

ATHLETIC AND
RECREATIONAL AREAS

ATHLETIC FIELDS

The earliest reference found to what could be called an athletic field is seen in the 1897 Bomb where events of 1884 included the statement. "A base ball association was organized to give direction and control to our movements on the diamond." In May 1890 the Aurora noted that "The Athletic Association has been making improvements on its track." On March 10, 1892, the IAC Student reported that "The athletic grounds will need a great many repairs." Just where those sports were practiced at that time is uncertain.

In 1892 the Board set aside the large area west of Morrill Hall, consisting of about 12 or 13 acres, for the athletic grounds.(1) Early in 1893 work began on installing an underground tile drainage system in the area and also the operation of leveling the field.

On May 27, 1893 the IAC Student briefly described the new athletic fields:

Our race track on the new grounds is to be constructed in the shape of the figure 8, three laps to the mile. It will enclose the football grounds in its southern eye and its northern eye will enclose apparatus for acrobatic training. The diamond is to be placed to the east of center of the figure.

It was a year later, however, before the work of grading, leveling and layout of the track was completed and ready for use.

The field was fenced (for football) in 1900(2); wood bleachers were built the same year.(3) Four new sections were added in 1904.

The November 16, 1901, issue of the ISC Student suggested that a name be given to the athletic field. Just when a name was adopted is uncertain. During 1902 and 1903 there were more editorials and names proposed. The area is identified as "State Field" on a map printed in the ISC Student in October 1904, but no record has been found relating to a formal dedication or adoption of that name. By 1905 the addition of portable bleachers provided a seating capacity of "well over two thousand,"(4) and for the first time reserved

(1) Minutes, Sept. 27-29, 1892 and Aurora, October 1892

(2) ISC Student, Oct. 1, 1900

(3) ISC Student, Oct. 15, 1900

(4) ISC Student, Sept. 16, 1905

seating for "a nominal sum" was charged.

Moving of the field was formally discussed about that same time, as recorded in the Biennial Report for 1903-05:

The development of the College has been such as to necessitate the early removal of the athletic grounds from their present location near Engineering Hall to the Southwest corner of the campus. Quite extensive grading will be necessary to put the grounds in shape.

Shortage of funds delayed development of the new field, although grading was done spasmodically over the next few years. But it was 1914 before the field was in full use.

That field became known as "New State Field" or just "State Field". As early as January 13, 1916, the Iowa State Student was editorially calling for the field and the gymnasium to be designated by more appropriate names. The field was dedicated as "Clyde Williams Field" in the fall of 1938 in honor of the man who served Iowa State from 1906 to 1919 and as athletic director for the last five of those years.

In later years various improvements were made to the field and maintenance was necessarily continuous.

Clyde Williams Field continued as the site for all home football games through the 1974 season. Since then it has been used primarily as a recreational area. The track remains and is used regularly by joggers and runners. The Stadium was razed in 1978.

Since 1975 football has been seen at the new South Campus field and Stadium.

A separate women's athletic field was first mentioned in 1921 when this item appeared in the Iowa State Student on April 4:

Inadequate facilities for women's athletics would be greatly relieved, it is thought, by a proposed plan for the development of new playgrounds south of the temporary dormitories. Provision would be made for a baseball diamond, tennis courts and soccer field. Hockey grounds would remain at the present location north of engineering hall. Although plans are complete, execution of the program must await the provision of funds, according to Miss W.R. Tilden, head of women's athletics....

Miss Tilden has asked that, in connection with the development of this field for the girls, that boys remain off the field.

The next reference to women's fields occurs in the May 14, 1925, issue of the Iowa State Student:

Extensive addition to the women's athletic field at the east of the dormitory group will be made. When the plan is completed the field will extend south to Lincoln Way and east to the bend in the creek. It will include a new track, volley ball courts, handball, archery, soccer, quoits, jumping pits, a baseball diamond and the tennis courts.

On December 10, 1929, the Board approved President Hughes recommendation

That a strip wide enough for hockey fields be taken off the animal husbandry field east of the Women's Dormitory and added to the athletic grounds for girls.

