross' Teal Lake Lodge in Hayward, which was billed as a "real vacation . . . in an environment that embodies all the charm, rest, and recreation of the North woods."*



WHi Image ID 37953

*As the automobile gained popularity, more people traveled to resorts like Teal Lake Lodge by car—pictured here ca. 1930.*



WHi Image ID 37954

*Muskies caught at Teal Lake Lodge. Fishing was one of the biggest lures of North Woods tourism, so much so that the road from Chicago to Eagle River was billed as the "Big Fish Auto Route."*



reflect his son's involvement and to avoid Chicago vacationers confusing it with a different sort of resting place—the Forest Home cemetery near Chicago.

Like Warner, Daniel Cardinal learned the region's lakes and woods while working and guiding at another resort. He then purchased Manitowish Lodge in 1916. New York native Charles Hazen was a former Chicago stockyard worker and also had been a cook for the Pullman Company as well as several resorts, before he established Long Lake Lodge in Phelps, which, in the early 1920s, became one of the first resorts to stay open during the winter. In 1910, Milwaukee photo engraver Henry Voss opened Birchwood Lodge in Manitowish Waters after he vacationed in the area. Voss was joined by another Milwaukeean in 1916, piano tuner Theodore Koerner, who established Spider Lake Lodge in Lac du Flambeau. Other operators came to work in the lumber industry and ended up entering the burgeoning tourist business instead.<sup>5</sup>

Further west, Walter Ross established Pike Lake Resort near Fifield in 1910, selling his interest five years later and purchasing the Cornick Resort on Teal Lake about twenty miles east of Hayward in Sawyer County. The resort had a main lodge, three cabins, and an icehouse. Early promotional literature informed potential guests that Ross' Teal Lake Lodge offered a "real vacation away from the cares of the business world and the rush of city life in an environment that embodies all the charm, rest, and recreation of the North Woods."<sup>6</sup>

In the 1920s and 1930s, more North Woods vacationers arrived by automobile, often stopping at several different locations. Middle- and working-class tourists enjoyed staying at housekeeping cabins, which were cheaper than a lodge or resort stay. While the cabins often required driving to a lake

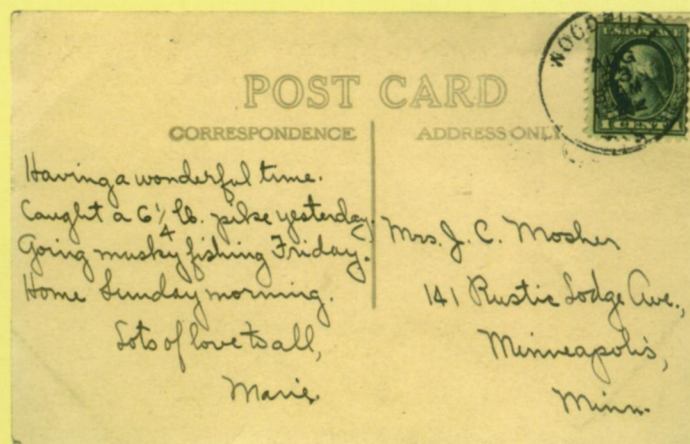
for swimming or fishing, public access and better roads enabled successful tourist development away from the water. Unlike the resort vacation with meals and cleaning provided, housekeeping cabin vacationers often cooked and cleaned themselves—with women in the family enduring much of this work. Resorts generally operated on the American plan with room and board included, while housekeeping cabins normally rented for a weekly flat rate that included nothing beyond accommodations. Looking to expand clientele and compete with these new enterprises, Teal Lake Lodge and Warner's began offering cottages where people could cook their own food instead of eating at the lodge.<sup>7</sup> In addition to helping their guests, Herbert and Bert Warner tended to people's summer cottages when cottage owners rented to friends. In return, many cottage owners and their guests often dined at the resort, building relationships that proved crucial to establishing a successful operation.<sup>8</sup>

While the Warners and Rosses were involved in the tourist industry before World War I, others built their operations from the ground up after the war, often with the help of local residents. In 1928, William Drewry purchased land in Phillips from Thunder Lake Lumber Company and built cabins for Drewry Lane Cottages from material found on the property. His experience was typical because lumber companies often sold cutover lands to potential resort owners. For people like Drewry, building the resort involved both the actual physical construction of the place and the subsequent service provided to guests. In 1923, Jennie Neubauer and her husband came north to Park Falls to enjoy their recently completed cabin. Realizing tourism's economic possibilities, they established a food stand and built cabins to create Oxbo Resort. Guests arrived from across Wisconsin and from Chicago, paying fifteen dollars for a four-day stay.<sup>9</sup>



Courtesy of Jim Draeger

The front of this postcard shows a rustic log "housekeeping" cabin at Lakewood Pines, a cheaper option for guests who could do their own cooking and cleaning.



