

The Old and the New Exmoor

By Joe G. Davis

Reprinted from the July issue Chicago Golfer

In July the eyes of the local golfing world were focused on the Exmoor Country club, where the Amateur championship of the Chicago District Golf association was staged, July 17 to 19.

Exmoor is old by reason of thirty-four years of existence, and new, because it is up-to-date. It never has vegetated. Always noted for its social activities, it is even more widely known as a golfing center. As far back as 1901, Walter E. Egan gave it a place on the golfing map when he was runnerup to Walter J. Travis in the National Amateur championship at Atlantic City. Three years later, his cousin, H. Chandler Egan, put Exmoor in the premier position by winning the Amateur championship at Baltusrol, and kept it there by



William A. Alexander, founder of Exmoor and its first president, 1896-1897

repeating at the Chicago Golf club the following year.

These two Highland Park boys set the stamp of Exmoor indelibly on western golf activities, H. Chandler winning the western title four times between 1902 and 1907, while Walter won in 1903, in which year his cousin was runnerup.

The club has been equally active in women's activities. Mrs. W. A. Alexander was the first president of the Women's Western Golf association, when it was organized in 1903 and continued in office in 1904. The first championship of the W. W. G. A. was held at Exmoor in 1903, Miss Bessie Anthony of Glen View winning. The following year, at Glen View, Miss Frances Everett of Exmoor won. Two years later she was runnerup to Mrs. Charles L. Dering at Exmoor.

The twentieth anniversary tournament of the W. W. G. A.

was held at Exmoor, Miss Miriam Burns of Kansas City winning. Exmoor's amateur tournaments in the early days were famous, attracting star players from other cities.

The club had its inception in 1895, when a few students from Princeton and Yale, during a vacation period began knocking balls around the open spaces at Highland Park. They conceived the idea of establishing a golf club and consulted with William A. Alexander, who knew nothing about the new fad, but was willing to investigate. He made a trip to Lake Forest to watch H. C. Chatfield-Taylor and a few pioneers play on a sheep pasture on the McCormick farm. First impressions were not favorable, but he went back again and became inoculated. It was a great conversion, as "W. A." has been an ardent golfer from that time to the present.

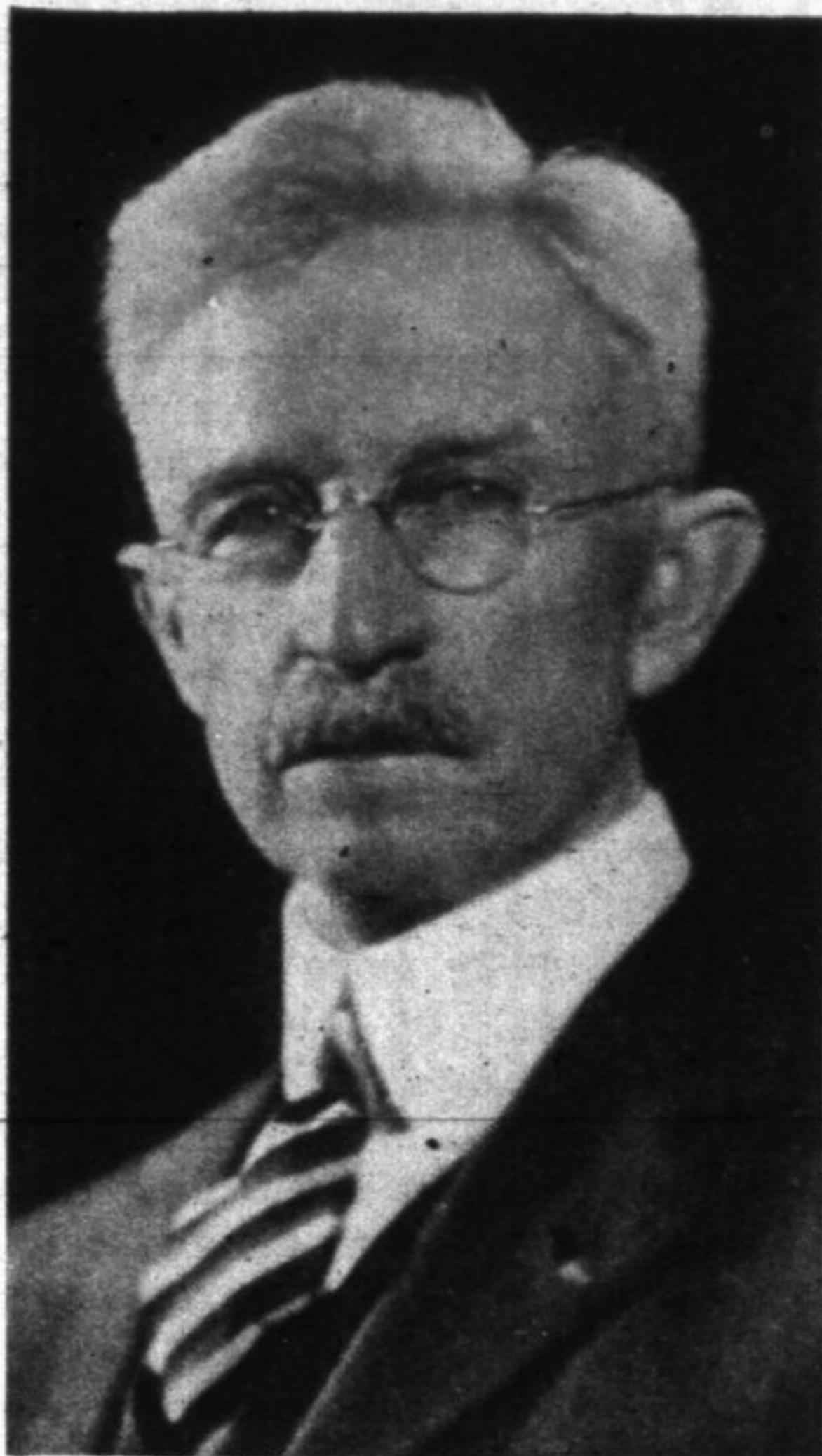
Next day he got a saddle horse and rode over the Ridge to inspect some land. He liked the present site, and obtained an option on 100 acres. He called a meeting of a few Highland Park citizens at the Union League club and presented his plan. Among those present were: Charles W. Fullerton, J. McGregor Adams, J. Wallace Wakem, Everett Millard, S. M. Millard and Vernon Cassard.

