

EXPERTS NEEDED

Neglecting to Employ Qualified Architects Has Cost Thousands in Muni Course Building

THE MORE I KNOW of golf and golf courses the more convinced I am of its influence on the health, the happiness and, owing to its effect on mental as well as physical fitness, the prosperity of the community.

One of the many advantages of capitalism is that under this system the luxuries of the rich today become the necessities of the poor tomorrow. This has been proved in regard to most things which at one time were the monopoly of the rich such as tea, coffee, sugar, automobiles, electric light, telephones, radios and even silk stockings, but golf and golf courses have fallen far behind other luxuries in this respect.

In olden days golf was the sport of kings, the Royal and Ancient game, but in Scotland in my youth, owing to the lessen-

One of the last articles written by the late Dr. Alister Mackenzie, internationally famed golf architect, is of timely interest because of extensive use of relief funds in municipal golf course construction.

Dr. Mackenzie points out the great opportunity before municipal golf courses that are expertly designed and constructed.

If his message were heeded by those responsible for the considerable amount of municipal course construction now being planned, use of public funds for such work would have highest, practical justification.

thority rarely appreciate the value of a golf course not only for its health-giving properties but also in providing wide open spaces free from buildings which are a permanent asset as the lungs of the city and in the second place they fail to realize



Dr. Mackenzie insisted his architecture appear to have been created by nature. This 180-yard 11th hole of the Valley Club, Santa Barbara, Cal., illustrates the finality of his work.

ing in cost of clubs and balls, it became so popular that it was well within the reach of the artisan.

At the Braid Hills municipal course in Edinburgh and on many other municipal courses golf could be played for as little as three pence a round, and at St. Andrews the rate-payers and their families enjoy the game free of all cost.

In the United States often those in au-

that a golf course which is well designed and constructed, invariably pays, and is not such a burden to the community in the form of taxes.

The natural conditions of soil and climate in America are not so suitable for providing golf courses at a low cost as in the home of golf, Scotland.

The chief cause of the comparatively high cost of golf, however, in the United

BY ALISTER MACKENZIE



One of the late Dr. Mackenzie's prides: the 160-yard fifteenth at the Leads (England) municipal course.

States is due to the fact that the municipalities that intend constructing a course rarely realize that the construction of a golf course is an extremely difficult art and if it is to attain its acme of popularity at a low cost of maintenance and construction it must be designed by an expert.

Build Right for Profit.

Records show that a first class golf architect designs a golf course at half the cost of construction charges and at a saving of at least 50 per cent in maintenance charges under figures of an inferior architect. Moreover the course is twice as popular if computed in terms of green fees. This estimate of course is based on similar conditions of accessibility, nature of terrain and so on.

With the exception of cities like San Francisco and Sacramento that are blessed with Park Commissions and city managers of exceptional ability cities are inclined to figure that if they get 9 or 18 holes of golf course they have handled the job properly. There never has and never will be an outstanding municipal golf course constructed on these lines. The false economy of saving one or two thousand dollars in expert advice frequently leads to the loss of hundreds of thousands of dollars in increased cost of construction and maintenance and in decreased popularity as estimated in terms of green fees.

This may appear to be an exaggerated statement but I do not think that it is. I have in mind two public golf courses in

the same city. One of them is less accessible and more unsuitable ground for golf than the other, but designed by an expert whereas the other was designed by a man of extremely limited architectural experience. The one designed by a first class architect has not cost half as much to construct and maintain and yet it gets \$50,000 a year more in green fees than the other. Multiply this by the life of a golf course which may be 20 to 100 years (the old St. Andrews course, which is a municipal course, is over 300 years old) and the loss for the lack of expert advice may conceivably run into a million dollars or more.

There are a few general principles which apply to public courses even more than to private ones. It is of even greater importance than usual that the soil, climate used for irrigation be carefully matic conditions and the nature of the studied so as to select the most suitable seed and fertilizers to provide turf of hard wearing qualities.

A Civic Jewel.

Beauty is of paramount importance. A municipal course designed by an architect who is an artist in constructing hillocks, hollows, sand bunkers and the grouping of trees of a natural appearance is almost invariably the beauty spot of the city. The most important thing of all in the designing and maintenance of a municipal course is the realization by everyone concerned that golf is played for fun, and that unless

a golf course provides the maximum amount of pleasure for everyone, including the beginner who rarely gets a ball off the ground, it is not a complete success.

There should be no long grass or other hazard on a public course necessitating the annoyance and irritation of searching for lost balls, and there should be a minimum of sand bunkers.

On the other hand the course should be full of interesting features such as closely mown hillocks, hollows and swales creating fascinating strategic problems and making every hole of such a character that there is such infinite variety stimulating players to improve their games. Then the charm of the course grows and grows and grows so that golf never becomes stale.

The Old Course at St. Andrews in Scotland is an ideal public course in this respect. There is a constant stream of men, women and children playing on it all the year round from sunrise to sunset and yet it is such an excellent test of golf for a good player that Bobby Jones says he gets more pleasure in playing it than in a hundred other courses.

The course I made for Bobby Jones, the Augusta National, is similar to St. Andrews. There are only 22 sand traps on it. It is easy for the man who is content with fives and sixes and an occasional par, but it is extremely difficult for the golfer who is striving for sub-par figures. It is a private club but it would have made an ideal public golf course.

There is an old adage, "Penny wise and pound foolish," which applies as much to the laying-out and designing of golf courses as to anything else, but it requires men of vision to realize this. Records show it however, and history has proved it. Beauty and finality must be provided for at the beginning, or the life of the course will be that of a cripple struggling along on crutches.

WILLIAM MILLER, a director of Teachers, the Scotch liquor people, recently visited Chicago and told the folks among other things:

"The American's drink is about 50 per cent larger than the 'spot' consumed by the Englishman.

"Scotch liquor should be consumed with the liquor and the soda about 50-50.

"Cost of retail liquor licenses in Scotland is 50 per cent of the assessed value of the property."

Experienced Manager Needed at Fee Courses

HERE IS AN example of how willingness to work isn't all that's needed in keeping a fee course going these days. A certain group of rich golf enthusiasts during the boom days built a fine daily fee plant. None of them ever paid much attention to the plant. They hired and fired managers frequently but refused to give any of the managers they hired the benefit of their extensive and successful business experience. The last manager advised them to cut the prices as a last resort.

"O.K.," said one of the rich owners, "get out the announcements to your mailing list."

"But I haven't got a mailing list. Very few of the people who come here ever give their names and addresses," replied the manager.

The part-owner shook his head in discouragement. "What about all the automobiles that have been parked around here? You could have taken their numbers, checked up on them and compiled a great mailing list."

That compilation of mailing lists from automobile licenses and other sources is one of the first things an experienced operator does and certainly should be one of the plant's assets that owners should investigate, but it's amazing how many of the courses haven't such lists. Some of them say there's no use, they haven't the money to work the list.

That's only one small but significant instance of an expensive lack of experience in the fee course business.

SOILS DIFFER widely. It has been shown that bent grasses grow best in some soils if they are decidedly acid, whereas in other soils the best growth may occur when they are alkaline. Therefore it is impossible to state that soils for golf course turf should be within certain prescribed limits of acidity.—John Monteith, Jr.

DURING construction or reconstruction of a golf course, it is best to do all possible carting of materials in dry weather or after the ground is frozen. Carts should stay as much as possible in the same tracks, thus doing the minimum of damage to turf. Sometimes it pays to remove the turf during carting and relay it after the work is finished.