Discussing the plans for the proposed women's gymnasium an article in the Iowa State Student on June 2, 1937, also mentions outside activities:

Plans for playfields and a riding school also are included in the predictions for the next 20 years. Outdoor playfields will cover 20 to 30 acres, which will be divided into four baseball diamonds in spring, two hockey fields in fall, six deck tennis and badminton courts in fall, and 15 to 16 tennis courts (ten hard and five clay).

That plan did not materialize until 1943 when the area was made useable for the fall term. It was the 17 acre field identified as bounded on the west by Wallace Road, on the north by the cinder path along the railroad, on the east by pasture and on the south by the channeled part of College Creek. Except for a small parking lot cut out of the northwest corner that area has remained relatively intact since it was first established.

BASEBALL DIAMONDS

The "Old State Field", west of Morrill Hall, was the site of the first formal baseball diamond, although the game had apparently been played somewhere prior to the establishment of that field in 1894. On those new grounds the diamond was located on the east side of the track and football field, and was first used in 1895.

A map dating from 1915 shows the ball diamond just northeast of the track in the new State Field (later Clyde Williams Field). When the east Stadium stands were built in 1926 the baseball diamond was moved farther east on "ground which was once occupied by West Gate Cottage."(1) (Georgia White House).

In 1957 the varsity diamond was moved from that location to an area west of where Town Engineering Building now stands, about on the north extension of Sheldon Avenue, and remained there until 1968 when it was moved again to its present site at what was called the Old Horticulture Farm, north of Knapp Street and west of Hayward Avenue.

Underground drainage and watering systems were installed when the new diamond was constructed. A second ball field was also built as a practice diamond just to the south of the varsity diamond. Team dugouts were included as part of the new construction.

In 1974 that field was formally named "Cap Timm Field" in honor of Professor of Physical Education L.D. "Cap" Timm, who had coached the baseball teams since 1938.

(1) Iowa State Student, June 4, 1926

GOLF COURSE

An interest in golf, among faculty members, is first recorded in the ISC Student on May 22, 1900:

The golf links of the faculty golf club are being laid out in the pasture north of the experiment barn.

That was either unsatisfactory or abandoned soon thereafter because the paper of March 23, 1901 reported:

The faculty golf club have decided to lay out a nine-hole ground, bounded by the cottages and Emergency Hall on the north, the Sanitarium on the east, Professor Marston's on the west, and the road on the south.

No other mention of golf has been found during the next quarter of a century.

On April 12, 1927, an article in the Iowa State Student presents a new approach:

For several years a campus golf course has been one of the dreams of a large number of professors and students of Iowa State who are interested in the game and follow it closely.

A demand for a convenient, economical course which would be available for students, faculty members and college employees has been discussed by various groups and at one time the matter was considered by former President Pearson. However, in each instance the campaign fell thru before accomplishing concrete results....

Interest in a golf course located near the campus is present in the minds of a sufficient number of students and faculty members to make its success certain, once it could be obtained....

The next year Professor P.H. Elwood had his senior students in landscape architecture plan a golf course in the Arboretum area, which was favorably received except for the legality of using the Arboretum for that purpose.(1)

In 1930 President Hughes, in addressing the faculty at the start of the fall term, mentioned "the possibility of establishing a golf course on wasteland now belonging to the school."(2)

(1) Iowa State Student, May 18, 1928

(2) Iowa State Student, Sept. 22, 1930

During the following two or three years various sites were mentioned, including the Horticulture Farm. On May 2, 1931 the Iowa State Student proposed the land "north and west of the college cemetery.... It is the hope of many that a golf course will be built near the campus by next fall so that this sport may be included on the intramural schedule for next year."

A practice green and two approach tees were built in an area just south of State Gymnasium in 1933. That was initiated by Director of Athletics George Veenker.

In June 1935 the Board approved the proposal of President Hughes to develop a golf course north of the Chicago and North Western tracks. In his statement to the Board he said that "It further seems probable that a great part of the development of this course can be carried out with relief labor or some other form of publicly paid labor, with little expense to the College."(1)

By later summer of that year construction of the golf course was under way, as reported on September 21, 1935.(2)

An Iowa State recreational area which will include an 18-hole golf course, bridle paths, picnic areas and lagoon for canoeing is now under construction in the North Woods, a scant 500 yards from the middle of the campus....

Already a great amount of work has been done on the project since its inception approximately a month and a half ago. CCC labor has cleared a number of trees from the ground to become fairways on the opposite side of the Chicago and Northwestern railway tracks from the campus....

