

THE HISTORY OF
THE CITY OF TALLAHASSEE'S

JAKE
GAITHER

GOLF COURSE

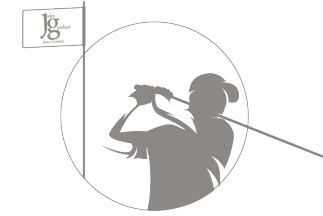


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CITY OF
TALLAHASSEE



THIS IS JAKE GAITHER

The Jake Gaither Golf Course is a 120-acre, nine-hole course established by the City of Tallahassee in 1956. The park adjacent to the course was created in 1953. The property occupies a sloping site with wetlands in the central and southwestern portions. The course was historically designed for use by African Americans. Due to constant flooding, the course was redesigned in 1961.

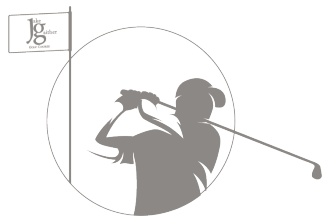
The Jake Gaither Golf Course is a par 36 golf course that features three sets of tees playing to 2,475, 2,849 and 3,109 yards. The course has a few hills but is mainly straight-forward. Many trees surround the holes, adding to the importance for straight shots. The Jake Gaither Golf Course has always had nine golf holes. The course has three sets of tees on each hole, black, orange, and green. Red and white poles are placed in the fairway of each hole, marking 100 yards to the green.



Tallahassee, Florida

Tallahassee is the capital of Florida, located in the state's northern region and the east part of Florida's panhandle. This region was originally inhabited by Apalachee and Creek native groups. This part of northern Florida was appealing due to the mild climate, four seasons and rainy period. In the end of 1824, the United States' Territorial legislature created Leon County, named after Ponce De Leon, an early Spanish explorer. Settlers in northern Florida soon realized the benefits of Leon County's location, in between the two established cities of

Pensacola and St. Augustine. In 1825, settlers created the city of Tallahassee in the lower portion of Leon County as the new capital of Florida. The city of Tallahassee grew as a pivotal location with access to the state of Georgia and cities of Pensacola, St. Augustine and Jacksonville. The new railroad, which connected Tallahassee to St. Marks in 1834, gave the city access to the Apalachee Bay and Gulf of Mexico. This connection was critical since many developments in central and southern Florida were best reached by boat. Tallahassee's historic capital building was built in 1839, and the dome was added in 1902. Today, Tallahassee has multiplied in size and is known for its natural public parks, Florida Agricultural and Mechanical University and Florida State University.



THE ARRIVAL OF GOLF IN FLORIDA

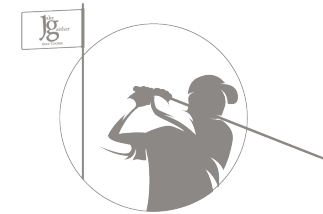
Early golf enthusiasts in Sarasota insist that the first golf ball ever put into play in the United States was on a small practice course on Sarasota's Main Street in 1886. Colonel John Hamilton Gillespie designed and built the course in a small, natural clearing close to where Sarasota's Central School now stands.

Born in 1852 in Edinburgh, Scotland, John Hamilton Gillespie moved to Sarasota in 1886 to oversee his father's investment business. Gillespie brought his golf clubs from Scotland and built a tee in his back yard between his home on Palm Avenue and what is now the U.S. Post Office on Ringling Boulevard. He would tee off, and his caddy would return the ball to him. In May 1886, Gillespie cleared land for a two-hole golf course behind his house.

The creation of Gillespie's course, which consisted of two greens and a fairway, is the foundation of Sarasota's claim

as home to the first golf course in the United States. He was indisputably one of America's golf pioneers. Golf wasn't just a hobby for Gillespie; it was his passion. A May 1886 diary entry by Sarasota colonist Alex Browning, notes, "I used to stop on my way to work and watch Colonel Gillespie play golf. One day he asked me if I ever played golf, and when I said 'No,' he replied, 'Mon, y're missin' half ye life.'"

Gillespie sold Henry Bradley Plant on the notion of promoting golf as a tourist attraction when Plant was building his Florida west coast railroad and hotel empire from Belleair, Florida, to Cuba in the 1880s and 1890s. Plant hired Gillespie to design and build golf courses for his investment company in Winter Haven, Kissimmee, Tampa, Belleair and Havana, Cuba. At the same time, Henry Morrison Flagler, the founder of Florida's East Coast Railway, was extending his railroad and hotel empire along Florida's Atlantic coast from St. Augustine to Miami. Recognizing the value of building golf courses with his resorts, Flagler created the Florida East Coast Golf Club in 1898. The Club combined Flagler's golf links at St. Augustine, Ormond, Palm Beach, Miami and Nassau, so that membership in one course provided membership in all the courses.



