

Walter Hagen

Allens Creek has been the source of many good things in Brighton, meandering its way across the town. Native people fished for salmon, early settlers dammed it and used it as a source of waterpower, children swam and searched for crayfish. For a time in the twentieth century it was polluted, absorbing the effluent from homes and businesses on the east side of town.

Before the sewage treatment plant, Allens Creek was home to the namesake Corbett family who farmed and operated a picnic area in the Glen. Neighbors on the other side of the bridge were few but one family stands out: the William Hagen family on Glen Road.

William and Louise Hagen raised four daughters and one son in the Glen. William worked at the Country Club of Rochester as a greenskeeper and later in the car shops in East Rochester. Son Walter, born in 1892, was introduced to golf at age three by a friend of his father. As a child he laid out his own three-hole golf course and practiced by pitching golf balls to newspaper targets spread out on the lawn overlooking the creek.

As a friend of the caddie master at the Country Club of Rochester, in 1900 Walter was able to secure a position as caddie when he was only seven years old (about the same age as he is in the accompanying photograph of the Allens Creek School children). Caddying earned him restricted playing privileges at the club and, by his fifteenth birthday, he was regularly breaking 80 on the eighteen-hole course.

In 1907, his education at Allens Creek school completed, Walter Hagen was promoted from caddie to assistant pro. Five years later, when the club pro took a position in Vermont, Walter was offered the job.

Playing golf as much as possible, Walter Hagen became a skilled golfer in his teens. He entered the 1912 Canadian Open and placed eleventh. Two years later, trying to decide between a professional career in baseball or golf, he cancelled a tryout for the Philadelphia Phillies in order to play in a golf tournament. That tournament was the 20th U.S. Open held at the Midlothian Country Club near Chicago. Twenty-one-year-old Walter Hagen won by one stroke, the first of his two U.S. Open wins. In addition to those wins, in 1922 Walter Hagen was the first native-born American to win the British Open. He went on to win it three more times.

Walter Hagen's career total of eleven major tournament wins is third behind Jack Nicklaus (18) and Tiger Woods (14).

This amazing athlete came from Corbett's Glen in Brighton!

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