

IOWA'S FIRST OFFICIAL A.A.U. SWIMMING & DIVING CHAMPIONSHIPS

By John Robert "Jack" Gobble

Fairfield, County Seat of Jefferson County, Iowa, hosted the First Iowa State Official A. A. U. Outdoor Individual Swimming and Diving Championship Meet in the second of its four successive public swimming pools in 1936.

Fairfield, itself, has had an official existence as a village, town, and city, since 1839; during its first century it had two public swimming pools. Just when the first was started or completed is unknown to me, but I do know it was in operation by the end of World War I and, presumably, before then.

It may have had some more dignified and alluring or tempting designation, but generally was known by the public as "Pumphrey's Pond." It was privately built (by damming a natural draw or slough) and privately owned, but was open to the public and fees were charged for swimming and the various other services available. Actually, it was nothing, or little, more than a man-made, mud-bottomed pond into which many wagon loads of sand and gravel had been dumped in a futile attempt to create various beach areas at strategic spots around its circumference. There were wooden platforms, runways, boat docks, separate bath houses for the Ladies and Gentlemen, homemade diving boards; and those who came unprepared for swimming, but acquired the urge after arrival, could rent those darling, short-sleeved, long-legged, skirted, cotton bathing suits which were so fashionable (and unswimmable) in that era prior to the 1920s. Rowboats and canoes also were available on a rental basis for those who wanted exercise or a "romantic" setting.

There was no water purification system, and if any chemicals were used in any manner, they were lost in the silt-laden water from which you emerged with a coat of dirt thick enough to raise the tallest corn ever produced in the Hawkeye State. There was a deep well for supplemental water supply when nature's rain was inadequate, but the addition of it was in no way noticeable except, possibly, that the depth had been maintained or increased. That pure, crystal clear, sparkling

well water didn't stand a chance in competition with the soil-saturated pond water to which it was added and which constantly was being roiled by wading people.

Nevertheless, it was a place to swim, dive, boat, loaf, spoon, picnic, and otherwise enjoy a "resort" area. It was convenient, "in-town" and readily accessible, even if it was at the City limits, some one dozen blocks east of the Central or Public Square, on East Burlington Street (now an AVENUE, if you please, and a native-born former resident may be so permitted to comment).

During that same period of time there was a similar, private, smaller, and not within the city, pond-type of facility owned by John A. Huglin, and located between his residence and the "Burlington Road" (now U.S. Highway 34), just east of the city limits and Chautauqua Park. It was for the use of the Huglin Family and their non-paying guests.

Some time after World War I, the old Pumphrey's Pond was drained, intentionally, by breaking the dam, and that antiquated resort area dried up in more ways than one. Henry and Clay Pumphrey, bachelor brothers, had owned the property for many years, and I believe it was shortly after Clay's death that Henry offered the site to the Fairfield Boy Scouts, with the proviso that they first raise an adequate sum of money for the construction of a modern swimming pool.

Committees were formed, publicity was rampant, action ensued, the needed funds were raised by public subscription, and the land was deeded to an adult Fairfield Boy Scout Committee composed of this writer's father, R. Bruce Gobble, Harry H. Lovell, and Frank Harris.

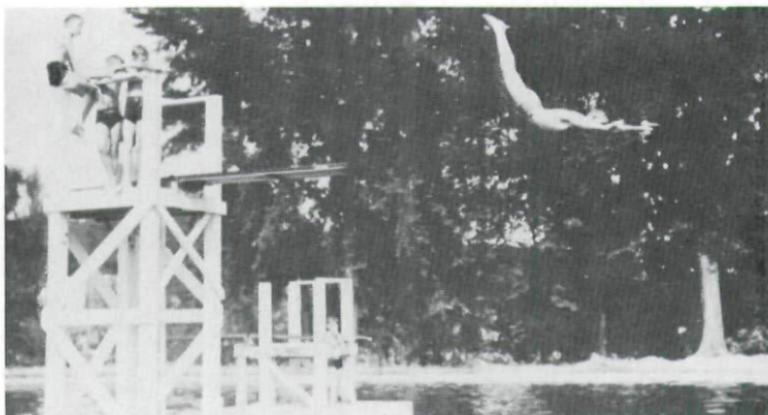
To the ownership of the land and the pledges money, were added various items of generosity on the part of a number of citizens. C. H. Kearns, a local concrete and paving contractor, for example, loaned much of his equipment and know-how, and several of his employees donated considerable amount of their time and abilities toward the new construction. It is a somewhat ironic, but sad, sidelight that the Kearns's ten-year old son, Paul, should become the first (and I believe only) Fairfield recipient of a Carnegie Hero Medal—and that for heroically giving his life in an unsuccessful attempt to save an 11-year old chum from drowning in Crow

Creek, scarcely more than half a mile east of the swimming pool his father helped build and which, at the time, was drained and being prepared for the 1925 season opening. The medal was awarded, posthumously, to the father.

