

MOENS LAKE RESORT

Fred A. Risberg moved to Rhinelander in 1921 when he and his partner, Carl Ellison, purchased the Schlitz Hotel on South Brown Street. Also included in the transaction were 26 acres, with a cottage, on the west side of Moens Lake. Risberg had traveled to the area from Chicago numerous times to visit his wife's family in the town of Pelican. It was apparent to him that the Moens Lake property would be the perfect place for a resort. Construction of a huge pavilion and several cottages was soon underway.

In this part of Northern Wisconsin, summer dances were all the rage in the 1920's and pavilions were scattered from Monico to Rhinelander to Sugar Camp. Risberg went all out to make his pavilion, first named Moens Park Gardens, a popular spot. Orchestras from Chicago and popular singers of the era were brought to the resort for the enjoyment of not only guests, but the local community as well. With strains of "In the Good Old Summertime" playing in the background, crowds enjoyed an evening of dancing and refreshments for 50 cents per person.

By 1926, the popularity of Moens Park made it necessary to expand the pavilion and, for the pleasure of the beach-goers, a Selner water slide was built – a speedy 100-foot ride into the waters of Moens Lake. Risberg's contact with guests did not end after they left. Christmas trees were often cut and sent by train to Chicago for the guests who had been notified with a postcard at Thanksgiving.

As the years passed, the pavilion became a Recreation Hall, part of Risberg's expanded Moens Park Lodge and Resort. With the popularity of shuffleboard, tournaments for the sport were often held inside the pavilion, while table tennis was also a favorite. The huge lodge was joined by several more cottages and gas pumps for those who traveled by car.

Upon the retirement of Fred Risberg in 1943, the resort was purchased by George Kane, also from Chicago. Kane altered the name slightly to Kane's Moens Lake Lodge before selling the complex seventeen years later to Tom and Dorothy Neal. The current name, Pine Valley Lodge, was born with the Neals and carried on by Gene and Joy Ziegenbein when they purchased Pine Valley in 1968. The Ziegenbeins have many fond memories of campfires, ghost stories, square dances and even weddings during their 30 years of ownership. The current owner, Bruce Hintz, had been a guest at the lodge for many years, a good sign that the guests keep fond memories of their visits, too.