

A History of Blackhawk Country Club

—The Early Days—





Undated Photo , Early Golfers
Found in BHCC Records

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the
Blackhawk Country Club Mound Group
in
Shorewood Hills, Wisconsin

is listed in the

NATIONAL REGISTER
of
HISTORIC PLACES



August 1, 1979

THE STATE HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF WISCONSIN
IN ASSOCIATION WITH THE U.S. DEPARTMENT OF INTERIOR



FOREWORD



When tasked with the opportunity to write this brief history my undaunted enthusiasm soon came face-to-face with three rather daunting questions. Where to start? Where to end? And how much detail to include in between? Being a lifelong student of history I am keenly aware that history when presented as a story is usually of interest to most people, especially if kept short. The astute reader will note that the title page starts with “A History of...., not THE History of....” Accordingly I have adopted a more synoptic approach, the intent being to simply inform the membership of some of the more interesting and substantive history (with emphasis on the early years) of Blackhawk Country Club. By no means was this ever intended to be a scholarly treatise. The critical reader will no doubt find gaping chronological holes, large enough to accommodate an errant drive from the first tee. To that reader I can only offer my humble apology, and say that I simply wanted to avoid a “tome” loaded with dull, trite facts and figures of lesser interest.

Proceeding in the belief that increasing one’s knowledge of an enterprise enhances the appreciation of that enterprise, the following paragraphs are expressly written for you the membership. It is my hope that you will feel a sense of re-kindled pride and joy as a member of BCC as you read and understand that these twin emotions have been in our fabric since C. H. Mayo first broke pastured ground with his landscaping blade in 1921.

Enjoy.