Courtesy of Jim Draeger

The back of the postcard recalls happy memories of a North Woods vacation. The text reads, "Having a wonderful time. Caught a 6 1/4 lb. pike yesterday. Going musky fishing Friday. Home Sunday morning. Lots of love to all, Marie."



George and Hazel Blaesing originally purchased land near Rhinelander intending to farm, but quickly realized the land's unsuitability for agriculture and built Blaesing's Shorewood Vista in 1926. When flagged, trains from Milwaukee and Chicago stopped near the resort entrance, making it an attractive option for those choosing not to drive. The Blaesing's first brochure boasted of the lodge's varied amenities, including a fireplace, dining hall, and Sunday chicken dinners. Guests were reminded of wonderful fishing and that "virgin pines, birch, and oak trees surround the place in abundance, making it a place of health and haven for hay fever and asthma sufferers [sic]." At Shorewood Vista, the Blaesings worked to provide guests a pleasurable North Woods experience.<sup>10</sup>

Resort owners, as a whole, worked to please their vacationing guests and generate additional business. These pioneering operators included: those who initially served wealthy hunters and fishermen and later accommodated the middle class; those who adapted to tourism from other businesses; those who purchased existing resorts; those who literally built from the ground up; those who vacationed in the North Woods and decided to stay; those who learned by working and eventually established their own place; and those who migrated and settled in the North Woods. It was an eclectic bunch drawn to the region not merely because of the outdoors but also by economic and employment opportunities in an expanding tourist industry.<sup>11</sup>

### *"Relax in Wisconsin: Where Friends and Nature Meet"*

—Wisconsin tourist slogan appearing  
on roadside signage in the 1930s<sup>12</sup>

#### **The Power of Promotion**

While scenery contributed to the region's development as a tourist destination, tourism is not a natural product. Rather, as evidenced by the range of tourist operators, it is developed, managed, and packaged by people and organizations often in competition. Attracted by the inducements of advertising literature, roadside signage, and recommendations from friends and family, vacationers looked for places to experience the images presented. As more Americans received vacation time, the state and private tourist interests marketed North Woods vacations as a means of improving health and productivity.



Courtesy of Jim Draeger

*Guests ride horses at Blaesing's Shorewood Vista resort in Rhinelander, which the Blaesings built on land they had originally intended to farm, but found unsuitable for agriculture.*

Several regional organizations promoted northern Wisconsin to potential vacationers, which helped bring together the diverse array of tourist operators and sparked additional advertising efforts. The mission of the Fish and Game Protective Association of Northern Wisconsin combined conservation with tourist promotion by advertising "the beauty and advantages for sport and outing offered to the vacationist and tourist." Established in 1912, the organization prepared a booklet promoting scenery and resorts for the "office worker or city dweller who can spare only a week or 10 days for an outing."

With thirty members, the Resort Owner's Association of the North Wisconsin Lake Region, established in 1916, promoted increased recreational land use. Its early initiatives included marking an auto road from Chicago to Eagle River as the "Big Fish Auto Route," establishing a Bureau of Information, and placing cooperative advertising in city newspapers.<sup>13</sup>

In 1923, the Wisconsin Conservation Commission highlighted the range of vacation opportunities available, claiming, "The tourist driving the Cadillac as well as the man driving the Ford will be provided for either at the regular hotels or resorts along the way or in his own tent." Whether one was traveling in luxury or roughing it, state officials suggested the North Woods offered opportunities for different types of vacations. Employees who worked more than a year at Racine's S.C. Johnson and Son had an annual two-week vacation and could venture north to relax in natural surroundings at a resort or in a tent. State and local initiatives to facilitate and promote automobile travel, the development of company vacation plans, and new lodging options helped



attract additional middle- and working-class vacationers looking to escape the offices and factories of Midwestern cities for Wisconsin's North Woods.<sup>14</sup>

