

The Links

by Lynne Belluscio

Tom Dreyer stopped by the other day and left some wonderful information that he had gleaned from the *LeRoy Gazette* and other sources about the early golf courses in LeRoy. His interest had been peaked by a story about a golf course on the West Bergen Road built by Edward Butler, owner of the *Buffalo News*. Tom who lives in the Old Cheshire Cheese on Randall Road had been told by Charles and Betty Habgood about the golf course. They remembered that the large cement columns on West Bergen Road marked the entrance to the course. Later, Tom had talked with Charlie Hines who lived on the West Bergen Road, who told Tom that the "club house" was on the West side of the road where the trailer park is located today and it had been built of materials from the 1901 Pan American Exposition in Buffalo. The materials had been loaded onto a railroad car and off loaded near the overpass on Route 19 (at the station that was near where Crocker's is today).

According to an article that Tom found in the 1919 *LeRoy Gazette*, it was Edward Butler's brother, Ambrose who owned the farm where the golf course was located and he had bought the Dominican Building from the Exposition and re-erected it for a clubhouse. Butler had also brought a 110 foot flagpole from the Exposition and put that up at his farm. In 1901, Edward Butler asked if he could rent the village steamroller for his golf links. He was told it would cost \$4 and that the village would pay the engineer. Apparently that didn't set too well with the village board who questioned the advisability of renting the machine for private purposes but since the deal had been made, Butler had the use of the steamroller. The golf course - or at least the club house had a bad reputation and was known as the "course of ill repute" known for ladies of the evening. It was said that the tea made from the wild tansy flowers in the area kept the ladies from getting pregnant.

Tom discovered that the Butler course was not the first golf course



in LeRoy. In 1899, Oliver Allen Jr. secured a field next to Circular Hill Road and he measured and staked out a nine hole course. The *Gazette* proclaimed that the Circular Hill links were the "best in this section of the country." Tin distance signals were installed and steps were cut into the side of

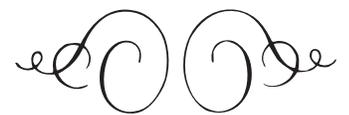
the hill which "makes the climb to the top easy." "The land has natural obstacles and the drive home from the top of the hill is without rival. Charles Rathbone of Detroit who is a guest of Mr. and Mrs. Oliver Allen and an enthusiastic golf player, has been at work improving the links." Each

hole had a name: Apple Tree, The Elm, Bunker, Yosemite, Mushroom, Gulch, Meadow, Summit and Gateway. The *Gazette* noted that although a club had not been formed, it was expected that members of the County Golf Club of Rochester and Buffalo would venture out to LeRoy to play a match game.

An unfortunate accident occurred on September, when W.H. Foster was injured when he was struck above the left eye by a golf "stick" in the hands of District-Attorney F.S. Randall. (It was noted that the injury was dressed by Dr. J.P. Cleveland.)

Plans for the new Circular Hill golf course included a small club house where golfers could enjoy a light luncheon after the game. Unfortunately the following year, the golfers were unable to secure the use of the field. But it was a year later that the Hookers and the hookers began business on the West side of town.

It would be almost thirty years later before Donald Woodward built the "pay-as you-go" course on East Main Road. The nine-hole course opened in July 1931. In 1936, his younger sister Helen enlarged the course and built the "tidy little club house."





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