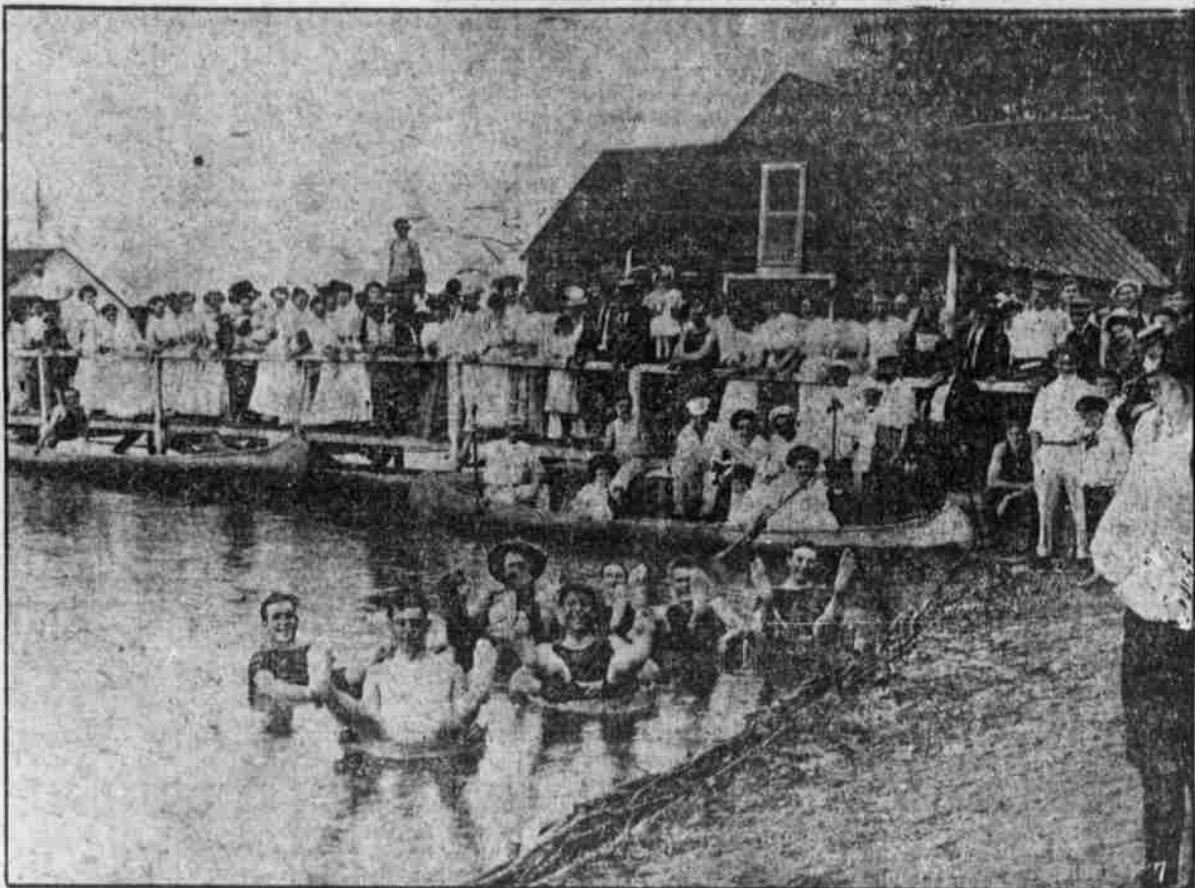


SUMMER PLEASURES ON THE WATERS OF CUT OFF LAKE

Home of the Rod and Gun Club and Interests that Employ Its Members During the Days When Water Sports and Diversions Have the Preference Over Other Forms of Amusement



OMAHA people were a long time waking up to the fact that out at Cut-Off lake were neglected possibilities, but, now that these same have been recognized, the delay of the past is forgotten in the haste of the present to take advantage of whatever the pretty little body of water may offer for summer pleasure. Fishing and bathing, boating and all that goes to make for a few hours, or a few days, diversion can be found there as well as at the far-away and more expensive places. For water is only water, after all, and fishing is only fishing; and a canoe and a pretty girl are as much a picture in the proper setting one place as another. So you may call it Cut-Off, or Nakoma, or Salina Sea, or any other name you like, the long neglected lake is being sought out by folks who are compelled to spend their summer days downtown in Omaha, and who like to spend their summer evenings somewhere by the waterside. Bungalows have sprung up on both sides of the lake and club houses and bathing beaches and a fleet of boats of all conditions, sizes and descriptions, from the flat-bottomed punt to the expensive motor boat. The skiff and the rowboat, the canoe and the yacht, flit over the placid bosom of the waters, and the evenings are merry with the songs and laughter of the light-hearted folks who are enjoying the beauties that those who stay downtown know nothing of.