According to George Veenker, director of athletics, the course and recreational area will be ready for use in May of 1937. The fairways will be seeded next August and the bent grass greens put in place so that the area may be used the following spring....

There will be two holes on the south side of the railroad tracks, the first and the eighteenth, but the land for those two is as yet unavailable....

The golf course itself is now planned to be approximately a 6,000-yard course, which may be extended to 6,500 yards through construction of large teeing spots....

(1) Minutes, June 19, 1935

(2) Iowa State Student

When the golf course is completed, it will offer the golfer a different problem on practically every hole. It was designed by Perry Maxwell, one of the outstanding golf architects in the United States....

Unavailability of pipe for the irrigation system prevented the seeding of the greens in 1936, with the result of a year's delay in the planned date for opening of the course for use. The status of the work was fully described in the issue of the Iowa State Student for September 19, 1936, which also noted that the project was largely built with CCC labor and WPA employees with only a small amount of state money going into the project. (CCC stands for the Civilian Conservation Corps and WPA represents the Works Progress Administration, both federal agencies of depression days.)

The golf course was dedicated and opened for use on May 12, 1938. (1) The paper on that date also included a plat of the course.

In late 1959 the name "George F. Veenker Golf Course" was formally adopted to honor the man who was primarily responsible for its planning and development. He had been Iowa State's football coach from 1931 to 1936 and athletic director from 1937 to 1945. He died September 8, 1959.

The proposed extension of 13th Street west from Stange Road to Ontario Street resulted in forced changes to be made in the golf course in the early 1970's. The two holes south of the railroad tracks were relocated to the north side and several of the other fairways were modified to adapt to that change.

In 1971 responsibility for the operation of the course was transferred from the Athletic Council to the Physical Plant Department. The Club House was built in 1972.

(1) Daily Iowa State Student, May 12, 1938

RECREATIONAL and INTRAMURAL AREAS

In addition to the athletic fields, used primarily for football and baseball varsity teams, there were less formal areas designated for general recreational and minor sports activities.

Playfield North of State Gymnasium

Before construction of Beyer Hall and later Town Engineering Building, the entire area north of Union Drive to Pammel Drive and all college land west of Bissell Drive had been set aside as "playground area". It included tennis courts at the south end and other open and intramural fields north of those courts, including football practice fields. This came about in 1913 when the farm experimental work was moved from that area to the Zumwalt farm.

Five Baseball diamonds were made in this area in 1915, one for "contests among the members of the inter-fraternity baseball league, one to the inter-club league, and the remaining three to the inter-class teams."(1)

East Intramural Fields

The fields north of Lincoln Way, east of Wallace Road, south of College Creek and east to Squaw Creek were set apart for use of intramural activities in 1957. The original 27 acres was reduced in the late sixties when the new residence halls and their parking lots were erected.

Hockey

The April 15, 1905, edition of the ISC Student records that "The girls of Margaret Hall have a new hockey field, which is situated east of the Campanile and just west of Prof. Bissel's residence." (That residence is the one known today as Sloss House.)

In 1917 the Minutes for September 21 note that "Superintendent Sloss is authorized to provide a hockey field for women students on the old athletic field north of Engineering Hall." Presumably that location continued until 1929 when land was added for hockey fields adjacent to the women's athletic grounds.

(1) Iowa State Student, March 30, 1915

Handball

The Board Minutes of August 6, 1919, authorized the expenditure of \$500 for handball courts. These were built just south of State Gymnasium. The sport grew in popularity and four additional courts were built in the adjoining area in 1922. Six more courts were added on the east side of the gym in 1931, "to replace the obsolete old ones on the south side of the gym."(1)

Bowling

Outdoor or lawn bowling was introduced in 1934 with the construction of eight lanes 14 by 112 feet.(2) The courts were ready for use the following June.

On June 2, 1938, this account appeared in the Daily Iowa State Student:

Lawn bowling enthusiasts will get their first 1938 fling at the sport at Iowa State within a week or 10 days....Starting next fall....lawn bowling will be included as a regular intramural sport on the Cyclone program....Lawn bowling was so popular among faculty and townspeople last summer that the heavy usage wore down the grass, necessitating reseeding the green. By next fall the newly-construsted bowling green south of the gymnasium will be open for intramural play. This new green will be superior to the older one, Director Veenker believes.

