Pine City Area History Association
Preserve & Share Pine City Area History

Presents:

Pokegama Sanatorium
Dr. Henry Longstreet Taylor was an active anti-tuberculosis crusader in Minnesota. In 1902 he had worked with doctors Ancker and Breckmann to establish a tuberculosis ward in the City and County Hospital in St. Paul. In 1903 he established a tuberculosis ward in Luther Hospital at John and Tenth streets, also in St. Paul. He served on legislative committees that studied potential construction of public sanatoriums. He became frustrated with the slow pace at which state government was dealing with a serious health problem. In 1905 he used his own money to open a private institution near Pine City. It was named Pokegama Sanatorium for its location on the lake of that name. Pokegama is an Ojibwe word meaning "at the side."

Pokegama catered to patients who could pay their own way. Rates per week ranged from $30 to $50. When the county sanatoriums opened, their rates ranged from free for the indigent person to $7 for those who could pay. Pokegama also furnished electric blankets for each bed, rather than the five to 10 woolen blankets issued at the county institutions. Stock market quotations were available for the businessmen.

Pokegama was built with 15 open-air cottages, but in 1918 new cottages were added. They had steam heat with private bedrooms and bathrooms shared with only two or three people. A reception hospital added in the early 1920s contained a modern surgical suite, a long-distance telephone system, and elevators.

Pokegama's most famous patient-in-residence was Dakota County attorney Harold Stassen who was there in 1930. He was elected governor of Minnesota in 1938. Dr. Taylor died in 1932. His sanatorium closed in 1944 when World War II created shortages in both supplies and staff.

March 3, 1905

Dr. H. L. Taylor of St. Paul, was in Pine City Saturday and Sunday to confer with Dr. R. L. Wiseman in regard to a sanatorium which the gentleman will conduct at Pokegama lake.

The doctors have decided to locate the sanatorium on DoBell Point at the mouth of Jarvis bay and will begin building operations at once. Cottages will be erected for convalescing patients. It is intended that the sanatorium will be ready for patients by the 1st of May.

The location is a most desirable one, and the scenery is very picturesque. The delightfully bracing pine air that is so abundantly bestowed upon Pine county residents will afford natural advantages that will tend to act as an elixir of health to all who choose the Pokegama sanatorium as a means of relief from the ills of life.

Dr. Taylor and Wiseman should meet with gratifying success in their new enterprise and endeavor to restore lost health, and their move has the hearty endorsement of their numerous friends.

March 10, 1905

All the arrangements have been perfected for the sanatorium at Pokegama lake. An addition is to be built onto the Wiseman cottage, making that building 12x14 feet. It is to be an open air affair with a screened interior, and is intended only for summer work. Several small cottages will be built adjoining the main building and tents will also be available. A good launch will be purchased for transporting patients to and from the sanatorium. The sanatorium will be conducted for the express purpose of treating incipient cases of consumption.

May 12, 1905

Geo. McRay and John Bergwell of North Branch, and Rex Ahlstrom of Grantsburg, were in Pine City last week doing work for the Mutual Telephone Co. Among other jobs they installed a telephone at the Pokegama Sanatorium, and the resort is now in telephonic connection with the "outside world."

September 29, 1905

A plate of fine winter apples are on exhibition in the show window of the Pine City State Bank. They were grown on the Pokegama Sanatorium farm.

The Sanatorium farm provided fresh food for the patients.

1905 The start of the Pokegama Sanatorium
Sleeping Cottage 1907
POKEGAMA SANATORIUM, PINE CITY, MINN.

Dining Room 1908

This is where I am located at present. This is the dining room. We eat on the porch. Hope you and Lester are well. Am feeling fine. — cereal.
Pokegama Lakeshore 1910
Sleeping Cottages 1910
Correspondence

This is one of the buildings at the Sanatorium, about 1/2 mi. from. They have another building the same size, and about 1/2 as small. One of the large buildings is to be built.
Dear Uncle Jim,

I am having a fine time. My life is good. I believe that the weather is much milder here. I am writing this letter on Wednesday, May 15th, 1943.

The weather is pleasant, and I am feeling well. I hope you are also feeling well.

I am looking forward to your visit as soon as possible.

Best wishes,

[signature]

POKEGAMA SANATORIUM, PINE CITY, MINN.

This is a postcard. It shows the Pokegama Sanatorium, Pine City, Minn. The text on the card reads:

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POKEGAMA SANATORIUM, PINE CITY, MINN.

This is the dining room, where we eat meals. Hope you and sister are well. Am feeling fine, thinking of you.

Dear Uncle Jim,

I am writing this letter on Wednesday, May 15th, 1943. I am having a fine time. My life is good. I believe that the weather is much milder here. I am writing this letter on Wednesday, May 15th, 1943.

The weather is pleasant, and I am feeling well. I hope you are also feeling well.

