



### The Panola Zephyrs

"Panola Downs St. Paul Team in Bitter Tussle" "Goalie Lundquist Sends Two Stops To the Jaw In Hockey Thriller..." So read one of the yellowed-with-age sports headlines, one of many announcing that the Panola Zephyrs amateur hockey team had defeated another team in or outside its league.

The nucleus of the Panola skating zeal for 22 years, beginning in 1938, was the Panola Zephyrs Club, a club to which everyone in the community belonged and paid 25 cents a month dues. The club sponsored the famous hockey team and managed the almost-equally-famous Panola ice rink.

The ice on the Panola rink was the pride of the community. "Even the players from St. Paul used to praise our ice," said Robert Bruss, who started with the original team and played for 20 years. Panola audiences enjoyed seeing the "local farm boys" defeat the city teams on the best ice rink in the state, according to Bruss and Norton Bursch, another member of the original team.

Flooding the rink the first few years was a major project without a well. The 160 x 80 rink was flooded with the help of creamery trucks to create the underlying ice base. But the regular flooding was done by mounting a stock tank on an old car (with wood spoke wheels) chassis, and attaching a sprinkler system. One man pulled the strange apparatus and another guided the sprinkler. Things were easier when a well was dug. Later, the club built a concrete holding tank, which is the only visible evidence today of the skating rink complex. The complex included not only the rink and the holding tank, but a "shack" which was a house with a kitchen, concession stand and warming room heated by a potbelly stove, and a sturdy wood fence.

"On Friday afternoon those were trees in my father's woods, and by Sunday night they had been cut and planned and half the fence was up. We didn't have chain saws in those days," said Robert Bruss. "We decided to do it and then we just did it."

The Panola Zephyrs financed the hockey team by publishing schedules supported by Lindstrom advertisers, by auctions, by raffles and by conducting creative fund raising projects all during the year. One such effort was catching mice and presenting a mouse race at the county fairs. They also sponsored a concession stand at the rink selling hot dogs, pop, rolls, and candy.

On Sunday afternoons and during evenings when there wasn't a hockey game, the rink was open for pleasure skating. Skaters were charged ten cents a session or one dollar for a year. After skating, families socialized in the "shack" and sometimes held card parties.

From the beginning, the rink had music. An Osceola firm provided a free juke box and records, and the club mounted an outdoor speaker on the "shack." Whenever there was pleasure skating, there was music.

On Sunday night there was usually a hockey game. The team played every Sunday night during the season, either in Panola or on another team's rink. The team was a member of the U.S. Amateur Association, and referees came from the Twin Cities for every league game. Uniforms and equipment were bought by the club.

The win-loss record? Everyone who remembers says the team had an impressive record, but no one kept track.

"Maybe we didn't keep good records," said Norton Bursch, "but we sure had a lot of fun."

Today, all that remains of the Panola Rink is the crumbling concrete water tank, nestled in the trees on the northwest corner of Olinda Trail and Panola Drive six miles south of Chisago Lakes High School.

#### *Lindstrom on the Lake 1894-1994*

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In 1938 a skating club, the "Panola Zephyrs," was organized with a membership of 33 young people. Having skated on a nearby lake some years, it was felt that a good skating rink and warming house were needed in order to play hockey competitively as well as for pleasure skating.

First of all money had to be raised for material and equipment. The first venue at raising funds was a carnival at the schoolhouse. Later the stands were used at the County Fair and a Harvest Festival to further augment the funds needed. Two talent plays were given over the years. Basket and pie socials and card parties also helped. Of course there were membership dues, and a refreshment stand in the warming house. Each effort bound the community in a closer fellowship, besides providing the young people with a lot of fun.

The rink was 160 x 80 feet and was surrounded by a concrete wall, with a board wall outside of that. Electric lights for evening games, a juke box with amplifier proving gay music made this an exciting place for skaters and viewers alike. The old Yeomen Hall with its pot bellied stove had been donated to the Club to be used as a warming house. All labor connected with the project had been donated by club members and parents.

"The Zephyrs" looked very impressive in their uniforms of maroon, gold and green when they played their first game against Scandia, the third Sunday of December, 1938. A record crowd was on hand and the club was off to a start which lasted many years providing healthy, happy hours of recreation. Certainly it could not have succeeded without the spirit of cooperation, enthusiasm, hard work and determination of all involved.

#### *Scandia – Then and Now, by Anna Engquist*