Much consideration was given to the planning of the new pool. The natural lay of the land, the amount of money available, and other factors including a desire to make the pool as large as possible so that the greatest number could enjoy it, logically determined the pool should be saucer-shaped, somewhat elliptical, with a perimeter of concrete curb and gutter, and a sand bottom. The small, but necessary quantity of dirt was scooped and graded out, the curb and about a two-foot gutter were constructed, a 35-foot wooden diving tower was built on a concrete foundation at about the center and deepest (nine feet) part of the approximately one-acre pool. Load after load of sand and comparatively fine gravel was dumped and distributed evenly over soil bottom, modern bath houses with hot and cold water showers were erected, and the pool was filled from the chemically treated public water supply.

The pool could be overflowed, and such was done a few times in generally unsuccessful attempts to drain off supposedly contaminated surface water and its flotsam. Blue vitriol (copper sulphate to you chemically educated readers) crystals were hand-sprinkled around the outer areas of the pool to kill the algae growth and, in addition, the entire pool was chlorinated! The chlorinating was done by the "efficient" method of fastening cloth bags containing the chemical, at intervals, to a rope approximately as long as the radius of the nearly circular body of water. One big, strong boy (or several smaller ones) would grasp one end of the rope and walk with it around the curbed circumference as another boy (or more) held the pivotal end while treading water somewhere near the pool's center, the chlorine granules dissolving in the pool's water as their containing bags swished along their circuitous route. A couple of trips around the pool each week "fully chlorinated" the water and bathers frolicked with complete confidence—why, you could even smell the chlorine for a couple of hours after each treatment! The Fairfield Boy Scout Pool was a thing of beauty, modern and safe in every

detail, and a most popular spot for all ages of both sexes during the summer months for many years.



courtesy of the author

Fairfield Boy Scout Swimming Pool

Site of Official Contests

It was at this Boy Scout Pool where the First Official Iowa State A.A.U. Outdoor Individual Swimming and Diving Championships were held on a Saturday and Sunday, Aug. 29 and 30, 1936.

An application for an official sanction first was filed with William H. Thomas, then Secretary-Treasurer of the Mid-western Association (of which Iowa then was a part) of the Amateur Athletic Union, at Omaha, to hold a sub-district meet early in July. The sanction was granted, the meet held, and its success prompted the further request for Sanction to hold a district meet in August. That, too, was granted and a meet for half of Iowa was authorized. The Sanction, however, failed to designate whether it was for the southern or eastern half of the state, and clarification was requested. With inherent savoir-faire, Bill Thomas simply sent, by return mail, Sanction No. 36-30 authorizing the meet to be Statewide, to grant official A.A.U. Iowa State Championship medals and trophies for the first time, and the meet manager, in his almost total ignorance of the job at hand, took the bait, hook, line, and sinker, and plans immediately got underway.

The July meet had required the construction of a race course in the saucer-shaped pool, and that had been accom-

lished by building one platform and turning board as an extension from the diving tower near the pool's center, and another of similar type 25 yards to the south. The preliminary meet showed a few needed improvements for the Statewide event and they were made. In addition, a 45-foot pole bearing "four large reflectors that will throw powerful rays of light down on the swimming lanes (all five of 'em) and diving platforms" (quoted from the local newspaper) was placed at about the pool's center.

District meets had been held at Iowa Falls on Aug. 9, at Waterloo on Aug. 12, and at Clarinda on Aug. 14, along with the one at Fairfield in July, as preliminaries to the State Championships.

An Unscheduled Event

Because of the pool's shape, the starting and diving platforms and the turning boards had to be located well out into open water, necessitating the paddling of fully clothed officials, two at a time in canoes, to their respective stations. That sub-district meet in July had been successfully concluded and the officials, weary of being confined to a quite small platform area completely surrounded by water, were anxious to get ashore. Amongst the very first of those clamoring for the canoe transportation, and getting it, were L. A. Gluenkin and Leo J. Frank, athletic directors at the Fairfield High School and Parsons College respectively. In some way (maybe accidentally?), when they were only about six or eight feet from their previous stations of dignified authority, the canoe capsized in water eight or nine feet deep. Quite a number of swimmers, and most of the remaining fully clothed officials, promptly and gleefully dived to their assistance, whether or not it was needed. As a consequence, the only casualties were the vanities of a couple of athletic directors and an overdampened stop watch or two—but, strange as it may seem, neither of those men was available to serve as an official at the State Championship meet a month later—they simply were "out of town" when that date arrived. Fairfield, for many a year prior to then, had been famous for its practical jokes and neither of them, apparently, desired a repeat performance. There was a goodly sized audience for that first exhibition, most of whom greatly enjoyed relating the story for some time afterward,

either in or out of the presence of the star performers. One of those stars has continued to reside in Fairfield, respected, and respectably retired, and no doubt will have some comments to make to and/or about this reminding author.

