

ONE MAN'S ENERGY *and* EFFORT PUT Small Town Fee-Course ON PROFIT PRODUCING BASIS

LIVING about eighty miles north of Detroit, as the crow flies, in the "thumb" of the lower Michigan peninsula, is the little town of Caro with a population of around 3,000. From the standpoint of the readers of GOLFDOM, Caro is of interest because it has as successful and popular a nine-hole daily fee course as can be found in the state. The course was conceived, planned and built last season by one man, F. L. Clark, who as a real estate broker picked up at a bargain the land on which the course was laid out. In a letter recently received by GOLFDOM, Mr. Clark recounts his experiences while putting the new course "over the top."

"My only reason," says Clark, "for buying the 93 acres in the first place was the attractive price at which it was being offered. Adjacent to the city limits and on the main trunk line M-81, it also borders on Cass River, a stream about 50 yards wide and six feet deep, very desirable for boating and fishing. The only available timber and location for a city park and playgrounds are on this tract of land.

After the sale was consummated I thought of platting and selling off that portion of the property fronting on the river and along a most beautiful timbered ravine. This has a boiling spring with the finest drinking water one could care for and with sufficient water to supply two hundred homes. Our town is small and after giving the project careful consideration I decided to give it up for the present and instead build a golf course laid out so that I can sell homesites later and not interfere with the course. It is possible our city may want the layout for a closed club.

The soil on this property was considered very poor, being blow sand and quack grass. This land lies about 80 feet above the river and is quite level except for several ravines extending across it which add to the course's attractiveness.

All the old farm buildings on the place were wrecked with the exception of the



Remodeling an existing building gave the Caro course an adequate and inviting clubhouse at low cost

house, such a good frame structure that we decided to remodel it and use it for a clubhouse.

Financing was the hard thing to put over in a small town like Caro. I went to a friend banker of mine and laid my cards before him. He offered to make me the loan I asked for, but on such rigid terms I could not consent; then I went to a nearby town, Cass City, and got the amount asked for on my own terms.

I tried to get a golf architect. Most of them were busy that time of the year and those who were not engaged wanted as high as \$3,000. I could not afford this, as I only had a limited amount of funds; so I had to do the job myself.

We did not expend any great amount on the old farm house that we use for a clubhouse, except to remove a partition that gave us a large lobby. This is furnished with wicker furniture. We installed a hot water heating system, lockers and showers for men and a ladies' shower and rest room. A large porch overlooking the ninth green was added.

The "Wigwam," a rustic structure located opposite the first tee and ninth green about 25 yards from the clubhouse, is an eating place for the public open day and night. Light lunches, toasted sandwiches and soda fountain service are given there. We are just adding a private dining room and enlarging our kitchen, where full course dinners will be served. This is run under the management of the



The ninth green of the Caro course shows how the layout provides for good conditioning at low maintenance expense

club. Eighty per cent of the business is from the golfers, but the convenient location from the city makes it fairly good business in the evening, for they can dine and dance. The place has an automatic phonograph that plays twelve records.

The interior of the "Wigwam" is of rustic design, the walls are solid white birch bark, the back bar is of birch poles, chairs are birch bar finish with a hand-painted landscape picture of different design on the back of each chair. The tables are made of birch poles with a birch bark top covered with plate glass.

Our fences, sand boxes and all settees are rustic, also the pros' house. We have two large rustic bridges, one in particular which spans a ravine 90 feet wide and 25 feet above water. This bridge is located at the edge of the river.

The greens are of Washington bent and are practically perfect. The fairways as stated are of sandy soil but we have a wonderful catch of fescue and blue grass on them. We did considerable top-dressing with barn-yard fertilizer and clay and it is my opinion that sandy soil is superior to any other for fairways.

This is a semi-public course. The club was formed and run in this way.

On June 1, 1927, I circulated an agreement in our city with the understanding that if 40 signers were secured at \$75.00 annual dues each, I would agree to construct a nine hole course on the present site and open not later than May 30, 1928. I committed myself in this agreement to refund the money collected if I failed to open on that date for any reason of mine. This I fulfilled and in addition to giving these members nine holes of golf I gave them locker, shower, and clubhouse privileges. The result was I sold about 125 resident and non-resident memberships before the season was over.

We were open in exactly four and a half months, green fees practically paid for the upkeep of the course during the season. That left the membership dues for interest on the investment, taxes, construction, etc.

I didn't have a greenkeeper and was disappointed on our professional but secured a pro later in the season. I took complete charge of the greens myself and want to say with the aid of the green section and GOLFDOM articles I got along exceptionally fine. From this experience I do not believe three men are necessary for all nine hole courses, as two handle this course, including watering.

Our membership dues range as follows. (1) resident, \$75.00, which includes a man, his wife and children from 15 to 21 years; a locker, shower, and full privileges of the clubhouse for entertaining are included. (2) individual membership for single men at \$45.00; this does not include locker or showers. (3) non-resident members are on a zoned system according to distance and range from \$25.00 to \$45.00. We make no distinction between a single or married man in the case of their membership. Green fees are \$1.50 Sundays and holidays and \$1.00 week days. We have student rates of 20 plays for \$17.50, good any day.

I might state we can show net earnings of about 15 per cent on the investment.

Greenkeepers Hold Local Exhibitions

SEPTEMBER 9 the Midwest Greenkeepers' association held its annual outdoor equipment demonstration at Sunset Valley, Highland Park (Ill.). The event was well attended by equipment men and about 40 greenkeepers. Various standard items of golf course equipment and supplies were demonstrated.

On the same date the New England Service Bureau and Greenkeepers' club of New England staged their annual outdoor exhibition. A two-hour discussion on golf course maintenance problems featured the luncheon intermission in the demonstration program. September 8 the New Englanders representing some 20 clubs met at the Charles River C. C. experimental plots. Dr. John Monteith, Jr. of the Green Section and F. H. Wilson, Jr., greenkeeper for the club, explained the work and pointed out the results at the station.