Polo

The only reference found to a polo field occurred in the May 16, 1931, copy of the Iowa State Student, although there were several articles in that general period about the polo team. The article commenting on the field states

The polo practice grounds west of the Armory are in danger of being made unfit for use because of the thotlessness and carelessness of a few persons....all offenders were either faculty members or college employees who were driving their automobiles across the polo field....

(1) Iowa State Student, Sept. 18, 1931

(2) Iowa State Student, May 19, 1934

Drill Field

The June 8-9, 1921, Minutes of the Board authorized the Department of Military Tactics to use for drill purposes the area lying between the east line of the Armory and the west boundary of the campus, and between the street car track and the road which is about 200 feet north of the Armory.

In 1931 the drill field was relocated to an area north of the Physics building, to be closer to the Military Stables.

More recently the fields east of Bissell Road have been used by the military units and also by the marching band as drill fields.

Ice Skating

The earliest request for a place for ice skating appeared in the ISC Student in 1904, but no specific location was suggested. In 1912 and 1913 consideration was given to the possibility of flooding the old athletic field west of Morrill Hall but that proved unfeasible because of the topography.

It was the winter of 1914-15 that ice skating became possible for the first time when a dam was built on College Creek to flood the low area that is now Lake LaVerne. The weather turned cold enough in early January to permit use of the pond so formed.

Construction of Lake LaVerne assured good skating the next year. However, there were many years when the condition of the lake did not permit skating. More recently the weather has been the only determining factor as to when the ice is ready for skating.

TENNIS COURTS

When tennis was first played on the campus has not been determined. The earliest reference located occurs in the July 1885 copy of the Aurora which noted that "The lawn has been cross-barred with white-wash for accommodation of Lawn Tennis." By June 1890 that paper recorded that "Tennis courts literally cover the campus, and the evening recreation hour seems not nearly long enough."

The Athletic Grounds, west of Morrill Hall, were established in 1892 and most of the tennis courts were moved to that area. However, work in developing the courts area was slow, and in April 1893 the IAC Student wrote, "The campus is dotted with many new tennis courts." Three months later that source said there were twenty-three courts on the campus.

The first mention of tennis courts for women appeared in the ISC Student on April 15, 1905: "Two dirt tennis courts have been prepared for the girls just north of the Faculty club which will be for the exclusive use of the girls." In 1909 the women's courts were relocated to the north side of the street at about the location where Physics Hall stands now. Four new courts for women were installed west of the Home Economics building in 1913.(1)

After construction of State Gymnasium new tennis courts were built across the street to the north, on the land now occupied by Beyer Hall. The September 11, 1914, issue of Iowa State Student records that work was about to start on fourteen courts in that location. Clay for the surface of the courts came from Marshalltown. It was late in 1916 before any of those courts were ready for play.

Only two weeks remain before the eight new tennis courts north of the gymnasium will be completed....Four new courts will be built immediately north of Engineering hall where the old courts now are, sometime this fall. These courts will not be ready for use until next spring. Eventually four new courts will also be built east of those across from the gymnasium, making twelve courts in a row. Just when these will be built has not been announced.(2)

In 1922 work on additional courts was started. Four were added north of those across from the gym and four, for women, north of College Creek, east of Wallace Road. Concrete surfaced courts for

(1) Minutes, July 1913

(2) Iowa State Student, Sept. 19, 1916

varsity use were first discussed in 1925. Two of these were authorized at the May Board meeting that year. However, by 1928 only one concrete court had been completed. The following year it was noted that

Six new tennis courts are being established at a cost of \$2,650. The new courts, three of cement and three of clay, will be added to the east of the old courts in the space formerly used as a car parking area.(1)

The eight women's courts were resurfaced in 1948, using a specially prepared material providing a hard yet resilient surface. Nine men's courts were resurfaced in 1959, in preparation for the Big Eight Tournament scheduled in 1960.

Construction of Beyer Hall in 1963-64 resulted in the loss of most of the courts in that area and an appropriation of \$90,000 was made to permit the building of twenty-one new courts as replacement. Those were completed in 1965.

In 1979 six new courts were built in the area of the old Horticulture Farm, west of the baseball diamonds.

(1) Iowa State Student, Sept. 26, 1929