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[signature]
Boat Dock on Lake Pokegama at Sanatorium
Pamphlet 1918

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Rates and Information

Pokegama Sanatorium

Established 1915
P. O. Address: Pokegama, Pine Co., Minn.

RATES AND INFORMATION

HOW TO REACH POKEGAMA

Pokegama is a private sanatorium for the treatment of Pulmonary and Laryngeal Tuberculosis. The work does not compete in any way with the various county and state sanatoriums in whose organization and maintenance our staff is vitally interested. Pokegama is conducted to meet the demand for institutional treatment of the better class, greater privacy, and closer medical and nursing attention that is more attainable with a small patient list. The institution is grateful for the interest and support of the medical profession and for the further consideration and cooperation of physicians and the public.

MAIL, EXPRESS AND MESSAGES

Address all mail to Pokegama, Pine Co., Minnesota. This is a strictly private institution; therefore, all unaccompanied messages of any kind should be directed to the attention of the manager. Telegrams and telephones connections are direct through Pine City.

RATES PER WEEK

Cottage, occupied by one $35.00
Cottage, occupied by two $40.00
Elong and Diamond cottage, single room $45.00
Elong and Diamond cottage, double room $50.00

STAFF

H. Longstreet Taylor, M. A., M. D., Director
M. D. Lewis, M. D., Sanatorium Superintendent
Owen M. Cady, Sanatorium Physician
J. J. Scoville, D. D. S., Dental Surgeon

Pamphlet 1918
Pamphlet 1918

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Location of Pokegama

The sanatorium is located between the Great Northern and Northern Pacific main lines between the Two Cities and Duluth. A "near zero" stage leaves Garrison on the G. N. R. at about six o'clock Sunday, or after the arrival of the northern passenger trains, with direct mail to the U. S. Postoffice maintained at Pokegama, and is equal to the many changes. From early May until late October a pleasant, easy trip is by train from Pine City on the P. R. R. Conveyances may be had at either Garrison or Pine City on rail. Should arrangements be made to assure any train on modification of intended arrival.

Those coming from Chicago or similar distances do not find it necessary to take a steamer to St. Paul and then the morning train. The conveyance provides a chance to provide dressings, exercising forest air, comfort for passengers and the cool and refreshing back scents in the "out cars," not nearly as restful. The buildings are situated on a high prairie with lake and streams on their rear and front sides to the west. A golf course is located in the sanatorium and the trails through the interesting woods are very well maintained.

Pamphlet 1918

Buildings and Equipment

In the Main Building are found sanatorium halls and display rooms, medical and post office, kitchen with refrigerator and storeroom. Patients quarters consist of small and large cottage rooms about the main building and are two types: the first provided with flag on two sides which may be closed and the room readily heated before the patient leaves; the second has a screened porch and closed dressing room. Of the four larger cottages, three have one room with a porches and a steam-heated dressing room, medium-sized two rooms. Women sanatorium with separate dressing room and a comfortable living room, where four women, two in each ward, are accommodated for each. The sanatorium kitchen, with a special office, is charge of the chief medical staff, and a new two-story cottage for nurses, needed in every way, will be available in 1918. In the basement, especially designed quarters will become the complete X-ray room for after hours and diagnostic work. See these plans on another page.

Pamphlet 1918

Pokegama Methods

The patient: physician sees each patient twice daily, and is available for any emergency. He is assisted by the medical director who sees considerable time at the sanatorium and keeps in close touch with all cases. Each patient is carefully supervised by trained nurses and physicians, supplemented by Drs. Repp, Kain, nurses and doctors, together with proper food and exercise, bring on the foundations of treatment at Pokegama. Medicine plays a small part in the direct cure of tuberculosis, but frequently it is of great value in correcting secondary diseases that may arise in individual cases. Therapeutics is not a disease that can be treated in a hospital, but rather requires close medical supervision of every symptom and diet for a considerable period. Patients should come with the idea of remaining several months, for sufferer for severe conditions or for diagnostic purposes. Here we can live in close touch with medical and surgical precautions and permanent labor are prescribed as indicated. Good food is a big step. A wholesome general diet is given rather than forced "tenching" as it is found to produce more constant and permanent results.

In those that indicate it, special diets are prescribed. Dietary Macro comes from the tuberculosis society, medical staff directed food state at the sanatorium.

Pamphlet 1918

Entertainment and Recreation

Properly selected amusements, sports, and recreations are provided for patients. Religious services are held by both Catholic and Protestant clergy. In Pike City, and by visiting priests. Walking through the woods and about the lake is a favorite exercise at all seasons. In summer the lake furnishes boating, fishing under, and, in winter, skating, cheerleading, and snowshoeing by those who enjoy winter sports. Laws protect, and other games are practiced. The most general direction is resting and to those not resting fever, sanatorium life furnishes an excellent opportunity to do excellent read. Right study, or walking along the lake. The club room and library afford a number of newspaper, periodicals, and books. These are numerous to induce study, books being that lasts are respected and borrowed. Time and books are found and are almost always made use of by patients. A good law is that of the lake and the sanatorium.