They were willing to act as directors, but unwilling to put any money in the experiment, so Mr. Alexander bought the property himself. Early in February he started to clean out the timber, removing several thousand trees. After getting the land ready for seeding he obtained permission from the city of Highland Park to lay a six inch water main from a standpipe to the clubhouse, which he paid for and deeded to the city.

A concrete road from the entrance on Vine avenue to the clubhouse cost \$8,000. He built and furnished a clubhouse, and employed a young Scotch professional named Tweedy. He made contracts and built a nine hole course with the able assistance of Henry A. Towner and R. Harvey McElwee.

A good many years later Mr. Alexander and Mr. McElwee promoted the Old Elm club.

The greens were sown, and following the old Scotch custom of having sheep on the course Mr. Alexander obtained 1,000 sheep from a Board of Trade man and hired a shepherd, who had two dogs, to look after



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them. Tree trunks were hollowed to make feeding troughs. An old log cabin built in 1845 was used as caddy house and did duty for many years.

The club was opened July 4, 1896, when more than 1,500 people passed through the gates, 800 being at the luncheon and 600 at the dinner. Exmoor was off to a great start.

The club was incorporated in 1896 with W. A. Alexander as president, the other directors being J. McGregor Adams, H. T. Birch, J. W. Wakem, S. M. Millard, Vernon Cassard and Charles W. Fullerton.

Mr. Alexander leased the house and grounds to the club at a low rental. Anticipating that more ground would be needed, he bought forty more acres which the club ultimately bought. Ten or twelve years later the club sold bonds and purchased the property. W. A. taking bonds in payment. Original entrance fee was \$25, with \$15 annual dues and the club was able to meet all its obligations. The membership of 150 filled the first year and Exmoor never has looked back.

The name Exmoor was chosen from "Lorna Doone" by Mr. and Mrs. Alexander.

The new club met with some opposition by the Highland Park club, a social organization, whose members feared the morals of the suburb would be injured by Sunday golf. "W.A." countered by giving every priest and clergyman a membership and by not permitting

the caddies to work until after midday on Sunday. So the opposition faded.

Mr. Alexander in after years confessed that his philanthropy was not exactly 100 per cent, as he had an idea that the game might prove a passing fad and ultimately he might get the clubhouse, now the central part of the present structure, and use it as a residence. He admits he was a poor prophet, as the club has gone steadily along.

Coming after Mr. Alexander, the club has had a line of highly capable presidents, most of them captains of industry. These have been 1898-1901, Charles W. Fullerton; 1902, John M. Cutter; 1903-5, Benjamin F. Cummins; 1906-9, Edward F. Carr; 1910-11, W. E. Carr; 1912-14, Denis F. Kelly; 1915-16, Robert F. Carr; 1917-18, F. Edson White; 1919, Percy B. Eckhart; 1920-21, Thomas R. Wyles; 1922, Fred A. Preston; 1923-24, Hobart P. Young; 1925-26, Fred P. Boynton; 1927-29, George W. Childs.

The addition to the clubhouse, recently completed, was designed by Architect R. E. Pingrey, a member of the club. It is of Colonial design and conforms with the old building. Eventually the old building will be replaced by a new structure,



George W. Childs
the present president

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