

Mansfield Memories - Canoe River Golf Club

October 15, 2019

When Willowdale Golf Course closed in 2014 after 54 years of operation, local enthusiasts were disheartened that Mansfield no longer had a golf course. What they might not have realized was that more than a century before, East Mansfield was home to a short lived but vibrant nine-hole links.

With interest on the rise a group of locals banded together to form Canoe River Golf Club in 1903. No map or plot plan survives today, but based on published reports the course was located on the south side of East Street “on property of J. M. Atwood and B. K. Flint.” In current terms that would be between the

Canoe River and Flint Farm, on or behind land now occupied by several private homes, the Heron Crest Condominiums and Flint Farm.

At first club organizers hoped to attract 50 charter members. Instead, 112 individuals signed up. In early May local gardener Patrick Cody of Chauncy Street was secured to lay out a plan and oversee construction. By the end of the month the new nine-hole course, which must have been rather rudimentary, was ready for play. In the week leading up to the formal opening the best nine-hole score was recorded by R.W. Messinger, who shot 57.

Canoe River Golf Club was dedicated on May 30, 1903. The men organized an 18-hole tournament, while the ladies played nine holes. The ladies also brought sandwiches and hot coffee for a gathering after the round, held in a “pretty grove” that members dubbed the “point of pines”. A dance was held that evening in Gifford’s Hall.

A busy summer of golf and socializing followed. Matches were played against Franklin, Walpole, Highland and Pawtucket country clubs. In May 1904, Canoe River Golf Club was officially incorporated, with the stated purpose of “promoting interest in the game of golf and other out of door sports and to promote sociability.”

The club continued to flourish that year, with a new clubhouse of green and red constructed “on the field fronting the residence of Alfred Burt.” This description suggests that the clubhouse was built on the south side of East Street roughly across from what is now the entrance to Lawndale Road. The new clubhouse was dedicated in October 1904.

GOLF TOURNAMENT. July 1903

Last Saturday a successful trio of tournaments was held by the Canoe River Golf Club.

There were prizes awarded for the best actual score, the best handicap score and for mixed foursomes. Frank M. Copeland made the record for the course, going the nine holes in 49. O. F. Dinsmore made the best net score and secured a prize. The scores in the men's tournament were as follows:

| | Gross | Hdcp | Net |
|-----------------|-------|------|-----|
| O. F. Dinsmore | 62 | 18 | 40 |
| F. M. Copeland | 49 | 0 | 49 |
| H. T. Emmons | 50 | 8 | 51 |
| H. W. Cobb | 59 | 6 | 53 |
| R. W. Messinger | 57 | 8 | 54 |
| J. R. Allen | 55 | 0 | 55 |
| F. R. Hardon | 78 | 23 | 55 |
| F. W. Day | 57 | 11 | 56 |
| Roy Hollis | 75 | 16 | 59 |
| W. F. Somers | 78 | 16 | 62 |
| H. E. Fairbanks | 87 | 23 | 64 |
| J. A. Welsh | 80 | 13 | 67 |
| J. D. Spaulding | 83 | 18 | 65 |

R. W. Messinger of Taunton and Mrs. R. R. Dixon took the prize in the foursomes.

The Walpole club is desirous of meeting the Canoe River's at team play on July 25, either at the Walpole or Mansfield links. The teams to comprise any number from 5 to 16 players.

On Monday evening there will be a meeting of the club at the selectmen's rooms. A report will be received from the committee selected to secure plans for a club house.

Reports suggest that the club continued to thrive over the next few years. But by 1910 it was announced that the club would make a special effort to revive golf interest in town. It was about this time when Canoe River Golf Club faded into history. We do not know why beyond an apparent lack of interest.

In 1917 there was considerable discussion of building second golf course, “Mansfield Country Club,” on Maple Street, as “a few years ago [golf] was exceedingly popular where the Canoe River Golf Club was in existence.” It was decided to table a new Mansfield Country Club until the conclusion of World War I. That idea never went any further, leaving Canoe River Golf Club as Mansfield’s only early 20th century golf course.

No. 10381

Commonwealth of Massachusetts.

Be it known That whereas Ira C. Gray, William A. Copeland, William E. Somers, Henry W. Cobb, Charles M. Hendon, Francis D. Fairbanks, Frank S. Sempyngton, Claude F. Wellington, Justin S. Cobb, Clinton S. Austin and Robert Rogerson

have associated themselves with the intention of forming a corporation under the name of the Canoe River Golf Club,

for the purpose of promoting interest in the game of Golf and other out of door sports and promoting sociability,

and have complied with the provisions of the statutes of this Commonwealth in such case made and provided, as appears from the certificate of the

President, Treasurer and Directors

of said corporation, duly approved by the Commissioner of Corporations and recorded in this office:

Now, Therefore, I, WILLIAM M. OLIN, Secretary of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, DO HEREBY CERTIFY that said

Ira C. Gray, William A. Copeland, William E. Somers, Henry W. Cobb, Charles M. Hendon, Francis D. Fairbanks, Frank S. Sempyngton, Claude F. Wellington, Justin S. Cobb, Clinton S. Austin and Robert Rogerson

their associates and successors, are legally organized and established as, and are hereby made, an existing corporation under the name of the

Canoe River Golf Club.

with the powers, rights and privileges, and subject to the limitations, duties and restrictions, which by law appertain thereto.

Witness my official signature hereunto subscribed, and the Great Seal of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts hereunto affixed, this thirty first day of May in the year of our Lord one thousand nine hundred and four.

Wm M. Olin

Secretary of the Commonwealth.