

RAMSEY COUNTY  
**History**  
A PUBLICATION OF THE RAMSEY COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

*Growing Up in Ramsey County*

**With a Dash of Foreign Spice**

KITTY GOGINS, PAGE 14



*One Hundred Years Serving New Americans*

# **The Centennial of the International Institute of Minnesota**

KRISTA FINSTAD HANSON, PAGE 1

## By the Numbers . . .

The world's first golf club, The Royal and Ancient Club of St. Andrews, formed in Scotland.

**1754**

The first eighteen-hole course in the U.S., the Chicago Golf Club, opened.

**1893**

Ramsey County's first nine-hole course, Town & Country Club, opened in St. Paul.

**1898**

University of Minnesota professors sent a solicitation to faculty seeking to form a golf club.

**1915**

Articles of incorporation were finalized for the University Golf Club.

**1919**

The newly named Midland Hills Country Club of Rose Township opened for play.

**July 23, 1921**

Hollywood actors Bing Crosby and Bob Hope played an Army Navy fundraiser at Midland Hills.

**May 9, 1942**

Midland Hills Country Club celebrates its centennial.

**July 2019**

SOURCE: Midland Hills Country Club Archives

Most any new "great idea" often proves to be a monumental effort, full of competing ideas, hurdles, and a bit of handwringing. John Hamburger's article, *Where the Grass is Always Green: The Founding of Midland Hills a Century Ago*, tells the story of the early efforts and challenges in creating a course for University of Minnesota faculty and other members. See page 20.

### ON THE COVER



Karen dancers at the Festival of Nations, sponsored by the International Institute and held in the St. Paul RiverCentre and Roy Wilkins Auditorium, May 3–5, 2013. The Karen people are an ethnic minority from Burma (Myanmar) who first arrived as refugees to Minnesota in 1994. *Courtesy of International Institute of Minnesota.*

## Contents

- 1 *One Hundred Years Serving New Americans*  
**The Centennial of the International Institute of Minnesota**  
KRISTA FINSTAD HANSON
- 14 *Growing Up in Ramsey County*  
**With a Dash of Foreign Spice**  
KITTY GOGINS
- 20 *Where the Grass is Always Green*  
**The Founding of Midland Hills a Century Ago**  
JOHN HAMBURGER

### Book Review

*The Crusade for Forgotten Souls: Reforming Minnesota's Mental Institutions, 1946–1954* by Susan Bartlett Foote

GARY F. GLEASON

## Message from the Editorial Board

In this issue, we mark the one-hundredth anniversary of the International Institute of Minnesota. Krista Finstad Hanson brings us a comprehensive look at that organization, which began under sponsorship of the YWCA after World War I and has assisted people of diverse countries and ethnicities as they come to live in Minnesota. For instance, the group sponsored Japanese Americans who were allowed to leave U.S. internment camps during World War II, and it helped resettle Eastern Europeans after that conflict. More recently, it's been instrumental in providing support to the growing Hmong, Karen, and Somali communities. The Festival of Nations, still going strong, reflects the compelling cultural heritage of many groups that have contributed to our county. In a companion article, Kitty Gogins provides a more personal view, sharing how the International Institute helped her Hungarian-immigrant parents and reinforced rich family traditions as she grew up in Roseville. The other article in this issue tells a different suburban story: Midland Hills Country Club emerged from farm fields in the early 1900s to provide an opportunity to play the newly popular game of golf. Club member John Hamburger has delved into club archives to illustrate how the organization became a reality, despite the difficult process of acquiring land and raising money from sponsors. Even construction was hard. Designed by prominent golf architect Seth Raynor, the course was completed with rocks removed by hand and fairways cut with a horse-drawn hay mower!

Anne Cowie  
Chair, Editorial Board

*The Ramsey County Historical Society thanks Board Member James A. Stolpestad and affiliate AHS Legacy Fund for supporting the updated design of this magazine. Publication of Ramsey County History is also supported in part by a gift from Clara M. Claussen and Frieda H. Claussen in memory of Henry H. Cowie Jr. and by a contribution from the late Reuel D. Harmon. Thanks also to Midland Hills Country Club and International Institute of Minnesota for their financial support.*

*Where the Grass is Always Green*

## The Founding of Midland Hills a Century Ago

JOHN HAMBURGER

**July 23, 1921**

It's bright and sunny on this fine Saturday morning. What a wonderful day to play golf! Temperatures are expected to reach the upper 80s, and there's no rain in the forecast.<sup>1</sup>

A new golf course in Rose Township along the northern edge of St. Paul and Minneapolis opens this very day. It was scheduled to open a week earlier, but heavy rains hampered those plans.<sup>2</sup>

The game of golf is exploding in popularity, and more and more people want in on the social and physical aspects of the sport. Many in attendance today were members of the nearby nine-hole University Golf Club. Last weekend, the new course was featured in Sunday's *St. Paul Pioneer Press*, comparing it favorably with any in the country.<sup>3</sup>

Anticipating the day, excited golfers journey from home in the popular Ford Model T or Packard Twin Six. They travel along Larpen-teur Avenue toward a dirt road near Cleveland Avenue, where they cross the fairway of the

par-three Eden hole and head directly to an old farmhouse—now clubhouse—which has been remodeled and covered with a fresh coat of white paint with green trim.

