

WPA Big Factor in Golf Growth

500 courses affected by WPA work of constructing and improving 40,000 acres of golf links

THOUSANDS of Americans who until a few years ago couldn't tell a putter from a niblick today are playing over more than 40,000 acres of golf links, constructed or improved by the Works Projects Administration since its inception in the summer of 1935. An inventory just made public of WPA's physical accomplishments from the start of the program through December 31, 1939, shows that in that four and one-half year period 500 modern, sporty public courses, with a total of more than 6,000 holes had been made available to golfers in nearly every state by the Federal work relief program.

More than 200 of these courses, aggregating 2,300 holes and occupying 15,000 acres, are brand new, scientifically designed to meet the particular needs and finances of individual communities. Nearly 300, with more than 3,700 holes and covering some 28,000 acres have been improved through re-sodding, new fairways and hazards, landscaping, drainage and other alterations.

As a result golf, as a popular recreation, thrived through depression years, with more and better courses in the country today than there were in 1929. And it has been common experience that the number of golfers increases as new courses are put at their disposal.

Work Done Only for Public Courses

All this work of the WPA is, of course, in all cases on publicly owned and operated links, usually under the sponsorship of a municipality but in some instances under the sponsorship of counties. Aside from the recreational value of this wide program of golf course development, important as it is, work of this particular type has been of tremendous material benefit. To begin with, construction and improvement of golf courses is ideally adapted to the primary objective of the Federal work relief program—to provide work on worthwhile projects of permanent value for employable persons on local relief rolls.

The municipal governments benefit through the increase in real estate values through the reclamation of wasteland on

which many of the courses are built, and through residential developments which spring up in their vicinity.

For example, the Washoe County golf course at Reno, Nevada, has brought about a noticeable increase in residential construction. City Park golf course in New Orleans, where the third Crescent City \$10,000 open tournament was played in February, was an impenetrable swamp only a few years ago. The Work Projects Administration and the city of New Orleans have transformed this swamp into one of the finest golf courses in the South. The 1940 tournament was one of the most successful ever held in this city and attracted thousands to the new range to see Jimmie Demaret of Houston carry off the purse with a total of 286 for the four rounds.

New Orleans Gets New Clubhouse

Spectators at the tournament had the opportunity to inspect City Park's new golf clubhouse being constructed by the WPA and now nearing completion. Using the old clubhouse as one wing of the structure WPA workmen are completing a central building, two stories high, flanked on the left by a wing which will be used as a men's locker-room, increasing locker-room facilities from 75 to 250 lockers. The building will also house facilities for women golfers.

In the construction of other new courses, many difficulties were encountered and overcome. Boston's George W. Wright golf course in the Roslindale-Hyde Park section was literally carved from rock-ribbed New England countryside. To construct the course, which has been acclaimed by Boston linksmen as equal to any private club in the Metropolitan area, masses of underbrush, boulders and woodland debris had to be cleared away, ledges and rock outcroppings blasted and covered with loam; swampy valleys drained and graded.

Ithaca, New York, for years had wished to develop its lake front, a tract of some 300 acres, one-third of it little more than a swamp, on Cayuga Lake. On this site, which for 20 years had been used as a

public dumping ground, a 9-hole golf course was constructed after 30 acres of scrub willows had been cleared and grubbed, 35 acres of dump area graded and the swamp land filled with material from the graded acreage.

Baker, Oregon, until recently struggled with a municipal golf course situated on an alkali bed which could not be drained satisfactorily, and upon which grass could not be grown. A tract of 55 acres near the city reservoir was provided by the city and with the aid of the WPA a 9-hole course was constructed, the only turfed course in the county.

At West Seattle, Washington, work is nearing completion on an extension to the existing golf course as part of a large recreation area being developed from a 208-acre former cut-over tract and garbage dump. The course will be ready for use this spring.

Completion of two new public courses

late in 1939 and improvement of three others has provided additional facilities for Philadelphia's public linksmen.

One of the first of the courses to be rehabilitated by the WPA was the Pelham Bay links in Greater New York. That course, which originally measured less than 6,000 yards, with the greens the only places closely mowed, was completely rebuilt. It now measures 6,600 yards, has been landscaped throughout with trees and shrubs, has fine draining and irrigation systems, and, as is generally the case in WPA-built courses, has an attractive clubhouse. During the first year of its use, 1937, a total of 48,000 rounds of golf were played over its fairways. In the construction and improvement of these hundreds of public courses, the WPA has sought the expert advice of recreation authorities and, particularly, golfing experts.

'Panhandle' Gets Grass Greens Course

By George May

THE City of Amarillo (Texas) set out to build an 18-hole grass green golf course with \$40,000, and almost did it. On March 1, when the course was put on a maintenance basis, the costs were tabulated at \$41,929.28.

The work included a complete high pressure watering system for the fairways, greens, and tees, a new clubhouse, 1,600 trees, 18 big greens and the work done on the fairways and tees. Cost of the clubhouse alone was \$17,500.

Amarillo's city commission, headed by a golfing mayor, Ross D. Rogers, has

accomplished something remarkable, but they don't believe they have done anything other golf-conscious cities can't do. Amarillo had one big advantage in that it had a 640-acre park almost wholly undeveloped. Mayor Rogers, after careful study of the entire park area, selected 225 acres of high rolling ground as the location of the links. The course is laid out along four low hills. When construction started the land was fairly well covered with native grasses.

From the city street department the course borrowed a large piece of road



Amarillo's new clubhouse for many course golfers, which has just been completed, provides ample shower and locker facilities, plus plenty of lounging space; cost was \$17,500.