Bulletins from the *Chicago Tribune* and *Chicago Daily News* Bureaus of Travel and Resorts, correspondence sent to resort operators, and vacation guides in Midwestern newspapers offered information on where promotional appeals were made and on the people interested in North Woods vacations. In the early 1920s, an increasing number of potential vacationers asked about resorts with lake frontage and contemplated purchasing land for summer homes or investment. Others wanted a "wilderness" cottage. One Minneapolis family had rented a cottage in Minnesota and was hoping to find similar accommodations with good meals at a reasonable rate in Wisconsin. Milwaukee residents, like their counterparts in other cities, read the *Milwaukee Journal's* "Vacation Travel and Wisconsin Resort Guide," which promoted North Woods vacations and offered the following bit of advice, "May your relaxing time be well spent, and may you return to workday routine refreshed and invigorated until again the vacation call will sound."<sup>15</sup>

Despite success attracting vacationers in the 1920s, Wisconsin resort owners raised concerns that tourists "did not select Wisconsin as their playground in 1929 as they have in former years, but instead migrated by the hundreds of thousands to other states of the Middle West that were better advertised." Both Minnesota and Michigan had designated state funds for tourist promotion, but Wisconsin had not. At the behest of resort owners who believed better promotion would attract more vacationers, Joe Mercedes started the Wisconsin Heart O' the Lakes Association in the early 1930s. Mercedes traveled in a log cabin trailer publicizing Wisconsin and established a prominent promotional office on Chicago's Michigan Avenue. He advertised northern Wisconsin as the "Most Concentrated Lake Region in the World" and claimed, "All development in the entire section has been to the end that summer people might be served." He received 5,570 inquiries on the first day of Chicago's 1933 World's Fair and encouraged tourists to make Minocqua their base, claiming it had 1,500 lakes within a twenty-five mile radius. Eagle River offered another option with water adventure and abundant winter activities on the Eagle Chain of Lakes. Funding for the Heart O'Lakes Association came from resorts, including Blaesing's Shorewood Vista, as well as developers and real estate com-

panies selling northern lands. One sponsor, the Minocqua Lumber Company, encouraged people to "own your own summer cabin in the Heart O' The Lakes."<sup>16</sup>

While some northern Wisconsin newspapers urged state promotional expenditures to compete with Michigan and Minnesota, Mercedes and his organization rallied against government involvement, suggesting that it would place an unnecessary burden on taxpayers and that private industry could handle the work. Despite Mercedes' protests, the state entered the tourist promotion arena in 1936, creating the

Recreational Publicity section in the Department of Conservation. It hoped tourists would contribute much more to the state coffers than the initial \$50,000 advertising appropriation. That year, the state received 17,954 inquiries. In 1937, the state sponsored a "Battle of the Muskies" competition between Wisconsin, Minnesota, and Michigan governors, established a Madison tourist information booth, and created two exhibits in Chicago rail stations. These efforts contributed to nearly doubling the number of inquiries of the previous year.<sup>17</sup> The department also distributed stories promoting northern Wisconsin to railroads, oil companies, bus lines, motor clubs, and tourist bureaus. By the eve of World War II, Wisconsin's private and public promoters generated materials that attracted people to its sun-drenched lakes, cool summer climate,

and reforested landscape. While the war slowed tourism, as well as state promotional efforts, the Department of Conservation encouraged private promoters and tourist operators to "keep the name and fame of Wisconsin's Vacationland fresh in the mind of postwar travelers" just as they had during the interwar years.<sup>18</sup>

In addition to private associations, the press, and state government touting the region's tourist potential, resort owners also developed their own promotion. The Warners and Rosses, along with other proprietors, provided the physical location for building a community around a North Woods promotional dialogue of scenery, nature, health, comfort, affordability, congeniality, and family, taking on a variety of tasks to aid visitors, employees, and residents. City dwellers tapped into this dialogue in newspaper articles and advertisements, maps, pamphlets, resort newsletters, and guidebooks and used it to determine their vacation options. Vacationing families hoped to put their normal labors on hold, arriving at places like Teal Lake Lodge to enjoy relaxation and activities in nature's outdoors.