The main floor contains a large porch from which golfers are seen completing their rounds on the eighteenth green. The interior has been redecorated and lighted with electricity.<sup>4</sup> The golf shop is in the former granary, which was moved to the northeast corner of the clubhouse. Remnants of an old hay barn sit adjacent to one of the new tee boxes. Another barn sits nearby to house the horses, which are still used to pull mowers that cut the grass.<sup>5</sup>

Herb Wussaw is the Midland Hills golf professional for the 1921 season.<sup>6</sup> He was the professional of the nine-hole course last summer and was previously a golf instructor in Janesville, Wisconsin, and Alexandria, Minnesota.<sup>7</sup>

Wussaw gives lessons, cleans clubs, operates the refreshment stand, supervises the caddies, and assembles new sets of hickory-shafted clubs for players, complete with hand-forged heads with his personal stamp.<sup>8</sup>

A few players stop by the golf shop to purchase new Spalding Kro-Flite balls from Wussaw

An unknown golfer putting out on the fourth hole at Midland Hills (today, it's the eighth hole), with the Walsh farmhouse/clubhouse in the background. *Courtesy of Midland Hills Country Club Archives.*



Midland Hill's first golf professional, Herb Wussaw, was also a clubmaker. This is a Bakspin Mashie Niblick club sold by Wussaw. Today, this club would be the equivalent of a seven-iron. *Courtesy of Midland Hills Country Club Archives.*

for today's round for seventy-five cents a piece.<sup>9</sup> Hit them straight, because the roughs are high, and the balls are expensive.<sup>10</sup>

The men are dressed in long shirts, bow ties, and knickers manufactured with Aeroplane wing cloth by Maurice L. Rothschild & Co., and available at the Palace Clothing House in St. Paul for five dollars. The ladies are wearing fashionable long skirts. It's hot, but everyone wants to take part in the new pastime, so they make do with a little discomfort.<sup>11</sup>

Thanks to Prohibition, nothing stronger than lemonade or iced tea is served to quench people's thirst after the round is over—unless of course, they've brought along some grain alcohol to mix with their Schmidt Select near-beer.<sup>12</sup>

Reporters from the *St. Paul Pioneer Press* are on hand to cover the opening-day festivities of the new eighteen-hole course, a 6,200-yard, par-seventy course, under construction since the summer of 1920.<sup>13</sup>

Seventy-two fellow members have assembled to play in the opening-day tournament, and according to the newspaper, "substantial cups and prizes have been donated for the low gross and net scores."<sup>14</sup> Caddies are lined up next to the clubhouse and working that day for sixty-five cents per bag.

The day continues pleasantly for players, guests, and all the behind-the-scenes workers who have spent long months making this dream a reality. All are amazed at the transformation of the Walsh and Anderson farms.

At the end of the day, Mr. Paul Bessell shoots a seventeen-over-par score of eighty-seven to win the Governor's Trophy.<sup>15</sup> Everyone returns home tired but happy with their first day at the Midland Hills Country Club, and it's decided soon after that this same tournament will be played annually.

### **The Story Unfolds . . .**

The University Golf Club opened for play in the spring of 1916 on eighty acres of ruffled farm pasture near the University of Minnesota's University Farm. Its founders, a group of deans and professors, fashioned a crude, nine-hole playground they originally called the "Faculty Links."<sup>16</sup>

When the five-year land lease couldn't be extended, the club leased two farms to the north

### **Prohibition: A Work-Around**

The National Prohibition Act or Volstead Act, named for U.S. Senator Andrew Volstead from Minnesota, eliminated the manufacture, sale, and transport of intoxicating beverages in 1920.<sup>a</sup> The legal drinks of choice for Midland Hills members during Prohibition (which ran until 1933) were soft drinks, lemonade, and a near-beer produced by the Jacob Schmidt Company known as Schmidt Select.<sup>b</sup>

The late Bob Morgan, a former Midland Hills caddy who became president of the club in 1953, said this in a 2004 interview:

"There was a common practice during Prohibition to mix grain alcohol in a can of Schmidt Select. In addition, a corn whiskey known as Minnesota 13 was often passed around the club or kept in golf bags."<sup>c</sup>

An entry in the board minutes of September 1, 1920, suggests that alcohol was also present at some board meetings:

"There were certain elements present at this meeting which brought forth considerable good cheer in the early part of the evening and in fact there were a few of the members who were somewhat boisterous and unladylike in their conduct. For this reason, it was voted to hold meetings of the board as frequently as possible."<sup>d</sup>

to build an eighteen-hole golf course. They retained a prominent golf architect, Seth Raynor, to design it and relied on Ralph Barton, a quirky university mathematics professor, to supervise the project. Formally organized in December 1919, the club opened its new course in July 1921 and renamed itself The Midland Hills Country Club of Rose Township. This is the history of the founding of Midland Hills and the construction of its classic golf course.

