

Brief History of Portage Lake Golf Course

Portage Lake Golf Course has been a golfing gem in the Copper Country since the early 1900s. Deeded in 1903, Portage Lake Golf Course celebrates 120 years of golfing excellence in the Keweenaw.

For the first 70 years, Portage Lake Golf Course operated as a 9-hole facility. Verdie Cox, a legendary coach of Michigan Technological University and club manager of PLGC, oversaw the construction and development of what is now the front 9. With immense support of the local community, builders, and contractors alike, Verdie Cox was able to facilitate completion of the project for well under \$100,000.

Cox gave credit to Charley Prochst of the Prochst Construction Co. in Iron River, Bob Brumm of the LW Brumm Construction Co. in Marquette, and Warren Monberg of the Gundlach Construction Co. in Houghton. Verdie Cox was quoted as saying, "I think the total cost for moving most of the earth around was just a little under sixty dollars." The \$60 was the price of the sandwiches provided by the school's Memorial Union for the operators. Hank Fredd and Paul Koski, both avid golfers, helped survey and lay out the new nine holes, and Dick Hiltunen got high marks from Cox for his time and skill as a heavy equipment operator.

Portage Lake Golf Course officially became an 18-hole facility in 1972, and achieved a hallmark three years later when it hosted the Upper Peninsula Golf Association's Men's Championship in 1975.

PLGC has only known six club managers since 1945. Franz Schubert was the first, holding the position until 1949. Fred Lonsdorf was hired to manage both the Mt. Ripley ski facility and the golf course. Lonsdorf relinquished his golf course duties at the end of the 1952 golf season. Verdie Cox took over in 1953. Cox stepped aside after the 1977 season, and Mike Augustine, who had been working with Verdie Cox since 1971, was named the manager. Augustine was club manager for 33 years in total before Mark Maroste took the helm. Now, Erik Crowley, PGA, oversees all club operations as General Manager, and looks to continue the positive legacy of the club for the members and local golfing community.

John Williamson, who grew up in Houghton, was hired as PLGC's first greens superintendent in 2000. Williamson, a graduate of Michigan State University's Turf Management program, has been an integral part of the club's success over the years. John and his team continue to provide pristine course conditions for PLGC and its patrons.

From all of us here at Portage Lake Golf Course and Michigan Technological University, it is an honor to host the UPGA Men's Championship, once again. We hope you enjoy the golf course, facilities, and the spirit of friendly competition.

