

Oakland Hills Clubhouse is adequate to cater comfortably to a roster of 600 members.

PRIVATE - PUBLIC SPLIT OK

By JOHN CHANDLER

36-hole Detroit layout profits thru opening one course to fee players

OAKLAND HILLS Country Club, situated about 15 miles from the heart of Detroit, Mich., occupies an unusual position—a leading private club successfully operating a public links.

The history of Oakland Hills and its public brother sidekick, North Hills, says John P. O'Hara, prominent Detroit lawyer and president of the club, goes back to 1916 when construction of the famous course was begun. Using natural advantages as much as possible, Donald Ross, well known golf architect, constructed the entire course about two holes, numbers 10 and 11 which are still considered classic two-shotters in golf construction.

About 1920 directors of the club, taking heed of the rising membership total, decided to purchase a large tract of land directly north of the Oakland Hills course, to be utilized at a later date as an additional playfield for its members.

Old Course Gets Traffic

But things did not work out the way the optimistic directors had hoped. For instance, everyone at the club from Grandpaps down to Junior preferred, naturally enough, to play the championship south course. A few years later, not long after the north course was opened in 1924, came the national panic and many members were forced to become non-club members. The club roster shrunk from a high of well over 600 to 400, then to 300. Obviously it did not take a great deal of thought to discover that something had to be done—and quickly. The north course should be sold



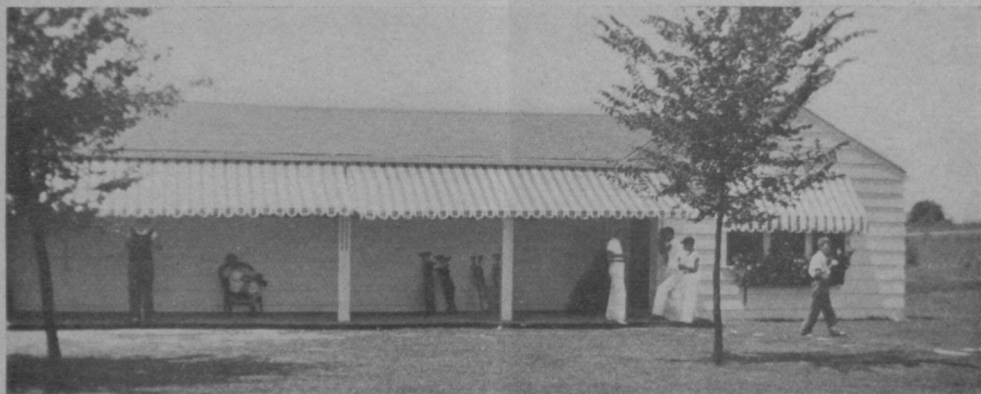
JOHN P. O'HARA

outright on the auction block, urged some of the club's members.

Others, more staunchly in favor of keeping both courses under the wing of Oakland guidance, proposed putting the north course on a fee basis, while members of Oakland, of course, could continue to play it as well as the other. The idea carried.

So, Al Watrous, Oakland Hills professional, leased the north side course from the club in 1933 and operated it himself for a two-year span. Gradually the course met public fancy, and by the end of 1934, those faithful members who a few years before had battled to keep the course, began to see that their vision had stood them in good stead.

Now, 1935, the club operates the course



The clubhouse of North Hills is designed to render efficient fee-course service to its players.

under the direction of its own manager, Joseph Bureau. Beneath Bureau is the North Hills pro, Leo Conroy, who incidentally encourages business to the course because in addition to his salary he receives a commission on the play. And now also, the North Hills course defrays the overhead of Oakland by paying its own maintenance costs. These costs were constant, as O'Hara aptly pointed out, whether the course was private or public whether anyone played it or not. Maintaining both courses for the year will cost about \$18,000, O'Hara estimates. And green-fees from North Hills, if the play

keeps up as it has during May, June and July, will take care of that course's share of the expense. Maintenance is under the expert direction of Herbert Shave, Oakland Hills greenkeeper. The two courses are kept in tip-top condition.



HERB SHAVE

Here's just what the North Hills public course has done for Oakland. O'Hara speaking:

"By using North Hills for public play, we helped defray our overhead. When North Hills was not used extensively, we still had to keep it up and the overhead costs endured. With the public using it now, the returns just about take care of its maintenance."

As for other courses in the country trying out this idea, running a public layout alongside the private, O'Hara says:

"If they had two courses already, using

one course in that case would be a decided advantage. But if they haven't two courses side by side, they needn't worry about converting one of them into a public course."