### **An Idea Sprouts: The University Golf Club**

A golf course building boom began in 1915, fueled, in part, by twenty-year-old Francis Ouimet's National Open win at Brookline, Massachusetts, in 1913 and by Charles "Chick" Evan's twin 1916 victories in the National Open<sup>17</sup> at the Minikahda Club and the U.S. Amateur at the Merion Cricket Club in Philadelphia.<sup>18</sup>

Ouimet's victory over two legendary British golfers and Evan's popular appeal introduced golf to a nation that increasingly valued exercise and open-air sports.<sup>19</sup>

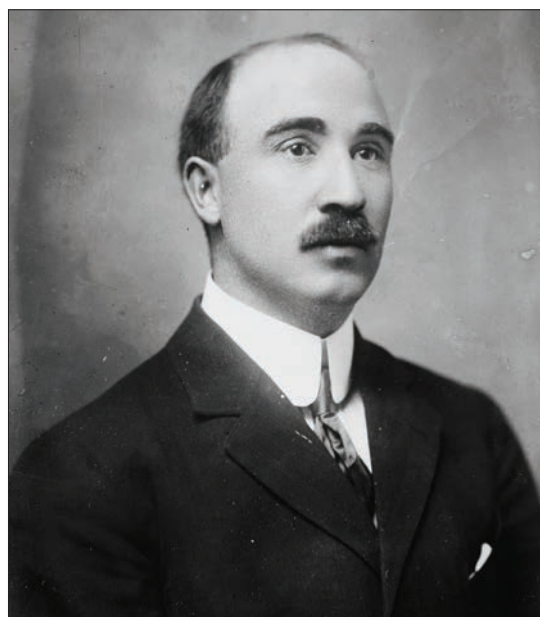
The number of golf courses in the United States increased from 732 to 5,856 between 1916 and 1930.<sup>20</sup> In fact, by 1915, there were four golf courses established in Minneapolis and St. Paul, including Town & Country Club, Minikahda Club, White Bear Yacht Club, and Interlachen Country Club.<sup>21</sup>

A faculty committee of twenty-two men wanted to create one more course and posted a notice in the May 31, 1915, "University of Minnesota Alumni Weekly" newsletter to assess if faculty members would support a golf club near the University's Farm Campus:

University Golf Club Logo. Courtesy of Midland Hills Country Club Archives.



Edward Dana Durand, an applied mathematics professor at the University of Minnesota and a former U.S. Census Bureau director, was instrumental in the creation of the University Golf Club in 1915. From the George Grantham Bain Collection, courtesy of the Library of Congress.



"It is planned that if between 100 and 150 members of the faculty will join in this movement it can be carried through. It is proposed to furnish a nine-hole golf course with tennis courts."<sup>22</sup>

The club's promoters were Edward Dana Durand, chairman of the Applied Economics Department, and six other faculty members, including law professor Edward Thurston; Joseph M. Thomas, a professor of English; and Guy Stanton Ford, dean of the graduate school and, later, president of the university. The group signed a five-year lease with farmers John D. and Kate Barrett for eighty acres of land and a farmhouse just north of the Gibbs Farm.<sup>23</sup>

A membership solicitation described the new golf club:

"The links are located about one-half mile directly north of the Farm School, three miles from the main campus. The club is easily reached by auto by going out East Hennepin to Cleveland Avenue, turning to the left a quarter of a mile and then to the left again, going about forty rods to a large red barn, which can be seen from the road, or the club may be reached by the Campus Trolley. There is a neat little clubhouse on the grounds with lockers, with reading and rest rooms. Two caretakers are constantly on the job improving the grounds and the course runs over one of the most beautiful stretches of land imaginable. There are plenty of hazards to test the skill of the most proficient, while there are no ravines or deep gullies to take the heart out of the beginner."<sup>24</sup>

Annual dues were set at fifteen dollars for faculty men, ten dollars for faculty women, and five dollars for wives of faculty members.<sup>25</sup>

By the end of the 1917 golf season, the club reported 144 members, six short of its goal.<sup>26</sup>

However, the U.S. entry into World War I disrupted daily life at the University of Minnesota, and club membership suffered. Because many faculty members were away performing government or military service, the club had trouble making ends meet. As a result, it was opened to alumni and professional men in the Twin Cities to bring in more funds.<sup>27</sup>

In the spring of 1919, Professor Thomas and William D. Clark, a professional at the Minneapolis Golf Club, revised the layout of the course. Thomas spent many hours supervising the construction and readying the course for play.<sup>28</sup> In fact, after the nine-hole course was renovated, it became known among members as the “Thomas” course.<sup>29</sup>

The lease with the Barretts was set at five years, and, by 1919, it became advisable to negotiate a renewal. At that time, the University Golf Club remained unincorporated, and its affairs were conducted informally. On one hand, some faculty members were satisfied with a nine-hole course as the center of their recreation. On the other hand, the addition of doctors, lawyers, and local businessmen to its membership led it to explore new amenities. By year-end, membership grew to 234 members, a majority of whom were not affiliated with the university. It was time to look for bigger and better options.