WHI Image ID 37957

*Virginia Ross holds a Northern pike next to a fish scale at Teal Lake Lodge.*

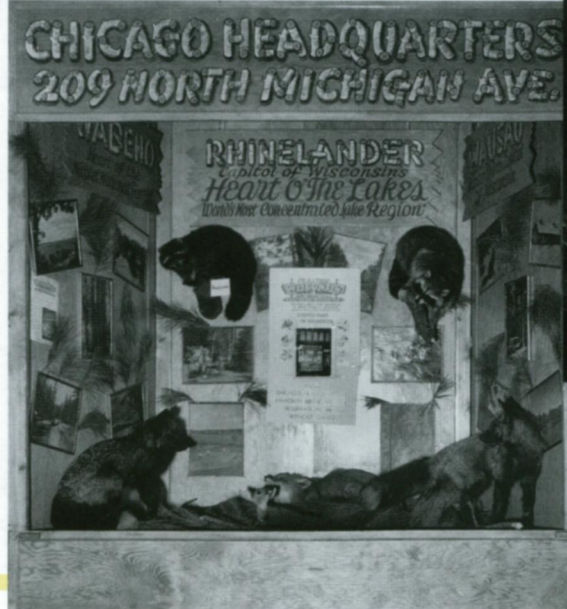




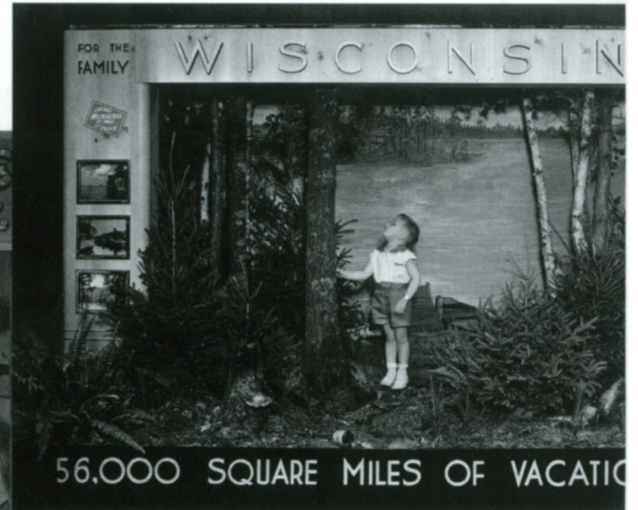
WHi Image ID 37927

*A group of hotel and resort owners poses in front of a sign in Rhinelander that reads, "Relax in Wisconsin: Where friends and nature meet."*

*Display at the Chicago headquarters of the Wisconsin Tourism Bureau, complete with taxidermied animals.*



WHi Image ID 37923



WHi Image ID 37934

*A boy examines a "tree" in a Wisconsin tourism display, possibly in Chicago.*

## *"Leave all your cares behind and come on up to Ross' Teal Lake Lodge"*

—From a Brochure for Ross' Teal Lake Lodge

*Teal Lake Tidings*, the resort newsletter first published by the Rosses in 1930 and issued several times per year, provides a window into the resort life of proprietors and vacationers. The Rosses used the newsletter to help create a sense of community among lodge guests. Family and fishing emerged as key themes, reinforced by reports on fish catches and reminders of pleasant times. Newsletters sparked memories of past summers and allowed people to stay abreast of changes and new activities. For instance, the Rosses encouraged guests to visit during the fall, when they said fishing was better and autumn colors were aglow. Expanding the vacation season was important economically, and the newsletter portrayed autumn as a beautiful time at Teal Lake. In the early 1930s, the lodge added modern cabins, bathrooms, and tennis courts while Walter Ross traveled to urban outdoor shows during the off-season to promote his resort. While the 1933 Century of Progress Exposition threatened to draw people away from Teal Lake, *Tidings* reminded them that you could not catch muskies in Chicago. The lure of fishing and family

marked Teal Lake Lodge as a destination for Chicagoans and, in 1934, sixty-two percent of its guests hailed from the Chicago area.<sup>19</sup>

For the Rosses, the initial purpose of *Teal Lake Tidings* was not formal advertising, but instead "to keep our friends informed of what is going on up here in the woods." Eventually, they did urge guests to pass it along, producing a center section for distribution. The newsletter offered an invitation to become part of the Teal Lake Lodge community through shared stories and events. Imagine receiving *Teal Lake Tidings* in January while toiling away in a Chicago or Twin Cities winter. Not only did it bring back memories with the masthead "To Recall Memories of Happy Vacation Days," but it also served as a reminder to plan your summer vacation early. For the Rosses, *Tidings* offered a simple way to contact all guests, provided information about the resort, allowed guests to recall vacation memories, and encouraged repeat visitors. The newsletter helped establish a sense of camaraderie and family among guests.<sup>20</sup>

*Teal Lake Tidings* also captured the difficulties of operating a resort during wartime when the Rosses faced food, gas, and tire rationing as well as labor scarcity. However, their experience operating Pike Lake Lodge in Fifield during World War I had prepared them for difficult times at Teal





WHi Image ID 37922



WHi Image ID 37936

*The Chicago office of the Wisconsin Tourism Bureau, located at 209 N. Michigan Avenue*

*Joe Mercedes hands out Wisconsin promotional brochures in this undated photograph.*



