

Golf for Muskogee Goes Back to 1903

MUSKOGEE — Oldest Oklahoma golf club still active at its original site is believed to be Muskogee Country club. It was founded a few weeks before founded in 1903. Eight now it is undergoing growing pains that take its toll.

The actual history of the club goes back to 1903 when F. P. Dyer, Tama Dyer Jr., and several others formed the Muskogee Town and Country club (fishing and hunting trips, social occasions and entertainments). Club meetings were held in one of the historic old buildings inside the Fort Gibson stockade. This made it necessary to cross the river on a ferry.

Club members were thinking of these early day operations as the object but it was not until the late summer of 1907 that they got around to doing anything about it.

The group purchased 100 acres of land known then as the Gairland homestead and hired Leslie Rowland, a Scotch professional secretary at a club in Port Beach, to build a clubhouse and green course.

The wizard Rowland returned to visit his home in Scotland and got Ed Nichols, a promising young Edinburgh amateur, to return with him to America to become professional at Muskogee. Rowland was a step-brother of Oklahoma City's Art Johnson who came to America some time later.

Arriving at Muskogee in the early spring of 1909, Nichols completed the job of building the course and had it open for play in May of that year. In about 1910 another 20 acres of land was purchased and Nichols, who served as Muskogee professional from 1909 through 1913, enlarged the course to 18 holes in 1911.

Following Nichols in the pro-lap came Willie Brown who served until about 1914. Tom Dickson took over for three years and he was followed by Ed Ford and Garland Jones who served until 1920 when Charlie Walker took over for two years before entering service in 1921. Returning from World war II in 1919 Walker has served as club professional in fact. While he was in service Willie Dow and later Jimmy D'Anorth, now at the same time golf and beach club at Myrtle Beach, S. C., were at the club.

In 1924 a race between the Muskogee club and Tulsa Country club developed in one which would build grass greens for the first time. The Tulsa men got their work done in 1924.

This late Perry Maxwell was hired to redesign the course and put in these first grass greens in 1924. Today only minor changes have been made from Maxwell's masterpiece. Best grass greens were set up in 1924.

When the club was formed 100 persons bought shares of stock for \$100. Now there are 400 members with a \$600 initiation fee and monthly dues of \$10.

PRESENT club manager is Alvin Hildreth with Voltaire the professional. Help Thomas is assistant professional and Tom Leonard, president of the Oklahoma Turfgrass association, is course superintendent.

Officers this year are Jay H. Fulkerson, president; Bob Campbell, vice-president; Wyntha Nason, secretary; Robert J. McKee, treasurer, and Fulkerson, Campbell, McKee, C. J. Perry, J. Gordon Turner, C. M. Smith, Bob Loman, Carl Graham and Bill Walker, directors. Executive chairman are Smith and Paves for greens; Turner and Graham for house; Bob Verna for entertainment, and Ed Langley for tournaments.

Club champion is John Everett Fort Worth professional Raymond Gifford holds the course record with a 61 while John Pook holds the amateur mark with a 61. Beth Stone is women's titleholder and she holds the course record for women with a 74.

The women's golf group organizes approximately 120 with Mrs. Maxwell Roster president, Mrs. Tony Sawyer vice-president, Mrs. Carl Pook secretary, Mrs. J. R. Kettle treasurer and Mr. Lloyd Burtlett tournament chairman.

IN the past few years much improvement on the course and clubhouse has been accomplished. With Floyd Farley of Oklahoma City as consultant a complete new watering system has been installed on the course. A new golf shop was built at a cost of \$10,000 five years ago and 20 this year two years a new grill and roof room cost \$2,000 and a new dining room costing \$12,000 have enhanced the pleasure clubhouse. A swimming pool and tennis courts have long been club fixtures.

The Muskogee city championship tournament is scheduled at the course May 24. Other regular golf fixtures each year are the sudden death trophy, club members with Port Beach, a football and an annual day honoring Nichols who won the state open championship five times and the state amateur crown twice after giving up a professional golf career to become a Muskogee business man. He won the club title first in 1913 and for the last time in 1915. He died in 1921.