### **The Idea Grows: Land for an Eighteen-Hole Playground**

In the summer of 1919, Thomas and businessman Edgar Zelle, working closely with Val Rothschild, a St. Paul real estate broker, located possible sites for a new eighteen-hole course just north of the nine-hole course. One site was approximately 120 acres, containing a thirteen-room farmhouse and three barns owned by Mary Walsh, the widow of a local farmer. To the east of the Walsh land was a forty-acre parcel owned by Theodore Anderson. The Walsh property was subleased to Gust Loftus, while the Anderson farm was leased to Anderson’s son-in-law, Sever Solstad.<sup>30</sup>

Club president Arthur Logan asked White Bear Yacht Club professional Tom Vardon to visit the Walsh and Anderson farms, to determine their suitability for a course. Vardon, brother of six-time British Open champion Harry Vardon, visited in January 1920 in “deep snow” and told Logan he “was enthusiastic over its possibilities.”<sup>31</sup>

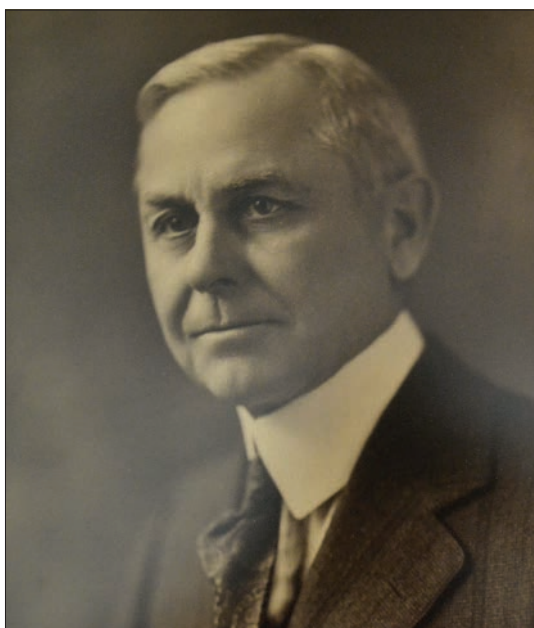
Zelle and Rothschild initiated negotiations with the Walsh heirs and Solstad for a lease on the properties. Clarence Drake of Minnesota Loan & Trust and Martin F. Ernst of Snelling State Bank assisted the club in the negotiations. The Walsh negotiation grew complex, as Mrs.



Former University of Minnesota president, Guy Stanton Ford, was one of seven University deans and professors who signed a five-year lease for eighty acres of land to build the University Golf Club in 1915. *Courtesy of University of Minnesota Archives—University of Minnesota: Twin Cities.*



Joseph M. Thomas, a University of Minnesota professor, redesigned the nine-hole course in 1919 and was key to the development of the new eighteen-hole course. *Courtesy of University of Minnesota Archives—University of Minnesota: Twin Cities.*



St. Paul Realtor Val J. Rothschild located the Walsh and Anderson farms for the new eighteen-hole course in 1919. *Courtesy of Kennon V. Rothchild.*

Walsh involved her attorney, Judge George Ross Smith, a former Republican congressman.

Concerning the east parcel, Anderson had confirmed to Zelle and Rothschild he would lease them his lands for a golf course. However, when Rothschild visited Anderson at his home to complete the deal, the farmer told him the club must negotiate with Solstad, who held a lease on the farm. The existence of a lease was news to Zelle and Rothschild:

“Solstad was inclined to be stubborn and severe in his demands, but after three hours of negotiating said he would agree to lease the land, provided he could sow his grains and harvest the hay this summer, which he had already ploughed and seeded.”<sup>32</sup>

Logan and William R. Vance, the dean of the law school, reviewed the terms of the two leases with the directors.<sup>33</sup> Both leases began January 1, 1920. The Walsh lease would last twenty years, with rent of \$1,200 for each of the first two years, \$1,500 per year for the next three years, and \$2,000 per year for the remaining fifteen years of the lease. The Anderson lease was set at twenty years at a flat annual rental of \$800, payable semi-annually.<sup>34</sup>

### **This is Getting Real: The Need for a More Formal Organization**

With agreements in place to lease land, a more formal organization of the University Golf Club was required. No longer would individual members take on the financial responsibility of signing long-term leases. On December 12, 1919, fifteen officers and board members of the University Golf Club put their signatures to the articles of incorporation, creating an entity that would eventually be renamed Midland Hills. The articles were presented to the membership for ratification at the first annual meeting of the new University Club on January 12, 1920.<sup>35 36</sup>

Logan went over the finances of the club at the meeting: From March 1, 1917, through the end of 1919, \$10,266 was billed to members and \$9,068 was received on account, leaving \$1,188 outstanding. The club reported cash on hand of seventy-five dollars and ninety-six cents. Dues were set for 1920 at thirty-five dollars for

non-faculty members and twenty-five dollars for the faculty. University of Minnesota faculty would always receive a ten-dollar discount, no matter what the dues would become.<sup>37</sup>

There was one issue: A Miss Winifred Dooley wrote the board asking for playing rights during the upcoming summer, but the new articles and bylaws contained no membership classification for women who weren't related to male members. The board announced:

