

THE AVIATION COUNTRY CLUB OF DETROIT

With Four Lakes and Eight Hundred and Fifty Acres of Land Its Members Have Every Right To Be Proud

By J. LEWIS BROWN

BEFORE the war it was the custom among golfers to boast of the freedom of the links, of the opportunity of getting close to nature, where a maximum amount of pleasure could be secured from a minimum of exertion and at the same time all the beauty of hill and dale and forest and stream could be fully appreciated as the health building ozone was inhaled. But of late conditions, particularly close to large cities, have not been so favorable. Complaints of crowded courses and clubhouses echoed from many points and, with waiting lists for membership, booking hours for starting and long waits at short holes, this freedom took on a very cramped appearance. More courses and more room are demanded, but the ever-increasing real estate values are very serious stumbling blocks to satisfying it.

In the circumstances Detroit has good reason to boast of the latest addition to its many fine courses because it does not seem possible that cramped conditions can ever encroach there. Instead of having a meagre one hundred and ten acres, as a number of metropolitan courses have, this new organization, the Aviation Country Club of Detroit, has eight hundred and fifty acres. Can any one who has not seen the property imagine what a golfing paradise that will be? Just conjure up in your mind for a moment the joy of suddenly finding yourself in the middle of this huge estate with everything in readiness for a game and sense the feeling of relief to know that no matter how long a driver you are you cannot put a ball out of bounds with one shot. The freedom of it seems almost too good to be true, and that is only one of many things this club has to offer. In fact, the Aviation Country Club has so many other attractive assets that it

seems almost impossible to pay tribute to them all in the space of one article.

In its inaugural work the Aviation Country Club followed the practice of the majority of new clubs today, and that was to purchase a private estate with a residence large enough for a clubhouse and all ready to take care of the members' wants. Most residences of this kind require additions and other renovations, and often as not surrounding farms have to be purchased to get sufficient territory for the course. This club fortunately did not have to do either of these things.

Detroit used to claim as one of its first citizens a multi-millionaire by the name of Flanders, among whose hobbies was country estates. He discovered this tract of land about thirty miles northeast of the city, on one of the main arteries of Michigan's motor roads; the beauty of the property did not fail to appeal to him, and in it he saw an opportunity

to realize his dream of a country place. Four small lakes furnished an entrancing contrast to the plentifully wooded valleys, where all kinds of trees and shrubs abound, thus affording an ideal background for a house built on very generous lines. Nothing was spared in perfecting his plans. The house was built large enough to entertain extensively and to accommodate

many guests over night. There is a huge dining room on the main floor; also a commodious lounge. The first floor is devoted to sleeping quarters, where over fifty guests could be taken care of. amid interior decorations that are the last word in that art, and there are numerous bathrooms and showers. Glass enclosed balconies flank two sides of the clubhouse and these are furnished just as luxuriously as the other main rooms.



THE FRONT OF THE CLUBHOUSE IS SHADED BY A GROVE OF TREES



THE DANCE HALL IS ON THE UPPER FLOOR OF THIS GARAGE

The house was, however, but the centre of the scheme of things. Every part of the estate was developed to its highest possible scenic effect. For instance, from one of the balconies only a small part of Flanders Lake was visible, so he had the side of a hill cut away at a cost of thousands of dollars. Fifty yards from the house a large garage was constructed, the upper floor of which was finished off as a dance hall with large balconies, while on the main floor two bowling alleys were installed. An example of the former owner's personal delight in this scheme is to be seen in the huge fireplace and front porch pillars of the house. Every stone in them was picked out at different places on the estate. Needless to say, the fireplace is one of the many objects of interest. Stables for numerous horses were built, for there are thirty-two miles of bridle paths on the property. Besides all this and many other things too numerous to mention there are tennis courts, boat houses, toboggan slides and hockey rinks for use in their respective seasons.

So it was really a bonanza which certain far-seeing men of the Automobile City secured in the huge eight hundred and fifty acre tract. Small wonder that the other clubs in Detroit are looking with envious eyes upon their new rival and that over four hundred members have already besieged the directorate for memberships, despite the fact that at the earliest there will be only nine holes in play by July—with possibly the full eighteen by next spring.