For Cut-Off lake is coming into its own, and the Rod and Gun club is making it a place of pleasure for its members and for the unassociated who enjoy indirectly the benefits of the club's enterprise. This organization was originally formed to protect the fishing at the lake. Year after year the state had planted game fish in the waters there, and year after year poachers had seized them out. Then came the strong organization, and now fishing is protected. Any citizen can enjoy the privileges of the waters at any time, but the seiner finds his nefarious efforts thwarted by the law, enforced under the watchful care of the Rod and Gun club. But the club has far outgrown its original scope, and now finds itself taking on the aspect of one of Omaha's important social organizations. Its grounds and club house have become the nucleus for a cluster of summer homes, and around them center a pleasant little community that leads the simple life all summer long. This community in turn is daily invaded by a host of folks who have to spend the hot hours downtown, but who find on the lake the surcease that comes with a bathing suit or a canoe. And the lake is peopled as it should be all through the days of summer until late in the fall. Then, when winter has come, the skaters and the ice-boaters have their turn, and so Cut-Off is a scene for outdoor aquatic sport all the year round.

No. 1, Members of the Rod and Gun Club; No. 2, "Lazy Lodge," the Summer Home of Alfred Morris; No. 3, Scene on Cut-Off Lake on a Rod and Gun Club Social Day; No. 4, a Placid Evening on the Lake; No. 5, Algonquin Lodge, Another of the Pleasant Summer Homes at the Lake; No. 6, Getting Ready for a Morning on the Lake; No. 7, Tub Race.

SCENES AT THE ROD AND GUN CLUB BEACH ON CUT-OFF LAKE.

Now that the public is interested, through the Park board's control of Levi Carter park, Cut-Off lake and its surroundings are to be made more attractive, and a place where all the hot folks of the city will want to go in the evening is to be provided. It may be that a more euphonious name will in time be adopted, but Cut-Off will always be dear to the old-timers, who cling with obstinate fondness to the nomenclature of the days that are as dear to them as passing years can make the past to any of the actors in its history.

est known game fish. The water not only seems especially adapted to this game fellow, but the moss beds along the edges seem to be just suited to his liking. Here he may lie in the shade of the moss and wait the coming of the shades of evening to go forth to feed. The Omaha Rod and Gun club went through its formation period from 1905 to 1908, when a complete reorganization was effected and the club put upon a business basis. The reorganized club started with a small membership and \$12,000 in debt. Now the club is one of the most prosperous in this section of the country. It has a membership of 750 members in good standing. It owns the land on which the club is located. It has a temporary club house, with plans well under way for a new house. It has locker and canoe houses for its members, tennis courts, a base ball grounds, bathing beach and fifty steel boats, twenty-five of them having been bought new this spring.

Members of the club are just awakening to their opportunities and the thirty cottages, forty new canoes, fifteen sailboats and fifteen new motor boats show the way in which the members are preparing to enjoy the hot summer evenings in the cool breezes which blow across the lake. The rowboats are always ready for the use of the club members, but the sail and motor boats are individual property of the members. New docks were built this spring for boat landings and the beach dyked with real dykes, and not merely riprapping as has been tried before.

Bathing at the club is a real pleasure as the water is at all times clear and clean, except after several days of high wind. The bathing beach has been prepared by dumping 300 loads of river sand on the ice and letting it settle, giving a hard, clean bottom. This beach is put to good use by the cottagers, who take a plunge morning and evening, and also by the other members, who keep their bathing suits in the 250 lockers of the locker house. On any hot evening several hundred members may be seen enjoying the cool, refreshing water, which is refreshed at all times of the year by an overflow of water through sand from the Missouri river. At no season of the year is the water of Cut-Off lake stagnant. Bathers have noticed numerous springs in the bottom of the lake, which also assist in keeping the water fresh.

Decoration day is fixed as the date for the formal opening of the club, and the members who delay their visit until that time will not know their own club so many and radical are the changes which have been wrought. The location is changed and the other improvements are so many that it looks like a new resort. A program of water sports will occupy most of the afternoon and will include swimming, rowing, canoeing, tub racing, sailing and distance diving. A band will be on hand during the afternoon and in the evening a musical program will be arranged, and dancing will help to fill in the evening's fun. Before the opening the grounds will be lighted with electric lights and the entire plot made as light as day.

The officers of the club are: John A. Scott, president; William S. Sheldon, vice president; A. F. Bloom, secretary; A. F. Whitmore, treasurer. Board of directors: Fred L. Goodrich,

J. Jeffrey Davey, T. H. Weirich, J. C. Youngs, F. B. Holbrook, J. F. Prentiss, Sidney W. Smith. On account of the rapid growth of the club it was this year deemed advisable to appoint a house secretary, to always be on hand and to have general supervision of the work at the club and take care of the accounts of its members. For this position G. O. Francisco, on account of his well known ability, was selected, and members will find that club matters are well taken care of.

The Omaha Rod and Gun club has spent a large sum of money in dredging out the weeds and silt from the shore of the lake along its water front, and is willing to share in further expense as soon as the city buys a dredge, as dredging can be done at a small expense in the lake after the machine is once purchased. Swift and Company has also benefited the club to a great extent in cutting the weeds that grow in the lake. The packing company wishes the weeds out of the way to have a clear field for its ice cutting season, and this also clears the water for the benefit of boats and bathers. Weeds grow most prolifically in the lake and unless crippled in this way grow in many places to the surface of the water.