“There being no provision for women not relatives of members, it was decided to allow these members use of the course as they have done in the past and to call a meeting of the club at some time early in the season at the grounds and establish a membership for these women similar to the one at the old club.”<sup>38</sup>

Miss Dooley's membership was approved on January 19, 1920, with an initiation fee of ten dollars.<sup>39</sup>

### **This Architect or That One?**

At the club's first annual meeting on January 19, 1920, there was talk of finding an able course architect. Board member Barton expressed enthusiasm for attracting “Donald Ross or some other good golf architect to plan the holes.”<sup>40</sup>

The Scottish-born Ross was the most famous golf course designer at the time, having apprenticed at St. Andrews under the tutelage of former British Open champion and course architect “Old Tom” Morris. Ross was naturally at the top of the University Golf Club's short list.<sup>41</sup>

Barton also reported that Willie Watson, the architect who designed the original courses at Minikahda Club, Lafayette Club, and Interlachen Country Club, might be interested.<sup>42</sup>

Another name mentioned was William Herbert Fowler, a former English cricket player turned golf architect, who was then seeking design work in the United States.<sup>43 44</sup>

One more option—Logan, still serving as club president, reported that he had contacted Seth Raynor, a Southampton, New York, engineer and former partner of Charles Blair Macdonald, the 1895 U.S. Amateur champion and architect of the first eighteen-hole golf course in the United States—Chicago Golf Club. Raynor

was developing a name in golf-architecture circles and had just signed on to design Somerset Country Club's course in West St. Paul. Logan explained that Raynor would be in town on the fifth of April and was available for discussions.<sup>45</sup>

The board arranged a meeting for April 10 at the Minnesota Club between club members Drake and Barton and Raynor and his associate David Cameron, followed by a tour of the property the next day.<sup>46</sup> According to Logan, "Raynor's opinion was excellent but not equal to the task of scattering gloom that his price shed upon the group"—a fee of \$1,600.<sup>47</sup>

The following day, April 12, Barton, Logan, bankers Drake and Ernst, and Professor J. C. Poucher met with Raynor and Cameron at The St. Paul Hotel to negotiate a deal. Raynor offered to design the course for \$1,500 if the club provided him with a topographical survey. The group told Raynor his proposal would be discussed with the full board as soon as possible.<sup>48</sup>

That night, Logan sent a telegram to Ross, Watson, and Fowler:

"Can you lay out a new eighteen-hole course in Minneapolis before June first. Contour map showing elevations of one-foot contours and cross sections each one hundred feet will be ready May 10th. Wire terms and date of possible appointment."<sup>49</sup>

At the next board meeting, Logan told the group he'd heard back from Ross, although the sought-after course designer gave no figures and offered time provisional upon other appointments. Fowler quoted a \$2,000 fee plus reimbursement of hotel bills. There is no record of Watson's response.<sup>50</sup>

Some board members still wanted Ross, even though they knew he might never visit the site.<sup>51</sup> It's estimated that Ross never saw a third of his course designs, preferring to do most of his work from his Pinehurst, North Carolina, office.<sup>52</sup>

Raynor's reputation for seeing projects through to completion was positive; plus, he was in town working on the Somerset course and could begin immediately. That shifted the board consensus towards Raynor:



Prominent golf architect Seth Raynor designed Midland Hills and Somerset Country Clubs in 1920. He and his mentor, Charles Blair Macdonald, were known to pattern their golf holes after famous holes in England and Scotland. Raynor is recognized as one of the top golf architects of all time. He designed more than one-hundred courses. Today, fourteen Raynor courses are listed on *Golfweek* magazine's "2018 Top 100 Classical Golf Courses in America." Courtesy of Mary Cummings, Southampton, New York.

"It was the opinion of the board that the course be laid out with the idea of taking advantage of the attractiveness of the surrounding country as viewed from different points on the course. It was felt that this should not be done in absentia."<sup>53</sup>

### **"Fore!" in 1920: Construction and Financing Headaches**

With Raynor finally on board as the course architect, Barton and Minneapolis landscape architect Charles Ramsdell took charge of construction. If not for Barton's manic enthusiasm and Ramsdell's landscape skills and tight management of the work crews, the course might never have been built.

Much of the history of the University Golf Club's construction of the new eighteen-hole golf course comes from board minutes and a few newspaper accounts. The club-minutes book from 1920 and 1921 is especially rich in detail. As both the construction supervisor and club secretary, Barton provided a first-hand account of the trials of financing and building the new golf course.

