

***“Where have they gone Mrs. Robinson...”***

***A look at area courses that have disappeared through the years!***

***By***

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As area golfers eagerly await the opening of the largest number of new courses in decades, it is perhaps timely to recall area courses that have been lost through the years. This is not to mark the current openings with a sense of doom; on the contrary, it is more a reminder of what can occur if support wanes and the land becomes more appealing for bedrooms, rather than a place for birdies and eagles!

To begin with the most recent loss, we only have to go back to 1995 as we saw the loss of ***North Shore GC***, the once elegant 27-hole course near I-270 and Riverview. Reduced to 9 holes through the years, the site sits abandoned today, but the tee's, greens and even the ball washers stand to this day as a remainder of its once proud past. Done in partially be the losing clash with the Mississippi, the course had battled for years to survive. But the floods of '93 would eventually seal its fate, as it could not recover.

But it is only 1 of over 40 courses that have disappeared. While its fate is different – the land sits unused – the majority have fallen for housing or office parks.

***The Magnificent Eight***

The eight courses built prior to 1900, all private clubs, have all been lost. Two of the clubs, ***Bellerive*** and ***St. Louis*** continue, though both have relocated twice since their beginnings. The earliest course was in the Clayton area and belonged to ***St. Louis CC***. When built in 1896, the course was considered one of the finest in the Midwest, and hosted almost all the early championships. Clayton was a rural enclave in 1896 and the club was located a considerable distance from its membership, which still lived primarily east of Grand Avenue, the members believed it had sufficient land to serve the club for years! But as Clayton grew it became apparent that another site would be necessary as homes and businesses began to encroach on the facility. By 1910, though they had built 27 holes, including a nine hole course set aside for women, the membership realized that the land could not handle the new, larger membership, and besides, there was a trolley line running right through the course! They moved to the present site in Ladue in 1913, abandoning the Jim Foulis course and polo grounds, for a classic course created by the legendary Charles Blair Macdonald.

***Bellerive CC*** (nee ***The Field Club***) would move three times in its career. When founded in 1897 as ***The Field Club***, the course was so hilly that women found it very difficult to traverse and with few level lies, was not a particular favorite of area golfers. Their initial move was in 1910 to the Normandy area, where the club was renamed Bellerive, in honor of the last French governor of the area. The new course was significant in that it was a championship layout that would survive as one of the areas top facilities for 50 years. But by the late 50's many factors were involved the next decision to move; the migration of many members to the western suburbs, the increase in aircraft noise as Lambert field grew, and a fatal jet crash on the course. These combined to prompt the club to move to the Ladue Road site in 1960, where Robert Trent Jones constructed one of his best designs.

***Florissant Valley CC, The Jockey Club, Triple A Club, Jefferson Barracks Club***, the ***Kinloch Cub*** and the ***Carondelet Park Links*** round-out the list of the remaining six clubs of the era.

***Florissant Valley CC*** wanted to be another ***St. Louis CC***; polo ponies and all! Located in Bel-Nor, it created 9 holes in 1898, on a site that would be between the existing ***Normandie GC*** and the UMSL Campus. However, the club was never able to muster sufficient members and when a fire destroyed part of the club, a quite common occurrence in those days of candle

lighting, the course was plowed-under. The club remained open as a dinner club until the early 40's, when it too ceased to exist.

**The St. Louis Golf Club** was built in 1898 within the infield of the Jockey Club racetrack, which was located near the present site of Fairgrounds Park, and was thus referred to as simply **The Jockey Club**. It was one of the favorites of most area players for two reasons; its proximity to down town, and the fact that it was almost perfectly flat. This allowed you to play a round in well under two hours! As a result, Lady golfers of the era, decked out in their long dresses and wide-brim hats, soon outnumbered men on the course. But in 1905, as the Missouri Legislature outlawed para-mutual betting, their days were numbered. Golf alone could not sustain the facility, and it soon closed.

The original **Triple A** course was located at the corner of Forest Park, near what is today Forsyth and Skinker. First constructed in 1898 with 6 holes, the course added three more within a few months, as more members joined the club. By April 1901 they had added another 9 holes and became the first 18-hole layout in the area. But it was short lived; the land on which the course was situated was needed for the upcoming 1904 Worlds Fair. The club negotiated a deal with the city for another site in the Park, one in the southeast section, and the club remains there today.

The **Jefferson Barracks Officers Club** is actually the first of at least two that were created on the military base. Both were eventually abandoned, as they needed the room for the series of campaigns, wars and police actions, which took place prior to 1940.

**The Kinloch Club** was perhaps the most exclusive club in the area. Only the wealthiest St. Louisans were accepted for membership to this nine-hole facility. Ultimately, a dispute between two members eventually spelled death for the club, as members took sides until finally, several members left and formed the **Log Cabin Club**.

