

Property Historical Tour



A self-guided tour
takes about one hour

General Background

In 1932, The Great Depression hit Keweenaw County hard. This caused many large mining companies to close, including Ahmeek Mining Company, who single handedly laid off around 700 men. The Keweenaw suffered tremendously with the highest unemployment rate in not only the state of Michigan, but the entire country at 75.2%. The county was noticeably suffering to the point that Harry Hopkins, a close friend and advisor of President Franklin Roosevelt's, reported the dire need for relief to aid the Keweenaw County residents. In autumn of 1933, Ocha Potter helped develop plans for the previously named Keweenaw Park and Golf Course in order to provide jobs to the unemployed individuals and families. The project began as part of the Civil Works Administration program but finished under the Works Progress Administration.

To begin the project, 167.27 acres of land, valued at \$20,000 was donated to the county. The Keweenaw Park and Golf Course project began on Monday, November 6, 1933 with 124 workmen. The first aspect of the project was to create a gravel entrance road and clear timber from the land to use as building material. While the total cost of the Keweenaw Park and Golf Course came out to \$126,092, 75% of those expenses went to paying employees and the remaining 25% paid for goods, materials, and miscellaneous services. The opening day was Sunday, June 23, 1935 with more than 2,000 visitors on the property. There were events held throughout the day including a golf tournament, prizes, and refreshments.

The construction of the clubhouse was delayed because of the county's disagreement and struggle to locate a professional to supervise the construction of the clubhouse. Eventually, WM. C "Clem" Veale became the construction manager and later the property manager. The design and inspiration of the clubhouse came from the Shingle, Bungalow and Western Stick architectural styles from the early 1900's. which is known as "Parkitecture." The clubhouse was originally a 96 foot x 50 foot building with a second-story loft used for a number of summers for a residence of Keweenaw Park's full time golf professional, Al Bovard. The clubhouse was known and used mainly by the elite status of Keweenaw County. The clubhouse was the spot to "see and be seen" in Keweenaw County.

The lodge was publicly owned until 2018 when it was put up for auction. The auction for the lodge was held in the conference center in late July and purchased by Keweenaw Resort, LLC. The finalization of ownership occurred on September 5, 2018. The lodge was also privately owned by two different land contracts in the mid-1960s and 1970 both of which involved an agreement to purchase the lodge. However, both of these agreements fell through as the buyers failed to make payments to finalize the ownership change. While the change in ownership in 2018 was an adjustment for Keweenaw County, it proved to be beneficial for the success of the lodge. The Keweenaw Mountain Lodge encompasses many historical aspects of Keweenaw County and today stands as a symbol for the challenges and resilience of that time. Today, the Lodge strives to marry the history with the future in order to get to a progressive and vibrant present.



A photograph from the Keweenaw Park and Golf Course opening day ceremony, June 23, 1935.

Property Map



Property Map from 2021

A. The Clubhouse: *See Clubhouse Historical Tour to learn more about the history of the main building.

B. Golf Course:

The golf course project began on Monday, November 6, 1933. It was estimated over 18,000 trees were cut to clear the once then 18 fairways. The golf course was designed by Ocha Potter, who was also a member of the Keweenaw County Board of Park Trustees. This board was created in order to get a liquor license. While Ocha Potter is considered the main architect, several other people were involved in the design including Harry A. Swanson, Keweenaw County Road Commissioner Surveyor and some say a hired expert in golf course design. The back 9-holes were never fully completed, but if they were, it would have been the first 18-hole golf course in the Upper Peninsula. The design of the course was finalized, and all the greens were cleared in the Spring of 1934. The majority of the funds for this project went into the completion of the golf course.



A view from Number 6 green in the 1930s.

Over the course of many years, discussion of completing the rest of the golf course was brought up, but continually shut down for multiple reasons including the lack of funds or rejection from the WPA

C. Tractor:

The tractor located by hole #1 was used to mow the greens of each hole when the course was built. It is a Toro Tractor that was made in around 1930-1934 and one of the last of its kind to have the steel wheels before switching over to the rubber wheels. It hasn't been used in years but still remains a focal point into the history of the golf course and the lodge.



Toro tractors used to mow greens during the creation of the golf course.

D. Water Tank:

The 18-foot 10,000-gallon water tank was installed in 1938 to replace the 3-inch waterline that had previously connected the resort to Aetna Creek Dam. This water tank serves as the main source for distributing water at the resort. The original elevated water storage tank had a catwalk around the elevated base that was accessed by a wooden staircase. In the late 30's and 40's guests would use this catwalk to observe the resort.

E. Cabins:

From this point, you can see cabins 1, 2, and 3. The construction of the cabins began in January of 1936. Wes Clark was the driver for the construction of the cabins. Cabins have made the most revenue for the lodge almost every year. There are a total of 24 cabins located on the property. Cabin #1 is where Clem Veale lived during his time as a manager. Cabin # 6 was destroyed by fire in the year of 1989, which resulted in one fatality. Cabin # 22 was also burned to the ground during the years of 1964-1970. Both of the cottages were rebuilt to replicate the original with a fabricated log structure. There is not a cabin #13.