Barton was a forty-five-year-old assistant professor of mathematics at the University of Minnesota and an unlikely construction supervisor. Born in 1875 on a farm in Newport, New Hampshire, and educated at the Phillips Andover Academy, a prep school in Massachusetts,



he graduated from Dartmouth College in 1904 at the age of twenty-nine.<sup>54</sup>

At Dartmouth, Barton became interested in golf and looked after the college golf course for a couple of years. In 1916, he joined the Minnesota faculty and became a member of the University Golf Club, eventually responsible for managing the grounds of the nine-hole course and promoting it to other faculty members.<sup>55</sup>

Charles Ramsdell was born in Massachusetts in 1879 and worked for the prestigious landscape firm of Warren H. Manning in Boston around 1896. Manning sent Ramsdell to Menomonie, Wisconsin, in 1899 to supervise a landscape project at the Stout Manual Training School; he later moved to Minneapolis in 1903 to open an office for Manning.<sup>56</sup> There, he performed “private estate” work and public projects for the Minneapolis Park Board and the university.<sup>57</sup>

Ramsdell joined the war effort in 1917, designing housing projects for the United States Housing Corporation until he was discharged in 1919.<sup>58</sup> When word spread that the University Golf Club was to build an eighteen-hole course, Ramsdell, then stationed at Fort Snelling, threw his name into the hat.<sup>59</sup>

University professor Harry B. Roe, using students as assistants, prepared a survey for \$700. It was staked to the ground near the Walsh farmhouse, and paper versions and a cloth map were provided to board members.<sup>60</sup>

Raynor and Cameron<sup>61</sup> then drew up detailed plans and staked each of the holes. They

prepared models of the greens so that Barton and Ramsdell could follow the exact contours.<sup>62</sup>

Raynor estimated that it would cost at least \$20,000 to complete the course and get it ready for play by July 1921. He recommended Barton and Ramsdell assemble a crew of thirty to sixty men to get the course ready for seeding by August 1920.<sup>63</sup>

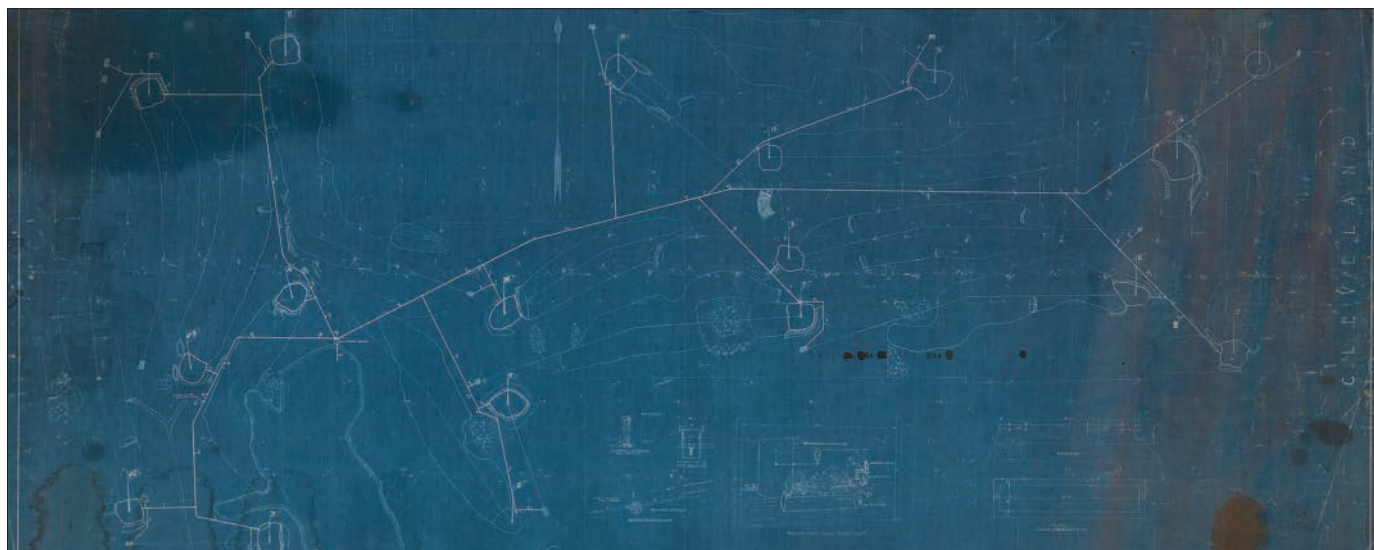
Clarence Drake worked up various options for financing the construction, including issuing bonds. However, the land was leased, and there were no assets to collateralize. The club hoped to raise \$15,000 by assessing 300 members fifty dollars per person. Still, that would raise only 75 percent of the \$20,000 that Raynor considered a minimum amount needed to construct the course. The balance would come from new-member initiation fees, which increased from \$100 to \$150.<sup>64</sup>

Construction began in earnest on July 15. Ramsdell organized a crew of thirty-three men and three teams of horses split into eleven men per team.<sup>65</sup> Barton estimated the three crews took approximately five days per hole to rough out the fairways, greens, bunkers, and tees using a recently purchased tractor.<sup>66</sup>

Work on the course proceeded slowly. A horse-drawn hay mower cleared tall grass and weeds. The ground was broken up by disk and spike-tooth harrows. Workers removed stones by hand, and a roller compressed what would become the new fairways.<sup>67</sup>

Raynor visited the club in late August to review the construction process and refashioned

Seth Raynor's golf course design map hangs in the clubhouse at Midland Hills. Courtesy of Midland Hills Country Club Archives.



the surface of the sixth green, a par-three hole, known as a short. By September, sixteen putting greens were ready for seeding. Raynor recommended a mixture of New Zealand fescue grass and red-top bentgrass for the greens.<sup>68</sup>