Leo Conroy, North Hills pro, says that North Hills is the best public link layout he has ever seen, barring none.

No Course for Dub Players

Poor golfers, rampaging around for a golf course, have a tendency to steer away from North Hills. They do not come there in large numbers because a missed shot or one which goes too far off line generally draws a stiff penalty.

Al Watrous holds the North Hills course record, a 63 in 1933. Al's recording-holding mark on the par-72 Oakland Hills layout is also 63. Par at North Hills is 70. Tommy Armour played the course a few years back and say he'd rather shoot it than the older layout.

Women are a bit skeptical about playing this public course, although they usually flock to the others in good numbers. As an added inducement to women, says Conroy, they are allowed to play free every Friday, and may also play free on Tuesdays if they are accompanied by a male escort—more than one to an escort being okay. The few women that stick it out past the nine hole mark find their scores mounting too rapidly on the back nine when they begin to tire. Not many play it.

But the men like the course. The better class of golfer and those who found the overhead tough in private clubs patronize North Hills heavily and Saturday

and Sunday crowds average about 250 per day. Fees are reasonable: 75 cents a round during the week, one dollar all day, and 50 cents for twilight play after four o'clock. Saturday and Sunday, there is no twilight fee—the price is \$1, nine holes or all the golf you can play.

The clubhouse has locker room facilities for both men and women and for a small fee the player gets a shower, towel and locker. There is a fine lunchroom attached, which is also operated by Oakland Hills. This year, playing privileges, including locker and shower every time the holder plays, were offered at \$35 apiece.

Conroy says his pro shop business is good. He's selling many clubs and plenty of balls. Lessons are frequent. When he talks about the course, he knows whereof he speaks. For seven years before he came to North Hills from Detroit two years ago, Conroy was touring pro on duty at various times at four of the more popular Detroit public courses. He divided his time among the four, and his present job, he says, is much better.

Leo, who was born in the clock town, Waterbury, Conn., 29 years ago, might have been an expert newspaper photographer if the lure of the links had not been so firmly imbedded in his blood through his caddying days. When Leo went to high school he lugged a camera and took shots of anything interesting that turned up. One day he saw a bunch of cops going into a house. He followed them in, saw a corpse lying on the floor, took a picture. A Waterbury news editor laid \$100 right on the line.

Is the present scheme a permanent one? Yes and no. North Hills will continue to be public indefinitely, but O'Hara, with a club president's rightful sense of optimism, says that his membership rolls are still growing (right now they total about 250) and maybe "some day we'll have to close the course to the public again."

But that "some day" will probably be a long time coming. So long as the North Hills layout keeps its head well above water, the public can continue to dig its divots. "Pay as you dig," says Oakland, "and you can dig all day."

ARSENATE OF LEAD has two distinct uses; that of poisoning the soil to check pests that feed in the soil, and poisoning the top of the turf for the control of insects which eat the leaves without feeding within the soil.

Jersey Field Day Reveals Helpful Data

ANNUAL Turf Field Day of the New Jersey Agricultural Experiment station at New Brunswick, N. J., was conducted by the Department of Agronomy on July 29. Each of the several hundred plots were fully labeled and on full display for visitors. In attendance were golf course officials, professionals, and greenkeepers throughout the entire Metropolitan area. In addition, there were a con-



The "gallery" follows Dr. Sprague, as he describes the plots at New Brunswick

siderable number of commercial firms represented, as well as superintendents of public parks, home and estate owners.

Some of the high-lights in the field plots discussed by Dr. H. B. Sprague, in charge of experiments, were as follows: The new plantings of grass species have shown that Italian or Domestic rye grass is considerably inferior to perennial rye as a nurse species in mixtures for new seedings; Poe trivialis is unable to survive in the open at any length of cut varying from $\frac{1}{4}$ to $1\frac{1}{2}$ inches; Velvet bent grass will produce a fine sod in less time than any of the other bent grasses or Kentucky blue grass and Chewing's fescue; the older plot of Velvet bent cut at lawn length was observed to be even more drought resistant than Chewing's fescue.

In the long-time fertilizer tests comprising a series of over 100 plots, efforts to replace Virginia bent with Seaside bent without changing soil conditions were entirely successful. The same fertilizer treatments which were found least desirable for Virginia bent, namely those treatments which made the soil acid, also made the establishment of Seaside rather difficult. It is clear, however, that Seaside bent offers considerably more com-