WHi Image 37925

Lake. Pointing to the advantages of a Teal Lake vacation during the war, they emphasized opportunities that came with wartime rationing. People would need to stay closer to home and Teal Lake's accessibility via rail would facilitate that need. The Rosses also connected patriotism, the war effort, and vacations, suggesting, "Vacations are necessary to build morale and to put you in trim for the long tough battle ahead. It is patriotic to go fishing and get your health ready for the job ahead." There might have been a shortage of guides during the war, but a leisurely time could still be had at Teal Lake. The Rosses were not alone in tying vacations to patriotism. The Boulder Junction Chamber of Commerce suggested a vacation would help one keep fit for wartime service and encouraged people to "Buy Bonds First then Vacation in Boulder Junction."<sup>21</sup>

In their first newsletter after the war, the Rosses expressed gratitude to guests who came despite limits on service, food, and labor, "At the beginning of the war we were expecting that travel restrictions and shortages would restrict our business. But the loyalty of our guests of past years in enduring the expense and inconvenience of travel conditions plus their enthusiastic recommendation of the Lodge to others made our wartime business excellent." While wartime created some struggles for Teal Lake Lodge, the Rosses resourcefulness and

their work developing the resort and attracting a regular clientele since the 1920s paid off handsomely when postwar patronage increased.<sup>22</sup>

## *"Wisconsin Heart O'Lakes: Where the Nation Finds Recreation"*

—Title of 1937 tourist booklet

### **Working the Leisure Landscape**

People surely enjoyed recreation in Wisconsin's North Woods during the interwar years. Tourist expenditures, such as the nearly two million dollars reported for Vilas County in 1930, proved vital to northern Wisconsin's economy. Despite the depression, in 1932, Vilas and Oneida County had 221 resorts, 3995 summer homes, and 73 camps or clubs. Such growth led to increased government involvement in the tourist trade, including developing conservation policies and land-planning initiatives to make the region more attractive to tourists. In 1933, Oneida County became the first county in the nation to adopt a rural zoning ordinance, assisting the tourism industry by designating recreation as a viable land use for forested and tax delinquent lands. Before passage of the zoning law, Three Lakes resort owner Angus McDonald



stressed the importance of reforestation and tourism's economic value, suggesting, "This land as a Federal Forest is going to be worth more to Wisconsin than the few struggling farms that may locate there in years to come." Not all resort owners would have agreed with him since some viewed state-operated parks and forests as competition for the tourist dollar. At the same time, though, many also realized that a deforested landscape was unlikely to attract vacationers.<sup>23</sup>

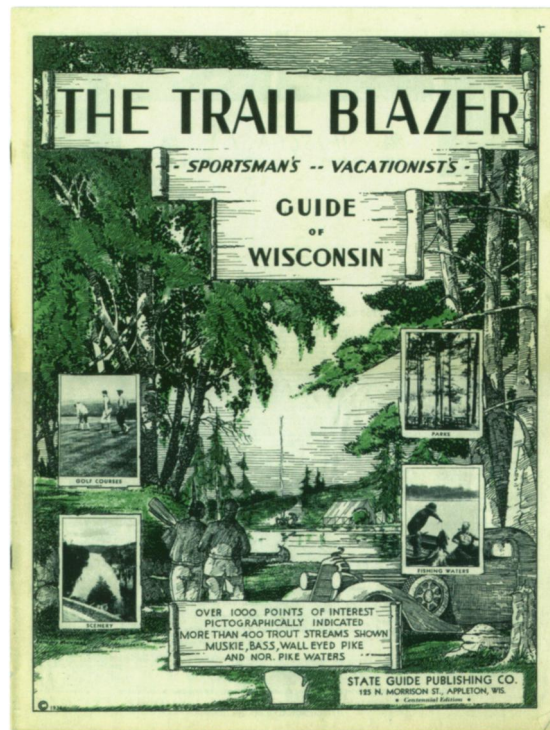
Additionally, the new tourist industry offered employment opportunities in a landscape increasingly dedicated to providing leisure, presaging larger national shifts from a production- to service-oriented economy. As resorts bolstered the local economy, especially around Minocqua and Hayward, operators turned to larger cities for prospective vacationers and, on regular occasions, for additional employees and items needed to run a resort. Students and city dwellers increasingly looked to businesses and public agencies to find work in the tourist industry. The Warners explored many avenues in the search for employees. A Milwaukee labor agent helped them find a baker while the State Employment Bureau provided a cook.<sup>24</sup> Walter Ross's son, Nelson, a Madison radio station manager in the late 1930s and 1940s, helped recruit university students for work at the resort. Jobseekers at Warners and Ross' Teal Lake Lodge were often turned away because positions were filled or their skills were not needed. Others, like Paul Quayle, who served as a caretaker for Teal Lake's previous owners, worked and lived at the resort much of his life.<sup>25</sup> Local entrepreneurs also aided in recruitment, including the editor of the *Vilas County News* who wrote the Warners providing a list of applicants. Several expressed a desire to work outdoors, sensing it would improve their health. Others were displeased with the work conditions at another resort and hoped for a better position at Warners. Continuously looking to find a new source of labor, one resort owner wrote the Warners about hiring boys from an orphanage and suggested they were industrious workers. Business, employment, and recreational opportunities brought lodging operators and job-seekers to Wisconsin's North Woods. With the bulk of work in summer and fall, tourism fit the region's seasonal work patterns