Dr. Bryan Wierwill
Member - Blackhawk Country Club
Spring 2016

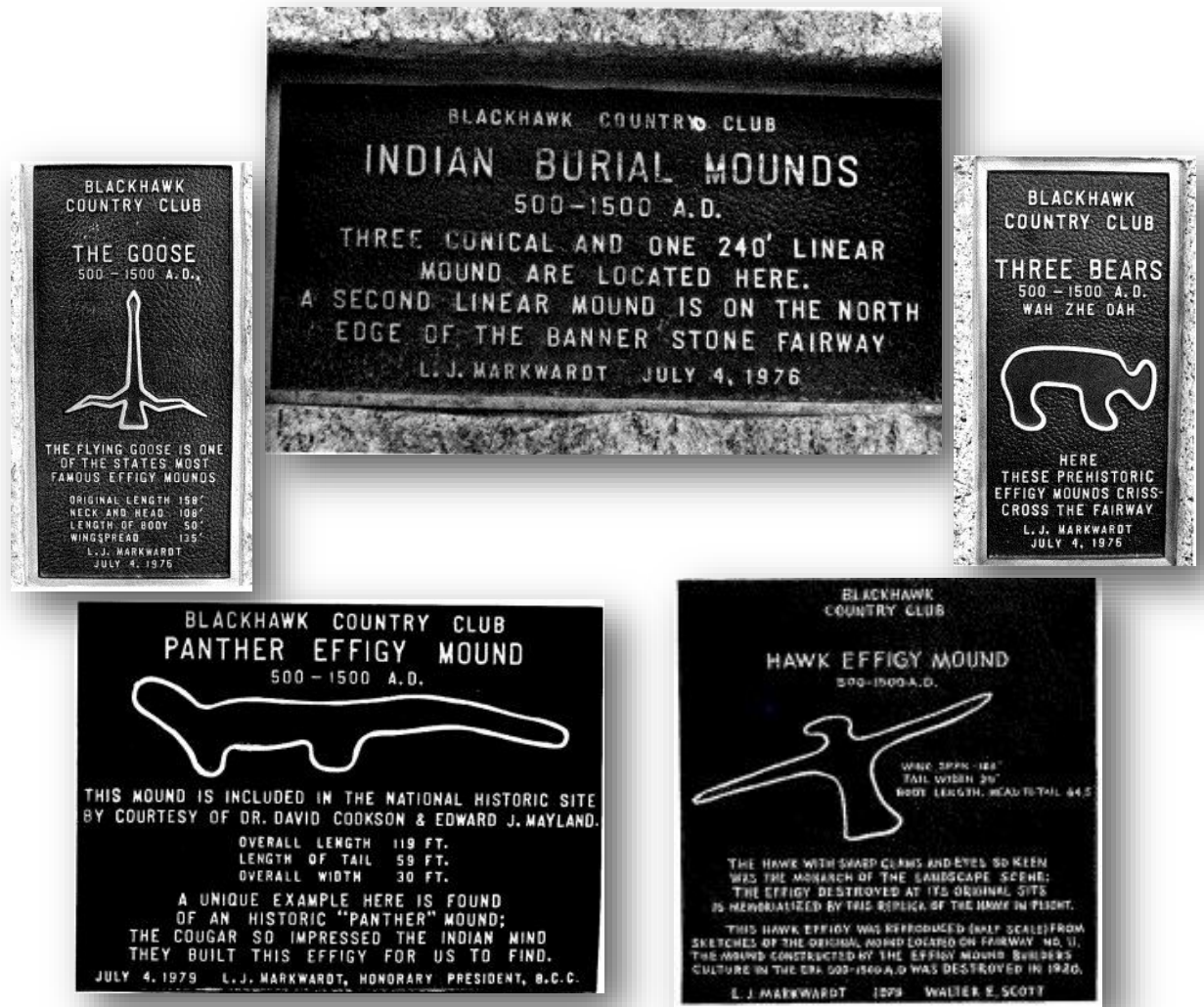
A HISTORY OF BLACKHAWK COUNTRY CLUB

—The Early Days—

The hills and valleys we presently enjoy as Blackhawk Country Club were shaped, scraped and carved by, appropriately enough, The Great Wisconsin Glacier...a process lasting an estimated 80,000 years. This glacier was massive, covering much of Canada and the present-day upper Midwest. It is said to have been over 1,000 feet high, possibly as high as 2,000 feet.

As the glacier receded some 10,000 to 12,000 years ago the first signs of human life began to appear. Over the next thousands of years these peoples morphed into various Indian tribes. At Blackhawk C.C. we have a physical history in the form of effigy and burial mounds built in approximately 500 - 1500 A.D. by the "Effigy Mound Builders Culture" of Winnebago (Ho Chunk) lineage. These mounds include a flying goose (the largest and perhaps the most recognizable of all the mounds at the front of the men's 12th tee); three bears (16th hole - right and left side of fairway); a panther (just west of the three bears on the north side of Lake Mendota Dr. on private land); three conical mounds (14th hole - left of fairway in the trees); and two large linear mounds (14th hole - lining left side of fairway at 240 feet long; and 15th hole - left of fairway and partially destroyed). The effigy mounds are the goose, the three bears, and the panther. The burial mounds are the three well preserved conical mounds and the two linear mounds. Among these mounds the goose is considered the rarest. One of its wings was partially covered by one of the early tees at some unknown date in the history of the club. Charter member and author, L. J. Markwardt persuaded the board to re-structure the tee and restore the wing in 1977. (The hawk mound at the entrance to the clubhouse is a reconstruction of a mound once found near the goose and was built at one-half scale).





It should be noted that when the club was chartered in 1921 the course was laid out so as to protect and preserve these mounds. The founders, being well aware of the historic background, memorialized the grounds by giving an Indian name to each golf hole. These names persist today. (For a more elaborate and detailed history and description of these effigy and burial mounds, the reader is encouraged to seek out L. J. Markwardt's very fine treatise "*Blackhawk Indian Mounds On National Register of Historic Places*". A copy can be found in the front office). I would be remiss if I did not remind the membership that the Blackhawk Country Club Mound Group is listed in the National Register of Historic Places, effective August 1, 1979.

Chief Black Hawk was the respected chief and leader of the Sauk and Fox nations. Originally settled in northwest Illinois, they were forced west into Iowa by the Treaty of 1804, and paid \$1,000. Such did not sit well with the Chief as he is quoted as having said, "Reason teaches me that nothing can be sold but such things as can be carried away". With that mindset Chief Black Hawk, now age 65, crossed the Mississippi River back into Illinois on April 6, 1832 near present day Rock Island, IL. He made this crossing with an estimated 400-500 warriors and some 1200 women and children. Fighting soon followed and the Illinois militia was called to push the natives back. In service with the Illinois militia was a young, inexperienced officer named Abraham Lincoln.

Chief Black Hawk decided it best to flee north, rather than re-cross the Mississippi River. As more fighting ensued the battle now became known as the Black Hawk War and was eagerly covered by the press. President Andrew Jackson committed the U.S. Army to intervene. The Army, under the command of General Henry Atkinson (Ft. Atkinson, WI would later be named after him) joined forces with the Illinois militia, often outnumbering the natives by as much as ten to one. The troops relentlessly pursued the natives into the Territory of Wisconsin. Chief Black Hawk now hatched the plan to make their way to the Wisconsin River where they could then, hopefully, reach the Mississippi River and seek safety back in Iowa.