While work progressed, only \$7,000 of the estimated \$15,000 in assessments had been collected by the middle of August. Barton pleaded with the board (in third person, which was how he often addressed himself in the minutes):

“He further stated there was \$934 in the treasury and that a payroll of \$1,400 had to be met on Saturday night. He urged members of the board and those members of the club present to take immediate and definite action to get money into the treasury, stating that unless this money came in or was assured by Saturday night that construction must cease.”<sup>69</sup>

Money problems kept Ramsdell from keeping the work crews together when he couldn't pay them in a timely fashion. He placed a lien on the club's land for non-payment of his supervisory services. Barton was frantic:

“The club has no credit with these workmen. They must have money and they must have it when it is due, otherwise they quit and the course as it now stands is useless.”<sup>70</sup>

Nearly one hundred members had not paid their assessments by the end of September. Barton was at wits' end:

“This is hell. If I had the money I could have all the greens and tees ready tonight and my bunkers cleaned out and my fairways in good shape. Money and the weather stand in the way of completion of the work. Evans has money coming. Youatt has money coming. Busse has money coming. I am getting afraid to go near the work. That says nothing of grass seed, tractor, pump, well and sand and rent to be paid for by January 1st. When the hurricane strikes the ship, the rats desert first. Who's going to stick to the end?”<sup>71</sup>



Ralph Barton put his heart and soul into the club, as seen through his colorful dialogue in the club minutes that he wrote. *Courtesy of Dartmouth College Library.*

The board divided the members who owed their assessments according to their city residency. A campaign chairman was appointed for each of the Twin Cities to make collection attempts. By the end of the summer, 200 members had paid their assessments, but the club was still short of cash.<sup>72</sup> In a last-ditch effort, a group of members borrowed \$1,400 from the Wells-Dickey Company to cover the latest payroll.<sup>73</sup> Ramsdell removed his lien after being paid an undisclosed amount.<sup>74</sup>

By the end of September, only six men were on the job besides Evans and a handyman, Bill Youatt. A work festival for club members was held in October to help the remaining crew get as far as they could before winter.<sup>75</sup> Where Raynor's design contemplated greenside bunkers, the board decided to dig shallow ones and finish them in 1921. Fairway bunkers were put off indefinitely because of the budget problems.<sup>76</sup>

Members who hadn't paid their assessments were sent a letter advising them to pay immediately; otherwise memberships would be taken over by the club and sold in the spring of 1921.<sup>77</sup> Urging his fellow members to pay up in advance of the season, Barton wrote again:

“The heavy expense comes in the first half of the season. The treasury is in serious need of funds. You've used the shovel and

franchise well, Brother, come on with the pen once more.”<sup>78</sup>

### **Meanwhile, the Nine-Hole Course Was a Bit in the “Rough”**

Maintaining the nine-hole course while the new eighteen-hole course was under construction proved to be too much. The club’s “Thomas” course was often in poor condition, and professors Barton and Thomas were the first notified. Barton describes the poor condition of the course and his deteriorating relationship with grounds superintendent William Evans:

“The Thomas Course has been very difficult to handle because of the inertia and opposition of the Evans family and the utter lack of responsibility of Evans senior. Evans junior has been loafing terribly. There is no question that this outfit is worthless except under constant and detailed supervision.”<sup>79</sup>

Evans was spending too much time working on the new eighteen-hole course and not enough time on the “Thomas” course. Barton

threatened (again, in the third person) to harness the horses and cut the grass himself:

“On Sunday morning, the chairman of the committee played over the course to get a line on what had to be done to it and he never played on a course in worse condition. He immediately went to Walsh Place and asked Evans to harness the horses, saying that he himself would mow the course if Evans would not. Evans said the course was all right and called your chairman foul smelling names, but harnessed the horses and mowed grass all of Sunday P.M.”<sup>80</sup>

Finally, the club’s biggest booster, Professor Thomas, told the board that he had had enough of golf management. He said that he “found that his health was giving out and it was necessary for him to resign as chairman of the greens committee.”<sup>81</sup>

### **Another Challenge – What’s in a Name?**

The second annual University Club meeting took place at the St. Paul Athletic Club on January 27, 1921. The meeting notice, sent on January 7, said that dinner would be served at a dollar fifty per plate and the idea of renaming the club would be discussed that evening.<sup>82</sup>

One hundred thirty-five of the approximately 300 regular members turned out in 30-degree weather to dine in the Athletic Club’s Ladies Dining room. Club members were updated on the status of the new course, and Charles Orr, a club member and state legislator, opened the discussion on club names.<sup>83</sup>

The club minutes do not mention what names were considered that evening. However, by the April 13 board meeting, the group had settled on a new name. They passed a resolution, changing the name to the Waveland Golf Club of Rose Township. When word reached the membership that Waveland was the board’s choice, there was considerable dissent.<sup>84</sup>

The April 27 board meeting immediately brought a motion to reconsider. Five new names were submitted that night: Allermuir, Kabekona, Midland Hills (submitted by Professor Thomas), Midmoreland, and Rose Town. Club members