and brought residents further into the consumer economy as former subsistence activities became wage work. Such labor was often divided along gender lines; women tending to gardens, taking in boarders, and working in resort kitchens, dining rooms, and laundries; men laboring as guides in the forests and lakes. Many Ojibwe at the Lac du Flambeau Reservation near Minocqua were among those entering the tourist industry and served as guides for visiting tourists, performed powwows, and sold handicrafts to visitors.<sup>26</sup>

### A Region Transformed

During the interwar years, tourists, proprietors, and employees found themselves enmeshed in a web of commerce and travel that connected city and country and altered the region's economy and landscape. While the appeal of lakes and woods attracted people to their northern Wisconsin outposts, the Rosses and Warners also helped create a promotional dialogue and provided places for vacationers to experience a North Woods vacation. Warner's, Teal Lake Lodge, Blaesing's Shorewood Vista, and Drewry Lane Cottages, like so many North Woods tourist enterprises, catered to people's desire to vacation in natural, healthful, and home-like surroundings, while also attracting employees looking for work and enjoyment in the out-

doors. These places were central to the creation of a Wisconsin North Woods vacation culture and landscape that followed lumber industry in terms of creating jobs and altering the region. Instead of felling trees and shipping lumber to cities as had been the case in the nineteenth century, people came to Wisconsin's North Woods to experience its forests, lakes, and natural beauty. In the process, tourism became the next "extractive" industry to capitalize on the region's land. Because of the nature of the extraction or, as proponents claimed, the lack of it, tourism was often portrayed as a permanent, sustainable, and clean industry unlike logging. But such a view often obscured tourism's broader impact on North Woods residents and the land. The North Woods remains a popular tourist destination today, especially for tourists in Wisconsin and other Midwestern states—most notably Illinois and Minnesota—just as it did nearly a century ago, and tourism continues to transform the environment and people's lives and livelihoods. ❧



WHS Map Collection A GZ 902 1936

*The Trail Blazer: Sportsman's--Vacationists Guide of Wisconsin highlights over one thousand "points of interest" and indicates more than 400 trout streams and waters where fishers may catch muskie, bass, walleyed pike, and Northern pike.*



## If You Go

### Online Trip Planning

Today the Wisconsin Department of Tourism provides an abundance of resources for planning a trip to the North Woods or anywhere in the state of Wisconsin. Go to [www.travelwisconsin.com](http://www.travelwisconsin.com) to create your own personal trip plan, or to order publications and maps, or call 1-800-432-TRIP.

### Wisconsin Welcome Centers

Wisconsin opened the first onroad travel information center 40 years ago. Visitors to the centers have access to booklets, brochures, and information on events, eating places and lodging. There are ten centers located across the state in Beloit, Genoa City, Grant County, Hudson, Hurley, Kenosha, La Crosse, Marinette, Prairie du Chien, and Superior. For more information on Wisconsin Welcome Centers go to [www.travelwisconsin.com](http://www.travelwisconsin.com) and click on Welcome Centers.

