

WINNEBAGO PLAYERS

BIRTH of the Winnebago Players occurred in 1928, when the board in charge of dedicating the newly-completed Doty Park decided on a home talent play as part of the ceremony. "Prunella" met with such popular enthusiasm that its sponsors began envisioning a little theater production as a permanent summer attraction. The idea grew, and in 1929, a hundred persons or more tried out for the cast of "Smilin' Thru." Twenty-two hundred attended its two performances, and the future of the Winnebago Players was assured.

Audiences of those earlier days will remember vividly "Pomander Walk," "Rip Van Winkle," "Devil in the Cheese," "The Return of Peter Grimm," and in later years, "Blithe Spirits," "I Remember Mama," etc. Ruth Dieckhoff, speech teacher at Neenah High, directed the first play in 1928, and continued in this capacity until she left Neenah. She and her work are remembered with gratitude. Miss Dieckhoff is now Mrs. H. B. McCarty, of Madison.

Unusual as these plays have been as dramatic achievements, there has been a civic aspect which has been more significant. Talent of both communities has been given opportunity for expression in the various fields of dramatic production. Actors, costumers, makers of sets, production staffs, directors and business managers have been necessary to the success of these performances. In producing them, there has come about an enlarging community friendliness such as few other civic enterprises could arouse.

Throughout its earlier years, and even up to a few years ago when, temporarily, the Players took a breathing spell, the citizens of Neenah and Menasha have given generous support to the Players. The result has been something of which the whole community may well be proud.

In 1957 the Recreation Department began sponsoring an amateur dramatic group, with performances given in the new Riverside Park pavilion. Under the able direction of Kenneth F. Anderson, speech, drama and English teacher at Neenah High School, highly successful

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