### **What Happened to the University Golf Club’s Nine-Hole Course?**

The club board made a deal in June 1921 to sell the assets of the nine-hole course to the Minneapolis Elks Lodge for \$1,000.<sup>e</sup> But by August, interest waned, and the Elks decided against it. By December, with no prospects in hand, the club notified John Barrett, the property owner, that it would no longer operate the nine-hole course or clubhouse after the first of the year, and it would “take advantage of his offer to release the club from its lease.”<sup>f</sup>

The following year, Barrett made a deal with a local bootlegger and golf hustler, Conrad “Con” Althen, who managed the course in 1922 as the “Twin City” and then in 1924, renamed it “Minneapolis Country Club.”<sup>g</sup>

In 1926, Barrett sold the entire eighty-acre tract to the University of Minnesota for \$76,000.<sup>h</sup> The following golf season, the University made nine-holes available for student and alumni play and began planning a second nine holes and expansion of recreation fields.<sup>i</sup> The redesigned course opened for play in 1930 and is still open today as the University of Minnesota Les Bolstad Golf Course.

voted for a first and second choice, and they could write in a name if they preferred.<sup>85</sup>

On May 11, the board gathered at the Walsh farmhouse to count ballots. This time, members selected Midland Hills as the first choice with twice as many ballot points as the second choice, Midmoreland.<sup>86</sup>

Senator Orr wasn't happy with the name. He felt it should reflect its location. He had submitted a write-in vote for Rose Hill Country Club and asked the board to reconsider. The board declined.

Thus, the University Golf Club officially became The Midland Hills Country Club of Rose Township on May 11, 1921.<sup>87</sup>

### **In the End, It All Worked Out: Midland Hills Today**

Any good project worth doing takes commitment, money, and a lot of back and forth between the key players. Sometimes the grass is not always greener. Building Midland Hills was a long, arduous process, but those club members of long ago who dreamed and battled and

worried and argued managed to create a club that is still vibrant today.<sup>88</sup> In fact, Midland Hills Country Club celebrates its one hundredth anniversary in July 2019 with plans to dedicate a new Centennial stone bridge to future members of the club. Today, Midland Hill's nearly 300 members come from all parts of the Twin Cities, and the club remains true to the ideals set forth in its first annual-meeting notice:

“Remember that our club is still in the making and that we want to make it such a club that because of the physical exercise in the open, because of the human satisfactions in good fellowship and good sportsmanship, you are a better companion, more efficient and a greater source of happiness in the family circle.”<sup>89</sup>

*John Hamburger is a member at Midland Hills. He caddied and worked in the golf shop from 1968 to 1975 and later served as president of the club from 2004 to 2006.*

In 1919, Midland Hills's founders saw something special in the rolling hills of the Walsh and Anderson farms in Rose Township. One hundred years later, with downtown Minneapolis as a picturesque backdrop, the golf course retains its natural beauty. Courtesy of Peter Wong Photography.



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88. When work on the University Golf Club's new course was substantially complete, Barton left the University of Minnesota faculty to join Seth Raynor's growing golf-course-design business. When the Great Depression hit in the 1930s, Barton, who had developed his own golf-design business by then, was forced to disband it. Charles Ramsdell resumed his landscape career and partnered with Tom Vardon on several golf-course projects, including Eau Claire Golf & Country Club and the Merrill Golf Club in Wausau, Wisconsin.

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# RAMSEY COUNTY History

A PUBLICATION OF THE RAMSEY COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Preserving our past, informing our present, inspiring our future.

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The Ramsey County Historical Society's vision is to be widely recognized as an innovator, leader, and partner in preserving the knowledge of our community, delivering inspiring history programming, and using local history in education. Our mission of *preserving our past, informing our present, inspiring our future* guides this vision.

The Society began in 1949 when a group of citizens acquired and preserved the Jane and Heman Gibbs Farm in Falcon Heights, which the family had acquired in 1849. Following five years of restoration work, the Society opened the Gibbs Farm museum (listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1974). Originally programs focused on telling the story of the pioneer life of the Gibbs family. In 2000, with the assistance of a Dakota Advisory Council, the historic site also began interpreting Dakota culture and lifeways, building additional structures, and dedicating outdoor spaces to tell these stories. The remarkable relationship of Jane Gibbs with the Dakota during her childhood in the 1830s and again as an adult encouraged RCHS to expand its interpretation of the Gibbs farm to both pioneer and Dakota life.

In 1964, the Society began publishing its award-winning magazine, *Ramsey County History*. In 1978, an expanded commitment from Ramsey County enabled the organization to move its library, archives, and administrative offices to downtown St. Paul's Landmark Center, a restored Federal Courts building on the National Register of Historic Places. An additional expansion of the Research Center was completed in 2010 to better serve the public and allow greater access to the Society's vast collection of historical archives and artifacts. In 2016, due to an endowment gift of \$1 million, the Research Center was rededicated as the Mary Livingston Griggs & Mary Griggs Burke Research Center.

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The entrance to the Midland Hills clubhouse in 1921 was by means of a gravel road that crossed in front of the old third tee. *Courtesy of Midland Hills Country Club Archives.*