THE ARRIVAL OF GOLF IN TALLAHASSEE

One of the earliest references to golf in Tallahassee dates to 1899. In October of that year, a citizens meeting was held at the Leon Hotel. The group met to discuss ways and means for amusing and entertaining winter visitors. They decided to have golf links and tennis courts built for the city's winter guests.

In November 1900, the *Weekly Tallahasseean* reported "Letters patent have been issued for the incorporation of the De Lacy Country Club, with a capital of \$3,000. The club will establish a course or grounds for golf, provide games of recreation and amusement, build and maintain a club house, and purchase, hold and transfers real and personal property." No other mention of this club or its location has been found. At some point, golf links were built and advertised on the 1901 Hotel Leon stationary.

Several newspaper articles from early 1900s mention golf links at Monroe Park.

This park was located in the area around Fourth Street and Bronough Street, behind the Grove, which was the former home of one of Florida's territorial Governors, Richard Keith Call. In 1908, newspapers reported that a golf club had been organized on the property of the Grove. The home was owned at that time by Mrs. Reinette Hunt, who was the great-granddaughter of Richard Keith Call. Known as the Tallahassee Country Club, it offered an initiation fee of \$1.00 and dues of \$1.00 a year. The newly formed club took advantage of a few golf holes laid out north of the property.

The 1901/02 edition of the *Argo*, the annual yearbook for the Florida State College (West Florida Seminary, now called Florida State University) had a page dedicated to a "Golf Club." Francis F. Rawls was president; F.B. McDougall, Vice-president; and Guy L. Winthrop, Secretary and Treasurer. The "Golf Club" had 12 members in addition to the officers. The "Golf Club" was a social group, and members likely played the golf course behind the Grove. A year later in the 1903 *Argo*, the "Golf Club" listed Peres Brokaw McDougall as president, Francis Flagg Rawls as vice-president, and Guy Louis Winthrop as treasurer, along with 10 additional members. This edition also produced an advertisement for Hotel Leon that listed golf links.



Not much was mentioned about this golf course or golf in Tallahassee until five years later, in another part of the city where a new golf course was being built. In 1913, George B. Perkins organized the *Florida Hills Country Club*, on land he owned in the southwest portion of Tallahassee. Perkins secured the services of Herbert H. Barker, a professional golf expert to lay out new golf links. Barker was a noted golfer from England who had won several amateur golf tournaments, including the Irish Amateur Open in 1906. He moved to New York where he served as head professional at Garden City Golf Club from 1908 to 1911. Barker is credited with several original golf course designs in the United States. “I have tried to give every variety of hole possible,” said Barker, speaking of his

work (at Tallahassee), “and there is enough variety to make it one of the finest nine-hole links on the continent.” The nine-hole golf course was completed in 1914 and received much local, state and national acclaim. A year later, the Hill City Golf and Country Club formally organized and included in their bylaws a “standing invitation to the fraternity girls of the Florida State College for Women.” In 1924, Perkins sold the property to the newly incorporated Tallahassee Country Club, and the golf course remained a nine-hole golf course for nearly two decades.

Another golf course was established around the same time but was located outside the city limits, off of North Meridian Road. A small private course

was built on the front lawn of the main house of the Live Oak Plantation by Dr. Tennet Ronalds. Dr. Ronalds who was from Edinburgh, Scotland, kept a flock of sheep on the property to keep the fairways and greens well-trimmed. The private golf course existed into the 1930s.

In 1935, the Tallahassee Country Club Board gave their golf course to the City of Tallahassee, with the provision that course ownership would revert back to the original members of the Tallahassee Country Club should the City become unable to maintain it. That same year, the City of Tallahassee applied for and received a federal WPA grant for the expansion of the golf course to 18 holes. Albert W. Tillinghast, one of America’s

most renowned golf course architects, stopped in Tallahassee later that year to inspect the golf course as part of his work with the PGA. Tillinghast reviewed and commented on plans for both the nine new holes and the existing nine holes. Construction began in 1936 and was completed within a few years. In 1956, the City leased the Tallahassee Country Club and most of the property back to the Club for 99 years. That same year, the Club assigned its lease to the newly chartered Capital City Country Club.



AFRICAN AMERICAN GOLFERS IN TALLAHASSEE

From its opening in 1914, the Capital City Country Club offered caddie services. The caddies were predominately made up of young African American men and boys, although there were white/Caucasian caddies as well. According to a 1921 scorecard, a caddie carrying one bag for nine holes would earn 25 cents and 50 cents for 18 holes. If the caddy had to carry two bags, he would earn 40 cents for nine holes and 80 cents for 18 holes. The country club allowed the caddies to play one day a week, and they had their own tournaments. In 1929, Carey Roberts won the caddy tournament, beating Herman Wilson and 15 other caddies with a winning score of 86.

