

As many of you have probably heard, there has been a lot of interest lately in reviving the old lake in Frazier Park. This interest has generated some curiosity about how the lake got started in the first place and has consequently led to questions about how the golf course got started as well. The staff at the Historic Adobe Museum research and compiled information from past newspapers that document some of the history of the beginnings of the golf course and the Frazier Lake. If anyone is interested in reading the entire document (about 20 pages) please contact Jeff Kreie at Bentwood Golf Course (353-1720). A summary of the researched history follows. If you enjoy this step back in time and would like to add your comments or recollections, please contact Jeff or send information by email to golfshop @pld.com.

The earliest reference to the golf course was found in the *Grant County Republican* in March of 1927 when it was reported that a group of citizens met at Dug's Lunch to discuss the feasibility of having a Country Club, golf course and playground. The proposed location was the Joe Bittiker place, which, as described was in the general area where the current golf course now exists, just north of a horseshoe bend in the North Fork of the Cimarron. There were plans at that time to erect a dam in this area in order to make a lake.

Just three months later after considerable work to prepare the golf course, the opening day for the Country Club was set for Wednesday, May 25th. A warm, windless day greeted participants to the Country Club opening at what was described as th most promising country club in this section of the state. C.D. Hickok was the only local golfer winning a flight that day and Ray Julian was the winner of the trap shoot, breaking 25 straight blue rocks.

In the fall of that first season it was reported that three of the fairways and greens had been worked over by those in charge and were in good condition - however, it was hoped that those in charge of the other holes would take the hint and get to work. No significant activity was reported again until two years later in September of 1929 when another tournament was organized by the golf committee in a meeting at Chet's Place. The tournament was set up by requiring qualifying rounds in the two to three weeks preceding the tournament date in order to assign players to their flights. Committee members included E.L Peacock, Earl Henderson, and Ben H. Lyle.

Early the following spring, in March of 1930, members put in new trees and made other course improvements, once again predicting that Ulysses will have one of the best courses in this part of the state. Two months later, in mid-May, the Ulysses golfers bested their visitors from Guymon by 29 shots in a total stroke team event - W.P. Wesley shot the low score of the day with an 84. One month later in mid-June a Mr. Walters from Sublette set the nine hole course record during a tournament by shooting 37 on his front nine in very windy conditions. Hole #3 must have been a par 3 hole near the river since it was reported on that tournament day that H.W. Stubbs had made a hole in one, although it took him three strokes to do so, having dunked the first two tee shots in the water hazard. According to the report, Mr. Stubbs was awarded a par on the hole, but as we all should know he should have recorded a five.

A couple of years later in September of 1932 it was reported that the Country Club held its annual member tournament. At some point after this date the Country Club was disbanded - it was reported in 22 years later in May of 1954 that a combination of dirt storms and the depression made it impossible to keep up the course - Ulysses did without for at least 20 years.

It was first reported in July of 1953 that Grant County would be getting a state sponsored lake that would cover 43 acres and have a maximum depth of 12 feet. Land for the lake was secured through condemnation proceedings. Later in 1953 the bid for the lake project was awarded to Wassenburg Construction Co. of Seneca, Kansas for the grand total of \$18,568.50 - the lake was to be completed by May 1st in the following year. Construction did begin on schedule in January of 1954 as ten men showed up to begin working on the job. Three months later in the first part of April the dam was built and the dry lake was waiting for rain.

With the newly completed dry lake awaiting rain, members of the Southwest Sportsman

Association began organizing in April in order to sponsor a 9 hole golf course at the site of the Grant County State Lake. A large number of enthusiastic volunteers made rapid progress on the new golf course leading the vice president of the North Fork Golf Association, Kenneth Eye, to predict that the course would be ready for play by the end of May. Par for the 3010 yard sand green course was set at 36. Work on the course was financed through the sale of memberships with family members paying \$15 and individual members contributing \$10 per year.

Only 37 members had paid dues by mid May - this financing effort was not matching the construction progress of the volunteers. Much of the credit for progress on the course was given to the efforts of Kenneth Eye, Ruben Blehm, and Jake Yarbrough - a Memorial Day opening was the plan.