## Notes

1. H. Ware Caldwell to Herbert Warner, 18 April 1920, folder 1, box 6, Herbert and Bert Warner Papers (hereafter cited as Warner Papers), Wisconsin Historical Society-Ashland Area Research Center, Ashland, WI (hereafter cited as WHSA); Brochure for Forest Home Summer Resort, folder 1, box 1, Warner Papers, WHSA. Promotional items from Forest Home, as well as other operations, often highlighted the exclusionary practices of many North Woods resorts on the basis of religion during this era.
2. *Oneida County: Centennial History Edition, 1887-1987* (Oneida County Board of Supervisors, 1987), 102.
3. Wisconsin Conservation Commission, *Biennial Report of the Wisconsin Conservation Commission, 1922-23* (Madison: The Department, 1924); Mark Davis, "Northern Choices," *Wisconsin Magazine of History* 79 (Winter 1995-96): 114; Promotional brochure for Ross' Teal Lake Lodge, folder 3, box 1, Ross' Teal Lake Lodge Collection (hereafter cited as Ross Papers), Wisconsin Historical Society, Madison (hereafter cited as WHS).
4. John McCormick, "History of Sayner and Star Lake," Collection SC10, WHSA.
5. George O. Jones and Norman S. McVean, *History of Lincoln, Oneida and Vilas Counties, Wisconsin* (Minneapolis, H.C. Cooper, Jr. & Co., 1924); McCormick, "History of Sayner and Star Lake," Collection SC10, WHSA; Collection Guide, Warner Papers, WHSA; "Voss's Birchwood Lodge History," [http://www.vossbl.com/voss\\_history.htm](http://www.vossbl.com/voss_history.htm); Charles E. Hazen to Herbert Warner, 9 June 1922, folder 5, box 3, Warner Papers, WHSA. Hazen and the Warners helped establish an information bureau to increase tourist traffic to the region in the early 1920s.
6. "Ross' Teal Lake Lodge, Hayward, Wisconsin," Promotional Materials, 1920-1982, folder 3, box 1, Ross Papers, WHS.
7. Michael Dunn, III, *Easy Going—Wisconsin's Northwoods: Vilas and Oneida Counties* (Madison: Tamarack Press, 1978); Robert Gough, *Farming the Cutover: A Social History of Northern Wisconsin, 1900-1940* (Lawrence, University Press of Kansas, 1997); Mead and Hunt, Inc., "Land of Silver Lakes and Streams": *Survey of Resorts and Boathouses Oneida County, Wisconsin* (Madison: Mead & Hunt, 1998), 7, offers information on resort conversions to house-keeping cabins in the 1920s. Pre-1920 correspondence from guests in the Warner Papers regularly mentions the need to be picked up from the rail station. After 1920, much of this disappears. See folders 7 and 8, box 5, Warner Papers, WHSA, for pre-1920 correspondence and folders 9 and 10, box 5, Warner Papers, WHSA, for post-1920 correspondence.
8. J.C. Harding to Herb Warner, 19 June 1916, folder 8, box 5; H. Ware Caldwell to Herbert Warner, 18 April 1920, folder 1, box 6; Mrs. W. L. Lewis to Warner, 3 July 1917, folder 8, box 5; John T. Harding to Bert Warner, 20 July 1927, folder 10, box 5, all in Warner Papers, WHSA.
9. Mead and Hunt, Inc., "Land of Silver Lakes and Streams," 27-28; Jennie Neubauer interview, Tape 365A, WHS.
10. *Blaesing's Shorewood Vista: A Typical "Dude Ranch," Completely Modern in the Heart of the Nation's Greatest Vacation Land, A Resort We Know You Will Like, Rhinelander, Wisconsin* (Rhinelander, WI: Shorewood Vista, n.d.), Pamphlet 57-1410, WHS. Mead and Hunt, Inc., "Land of Silver Lakes and Streams," 24-26; Quote appears in "Miller's Shorewood Vista Resort: History," <http://www.millersshorewoodvista.com/msv.html>.
11. For biographies of early resort operators, see Jones and McVean, *History of Lincoln, Oneida and Vilas Counties*.