From the Rock River near Janesville the natives headed west. At numerous times the U.S. Army was impressed with the fighting skill and military savvy displayed by the Indians and their leader, often paying the price in casualties. As the natives entered the Four Lakes region military records chronicle that they were hastily pursued along the southern and western shores of Lake Mendota in July of 1832. Given the chief's military prowess one makes the (undocumented) assumption that they would have used the high ground, some of which is now Blackhawk Country Club. Might he have held a council with his braves at the present location of the clubhouse? Perhaps he stopped to rest on the hills which make up the 14th hole? We'll never know and there are many myths as to where this band of Indians may have stopped along the way to have quenched their thirst, watched their pursuers, or may have even erected temporary fortifications.

The most famous battle occurred near Sauk City on July 21, 1832, what is now known as the Battle of Wisconsin Heights. This was Chief Black Hawk's shining moment in history as he and 50 hand-picked braves held off nearly 1500 U.S. troops allowing the rest of the band of Indians to reach the Wisconsin River and flee in hastily built canoes and rafts. Lt. Jefferson Davis (later to become president of the Confederate States of America) described the warriors efforts as "one of the most splendid achievements in military history". The young lieutenant later added that "had they been white men this battle would have gone down with much prominence in military lore".

Chief Black Hawk's glory was short-lived as on Aug. 2 nearly the entire band of Indians was massacred in the Battle of Bad Axe near the mouth of the Bad Axe and Mississippi rivers. The chief escaped with about 100 men, only to be captured on Aug. 27 near Wisconsin Dells. Lt. Jefferson Davis claimed to have personally been involved in taking the chief captive. The chief was paraded east in humiliating fashion to meet The Great White Father, President Jackson. Incarceration soon followed. Chief Black Hawk was released in June of 1833 and taken back to Iowa where he settled on a reservation near Fort Des Moines with his Sauk and Fox people. It was there that he died in 1838.

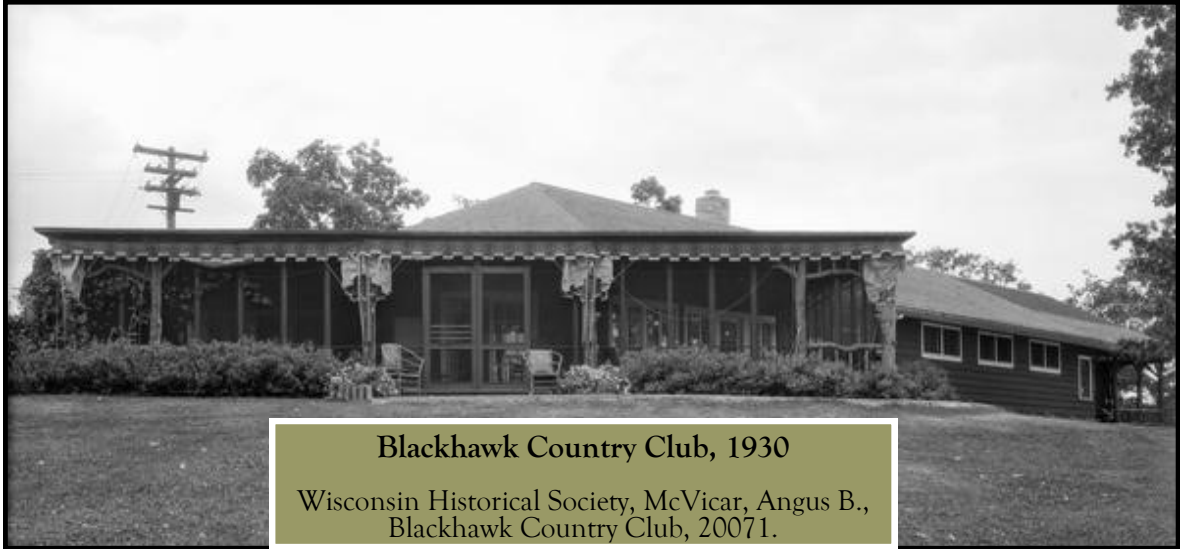


Prior to 1921 the only private golf club in Madison was Maple Bluff Country Club, established in 1899. It was time for a club on the west side. A determined group of men, after rejecting a very desirable site in the Nakoma area chose the present site of Blackhawk Country Club. Legend has it this decision did not come easily. Nor was it without spirited discussion and debate. Finally, after a vote was held the present site of Blackhawk C.C. won out. (Note: Those who preferred the Nakoma site were not to be denied as Nakoma Country Club would open in 1923. It would later be called Nakoma Golf Club in 1944). The dominant features which so impressed the founders were the magnificent view of Lake Mendota with its magical sunsets, the rolling terrain, the venerable woods, the surrounding quietness, and of course its heritage of pre-historic Indian effigy and burial mounds. About 96 acres of pasture was purchased from a land company which originally planned to develop private estates on the acreage. Mr. C. H. Mayo, a well respected golf course architect from Chicago was contracted to build the club. Blackhawk started as a nine-hole course, was increased to twelve, and by 1928 had become the present eighteen-hole course we now enjoy. (Note: at one time #7 was a longer par 6 going over a road with its tee box located near the 6th green, making par for the course 73. Did you know that BCC also offered tennis in the 1920's? The courts are believed to have been in the northeast corner of the present parking lot and may have been grass courts. This information is not clear, however, from the limited records available).