Only six weeks or so after the dam and lake project was completed and while work continued by volunteers on the new golf course, heavy rains in Stanton County and eastern Colorado brought water to the Grant County State Lake for the first time - not a drop of rain fell around Ulysses. Hundreds of locals kept track of the slowly approaching water. The water, hindered by piles of blow dirt and carrying a full load of tumbleweeds, traveled only one mile in 3 or 4 hours time. After driving across the county all Sunday afternoon, the water finally reached the lake late Sunday evening and by 8:00 a.m. Monday morning (May 17th, 1954) the lake area was filled. Monday was a busy day at the lake, with a constant flow of traffic to see the first impounded body of water in Grant County. There was considerable disappointment by many observers that the lake was too small and too shallow, since a great deal of water was going over the spillway. The lake actually fit neatly into the engineer's stakes and it was noted that had the dam been built higher the water would have been backed up across the road that provided access to the lake. Grant County now had the distinction of being the only state park in Kansas with a lake, golf course, and picnic area.

Members of the North Fork Golf Association continued their all-out effort to have the golf course ready for play on Memorial Day - president, Verlan Phillips, reported that the fairways have been planed and seeded and the greens are being oiled. One of the holes on the south end of the course had to be changed once the lake overflowed. A typical wind and dirt storm spoiled the planned golf course opening on May 31, 1954, however, by evening time that day a few golfers were able to finally try out the new course.

A couple of weeks later in mid-June of 1954, Kenneth Eye, vice president of the North Fork Golf Association explained to the Rotarians how a golf course worth \$12,000 - \$14,000 was built with a mere expenditure of \$800. The association had raised \$865 through the sale of memberships with most of that money going towards the purchase of 12 acres of land and \$180 worth of grass seed. They needed another \$1000 with a fairway mower standing out as their primary need. Two weeks after opening, no one had yet scored par on the par 35 course.

In December of 1954, the Southwest Sportsmen Association began planning for landscaping and picnic areas around the lake area with the major park area to be east of the lake.

The first winter after the lake filled, cold January weather gave the local Methodist youth group an opportunity for an ice skating party. Skates were in short supply, but it was predicted that skating would become a popular sport at the new lake.

Only nine months after the lake was first filled due to heavy rains to our east, problems with the water supply for the lake began to be discussed. There had been little natural rainfall since the lake filled - the main supply of water for the lake was coming from the Ulysses disposal plant. To make matters worse, a demand for water rights below the dam required that a certain amount of water must be released from the lake. There was talk of adding water from an irrigation well. The Southwest Sportsmen Association continued with their plans for recreational facilities at their organizational meeting and set their dues for 1955 at \$2 for county residents and \$1 for out-of-county members.

The first scheduled organizational meeting of the North Fork Golf Association in the spring of 1955 was cancelled due to a dirt storm, but members were finally able to meet in May to begin planning another year of activities. The first tournament held at the North Fork Golf Course took place on July 4th, 1955.

As we skip ahead nearly three years to the spring of 1958 there is little to report about the golf course other than announcements of annual organizational meetings in the spring. In a late April of 1958 at a Rotary meeting a member of the state fish and game commission declared that the Grant County State Lake was a failure, only 4 years after it first filled with water. Siltation and a lack of an adequate water supply were the principal culprits. A farmer living below the dam also had a vested water right. The state had no solution for preventing the siltation and at that point they didn't know what to do with the lake. It was reported at the same meeting that the state had no authority to dispose of state lake land even if the City of Ulysses wanted it for a City park.

Lo and behold, less than a year and half later in September of 1959 the state lake property was deeded to the City and the first park board was appointed. Ulysses was required to use the land for recreational purposes as part of the transfer agreement. Chairman of the new park board was R.D. Harnar - other members were Bill Frazier (for whom the park is now named), Mont McGillivray, Dean Stratton, Madison Traster, Leroy Bingaman, and Jean Bowman.

This ends a summary of the research at this time. Anyone wishing to add to, contest, or enhance this information is welcome to contact me. I would like to find as much history of the lake and golf course as possible and hope to publish it on a website in the near future. Call me at 353-1720 (work), 356-4170 (home) or email me at golfshop@pld.com.