**The Carondelet Park Links** were definitely among the most unique. Created by the Ladies from St. Louis CC, in protest to their lack of tee times, they hired a pro to design the course, a pro to teach them and their children to play, and built a "colorful and charming clubhouse" in the Northwest corner of Tower Grove Park. At first a 4-hole layout, it expanded to six and finally 9-holes. After almost 7 years, their husbands must have gotten the message, as the club ceased operations around 1905. Coincidentally, this was about the same time **The Country Club** built the final 9 holes at the Clayton site!

**And the list goes on!**

Each of the closed courses has their own individual biography. Either they lost membership and were unable to meet their financial commitments or the lure of a financial windfall proved too tempting for the owners!

Apart from the Depression, there are few single events that can be pointed to as having claimed most courses. Frequently it was the temptation of money, while at other times it was the location of the courses that did not enable them to continue as members looked elsewhere. Too often it was just inept management that squandered money and failed to maintain their links. Still others fell victim to government intervention as I-270, I-170 and I-244 took land for their expansion.

**Meadowbrook CC** is a club with a slightly checkered past. Founded in 1911 as **Midland Valley CC**, it was located off Ashby Road in Overland. A top club for years, only the depression could dampen the member's spirits, and the club was finally sold to the Berberich Family in 1932 and renamed **Meadow Brook**. Their efforts would be stellar, but they too would sell the club in 1936. Despite a fire, which destroyed the clubhouse in 1958, it would remain at the same location until 1960, moving to the Clayton Road site where Robert Bruce Harris had done his handiwork. More recently Keith Foster remodeled the course to keep it more in line with the present members wishes.

**Algonquin GC** had its original course in Webster Park in 1899 near Glen Road and the RR tracks. The Algonquin's were a hearty bunch who boasted they could take on all comers, and for several years they were successful in defeating almost all who dared challenge them. But as homes were built at various points on the course, it had to constantly be re-routed. For a time it

appeared that *Algonquin* and *Triple A* might merge, but finally each was able to secure sufficient land for their membership.

When the Bahn family initially built *Southmoor* in 1952 it was one of the top public facilities in the area. Faced with an opportunity in 1981 to cash-in they parted with a portion of their course, which soon became condominiums. Keeping 9 holes open, they purchased additional land and when they completed the 18 holes it became *Bahnfyre*. With pro Charlie Rotter, owner Bill Bahn worked hard to maintain the facility. But once again, it fell to development, so it remains a footnote in area golf history.

*Crystal Lake CC*, located between Bopp and Ballas Roads just south of Clayton Road, was another top facility for 50 years. Opened in 1929, it was a semi-private course for most of its duration. Head Pro Alex Bopp was a fixture here for years and players such as Marcella Rose, Jimmy Jackson, Bob Cochran, and area pro's would gather here for weekly matches. The Essen family, which owned the course, finally succumbed to developers and sold the land in 1979. Today it is Barrington Estates, featuring some outstanding homes, including one mailbox that calls itself the "home on the 14<sup>th</sup> fairway"!

*Creve Coeur GC* still exists with 9 holes, but it is a paltry image of the former course, an outstanding 18 holer dating back to 1924. Another of the outstanding public layouts, it featured rolling fairways with dramatic elevation changes. But by 1969, plans had been set in motion to take the front portion of the course, that part closest to Olive Street Road, and turn it into an office park, which was the eventual outcome. The current 9 holes, at just over 3,000 yards, is owned by the city of Creve Coeur, which has worked hard to keep it as a top municipal layout. But the original layout, at 6,xxx yards was a tragic loss for area golf.

*Twin Lakes* was a Jim Cochran-designed 9-hole layout that stood where the intersection of I-44 and I-270 is today. *Lakeside GC* survived for almost 20 years with Gene Webb as head pro for most of them. Many of the caddies here worked the US Open at Bellerive as they supplemented the Bellerive staff. It fell to the need to construct the Innerbelt (I-170). *Indian Meadows GC* was a Homer Herpel design on Olive Street Road that lasted a decade before falling prey to homes. The entrance to the homes is still marked with the name of the course.

*Glenwood Links* was a fun, 9-hole facility built on an old landfill. Exhaust pipes were scattered throughout the course to vent the gasses and you tried hard to avoid these; the smell wasn't very nice! A popular restaurant, Top of the Barrel, was located just above the pro shop. But after 5 years the course closed in 1979. The site remains abandoned to this day.

*Arrowhead GC* became homesites on Telegraph in 1989 as the land was sold, following a 34-year history. Another south county layout, *Mehlbrook GC* also felt the pressure as it survived only 6 years, closing in 1979. Pebble Creek and West Par were located at the corner of Clarkson and Clayton Rd. Each built as a nine-hole course, they closed a few years apart as homes took over the land. The same fate befell *Kenrick Seminary GC* as it now supports condominiums.

Other courses just seemed to vanish with no memory; *Biltmore CC*, *Camelot GC*, *Golfmohr GC* and *Ferguson GC*, along with *Pacific GC*, *Riverdale GC*, *Western Military GC*, *Alton CC* *St. Vincent's Hospital GC* and *Tanglewood GC*.

