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Century-Old Reminders of Golf Course

Graveyard Oddity at Country Club

Old Slabs on Army, Navy and Marine Corps Course

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Arlington, Va., July 27 – When William Fraser made his will in 1825, more than a century ago, directing that a quarter of an acre of his farm on the hills of Virginia overlooking Washington be converted into a permanent burial ground for him and his family, little did he dream that he would rest in the middle of a golf course and that knicker-clad players would daily pass his final resting place and muse upon the presence of his tombstone there.

Such, however, is the case, but the final wish of this old pioneer has been carried out to the letter and it is highly probable that he will always rest in the spot of his choice for officials of the Army, Navy and Marine Corps Country Club, who have acquired his once swampy farm and converted it into one of the most picturesque spots in the vicinity of the National Capital, have decreed that William Fraser, his family, and his slaves shall slumber peacefully beneath their woodland bower.

Mansion Burned Years Ago

Nor is the burying ground the only evidence left by the Fraser family on the property now owned by the club. The mansion was burned many years ago, but the old stone spring house, oblivious to time, has become the center of gay picnic parties, now being surrounded by stone tables and a stone stove, the only evidence of modern progress at this spot along Long Branch, the stream that runs through the club property and that lies just below Arlington Ridge.

The burial ground, which has aroused much interest among club members and their guests, is situated between the fourth green and the fifth tee. Every golfer who plays the first nine holes of the course must pass it, but it has been preserved so nearly in its original state, surrounded by a group of old cedars, dogwood and myrtle that few notice it the first time they pass. The family graves are surrounded by an iron fence, and the graves rest in unmarked mounds outside.

According to George E. Garrett, former directing engineer of Arlington County and a historian of note, the land on which the club is located is a part of a 6,000-acre tract that was granted by Gov. William Berkeley to a Robert Howsing in 1669. The records show that the grant was compensation for transporting 129 persons but fails to go more into detail.

In the years that followed the land gradually became divided and the next record of interest is the will of William Fraser designating the burial ground. The club obtained that part of the property on which are located the two points of interest from Mrs. Herbert Carter.

There are other historical points on the golf course, however, for immediately to the north of the clubhouse is the site of Fort Richardson, one of the chains of fortifications that surrounded Washington during the Civil War. This fort is situated 225 feet above tidewater. The old fortification rifle pits and outpost positions that practically surround the burial ground are in their original state and are to be marked according to Maj. Richard D. Newman, manager of the club.

Home Erected in 1850

The old Fraser home was constructed in 1850 of bricks that were imported from England and landed in the port of Alexandria in 1849. Since it no longer stands, the old boxwoods have been removed to the clubhouse, where they now lend an air of impressive dignity.

In commending upon the work of preparing the ground for the course, Maj. Newman said that they found much old pine log draining in an excellent state of preservation. The ground had not been cleared for more than forty years, he said. There was also a ram in the old spring house that had been used to force water to the mansion, which was situated on the opposite slope from that now occupied by the clubhouse.



Situated in the center of the Army, Navy and Marine Corps Country Club golf course players find a real mental and perhaps superstitious hazard in a small cemetery which history reveals was established there in 1825 by the will of William Fraser as a burying ground for him and his family. Club officials are maintaining it as well as the old Fraser estate springhouse (shown above) in the original state. The cemetery was left intact when fortifications were established around it during the Civil War.

– Star Staff Photos