The club was organized on a stock membership basis, with dues of \$20 per year. The first president was Mr. G. A. Hool who served three terms, 1921 - 1923. President Hool took a strong interest in the club and in 1923 personally solicited funds which got rid of the road which crossed from north to south right through the center of the Club property. This was considered a huge improvement as this road, which connected University Avenue to Lake Mendota Drive, interrupted a number of holes. Some time thereafter club member Mr. D. E. Morgan solicited funds and sponsored the deep well near "Little Elk" green (#6) to provide cool water for golfers as they passed by. The seeds of membership involvement and stewardship were planted early and continue on today as a veritable virtues in the Blackhawk tradition.

By 1929, after only eight years in operation, the club was running strong and experiencing rapid growth. 75 new men's lockers were added, along with 25 new women's lockers.

A large bunker was placed between #'s 1 and 10 to corral wayward tee shots, and new tees were constructed at #'s 1 and 2. All greens, except strangely enough #1, were now “stolen bent greens”...as opposed to the more common “creeping bent greens” at other clubs (your guess is as good as mine). The first true porch was built to face the lake. It was purposely built with rough logs to continue the “rustic effect” as preferred by the membership.



Blackhawk Country Club, 1930

Wisconsin Historical Society, McVicar, Angus B.,
Blackhawk Country Club, 20071.

The McKenna family dominated the Blackhawk golf scene in the latter 1920's. Mrs. J. C. McKenna won the state women's title 3 times and the Blackhawk women's championship twice ('28 and '29), each time beating her daughter Marcia for the BCC title. Son Don McKenna was the 1928 city long drive champion. With a measured blast of 316 yards he won the event handily, held that year at Maple Bluff C.C. (The Wisconsin State Journal sponsored this event up into the 1950's). He then went on to finish second at the national long drive contest in Chicago that same year. In other club news John C. Hackbarth returned in 1929 as the “golf instructor”, having spent the previous winter writing his book “The Key to Better Golf”. The Wisconsin State Journal reported the book was “well received by many”. (A copy of this book is presently in the custody of Mr. Derek Schnarr, Director of Golf at BCC). Across town Mr. George Vitense also returned as the “golf instructor” at the Madison Municipal Golf Course (Glenway) , which registered 51,864 rounds of golf the year before. (Perhaps one of the more notable moments of the late 1920's came when Dr. C. B. Woodford won the coveted 1929 Dane County Dental Society tournament at BCC, carding a score of 95. Note that I did preface this tidbit of history with “perhaps”).

The Roaring Twenties were good for Blackhawk and good for golf in general. Monona Golf Club opened in 1923; Nakoma Country Club opened in 1923 as mentioned previously; Westmoreland and Burr Oaks golf courses, each nine-hole courses, opened in 1929. (Westmoreland golf course would later become Westmoreland Community Park. The fate of the Burr Oaks course is lost to history). With Blackhawk, Maple Bluff and the aforementioned Madison Municipal course in operation there was no shortage of golfing opportunities for the city's 57,899 residents in 1929.

Attire mattered in these early days of golf in Madison. A gentleman almost always wore knickers, usually made of wool. A tie was not mandatory but when worn with the proper cotton shirt and appropriate cap a gentleman could look like, well, a gentleman. Women were obliged to wear skirts and proper hats. Sporting goods stores competed for the golfer's hearts and wallets. Felton Gun Store at 120 E. Washington Ave. advertised "Proper equipment is essential in every sport" and offered 4 clubs and a bag for \$6.95. An upgrade was offered-3 matched nickel plated irons and 3 matched woods for \$19.00 (no bag included). Not to be outdone, Petries Sports offered 4 clubs with leather grips, 3 balls and a bag for \$8.75. Some of the clubs offered in the package were "spoons". Life was good in the 1920's. (Imagine for a moment some of the parties that would have been held at our club!)



**Blackhawk
Country Club,
"Children's Day"
Dress up, 1932**

Wisconsin Historical
Society, McVicar,
Angus B., Blackhawk
Country Club, 17803.