A view of the cabins in the Winter of 1941-1942.



F. “Shantytown”:

The construction of employee housing began during the Winter of 1936 provided by the Works Progress Administration (WPA). It encompassed 13 small, around 8 foot x 10 foot wooden shacks near the tennis court. These huts were there to provide employees with housing in the summer and did not have running water. They were heated by small wooden stoves and had a single light bulb that hung in the middle of the room. There was one shack that served as the toilet building and was the only one with running water. Each hut had bunk beds to house multiple employees.



One of the last surviving “shantytowns” in September of 2009.

G. Swimming Pool/Parking Lot:

The swimming pool was built in the 1960s during the renovations of the lodge on top of what would have been the #10 tee for the golf course. Due to the improper construction of the foundation of the swimming pool, it constantly cracked and had problems holding water. Eventually, the pool was filled with mine rock in order to create a parking lot because parking had been an issue in the past.

H. Motel:

The Motel was built in 1984 designed by U.P. Engineers and Architects. The Motel consists of 8 rooms and one laundry room. It is now being used as employee housing instead of using the previously seen “shantytown” as lodging for employees.

I. Hiking/Mountain Bike Trails:

The path that connects to the driveway is one of four trailheads found on the property. This is the Trailhead for the Blue Trail, Cabin Life and Chipmunk Run. The Blue trail was originally constructed by the National Youth Administration (NYA) in 1938 and 1939. The NYA was a work program for youth (under the age of 18) and part of the larger; Work Progress Administration. In the early 2000’s local bikers added the wooden bridges on the trails.

The Cabin Life Trail was constructed in 2018 and was a joint project between the Keweenaw Mountain Lodge and the Copper Harbor Trails Club. Construction was done by local trail builders; Rock Solid. Cabin Life was built to provide mountain bikers an easier route from the entrance gate to the Lodge, compared to the rugged Blue Trail.

J. Tennis Court

The tennis court was an addition to the property with the approval and funding from the WPA. The tennis court was in use for many years, but later housed weddings and other events on the court. Along with the approval of tennis courts came a shuffleboard court, a “Greens Shack” meaning a Pro Shop, a barn for saddle horse, and other amenities to the property.

Along with the recreational projects that were approved and built with the help of the WPA, an archery and trap shooting range was approved but never built. It was supposed to be built for the 1942 season, but due to World War II was never suspended and later cancelled altogether.

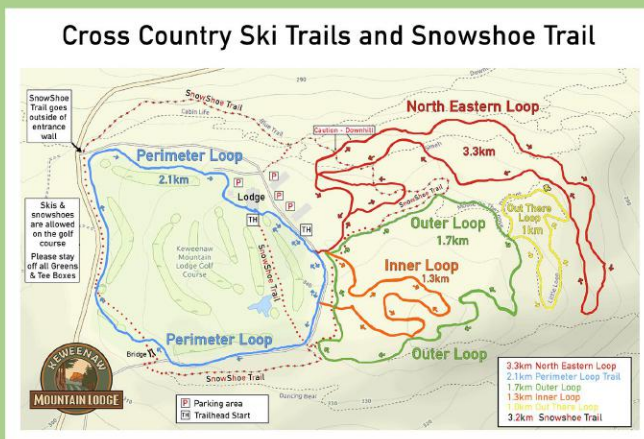
*Tennis court is in the background.
Photo taken from the water tower:*



K. The Snow Terrain Park The Ocha Potter Park was located behind cabin 23. It was built and used during the first 2-3 winters the lodge was open in the winter (2009- 2011) Lights were installed and people frequently used the park at night after Mount Bohemia was closed. There were even local “Rail Jam” contests held there at times. It is currently not in use but is being considered to be revitalized.



During this time period cross country ski trails were also added to the property. They were designed and made by local outdoor enthusiast Steve Rowe. In 2011, both the terrain park and the cross country trails were closed after the Lodge stopped operating in the winter. Under the new ownership the cross country ski trails were reopened in 2020 along with a designated snowshoe route.



L. Disc Golf Course:

The disc golf course starts at the back of the parking lot on the edge of the field. It is a nine hole course that wanders through the open areas and into the woods. It was built by local outdoor enthusiast Aaron Rogers in 2010.

M. Bike Wash/ Tool Station:

The bike wash and tool station was built in 2020. This was built by the facility staff and designed by local mountain biker Chris Guibert. Under the new ownership mountain biking was fully embraced and this was the first project to build out the biking infrastructure.



N. Outdoor Activity Center (OAC):

The OAC was established in the summer of 2020 by the seasonal workers that ran the golf course. Before that it was known as the “Pro Shop” and prior to that it was known as the “Greens Shack”. Golf members would store their clubs in the back. It is now a base for all outdoor activities including mountain biking, hiking and golf. In 2021 a fleet of 14 high-end Trek mountain bike rentals was added and a new bike mechanic station was built inside the building.



A pair of Sandhill cranes have been nesting in the woods between the holes of the golf course in 2020 and 2021.



The Lodge in the Summer of 2021

keweenawmountainlodge.com