Another important reason for this enthusiasm is that they have one of the best aviation fields in the country. Hence the name of the club. There are many star aviators among the members, including Eddie Rickenbacker, and it is hoped to encourage aviation as a practical sport. Just how practical flying may be in its relation to country life is well illustrated by the story of a member of this organization who had a very important business appointment in Detroit at five o'clock one afternoon, but found himself two hundred miles away and without a chance of returning by train until long after the hour set. Nothing daunted, he telegraphed his office to take his business friend out to the club—where, promptly at five o'clock, the member arrived via aeroplane, completed the business deal, and permitted his business friend to catch the evening train for home.

When the Aviation Country Club offers aviation, alley bowling, tennis, riding, boating, swimming, tobogganing, skating, fishing and all the beauties of nature, one might draw the conclusion that golf would be subsidiary to them, but such is not the case. They will all be subsidiary to golf, despite the impression the name of the club gives. It is the custom of late to announce when every new course is projected that it will be one of the best in the country. In this particular instance, however, I deem the prophecy a perfectly safe one. The course will certainly be a very welcome addition to those generally considered for national championships in this country, for it is so natural that with one or two exceptions no artificial bunkering will be neces- (Continued on page 40)



A BIRD'S-EYE VIEW OF THE PROPERTY FROM AN AEROPLANE



EVENING PLAY ON THE "BONNIE WEE"—J. E. KING STARTING



FLANDERS LAKE AND ITS SHORES AS SEEN FROM THE AIR

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 sary. To assure that the other interests will not by any chance overshadow the development of the course a resolution has been passed that one-third of each membership fee of seven hundred and fifty dollars will be used in construction work. Few clubs have gone ahead with such wisdom and farsightedness as to provide for this. The officials of the club have, in short, realized from the start that golf and golfers will be the backbone of the club.

There is not a chance of golf being anything but the leading interest in the club as long as John E. King is chairman of the golf committee. His heart and soul are wrapped up in the course laid out by Herbert Strong. He believes in it just as Strong does, and the latter has expressed the opinion that this is his prize course. Mr. King is already on the trail of the members who are not goiters. He has set a trap for them in which inadvertently they are going to be caught. While the course is being prepared he figures that there will be any number of members who would hesitate to take a chance on the links because they had never played, but they are going to play golf. This is how Mr. King has planned to get them to do it. Out in front of the club he has had a miniature nine-hole course built among the trees. Each hole calls for a ticklish approach shot and each green has been modeled to give a variety of contours. Then again, he decided that when the evening shadows fell a number of the real golfers would be interested. So he had electric lights installed—which make the course almost as bright as day. It was a hit from the start, and it is surprising how the "Bonnie Wee" links, as they are called, are drawing the members of the rocking chair brigade from the verandas. A golfing contingent is in the making there, and it will not be long until they are out on the first tee of the real course as established golfers.

But it is on the course to be that nature and Herbert Strong's art are to be seen and appreciated. The ground was particularly adapted to golf course construction; it broke right, being not too flat or too rugged. The beauty of its scenic wonders has been commented upon, but mere words fail to convey what it really means. The course will have to be seen to be fully appreciated, with lakes flanking several holes, others backing up to the brink, while others are constructed with an arm of water forming natural water holes. Then the inland fairways possess enfilades of trees, white birches predominating, and contrasting strangely and artistically with the greensward. The open stretches have their own natural advantages, and beneath all is a turf that will need little artificial stimulant, and most of that can be secured on the wooden portion of the property.