As mentioned earlier, *North Shore CC* was another layout that could not survive through the years. Built in 1916 as *Riverview CC*, it began as a private facility. Members such as Jimmy Manion would represent Riverview at area events with great success. Renamed North Shore in 1930, the course did not survive the depression and closed in the late 30's. But by the 1950's the course would reopen and it hired Homer Herpel and Chic Adams to add 9 holes, bringing the total to 27. It went through a series of ups and downs for the next 35 years before succumbing to the floods of 1993. It reopened in 1994 and did play as 9 holes for that summer. But by 1995 it could no longer keep going and has been abandoned since then. The tee markers and boxes remain as they were, but being in a flood plain has proved too much for potential investors.

Of the 44 courses that have closed, about 25 have been public facilities. The same number, 25, have closed in the area since 1960. But to offset this, we have had 106 built during the same period. So the net area gain would be about 60, not a bad total!

*Note: Much of the material presented here comes from the book “**Golfing Before The Arch; A History of St. Louis Golf**”, by Jim Healey.*

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### *In Memoriam*

<b>Course</b>	<b>Holes</b>	<b>Founded</b>	<b>Closed</b>
1. Algonquin CC	9	1899	1902
2. Arrowhead GC	9	1955	1988
3. Bahnfyre GC	18	1981	1987
4. Bellerive CC	18	1910	1960
5. Biltmore GC	9	1930	1940
6. Camelot GC	9	1969	1979
7. Carondelet Park Links	9	1898	1905
8. Country Fairways	9	1968	1980
9. Creve Coeur CC	18	1924	1969
10. Crystal Lakes	18	1929	1979
11. Ferguson GC	9	1930	1941
12. Florissant 600 GC	9	1968	1975
13. Florissant Valley CC	9	1898	1903
14. Glenwood Links	9	1974	1979
15. Golfmohr GC	9	1950	1963
16. Green Trails GC	18	1960	1982
17. Green Trees GC	9	1973	1979
18. Greenview GC	9	1922	1933
19. Indian Meadows	18	1946	1956
20. Jefferson Barracks Links	9	1898	1900
21. Jockey Club (St. Louis GC)	9	1898	1905
22. Kenrick Seminary GC	9	1928	1978
23. Kinloch Club	9	1898	1905
24. Lakeside GC	18	1950	1970
25. Mehlbrook GC	9	1973	1979
26. Midland Valley CC	18	1912	1960
27. North Shore GC	18	1916	1995
28. Northland GC	9	1961	1980
29. Pacific GC	9	1967	1972
30. Parkwood Oaks	9	1975	1981
31. Pebble Creek GC	9	1972	1977
32. Riverdale GC	9	1929	1941
33. Southmoor GC	18	1952	1981
34. St. Charles CC	9	1926	1942
35. St. Clair CC	9	1908	1911
36. St. Louis CC	27	1896	1913
37. St. Vincent's GC	9	1947	1955
38. Tanglewood GC	18	1973	1980
39. The Field Club	9	1897	1910
40. Triple A GC	18	1897	1902
41. Twin Lakes GC	9	1955	1967
42. Wentzville GC	9	1958	1997
43. West Par GC	9	1963	1983
44. Western Military GL	9	1899	1909
45. Woodlawn CC	18	1914	1937

Note: Number of holes shown at time of course closing.

*Also known as:*

Many area courses have had multiple names through the years. Here is a listing of them.

***Name today***

***and was also known as***

Ballwin GC	Fox Creek GC
Bear Creek GC	Wentzville GC
Bellerive CC	The Field Club
Bogey Hills CC	St. Charles CC
Cajun GC	Desoto GC, Suburbia GC
Chesterfield GC	River Valley GC, Ambo GC
Far Oaks GC	Champions Trail GC
Glen Echo CC	Ridgedale CC
Grand Marias GC	Lake Park GC
Greenbriar Hills CC	Osage CC
Incline Village GC	Ponderosa GC
Indian Mounds GC	Tee Up GC
Lakewood GC	Duwe GC
Meadowbrook CC	Midland Valley CC, Meadow Brook CC
Meramec Shores	Meramec Lakes
North Shore CC	Riverview CC
Northland GC	Nor-Lakes GC, High Point GC
Norwood Hills CC	North Hills CC
Old Fluorissant GC	Paddock GC
Players Club	Crescent CC
Rivers Edge GC	Granite City GC
Ruth Park GC	University City GC
Sherwood CC	Hillcrest CC
Southmoor GC	Bahnfyre GC
St. Peters GC	Lago Bello GC, Dardenne GC
Sunset Hills CC	Madison County CC
Union Hills GC	Teamsters GC
Wentzville GC	Cedar Creek GC
Westhaven GC	Belleville GC
Woodlawn CC	Hill Crest CC, Kirkwood CC