After Oct. 29, 1929 people tended to take a different look at their disposable income. Country clubs were not immune and Blackhawk was no exception. The Great Depression seemed to hit everywhere and the second World War took many sons and daughters off to Europe and the Pacific. Yet Blackhawk held serve these years as best it could.

In 1932 the club property was annexed by the Village of Shorewood Hills. As financial problems mounted further, a deal was struck with the Village in 1944, wherein the Village acquired the club to help with these financial problems. The Village then leased the property back to the club at no charge. The term of the lease was 40 years with the understanding that the Village would then turn it into a park in 1984. Just what kind of a park it would be was never clear to anyone. Aware of this uncertainty, and highlighting all the potential unforeseen and undesirable effects (and expenses) that could be incurred by the Village, the Blackhawk board deftly re-negotiated the lease in 1969, extending it to the year 2000. This negotiation was not met with uniform enthusiasm on the part of Shorewood residents as a vocal and implacable minority voiced their opposition. Similar lease negotiations were successfully completed in 1986 and most recently in 2015. Residents of Shorewood Hills and members of Blackhawk Country Club are aware that when private interests collide with public concerns there will naturally be differing opinions and mixed input. What has existed since 1944 continues today as a very pleasant symbiosis between the two parties.

GOLF

Golf is a science - a study of a lifetime in which you may exhaust yourself but never your subject. It is a contest, a duel, or a melee calling for courage, skill, strategy, and self control. It is a test of temper, a trial of honor, a revealer of character. It affords a chance to play the man and act the gentleman. It means going into God's out-of-doors, getting close to nature, fresh air, exercise; a sweeping away of mental cobwebs, genuine recreation for tired tissues. It is a cure for care, an antidote for worry. It includes companionship with friends, opportunities for courtesy, kindliness, and generosity to an opponent. It promotes not only physical strength but moral force.

(sic, 1969 membership booklet)

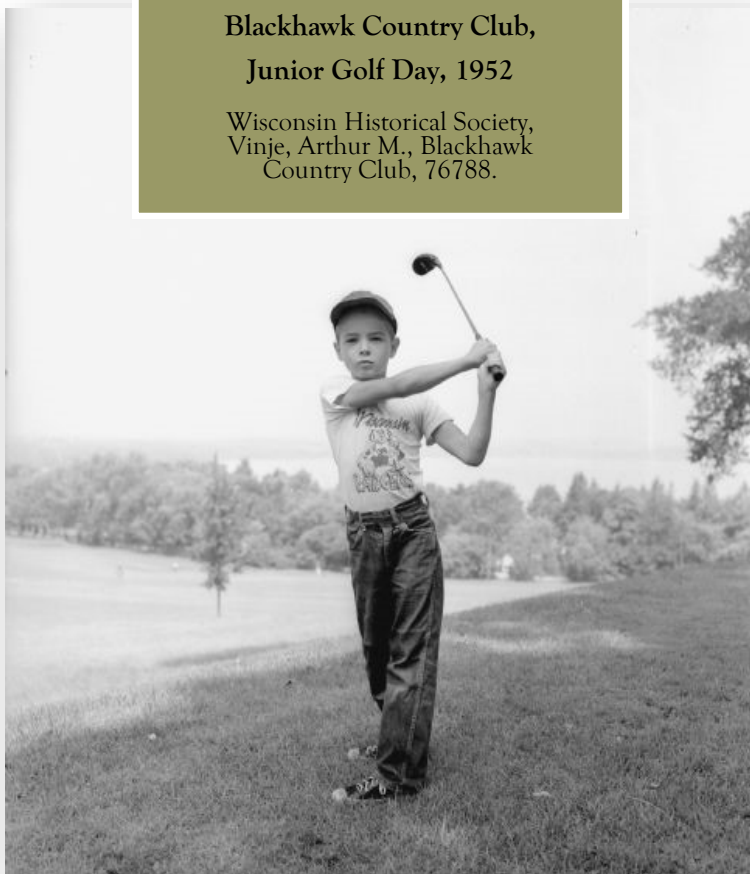
Blackhawk Country Club is poised for a brilliant future. With ever-evolving plans of physical plant and course improvement, and with a comfortable lease now extending through 2034 (and a ten year option beyond) there would seem to be no limits as to how the membership can enjoy our club. Our balance sheet is strong. Our amenities are second to none. Our course is the most beautiful in the city, always challenging, always fun and always maintained and manicured by a staff of “magicians” masquerading as grounds crew. Perhaps “Roundy” Coughlin, that venerable (but grammatically challenged) sports writer for the Wisconsin State Journal Peach said it best when his columns would occasionally conclude with, “What could be more fairer?”