State Championship Meet Officials

When the big day for the first Statewide meet arrived, there were all but two of the top swimmers in Iowa already entered. Widely known and respected officials were present, among them being C. E. "Jake" Daubert, swimming coach at Iowa State College (now University, Ames) and chairman of the Midwestern A.A.U. Swimming Committee, as the referee. The aforementioned Bill Thomas was head judge; Irving B. Weber, 1922 All-American backstroker at the University of Iowa, was the starter; and Max Hemingway of Mason City served as head timer. Others who acted as judges or timers were Leo DeKalb, Keith Prizer, Mac Rinehart, Justus Webb, Tom Karpen, Robert Lamson (a Fairfield native, then coach at Webster City High, later at Iowa State University, and recently deceased), Jack Blough, Darrell Sinn, and Russell Daubert who was swimming coach at Michigan State Normal, and a son Jake. Carleton Starr was the announcer. The meet manager was J. R. "Jack" Gobble, the reminiscer of this little story; he also served at the meet as a diving judge.



courtesy of the author

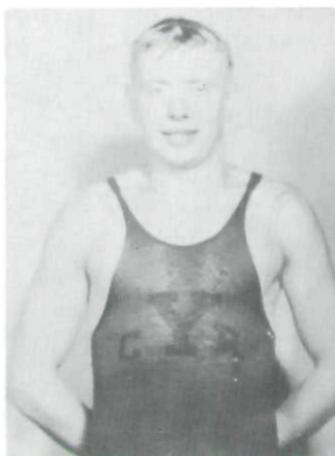
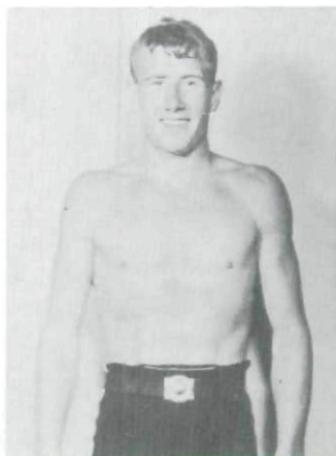
L. A. Gluenkin, J. R. Gobble, Irving Weber, Jake Daubert, Carlton Starr, Lou Wunschel, Bill Thomas, Max Hemingway, Jake Daubert, Jr., Tom Karpan.

The Daubert School of Ballet

Jake Daubert, when not actually concerned with a meet, or with swimmers, and the improvement of either, was the clown of the meet's officials. He always had interesting and highly amusing anecdotes to relate. Most of the out-of-town officials stayed at the now torn down and no longer existent Leggett House, Fairfield's then elite hotel located "just off the southeast corner of the Square, on Burlington Street (excuse me, Avenue). The local officials gathered there with them on Friday night before the Saturday preliminary events to insure that all plans were in order and all arrangements in readiness. Such seemed to be the case, and the meeting resolved itself into a more informal session of telling stories and recounting the feats and escapades of days gone by. Jake told his share, told 'em well, and got many a belly laugh from the men and stomach smiles from the wives and other ladies privileged to invade the inner sanctum. But the highlight was Jake's solo ballet dancing. Jake was about five foot six or seven inches tall, much stockily or wrestler built, and quite mightily muscled. He simply was not the gracefully lithe dancer type, but he put on an unforgettable exhibition of the various poses and movements known to that phase of the Terpsichorean art, naming each (the rest of us, or at least I, had to assume) with the proper technical term, and performing every one in conjunction with the various movements leading into each. Some of the more intricate were followed by a slow-motion demonstration, accompanied by a detailed descriptive oral dissertation. He made it excruciatingly funny and, when the gang gathered again after the meet sessions on Saturday and Sunday nights, there were vehement demands, which permitted no refusal, for repeat performances. Jake willingly supplied with as many, if not more, humorous gyrations and commentaries in each succeeding repeat. Jake, serving as the self-appointed Balletmaster, gave personal tutoring to the others present, and the "graceful" pirouettes and arabesques thus developed were wondrous to behold. Jake's own interpretations, and the "recitals" of his "ballet students," admittedly, couldn't be "topped" and, thus, were the finales of the evening "after sessions" conviviality.

