

PLANT *New Life* INTO AILING CLUB

GOLF IS a force in the U. S. scheme of living. Rightly handled it will make any country club prosperous. Because they believed that, members of the green-committee at Kakhwa CC in Erie, Pa., one of the oldest clubs in the country, have just completed a 2 year job which has increased and vitalized the membership and placed the organization once more on the road to prosperity. Incidentally, the 2 year golf improvement program has considerably changed the character of the membership. Kakhwa is now primarily a golf club.

When the board of governors decided early in 1943, following the operation of 1942 when the Club had gone into the red ink for the first time, that the war would bear down too hard to permit a full operation, they let the rough grow up in hay. Only about a dozen golf members proved themselves hardy enough for that. A half dozen lost balls a round was a common price even for them. By the winter of 1943-44 the membership was down from 360 in 1938 to 230. Prospective dues income for 1944 was insufficient to meet fixed charges on the old scale.

Now in 1946, dues are back to the old

volume, the club has opened the season with 250 golf members, counting juniors who have tripled in number, and with a total membership of 400.

There is nothing complicated in the story of what happened. The club was incorporated back in 1893; disposed of its city realty in 1917 and moved 10 miles out of town to 200 acres of farm land. Donald Ross built the course on open pasture land with 3 small patches of wood inside the perimeter. The same architect who laid out the Shaker Heights clubhouse at Cleveland designed Kakhwa's main club building.

For 50 years social members had predominated; a situation paralleled in many other clubs. After the first big construction expense the course was allowed to drift. In the roaring twenties that was simple policy; country club momentum was easily generated.

At the start of the 1930 decade membership began falling off. Kakhwa was a typical country club that knew it was suffering without anyone going to the trouble of analyzing the difficulty, aside from blaming it on the depression. Some clubs read the future and put in swimming pools and modernized their courses to keep themselves on a competitive basis with the many attractions that had developed on the American summer scheme.

Kakhwa drifted along until 1936 and 1937 when it staged 2 membership drives and brought the total again to 360 with golf dues at \$135 and house dues at \$90. Then the downhill drift began again until it culminated in the approximate shutdown of the club in 1943 with the war pall given as the reason. Skilled management in the house might have saved the situation even then but the club was turned over to the bookkeeper.

Rear view of Kakhwa CC. Part of green of pitch-and-putt course planted with 95 kinds of evergreens shown at bottom right.





Back of No. 7 green, formerly very open, now is graced with Concord firs and Colorado blues.

Planting Program Launched

In 1937 members of the present green-committee began fostering a planting program which they believed would put bigger basic values on the golf course. The first touch in this program was to copy the 19th hole from Scarboro, Ontario. It was rescinded, then restored by petition to the Board. Now everybody enjoys the improvement.

George Baldwin, realtor, put in 50 fruit trees in 1938 because all players like fruit trees. T. R. Palmer, life member, gave the club 500 spruce and pine Christmas trees in 1939. They were used to separate holes that were open and contiguous; to screen them in and create new character. This was followed the next two years with 8000 state evergreen seedlings.

In 1940 two hundred members each gave \$10 and 2500 deciduous trees, mostly spring bloomers and decorative pieces, to accent the evergreen planting, were bought with that money. An effort was made to copy some of the landscaping features of Forest Hills and Palm Beach CC, two of the most attractive courses in the U. S. A 9-hole pitch-and-putt course involving an arboretum containing 95 kinds of evergreens was added near the clubhouse.

Came the war and the trees stayed at their work silently. Now the long range policy of providing greater values is paying off. The trees have become important. Before the year is gone an aerial view will be taken to show the contrast with a similar picture made in 1937. The trees cost the club only the labor of planting. They could not be replaced in 1946 for many times what they cost.

The Pay-off Begins

There is nothing involved about the story of the last 2 years. The trees were growing into the payoff area. Every hole possessed new character and the course

was more attractive. The green-committee promised first class maintenance for 1944 and the Board was persuaded to drop golf dues to \$75 for that year to give the membership rolls the quick shot they needed.

Sixty-five new golfers were added under the committee's slogan of "bigger values for Kahkwa golfers." The rough was practically eliminated for the first time to make it non-irritating and hard to lose a ball. Rounds played stepped up 1000% over the previous season but dues were still far short of an amount needed to carry an average overhead so the operation had to be economical.

Add Other New Features

The course had been operated in 1941 and 1942 for \$18,000 each year and the \$1000 a hole standard had been regarded as proper just as it was and still is at many other American golf clubs. Kahkwa's golf and grounds cost in 1944 was \$444 a hole; but good enough to bring in 65 new members. The green-committee added 2 touches. The members lifted to a uniform level the lower limbs of 2500 large deciduous trees that had not been trimmed for many years. It was a tremendous improvement in silhouette uniformity and still is. Simultaneously 100 members kicked in \$10 each and the traps were filled with a 30 mesh white sand similar to Sea Island's. The white jack o'lantern traps and the 10,000 evergreens gave the golfing community something to talk about. The membership work continued.

In 1945 another 100 golfers were secured. Dues were upped to \$90 and the \$100 entrance fee replaced. Golf maintenance was expanded to \$685 a hole. No new machinery could be secured.

In the fall of 1944 four hundred tons of city sludge had been put on to the fairways. It was the first fertilization since the club opened in 1918. Fairways that had been limed in 1937 were limed

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Approaching No. 3 green at Kahkwa. New evergreen plantings shown at left.