The famous historian George Santayana once said, “Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it”. With respect to Mr. Santayana, and with unique and special application to Blackhawk Country Club I would like to say, “We who do appreciate our history of Blackhawk have every intention of repeating it.” And why not?! Friendliness, stewardship, and service have always been hallmarks of the Blackhawk tradition. We have always had good people looking out for us at the level of the board of directors. “Like breeds like” goes the saying.

From membership to professional staff, from hole #1 to hole #18 and every subtle nuance in between, there simply is not another club **anywhere** quite like Blackhawk Country Club.

Blackhawk Country Club,
Junior Golf Day, 1952

Wisconsin Historical Society,
Vinje, Arthur M., Blackhawk
Country Club, 76788.



From our immutable view of 12,000 years to the spirit and vitality of the present day membership with its ability to attract like, I am confident in saying that as long as Lake Mendota holds water Blackhawk Country Club shall remain a source of great pride and joy to all so privileged as to claim membership.

Enjoy your club!



Blackhawk Country Club golf pro, Kully Schlicht,
teaches golf club handling to twelve children, 1953

Wisconsin Historical Society, Vinje, Arthur M.,
Blackhawk Country Club Junior Golf Lessons, 81154.

GOLF PROFESSIONALS:

John C. Hackbarth
Phillip Greenwald
James Milward
Karl Schlicht
Michael Schnarr
Rick Witt
Derek Schnarr

Did You Know?

For many years, a residence was provided for the golf professional.

This residence was immediately south of the course, where present maintenance buildings are located.

PAST PRESIDENTS

1921	G.A. Hool	1966	Ernest J. Haar	2011	Kent Carnell
1922	G.A. Hool	1967	Robert C. Voss	2012	Sean Cleary
1923	G.A. Hool	1968	Donald A. Viereg	2013	Sean Cleary
1924	H.F. Wilson	1969	David C. Fritz	2014	Ben Dickey
1925	H.F. Wilson	1970	Glenn Willis	2015	Ben Dickey
1926	Harry L. Geisler	1971	Robert N. Kelliher	2016	Scott VanderSanden
1927	Harry L. Geisler	1972	William J. Buffo	2017	Scott VanderSanden
1928	W.L. Rideout	1973	Robert J. Wilson		
1929	Oscar Rennebohm	1974	John G. Gerlach		
1930	A.C. Larson	1975	William C. Lund		
1931	R.W. Clarke	1976	Leo B. McGann		
1932	H.J. Kuelling	1977	John M. Strickland		
1933	D.V.W. Beckwith	1978	Paul G. Rapp		
1934	L.A. Smith	1979	Jerome H. Kuypers		
1935	Harry Klueter	1980	Phillip C. Herro		
1936	A.F. Trebilcock	1981	Frank J. Bucaida		
1937	C.R. Acly	1982	Robert Fey		
1938	Allan J. McAndrews	1983	Charles F. Field		
1939	G.W. Bach	1984	Peter Eichman		
1940	Archie W. Kimball	1985	John Nelson		
1941	W.R. Wilkinson	1986	Edward G. Sheffield		
1942	L.A. Smith	1987	Verle W. Christensen		
1943	Harry L. Geisler	1988	Dale A. Strub		
1944	Harry Klueter	1989	Phillip C. Stark		
1945	Harry Klueter	1990	Len Sosnowski		
1946	Robert A. Lievan	1991	Frederik W. Jensen		
1947	David Wilson, Jr.	1992	Thomas C. Huset		
1948	E.M. Mickelson	1993	James E. Webster		
1949	James C. Geisler	1994	Alan Wolfe		
1950	D.F. Knowles	1995	Gerald Shields		
1951	T.B. Luhman	1996	Jack Cotton		
1952	I.E. Isaksen	1997	Jeffrey W. Younger		
1953	C.H. Wartinbee	1998	Daniel Stolper		
1954	Archie W. Kimball	1999	Michael Elliott		
1955	Walter J. Klossner	2000	Douglas D. Strub		
1956	Otto C. Heyer	2001	Charles Stoll		
1957	Harold E. Scales	2002	Michael S. Gerner		
1958	Harry Steiro	2003	Thomas Shepard		
1959	J. Lee Lillesand	2004	James B. Neuhauser		
1960	Allen J. Shafer	2005	Mark Burish		
1961	Oscar Siefert	2006	Audrey Dybdahl		
1962	Otto C. Heyer	2007	Todd Bramson		
1963	E.B. Schlatter	2008	Barbara Neider Stolper		
1964	Carl N. Bury	2009	Joe Tisserand		
1965	J. Riley Best	2010	James Possin		