12. Photograph of roadside signage, "Conservation Activities, Recreational Publicity," Wisconsin Conservation Department Photographic Record, 1930-1942, WHS.
13. Quotes appear in Mead and Hunt, Inc., "Land of Silver Lakes and Streams," 12. Also see letter received from John R. Powell, 8 May 1917, folder 1, box 1, Warner Papers, WHSA; Timothy Bawden, "Reinventing the Frontier: Tourism, Nature, and Environmental Change in Northern Wisconsin, 1880-1930," Ph.D. Dissertation, Department of Geography, University of Wisconsin-Madison, 2001, 213-217. Between 1917 and 1919, the Resort Owner's Association of the North Wisconsin Lake Region was also known as the Resort Owner's Association of the Big Woods Lake Region.
14. Wisconsin Conservation Commission, *Biennial Report, (1922-1923)*, 16; Eleanor Davis, *Recent Trends in Vacation Policies for Wage Earners* (Princeton: Industrial Relations Section, Princeton University, 1935), 5-9.
15. "Bulletin #10," "Bulletin #12," and Tribune Company Bureau of Travel and Resorts" in "Advertising 1920-1933 (Resort)," folder 2, box 1, Warner Papers, WHSA; *Milwaukee Journal*, June 15, 1930.
16. *Wisconsin Heart o' the Lakes* (Rhinelander: Heart o' the Lakes Association, 1934), Pamphlet, 57-2370a, WHS; *Lakeland Times, The First 100 Years: Minocqua-Woodruff, 1888-1988* (Minocqua, WI: Lakeland Times, 1988), Pamphlet 88-3323, WHS. For additional promotional materials from Mercedes' organization see, *Visit Wisconsin's Beautiful "Heart o' the Lakes": A Perfect Vacation Paradise: World's Most Concentrated Lake Region* (Rhinelander, WI: Heart o' the Lakes Association, n.d.), Pamphlet 57-2107, WHS; *Wisconsin Heart o' Lakes: Where the Nation Finds Recreation* (Rhinelander: Heart o' Lakes Association, 1937), Pamphlet 57-2370b, WHS. Pamphlet 57-2370a also include brochures from 1935, 1936, and 1939.
17. Wisconsin Conservation Commission, *Fifteenth Biennial Report of the Wisconsin Conservation Commission, 1935-36* (Madison: The Department, 1937); Wisconsin Conservation Commission, *Sixteenth Biennial Report of the Wisconsin Conservation Commission, 1937-38* (Madison: The Department, 1939). Inquiries in 1937 were 31,981.
18. Wisconsin Conservation Commission, *Nineteenth Biennial Report of the Wisconsin Conservation Commission, 1943-44* (Madison: The Department, 1945), 84.
19. *Teal Lake Tidings*, June 1933 and September 1935, folder 2, box 1, Ross Papers, WHS. Also see Bawden, "Reinventing the Frontier," 198.
20. Quote from *Teal Lake Tidings*, April 1934, folder 2, box 1, Ross Papers, WHS; *Teal Lake Tidings*, June 1938, folder 2, box 1, Ross Papers, WHS. The masthead appeared on many issues.
21. *Teal Lake Tidings*, Spring 1942, folder 2, box 1, Ross Papers, WHS; "Boulder Junction, World's Greatest Musky Waters," Pamphlet 83-3765, WHS, Madison.
22. *Teal Lake Tidings*, Christmas 1945, folder 2, box 1, Ross Papers, WHS.
23. George S. Wehrwein and Hugh A. Johnson, "A Recreation Livelihood Area," *Journal of Land and Public Utility Economics* (May 1943): 196-197. Wisconsin Committee on Land Use and Forestry, *Forest Land Use in Wisconsin* (Madison, Executive Office, 1932); Angus McDonald quoted in Vernon Carstensen, *Farms or Forests: Evolution of a State Land Policy for Northern Wisconsin, 1850-1932* (1958; reprint, Madison: Department of Agricultural Journalism, University of Wisconsin-Extension, Cooperative Extension Service, 1984), 77; F. G. Wilson, "Zoning for Forestry and Recreation: Wisconsin's Pioneer Role," *Wisconsin Magazine of History* 41 (Winter 1957-1958): 102-106.
24. Joseph Curley to Herbert Warner, 25 May 1920, folder 7, box 1; G. M. Householder to Herbert Warner, 17 May 1922, folder 7, box 1; F. Dahmen to H.L. Warner, 18 August 1922, folder 7, box 1, all in Warner Papers, WHSA.
25. Letter from Nelson Ross to Virginia Ross, 22 February 1937, folder 6, box 1, Ross Papers, WHS. On Paul Quayle, see Inventory and Guide, Ross Papers, WHS.
26. D. C. Menefee to Herb Warner and Son, 30 June 1924, folder 8, box 1; Gaither Her-ring to Bert Warner, 28 May 1928, folder 8, box 1; George Vrooman to Bert Warner, 9 June 1930, folder 8, box 1; W. J. Minch to Bert Warner, 26 May 1924 and 5 June 1924, folder 8, box 1, all in Warner Papers, WHSA. On Lac du Flambeau, see Michael J. Goc, *Reflections of Lac du Flambeau: An Illustrated History of Lac du Flambeau, Wisconsin, 1745-1995* (Friendship, WI: New Past Press, 1995) and Elizabeth Tornes, ed., *Memories of Lac du Flambeau Elders* (Madison, WI: Center for the Study of Upper Midwestern Cultures, 2004).

## About the Author

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