

Chicog-Then and Now for August, 2026
JoAnn Malek with guest writer Steve Loiselle

Billiards began as a lawn game similar to croquet, back in the 15th century. When the game moved indoors, a wooden table was topped with green cloth, simulating grass, and had a bank around the edges. The term "billiard" is French, taken from the word "billart," a wooden stick, or "bille," a ball.

The wooden stick had a large head on one end. When the ball landed near a bank players would turn the "mace" around and strike the ball with the handle, called a "queue," meaning tail. A leather cue tip was added in the 1800s allowing players to apply side-spin, topspin, even backspin to the ball. A "bank shot" is one in which the ball is made to rebound from an edge. A "carom" is the act of hitting two object balls in one stroke with the white cue ball.

The word pool indicates a collective bet or ante. In the 19th century a "pool room" was a betting parlor for horse racing, with pool tables installed for passing the time between races. Eventually the name pool became attached to pocket billiards. The game of pool evolved throughout the world with many flavors: varying table sizes, different numbers of pockets, and a variety of balls required (from 3 to as high as 22)

Steve Loiselle writes: Back when I was a young lad a recreation center for teenagers was opened in downtown Chippewa Falls. No alcohol or tobacco was allowed but there were plenty of pinball machines, dartboards, and other ways for young people to spend their time and stay out of trouble.

My family had a woodworking shop and I would go there after school to sweep the floor and run the sawdust up the chute. It didn't pay much but I always had a few nickels in my pocket for the machines and I actually got pretty good on them.

There were a couple of pool tables in the back room. Though it was never a rule, most of us assumed that this room was for older, high school aged kids, so we stayed out. Eventually the day came when there was no one using the tables. "Here is our chance. Let's do it." So we rented a table for an hour or two, and I got hooked on pool. After that we just got in line and took our turn whenever we could get an empty table.

During my college years we had pool tables in the dorm so I continued to feed my mania for pool. When I went to work for a living I traveled a lot and ate most of my meals in places where there were pool tables.

Then I got married and moved into an old country school house that had been remodeled and made livable, and so ended my love affair with a pool table. I didn't pick up a cue stick in many years until one day when I was sitting at Pappy's. A friend of mine, Jerry Brovan, was tending bar and said, "Come on and shoot a game of pool with us." I laughed. "Jerry, I haven't shot a game of pool in 25 years." He responded that it didn't matter, they just needed a fourth person.

We have all heard the old cliché about riding a bike. Well, I became a believer that day. As it turned out, it was getting really close to the start of pool league and Pappy's needed players. Some of their team just happened to be in the bar that day, and by the time I left the bar I had agreed to give it a try. I have been on that team ever since. I am not sure when that was but my guess is somewhere around 20 years ago.

During that time span we have been in the Webb Lake Men's Pool League with about 8 to 10 other teams. Although these guys are first and foremost my opponents, over the years many of them have also become my friends. Our matches can become very competitive but they are also friendly and in good spirits. Add that to the friendship that was formed over the years between my teammates and I, and I would have to say that being on the pool team has been a big part of my life here in Chicog. I plan on shooting pool for Pappy's as long as I am able, and hope that our team will continue to be successful.
GO, PAPPY'S



Stop in and watch the competition some Thursday night during the cold months. Strike up a game for a dollar a round. At Pappy's, tables are free on Tuesdays. Perhaps, like Steve, you'll find that the old cliché about riding a bike holds true for you. Maybe you'll even find a place on one of the league teams. And yes, women play on these teams, too.

Do you have stories to tell about Chicog-Then?
I'd like to listen. Call or text me at (612) 250-0301.

Thank you for reading Chicog-Then and Now
Town Website: www.townofchicog.com

IMPORTANT AUGUST DATES

Wednesday 8/5, 6pm, monthly Chicog meeting

Wednesdays 8/12&26, Namekagon Transit Service

Saturday, 8/22, Noon-6, Chicog Fun Fest, town hall

Food truck: **Stan and Stacy's Tasty Treats and Barbecue**

Live music, 3-6pm: **Sean and Ian Okamoto**

Chili and apple pie cook-offs - 1pm entry with \$10 fee

Silent auction - Noon-3

Dunk tank, with various volunteers

Meat raffles

For the children: minnow races, face painting, piñata

water barrel games with the Chicog Fire Department

Horse shoes. Corn hole

Refreshments including cash bar