Every course has some holes that seem to stand out above the rest. They are the classics of the golfing world. They are spoken of in great reverence. The Aviation Club has two of this kind, the eleventh and the fifteenth. The eleventh is only three hundred and seventy-five yards and a par four, but it is going to be a real test of every shot played. From the tee at the edge of the lake it looks as if one could drive the green, but the longest way round is often the shortest way home, and this is very true in this case. The fairway skirts the shore of the lake even when it turns abruptly in elbow fashion. Just at the turn is a slight rise. Long drivers will usually get over that rise, but others will not. The green from the top of the rise will be about one hundred and sixty yards, but it will be built out into the lake, with only an average sized port from the land side. The second shot will

call for a high long shot with tremendous backspin or a tricky running up shot, pitched well short, which will not turn either to the right or left. For those who fall short of the ridge from the tee it will prove some feat to find the green, although the timid player can play safe and have no difficulty in getting on in three, but those who love a sporty hole will find it particularly appealing.

The other classic, the fifteenth, is the second longest hole on the course and is on the opposite side to its rival. It is five hundred and fifty yards in length, a par five. The tee is situated on some rising ground, almost due north of the clubhouse. In front of the tee is about one hundred and fifty yards of low land, filled with what is commonly called American heather. To reach the rising ground on the other side this must be carried in decisive fashion, although the short player may skirt to the left in safety. Having safely driven over the heather, direction will be at a premium on the second shot down the not overly wide plateau, and the third will require equal precision to reach the green, beyond which a row of pines form a soldierly looking background.

These two holes seem to catch the eye the moment one sees them, but here are others which are almost, if not just, as good; in fact, each hole seems to have some distinctive features the others have not. For instance. The first tee is built out in the lake and the fairway swings across the neck of a pond to the high ground beyond. Both the second and third holes skirt the lake, holding to the high ground, the view of Green Lake from the third green calling for special mention. The fourth is a short hole and the fifth an ordinary drive and pitch, but the sixth is a splendid two-shotter, which in dog-leg fashion returns to the first green. The seventh provides a natural carry back to the high land over the road, the eighth paralleling on the return trip, but on the far side of the road, so that the ninth, a carry of one hundred and ninety yards over the pond, brings one right back to the clubhouse.

The outgoing nine is mostly open ground, but the next three holes meander through fairways cut right out of the bush. Huge trees raise their heads to the sky on every side, but here will be found turf that will be more than delightful to play on. The tenth tee is right on the edge of the lake, and after two good shots one should be on the green, unless you overrun into the water beyond, which somehow or other has crept round behind the green. Just imagine a sunset as you walk up that fairway with the green and lake beyond! Then comes the wonderful eleventh, after which you leave the lake, dog-leg between avenues of birches out to the open beyond. The thirteenth is the longest hole—five hundred and sixty-five yards—and it skirts the road and some low land on the right practically all the way and finally calls for a stiff iron that has no intention of falling short of the green. The fourteenth is in view of the clubhouse and is really a one-shot hole, but because of the slight bend in the fairway will demand a carry of at least one hundred and seventy-five yards. The fifteenth's virtues have been extolled and the sixteenth is another youngster of but one hundred and forty-seven yards, but the green is just beyond a pond from which non-floaters will never rise. The seventeenth is a beauty, both from a point of construction and scenery. The tee is situated in the heart of the woods and in rather low land. Beyond is a knoll, over which one must drive; in fact, it is the only blind drive in the course. Up from the bottom land you hit one and then, clinging to the right edge of the

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trees to save distance, you push out a brassie shot river some more low land to the high ground and green beyond. Par will call for more than perfect golf here. The eighteenth is a one-shot hole, and you are back at the clubhouse

The length of the course is 6,443 yards, made up of an outgoing yardage of 3,209 yards and an incoming yardage of 3,234 yards. The par of the course is set at 70, thirty-five each way. The length and par of the holes is as follows: First, 392 yards (4); second, 363 yards (4); third, 420 yards (4); fourth 177 yards (3); fifth, 407 yards (4); sixth, 460 yards (5); seventh, 350 yards (4); eighth, 450 yards (4); ninth, 190 yards (3); tenth, 350 yards (4); eleventh, 375 yards (4); twelfth, 417 yards (4); thirteenth, 565 yards (5); fourteenth, 230 yards (3); fifteenth, 550 yards (5); sixteenth, 147 yards (3); seventeenth, 390 yards (4); eighteenth, 210 yards (3). _____