

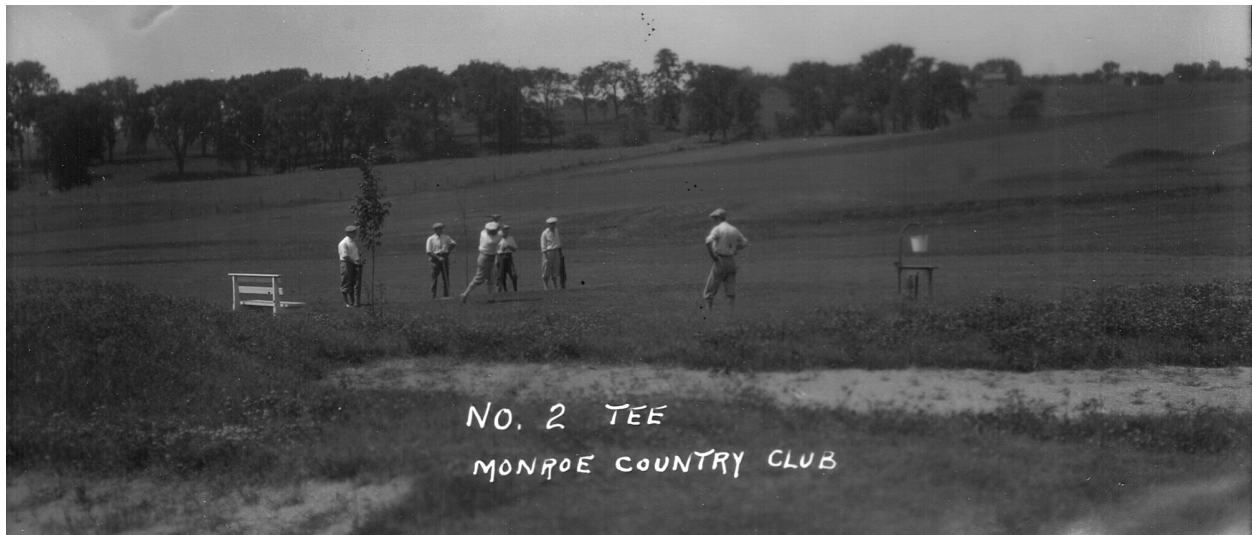
The Beginning of the Monroe Country Club

Many of us remember that last year in March the Monroe Golf Club was purchased by three local couples who have been working very hard since to make it a success. You may not know that its forerunner, the Monroe Country Club, was established in 1923 and opened 100 years ago on August 8, 1924.

The “Monroe Golf Club” had been formed earlier in 1923 “as a temporary organization for control of the course laid out on the fairgrounds infield,” which had only three holes. The group then met on August 29, 1923 with their sights on an 80-acre farm owned by Mrs. Marie Stuessy about two miles west of town, which she would sell it for \$155 an acre. Citizens from throughout Green County could “enjoy golf, tennis, croquet, horseshoes, possibly bathing and other outdoor sports and club house privileges including showers and lockers, refreshments, lounging room and dancing space.” The goal that year was to sell 150 shares of stock for \$100 each. Subscriptions for \$1,600 were already received that evening. It was voted to hire a golf architect or engineer before purchasing any property. The barn would be used as the club house. They thought that the dues would be set at \$40 whether you owned stock or not.

More than 50 people had subscribed to the Country Club by noon on August 31. At this time it was thought that maybe the subscribers might get a break on the dues. By September 1 they were favoring the purchase of the Fred E. Blumer farm, just south of Greenwood Cemetery. The quality of the soil was excellent and there was an excellent place to construct a swimming pool. The proximity of the land to the city, with 16 of the 50 acres within the city limits, was also a draw.

The Monroe Country Club was incorporated by P. J. Weirich, H. M. Place, W. J. Knight, Byron R. Bennett, and R. J. Grode on October 29, 1923. As mentioned earlier there were 150 shares worth \$100 each. No more than five shares could be owned by one person; shares could only be transferred to people found acceptable to the board of directors. About 13.25 acres was purchased from Otto and Emma Blumer for \$3,000 and recorded on March 3, 1924. An additional 43 acres was purchased from Fred E. and Bertha Blumer at the same time for \$10,250.



This early, undated photograph came from the collection late John and Virginia Irving. It shows six golfers at the Number 2 tee at the Monroe Country Club which opened 100 years ago this week.

Jim Hunter, Bill’s father, was hired on June 5 as the golf professional. He came from Stoughton and had “25 years’ experience teaching the game, helping introduce it into Australia and Tasmania.” At that time weeding and mowing was progressing with play anticipated within a week. The farm home on the grounds was to be used as the club house that season, with the women of the club furnishing it.

They expected to have golfers on the course by June 15. “Cups will be in, tee boxes up, poles and flags in place and fairways and greens mowed,” Place said. Rain, however, prevented that from

happening, but a number of players were on the course the following day. The general verdict was, "Considerable more walking than at the fairgrounds." All were pleased with the larger grounds.

"Attractive, colorful curtains were hung" in the clubhouse on Saturday, July 16 making it ready for the "usual large number of Sunday visitors." The furniture had been painted in "attractive gray with dashes of harmonizing color by the energetic wives of club members." Floors were "finished to a high polish for dancing." They still needed a piano and phonograph. The clubhouse was finished in white, both inside and out, and had a spacious, screened porch.

Before the official opening of the 9-hole course on August 10, it was described by the experts as "the sportiest golf course in the state of Wisconsin." The experts were Harry B. Snead, architect of the course, Peter N. Jans, the engineer who aided in the design, and Tom Bendelow, an architect and engineer who visited the course during construction. The rolling hills, ravines, and occasional trees made the course one of natural beauty.

More than 350 attended the official opening that day, which brought many novices who made their first attempt to send "the white ball hurling through the air." Any number of beginners "going around a few trial holes exceeded in skill those who have been playing for some time." More than 60 dinners were served at noon and nearly 200 were served during the day. The Monroe Municipal Band played in front of the clubhouse where Maud E. Wenger and Dr. F. L. Hodges favored the group with vocal solos.

Contests for that day had also been "designed to interest those who never wielded a club to strike a ball provided entertainment not only for the men and women who were induced to 'try their luck' but also to the great crowd assembled around the tees and on the porch of the clubhouse."

Club professional Hunter showed the onlookers how it was done by driving the ball with the skill of a veteran, sending it more than 200 yards. H. M. Place, "father of the club," was recovering from a painful cut near the ankle suffered when the power mower on the grounds fell upon him while he was inspecting it after a part had broken. He was able to witness the event, being brought to the grounds by motor and using crutches to reach a chair where he viewed the festivities.

"Admiration of the beautiful grounds and attractive house was heard on all sides and many marveled that so much had been done in so short a time to give Monroe an up-to-date country club."

And now, a century later, members and non-members alike can play on the 18-hole course that is constantly being improved. If you prefer, you can just have lunch and enjoy the beautiful view.