Before the formal opening of the club a cafe will be in operation for the use of the members, who may either telephone out their orders for dinner or order and have their meals ready for them after returning from a swim or a row on the lake. This will be a great addition to the comfort of the club members, and when the new club house is completed a more elaborate cafe will be installed. While the club membership is 750, the families of the members are given the privileges of the club, and this makes it a most popular place. All the spacious room is needed for the crowds which so often congregate to spend the evening.

Not only has the club been making improvements within its grounds, but the surrounding neighborhood has also been greatly improved during the last year. The city of Omaha is preparing to spend the \$50,000 given by Mrs. Levi Carter in fitting up a beautiful park on the opposite side of the lake. A race track has been built in the vicinity of the club grounds. Courtland Beach will be opened this year, which will necessarily give a much better car service to the club. The Young Men's Christian association is building an athletic field in the neighborhood of the club. Some of the resorts which were a nuisance last year have been cleaned out and are no longer a menace to the neighborhood. The street railway company has extended its lines to the very doors of the club, giving splendid car service, and the general atmosphere of the surroundings has been greatly improved.

During the last few months the club has been acquiring considerable property by purchase that its home may be permanent and that it may not have to move at the whim of some landlord. A tract of some eighteen acres has been secured, which will provide a permanent home, and more ground is being considered; in fact, the club has an option on some adjacent property. These grounds lie high above the water of the lake and make an excellent plot for club purposes. Plans are now being drawn by the architects for a club house, which, when built, will give the

club as fine a home as any outdoor club in this section of the country. When the new club house is built the club will have most commodious quarters, when used in connection with the buildings already owned. With the idea of a new club house in view the old club house has been moved to a site east of the place it originally occupied, and the new one will be placed where the old house stood.

A rough draft of the plans show the new club house to be about seventy feet long and forty feet wide, and so designed that in the future large wings may be added to any side. The new house, may also be used as a wing for a larger building in the future and still preserve the architectural beauty of the building.

The main room of the new club house will be a huge lobby, which is the first room to enter. Members of the club have great sport at the lake. Hundreds own their own canoes, and this form of boating is fast transplanting the rowboats. Some fast sailboats are kept at the lake, and last year some of the record boats from Manawa, owned by Omaha sailors, were moved from Manawa to Cut-Off lake. The lake gives a long sweep for sailboats and no matter which way the wind is blowing there is ample room for a long sail. The lake is in the form of a horseshoe, and the long stretch of water makes a splendid place for racing, and many impromptu races are run during the summer.

Water carnivals have become popular at the lake and each Fourth of July a big carnival is held of the Venetian order. Last year a large steamboat was secured and over 100 sail and rowboats, all illuminated, were pulled around the lake at night, giving the appearance of a huge seaserpent winding its way along the waters. Social features of the club are attracting more and more attention each year and the cottagers have many a social session at the sumptuous club house, when the members join in music and dance.

Just now crappie fishing is at its height and many good catches are made each day at the lake. All sorts of fishermen patronize the "pond" and secure their reward in greater or less degree. The great bass will soon be biting and the expert fisherman can find ample exercise for all his skill with line and lure in the killing of these sports of the clear, cold waters. The wily old black bass has points that excel, perhaps, those of any other fresh water swimmer, not even excepting the trout of song and story. No one knows so well as does the man who has angled in vain the wisdom of one of these veterans of many seasons of fly and frog. The calm indifference with which a big bass will lie in a shady place and lazily eye the proffered bait is about as exasperating as any such thing can well be. At times this fellow will hungrily bolt even a bit of red flannel, and then he will not be tempted by the daintiest of morsels. Now his taste runs to frogs, and then he wants flies, and sometimes he wants one kind of fly and sometimes another. He feeds in the morning and in the evening, and during the day he snoozes in the shade and disdains as a rule the suggestion that he come out and be caught. And mayhap his imperial stomach craves employment, and he will charge on his prey at any time, even high noon. It is simply up to the angler to determine if possible the psychological attitude of Mr. Black Bass and take him accordingly. He has been caught with worms when he wouldn't touch a fly or a frog, and at least one was caught on a trot line when the most expensive of expert outfits had proven useless in an effort to overhaul him. But when he is hooked he yields only after he has exhausted every other means and the fisherman fairly earns his prize.

It is this sport that adds zest to the days at Cut-Off in the summer time. Fish Commissioner O'Brien appreciates the advantage of the lake and keeps it well stocked with fine fish, and under the protection of the state officials and the Rod and Gun club it is becoming more and more a paradise for anglers every year.

And when the hot season comes, and sun beats down from above, the fisherman can join the fish in the water, and the heat of summer will be forgotten as the cool water embraces the weary limbs, and in the swim will be found new vigor and zest for life.



A DOUBLE "HEADER."