



Back in the day when American newspapers cost a nickel, and the price of Southern cotton was still noted at the top of the front page, Bobby Jones had an idea.

What if he, and a group of other individuals, bought Berckmans' Place - near Augusta, Georgia - and turned this horticultural paradise of rolling hills, fruit trees and gorgeous flowers (like azaleas) into a stunningly beautiful golf course? What if they hired Dr. Alister MacKenzie - a world-famous course architect - to transform farm land into golf greens?

While America was still gripped by the Great Depression, and the U.S. Federal Reserve was deciding whether to loan Germany additional funds (beyond the \$100 million loan which was already outstanding), Jones and his colleagues moved forward with their plans. They had an option to purchase the land for about \$200 an acre. (Had they waited a few years, it would have cost them even less.)

With Bobby Jones heading the project, wealthy Americans contributed thousands of dollars. Although some had been hard-hit by the market crash - like Alfred Severn Bourne, of Singer Sewing Machine fame, who had lost \$10,000,000 "almost overnight after the Crash" - other contributors had cash-on-hand for such a venture.

The result of their efforts? Augusta National Golf Club which annually hosts "The Masters," one of golf's most prestigious events.

The first Masters took place in 1934 (when it was called the "Augusta National Invitational"). Horton Smith won. To this day, the event still includes many amateurs (which was very important to Bobby Jones).

This July 15, 1931 newspaper article - from the *Augusta Chronicle* - announces the exciting news about the planned course:

"Bobby" Jones, king of the links for probably all time, whose superiority in golf has been displayed on the finest courses in the entire world has come to Augusta to build his ideal golf course.

The *images*, displayed in this article, take us back to a time when "Fruitland Manor," at Berckmans' Place, was a home (not a clubhouse). Bobby Jones' *words* take us back to the moment when he first realized the potential of this land:

I shall never forget my first visit to the property. The long lane of magnolias through which we approached was beautiful. The old manor house with its cupola and walls of masonry two feet thick was enchanting. But when I walked out on the grass terrace under the big trees behind the house and looked down over the property, the experience was unforgettable.

It seemed that this land had been lying here for years waiting for someone to lay a golf course upon it. Indeed, it even looked as though it already were a golf course, and I am sure that one standing today where I stood on this first visit, on the terrace overlooking the practice putting green, sees the property almost exactly as I saw it then.

The grass of the fairways and greens is greener, of course, and some of the pines are a bit larger, but the broad expanse of the main body of the property lay at my feet then just as it does now.

(Bobby Jones, quoted by Charles Price in *A Golf Story*, at page 74 - split into paragraphs here, for easier reading.)

Jones co-founded Augusta National with Clifford Roberts. Some of the early rules, governing behavior on the course, are either still-in-effect or are now-obsolete, such as:

- No running on the course - still true
- Members by invitation only - still true

- Only white golfers with black caddies - now obsolete
- No women - now obsolete
- Only black caddies - obsolete since 1983

Alister MacKenzie - a Scottish physician who believed that golf was good for his patients - left the practice of medicine in favor of designing golf courses. Although many of his Augusta designs have been changed through the years - to accommodate today's "big hitters" (among other reasons) - the routing of his 18 holes remains. (Follow the link to learn more about each of the holes.)

To make a golf course really great, Dr. MacKenzie believed these points had to be part of the design:

Should be arranged in two loops of nine holes (to create different wind conditions throughout the round)

Should have a mix of long par fours, drive and pitch holes and at least four par threes (to create infinite variety in the type of shots called for during a round)

The greens and fairways should be undulating without steep hills for the golfer to climb

There should be a minimum of blind approach shots

The emphasis should be placed on natural beauty, not on artificial features

There should always be an alternative route for the weaker player, yet a sufficient test for the plus-handicap player (this feeling influenced course layouts when penal designs were king)

There should be a complete absence of the annoyance caused by searching for lost balls

Course conditioning must remain consistently outstanding (Source for MacKenzie's course-design objectives: Weston-super-Mare Golf Club in Weston-super-Mare, Somerset, UK.)

Click on the text image for a greatly enlarged version of the *Chronicle's* article.

Credits:

Image of *The Augusta Chronicle* article - dated July 15, 1931 - online, courtesy Library of Congress.

See Alignments to State and Common Core standards for this story online at:

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicAlignment/Bobby-Jones-Envisions-Augusta-National-Golf-Club>

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