PAST CLUB CHAMPIONS

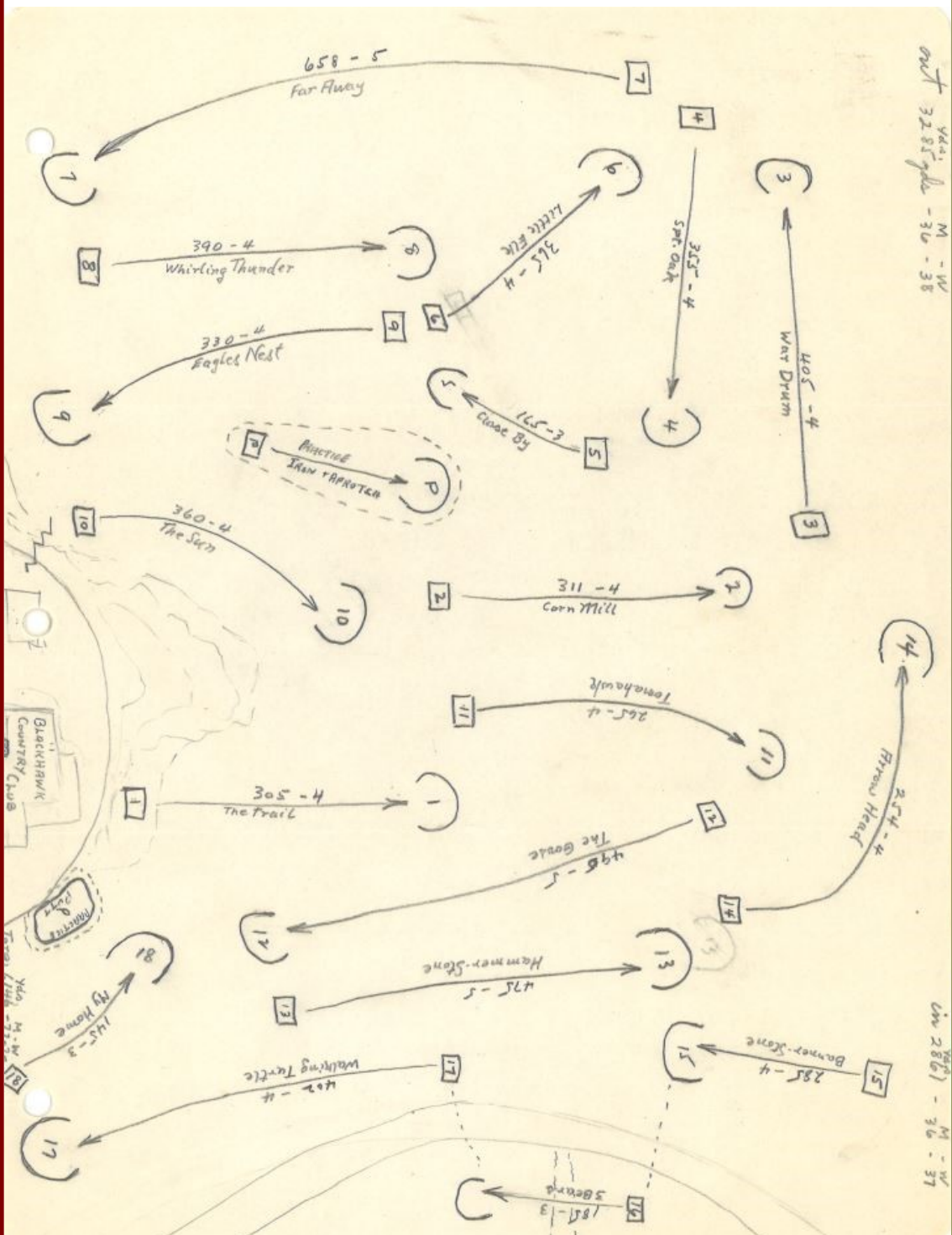
1922	Carson E. Lyman	1961	Walter Atwood, Jr.	1999	Dan Wubbels
1923	Joseph I. Hyland	1962	Ralph Larson	2000	Mark Disrud
1925	Maurice E. Pipkin	1963	Richard Radder	2001	Chuck Hinners
1926	Maxwell Manzer	1964	Walter Atwood, Jr.	2002	Chuck Hinners
1927	Maxwell Manzer	1965	Jay J. Lohmiller	2003	Pappy Johnson
1928	Maxwell Manzer	1966	Walter Atwood, Jr.	2004	Jim Bakken
1929	Donald McKenna	1967	Jeff Radder	2005	Chuck Hinners
1930	Robert Stebbins	1968	Ed Karpowicz	2006	Jake Shapiro
1931	Robert A. Wellman	1969	Jeff Radder	2007	Jim Bakken
1932	Stanley Febock	1970	Ed Karpowicz	2008	Nick Luebke
1933	Robert A. Wellman	1971	Jeff Radder	2009	Mark Engman
1934	Robert March	1972	William Hilsenhoff	2010	Mark Engman
1935	James Geisler	1973	John Kotz	2011	Scott VanderSanden
1936	Walter Atwood, Jr.	1974	Ed Tallard	2012	Ricky Howard
1937	Walter Atwood, Jr.	1975	Michael Murphy	2013	Ben Dickey
1938	Robert March	1976	Edward Sheffield	2014	Ben Dickey
1939	Walter Atwood, Jr.	1977	Jeff Bruns	2015	Jeff Cressman
1940	Walter Atwood, Jr.	1978	Sam Nuzzo		
1941	William Millward	1979	Ed Tallard		
1942	Melvin A. Pearson	1980	Michael Murphy		
1943	Al Mickelson	1981	Edward Sheffield		
1944	Pvt. Jack Muncer	1982	Michael Murphy		
1945	W.D. McCally	1983	Gregg Ponath		
1946	Doug Oldenburg	1984	John Watts, Jr.		
1947	Walter Atwood, Jr.	1985	Ed Tallard		
1948	William D. Lewis	1986	Michael Murphy		
1949	Ed Karpowicz	1987	Michael Murphy		
1950	Walter Atwood, Jr.	1988	John McMillan		
1951	Walter Atwood, Jr.	1989	Michael Murphy		
1952	Walter Atwood, Jr.	1990	John Watts, Jr.		
1953	Walter Atwood, Jr.	1991	John Watts, Jr.		
1954	William Ploetz	1992	Dick Regenber		
1955	William Ploetz	1993	Tom Huset		
1956	Robert Van Etten	1994	Chris Caulum		
1957	William Ploetz	1995	Brad Nelson		
1958	Robert Narowetz	1996	Chris Caulum		
1959	George Oosterhous	1997	Brian Karlovich		
1960	Walter Atwood, Jr.	1998	Mark Engman		