Plant New Life

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again. Fifty tons of sludge were put through a Royer and sold for lawn fertilizer at \$2 the bag and the profits used to defray expense of liming and sludging the fairways.

In 1945, after the season closed, another 50 tons was similarly processed and the profits used the past winter to build a new repair shop; 24x36 with concrete floor and plenty of light. Repair work had previously been done in a 75 year old barn. Bulldozers were put to work making a new approach to No. 4 fairway, taking away a hazard on No. 3 hole and building some new tees.

Blue, red and green courses (three in one), with 6250, 6450 and 6650 yardages, have been set up for 1946. New cards in three colors have been secured. A new practice putting green near No. 1 tee is going in. A new summer house of stone has been built in the center of the course. All of these course improvements came out of sludge profits.

During the past winter the same green-committee added another 25 golfers with initiation fees and sold an equal amount of stock to old associate members. It was not difficult to get \$4000 for new equipment. New fairway mowers, modern pressure sprayer and a new pump for the course doubling the water available, with other equipment, are being used this year.

Sign New Staff

Ross Brown, well known in western New York, took charge of the course in March. He is enthusiastic about Kahkwa possibilities. He wants to complete the modernization and do some more things Donald Ross would probably have done had he laid out the course 30 years later.

What happened in the house in the meantime? Very little. The bookkeeper again managed the club in 1944 but service was spotty and sporadic. Because of cook difficulty the dining room was not permanently opened to stay open until August 10th that year. Believe it or not

the green-committee hired 6 cooks to report August 10th and after that members had service. In 1945 a braver effort was made. Although golf meals were cut off in the grill the play continued in increasing volume. House operation lasted until Labor Day.

In 1944 and 1945 operations the green-committee saved \$16,000 over 1941 and 1942 costs on golf course and grounds so the club made a small profit as a whole each year.

Finally realizing the necessity of experienced management the club secured the services of George Miller, formerly with Milwaukee Club and Evansville



Art Vogt, for 24 years pro at Erie's Kahkwa club, estimates that in the past 8 years Cy Lund has visited the club 2500 times on work connected with the landscaping, course maintenance and general building of the club. Cy, now green-chairman, is genl. agent for Pacific Mutual Insurance Co. and like many other insurance man golfers, full of pep and high purposes. When he saw Kahkwa slipping he urged the landscaping plan to give new life to the course stage setting. So they let Cy do it. When the club's membership situation got desperate they had Cy head the drive. He brought in 100 new members by his own efforts. Now Kahkwa's in strong shape and the spark-plug of the revitalizing procedure can ease up. Around that club they'll tell you "Cy's quite a guy."—Ed.



(Ind.) CC. He also took over in March and has ready at hand an eager clientele of at least 1200 people; all looking forward to the good things in the house denied the Erie community in 4 years of less than average operations.

Art Vogt, pro, is now in his 24th year. Golf has changed Kahkwa over from a 311 member club with 125 golf members in 1941 to 400 membership and 250 golfers

in 1946. Watering for the fairways is in the offing; swimming pool talk is in the air.

The lowdown on the entire operation covering two years of "bigger values for golfers" is found in the accompanying figures abstracted from the annual statements. Many a green-committee spending \$18,000 to \$25,000 for upkeep of course and grounds

may find food for thought in the summary. Labor went up 60% and Kahkwa costs went down. The green-committee says the operation had to be good enough each year, even at the costs shown, to bring in 170 new golf members, and is inclined to think that result, in itself, is the measurement of the operational detail's value.

STATISTICS ON KAHKWA CLUB OPERATIONS

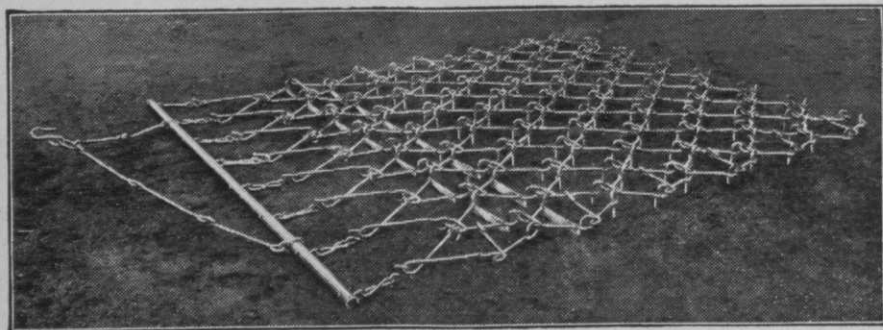
	1941	1942	1943	1944	1945	1946
Golf Members	125	110	83	150	212	250
Total Members	311	285	230	289	375	400
Annual Golf Dues.....	\$ 135.	\$ 135.	\$ 99.	\$ 75.	\$ 90.	\$ 90.
Total Golf Dues.....	16800.	14800.	8200.	11200.	18200.	21200.
Grounds Cost	17900.	18100.	*	8000.	12300.	14000.
Freed to General Funds...	—1100.	—3300.	*	3200.	5900.	7200.
Per Hole Maintenance Cost	1000.	1000.	*	444.	685.	777.
Per Capita Cost.....	143.	165.	*	53.	56.	56.

*No records.

Who was on the Grounds committee? Cyrus Lund, a life insurance agent was chairman and personally supervised the planting program from its beginning eight years ago. With him and back of him on the committee the past 2 years were: D. A. Currie, manufacturer; George D. Baldwin, realtor; E. L. Evans, county judge; and H. J. Laver, florist.

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