Pamphlet 1918
Pine City Area History Association Presents: Pokegama Sanatorium

Dining Room 1920
Edna Hinze, a local Pine City woman, passed away at the Sanatorium on May 19, 1931 at the age of 19.
In September 1934 Ken Cox was in a serious car accident. As the number of tuberculosis patients declined part of the Sanatorium was used as a regular hospital. Ken was brought there for treatment and recovery.
Memories of Working at the Pokegama Lake Tuberculosis Sanatorium

Memories of Virginia Haugen-Christensen

I first worked at the Sanatorium (San) the summer before my senior year in high school. After graduating from Pine City High School in 1937, I worked at the San for another year. I helped in the Hospital's diet kitchen. Food came from the kitchen in the Administration Building through a tunnel connecting it with the large brick Hospital Building. The Hospital contained patient rooms, a full medical operating room and the mechanical plant. The food was wonderful.

Then I went to Minneapolis before returning in 1940 after my brother Bob called and told me they wanted me to come back to work at the San. I would make $25.00 a month plus room and board (Women staff stayed in the Administration Building). So I returned and helped as a waitress in the dining room. Some people were afraid they might contract tuberculosis if they got too close to the patients but it never scared me. I enjoyed helping and visiting with everyone.

The patients were all from wealthy families except one bed was free, making the hospital a nonprofit hospital. Dr. Callahan, who lived in Pine City, was the head doctor. Other doctors came from the Minneapolis/St Paul area.

Here I met Hans Christensen on June 12, 1940. He had moved from Askov to work at the San. He helped take care of the plumbing, boilers and furnaces. Even though he was somewhat shy, he talked a lot when he was alone with me. One day he proposed. My folks always said I must have asked Hans to marry me as he was so shy. We were married at the Zion Lutheran Parsonage November 9, 1940 with Reverend Steging officiating.

Hans and I made our home in a little cottage across from the San. That's where we were the Sunday after our wedding. The weather got funnier and funnier.

started raining and then it turned to snow. It was still snowing on Monday morning when Hans left for work. And it kept snowing. Soon the electric lines were down and there was no radio or telephone. It was the deadly Armistice Day Blizzard.

Hans had taken the car to get to work but got stuck in the deep snow. He walked the rest of the way along the shoreline to the San. A transformer had blown. Hans and Dr. Callahan’s son-in-law walked all the way to Pine City through the deep snow drifts to get the electric company to come out and fix the transformer. Hans didn’t return home until Wednesday. I hadn’t seen or heard from him since Monday morning. During that time I didn’t know if he was alive or dead.

We lived in the uninsulated cottage all winter. Cold, winter winds bowled around the door and windows and blew the linoleum six inches off the floor. Water froze in the metal pail overnight. I baked and cooked on a kerosene stove and made my first bread on that darn thing.

I worked at the San in the mornings, cleaning the Administration Building. Times were hard We made very little money and worked long hours but we also had fun. We always had lots of company as all the "kids" (younger staff) would come across the frozen lake from the San. My brother Bob also worked at the San on the grounds crew. His family lived across the bay from us. So we’d walk across the lake to see them.
Then in the spring, we moved to the San farm house. It was on a little knoll west of the big red dairy barn and I was a little afraid at first when Hans wasn’t home. Hans took over the care of the cattle. He had a cart with one horse that he used to transport milk to the hospital.

I had a big garden and canned everything possible. We had to thoroughly clean the farm house as no one had lived there for quite some time. That winter was so cold that all my flowers in the house froze. One morning I went outside and found a dog sleeping in a snow bank. We already had a dog named Tippy. We had to leave both of them when we left the farm.

Then came WWII. Our first child was on the way. Before Hans worked at the San, before we were married and before the War, he had gone to Minneapolis to enlist in the Marines. The Marines told him he was one inch too short. Now with our entry into WWII, the Draft Board wanted him. Dr. Callahan went to the Draft Board and told them they couldn’t have him as he was needed more at the San than in the service.

At the same time, the San was in the process of closing as tuberculosis was on the wane. But not before Sharon Nancy was born at the San Hospital. Hans came to see me in the Hospital before Sharon was born but kept fainting so finally the nurses told him to stay away. He sat the rest of the night in the furnace room with his boss, Larry Cummins.

In October of 1943, we moved to Elk River where Hans had a new job awaiting him. And our story goes on from a short stay in Elk River back to Pine City where we remained the rest of our lives.

The Sanatorium closed and became the home of the Catholic Redemptorist Fathers. At Christmas a life size Nativity Scene appeared in front of the former Hospital Building. A lighted star shone down on the manger as Christmas carols echoed through the night. We always stopped to look, listen and remember.

Recorded by Barbara Christensen

Memories of Working at the Sanatorium
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Main Building 1940