Ed Karpowicz (left, Champion) &
Phil Schwartz (right, Runner-up)
Golf Club Champions, 1949

*women's Club Champions not recorded.

Undated Layout of Course



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The undertaking of a writing like this can never be a purely solo venture. Accordingly I should first like to express my sincere gratitude to **Ms. Sarah Lensmire** and **Ms. Jennifer Schneider** of the BCC front office. Their help in locating archived materials, assembling, editing and taking to print this brief history is greatly appreciated. They represent that can-do spirit of BCC in a most friendly and outwardly noticeable way.

The Wisconsin State Journal and *Wisconsin Historical Society* were also of much help, and appreciation must be extended their way as well. Take a moment and take a pictorial tour of the early days at BCC by going to www.wisconsinhistory.org and search Blackhawk Country Club (3 words). There you will find 156 pictures of interest going back in time. L.J. Markwardt's "Blackhawk Indian Mounds on National Register of Historic Places" offered wisdom and insight to this publication, referenced specifically on page 7. Wikipedia, Google, and other sources of electronic media were occasionally consulted for information.

Much of the archived material presently in possession of the club is without identification, undated, and hence contributes to the anecdotal nature occasionally presented herein. So too, the author has collected numerous notes from casual conversations with members over the past 35 years which also contribute to this anecdotal nature.

On a very personal level I would like to thank the current president, **Mr. Scott VanderSanden**, for the opportunity to write this history. To do so has been a most enjoyable and rewarding process. I can only hope that some of the pride I have felt in writing this brief history has come through these pages and been similarly felt by the membership.

And last but not least, an enormous amount of gratitude is due the Blackhawk team which most recently negotiated our present lease. Special recognition of thanks is hereby given to **Ben Dickey, Kent Carnell, David Hanson, Linda Bochart & Scott VanderSanden**. Numerous Shorewood Hills residents rallied in behalf of the referendum vote. Without your concerted efforts Blackhawk Country Club would not be in the stable position it is today, and its ability to project our tradition into the future might very well have been compromised. THANK YOU!



Blackhawk Country Club is a welcoming culture where lifelong friendships are built while enjoying exceptional golf, social and dining experiences.



3606 BLACKHAWK DRIVE
MADISON, WISCONSIN 53705
club house 608.231.2454
golf shop 608.231.2456