Every Winner a Championship Record Holder

The winner of every event automatically became the Iowa State Champion, received an A.A.U. gold medal, and the time or score was entered in the sports annals as the official record for Iowa. There were no former marks to better, and those earned in 1936 would stand for at least a year. Which has been broken, by whom, where, when, how often, and by how much, is unknown because we moved from the state soon thereafter and I had no opportunity to check the scoring for successive years. Some swimming historian, in or for Iowa, may be the source for bringing those subsequent records to light and up to date.

**Walter Maciejewsky***Photos courtesy of the author***Bob Daley**

Walter Maciejewsky, Cedar Rapids, was the individual high point winner, his three firsts giving him 15 points, and Mable Hall of Des Moines was the 12 point runner up with two firsts and a third. This scoring was done by the 5, 3, 2-point basis for first, second and third places respectively. The events and place winners follow:

Men's 200-Yard Free Style

- 1st—Walter Maciejewsky, Cedar Rapids, time 2:23.1
- 2nd—Gene Kershaw, Cedar Rapids
- 3rd—Robert Porter, Waterloo

Girls' 50-Yard Free Style

- 1st—Marjory Welch, Webster City, time :42.8
- 2nd—Shirley Boeye, Webster City
- 3rd—Mable Hall, Des Moines

Men's 150-Yard Back Stroke

- 1st—Francis Heydt, Iowa City, time 1:48.5
 2nd—Dale Lounsbury, Oskaloosa
 (Other entries failed to finish and were disqualified)

Men's Diving—10-Foot Board

- 1st—Bob Daley, Newton, score 93.23
 2nd—John Stark, Cedar Rapids, 83.24
 3rd—Paul Baridon, Des Moines, 79.51

Boys' 50-Yard Free Style

- 1st—Richard Wunschel, Davenport, time :28.1
 2nd—Wayne Leach, Ottumwa
 3rd—Ronald Norman, Fairfield

Men's 100-Yard Free Style

- 1st—Walter Maciejewsky, Cedar Rapids, time :59.0
 2nd—Gene Kershaw, Cedar Rapids
 3rd—Richard Wunschel, Davenport

Women's Diving—10-Foot Board

- 1st—Pat Brown, Cedar Rapids, 84.16 points
 2nd—Betty Colvin, Waterloo, 65.17 points

Women's 100-Yard Back Stroke

- 1st—Mable Hall, Des Moines, time 1:15.9
 2nd—Frances Hemingway, Webster City
 3rd—Betty Colvin, Waterloo

Boys' 50-Yard Back Stroke

- 1st—Richard Wunschel, Davenport, time :38.0
 2nd—Ronald Normal, Fairfield
 (There were only two entries)

Men's 500-Yard Free Style

- 1st—Walter Maciejewsky, Cedar Rapids, time 6:57.0
 2nd—Gene Kershaw, Cedar Rapids
 3rd—John Stark, Cedar Rapids

Women's 100-Yard Free Style

- 1st—Mable Hall, Des Moines, time 1:07.8
 2nd—Frances Hemingway, Webster City
 3rd—Dee Jay Replogle, Des Moines

Men's 200-Yard Breast Stroke

- 1st—Robert Wayt, Davenport, time 3:17.2
 2nd—Robert Boeye, Webster City
 3rd—Bill Walsmith, Cedar Rapids

The five required dives, 10-foot board, were:

MEN

Group	Dive	Degree of Difficulty
I	Somersault forward, running, straight	1.8
II	Header, backward, standing, pike	1.7
III	Islander—Half Gainer, running, straight	1.9
IV	Backward spring, forward somersault, standing, pike	1.6
V	Pike dive with one-half screw forward, running	1.8

WOMEN

I	Plain front dive, running	1.2
II	Front Jack Knife, running	1.4
III	Somersault, forward, running, straight	1.8
IV	Header backward, standing, pike	1.7
V	Islander—Half Gainer, running, straight	1.9

Men divers were required to perform one additional elective dive from each of the five groups, and the women, five additional dives from any four of the five groups.



Marble Hall



Photos courtesy of the author
Patty Brown

A primitive contest? Yes! Definitely, by today's standards—but 31 years ago it was a jim dandy, and it was a start upon which could be built the more sophisticated meets of the future and to the present. These later meets may be considered somewhat primitive in the year 2000 A. D.

That ever-so-popular and modern Fairfield Boy Scout Swimming Pool outlived its usefulness and modernity. The sand and gravel bottom wasn't the success anticipated. It stayed pretty much in place on the "lip" of the saucer, but shifted rapidly on the steeper inclines and settled in the central portions, making the diving area more shallow as time went on. Science found better sanitation methods, the wooden bath houses became a bit soggy with steam and more condensed forms of moisture. Time took its toll in many more ways. A third pool replaced that of the Boy Scouts' and, in 1967, the fourth pool was being constructed and expected to be in operation during this past summer.

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