

HISTORY OF GOLF IN MINNESOTA ROCHESTER GOLF & C C

by **JAMES D. GARDNER**
Assistant Golf Course Superintendent
Rochester Golf and Country Club

Rochester was one of the seven charter members in the Minnesota Golf Association (MGA) in 1901. The other initial members were Town and Country Club and Merriam Golf Club in St. Paul, Minikahda Club and Bryn Mawr Club in Minneapolis, Tapeta Golf Club in Faribault and Meadow Brook Club in Winona. Golf in Rochester up to 1916 was played on a leased piece of land just east of town. This pasture was maintained by a herd of sheep and a few goats with the greens given more attention by hand mowing. At that time, the course was called The Silver Creek Golf Club.

In 1916 The Rochester Golf Club bought the present day land and secured Harry Turple (a seasonal New Orleans golf professional at Red Wing) to lay out a 9-hole golf course - 3,285 yards, Par 38, bogey 40.

Albert Warren Tillinghast "Tillie the Terror" then came upon the scene. During the winter of 1925, Mr. Tillinghast presented his plans to the board for an all new 18-hole

design. Construction of the new 18-holes started in the fall of 1926, with all 18-holes opening by July 5, 1927.

Rochester Golf and Country Club has hosted many professional exhibition matches during its early years. Some of these matches include the following: Jock Hutchinson and Chick Evans (Evans Scholars) in 1925, Walter Hagen (1926), Patty Berg (1938), and Byron Nelson (1945). Byron Nelson shot a 66 that day; a course record that stood until the 1950's. Wally Ulrich shot 64's in 1953 and 1956. Ulrich played on the pro tour in the 50's and won the 1954 Kansas City Open. He also shot a 60 (9 under par) on 18-holes at the Cavalier Yacht and Country Club in Virginia Beach. Now with fully matured trees lining each hole, the modern day record for Rochester Golf and Country Club is held by a half-dozen members at 66.

The present day evergreen-lined fairways were all hand planted in the early 30's under the direct supervision and hard work of Dr. W. D. Shelden. In 1947, The Shelden Tournament was conceived as an enduring tribute to Dr. Shelden's foresight and generous spirit. The Shelden attracted the leading pro's and amateurs from the five state area. Some of the past Shelden winners include: Joe Coria, Jack Fleck, Don Waryan, Wally Ulrich, Pat Sawyer and Dayton Olson. Today this annual tournament (held the third weekend in June) continues to be the big member-guest event of the year.

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Rochester Golf and Country Club has hosted 3 MGA Men's Amateur tournaments (1930, 56, 70), 3 MGA Women's Amateurs (1938, 52, 62), 1 State Open (1941), 2 Minnesota PGA's (1968, 78) and the 1967 Women's Trans-Mississippi.

In 1987 Rochester Golf and Country Club initiated a Restoration/Renovation plan directed by golf course architect Geoffrey Cornish. The plan evolved out of the green committee and the members pride in having an original A.W. Tillinghast golf course. The goal of this plan is to maintain the original character and integrity of the A.W. Tillinghast design. This plan includes re-establishing original green margins to regain some of the old Tillinghast "unique cupping positions". Also contouring of the fairways were marked by Mr. Cornish. This contouring reduced our fairway acreage from 40+ acres to less than 30. This will allow for more intensive fairway maintenance, playability improvements, create new interest to old straight line margins, accentuate shot values and show off the triplex mowing lines.

Tee recommendations were made for possible extensions and/or additions. It was also recommended that #1 tee be redesigned to correct an alignment problem, provide more teeing area and gain better usage of the site. Every existing bunker was evaluated to restore the original shapes that had been lost through time. Addition of lost fairway bunkers was recommended to coincide

with today's shot lengths and original Tillinghast shot values. Today's membership is very proud of their golf course and look forward to hosting the 1989 Minnesota Men's Amateur Tournament.

IN RECOGNITION OF SERVICE KURT ERDMANN

by **JAMES D. GARDNER**
Assistant Golf Course Superintendent
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Kurt started his career in the golf course business in 1944 at Soldiers Field Golf Course in Rochester. Sponsored by Paul Miller, he joined the Minnesota Golf Course Superintendents' Association in 1946. Some other superintendents that joined the state association around this time were George Ostler, Sr. (1949), John Fuller (1951), Lyle Cran (1951) and Irv Fuller and Gordy Miller (1949).

Kurt began his tenure at the Rochester Golf and Country Club in 1957. Bill Bergstadt was the club president. He joined the Golf Course Superintendents' Association in 1958 and attended his first conference in Chicago. As Kurt will attest to, there are many stories that involved George Ostler, John and Irv Fuller when they attended

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