Many prominent Black golfers who would later become associated with the Jake Gaither Golf Course had their beginnings as caddies at the country club. In the late 1940s, William “Crum” Crumbie began working as a caddie at Capital City Country Club. He eventually

worked his way up to greenskeeper and would become the first professional groundskeeper and manager at Jake Gaither Golf Course.

Crumbie was born in 1926 and was a native of Tallahassee. He grew up in Smokey Hollow, a historic African American neighborhood, located to the east of the State Capitol building. According to Crumbie, during the 1940s and ‘50s, Black golfers were restricted to the early morning hours at the municipal golf course. “We used to dig a hole in the ground and make us a nine-hole course,” Crumbie stated in 1996. Crumbie and his friends played with worn-out or broken golf clubs that were left behind by the club members. “Me and my buddies used to slip out there after they (white golfers) left the course,” Crumbie stated. “They would get out of their cars and run us off.”

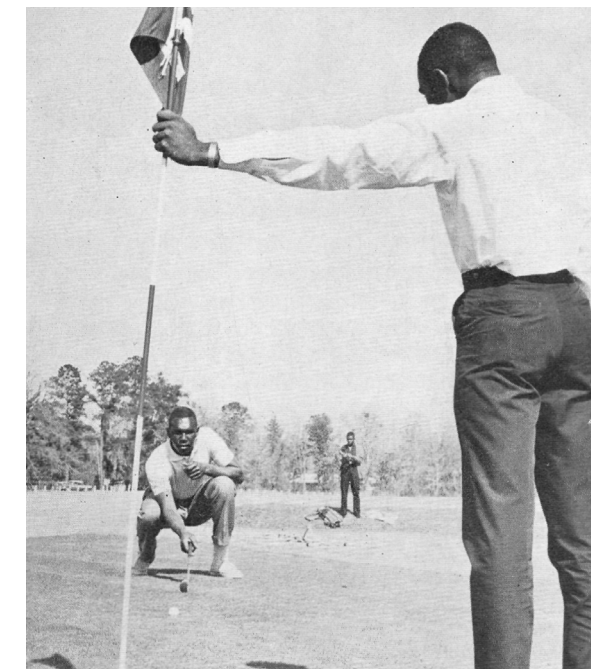
Leroy Kilpatrick became one of the top Black amateur golfers in the state of Florida in the late 1950s and through the 1960s, playing with legendary Black golfers Lee Elder and Calvin Peete. Kilpatrick would later serve as President of the Jake Gaither Golf Association from 1994-1998. He was instrumental in teaching many of the area’s junior golfers in the Tallahassee First Swing Program, as well as the Jake Gaither Ladies

League. In 1949, at age 10, Kilpatrick learned to play golf when he caddied at Capital City Country Club. “I grew up in a time when Blacks couldn’t even enter the clubhouse,” recalled Kilpatrick, “but I don’t dwell on that too much. One of my best friends was Bert Yancey (former Tallahasseean and PGA professional). Bert and I used to sneak onto the course and play for golf balls. We had the best of times.” A young Kilpatrick was at the opening of the Jake Gaither Golf Course in 1956. He recalled how he would collect empty RC Cola bottles and turn them in for a nickel each to pay for the 35 cent green fees.

Johnny Lee Brown was born in Tallahassee and attended the old Lincoln High School. As a youth, Brown caddied at Capital City Country Club. “I watched the way the players [for whom he caddied] played and felt that I could play like that,” Brown stated. Brown learned to play golf while caddying where he and his fellow caddies were allowed to play one day a week. Once the Jake Gaither course opened, he would improve his game and later record a 59 on the golf course.

Born in Jacksonville, Hansel Emory “Tootie” Tookes played and coached football under the legendary Jake Gaither. He served many years as

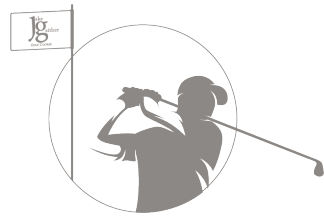
the Florida A&M University (FAMU) Athletic Director and as the head golf coach. He even coached tennis great Althea Gibson on the school’s golf team. In a 1970 newspaper article, Tookes recalled that when he came to FAMU in 1946, the varsity golf team had access to the municipal golf course. “Our arrangement,” stated Tookes, “was that we could come out there at about 6 o’clock in the morning and play until the first white patrons arrived, usually about 7:30 or 8.” According to Tookes, the arrangement ended when the golf course became private in 1956.



Members of the 1963 FAMU Golf Team at Jake Gaither Golf Course - Holding flag: C. Michael, Lining up putt: Ted Allen



Original Jake Gaither Recreation Hall, 1956.



BEGINNINGS OF JAKE GAITHER GOLF COURSE

Their main office was located on the southwest corner Lake Bradford Road and Orange Avenue. They owned a number of tracts of land, including the 120-acre parcel that would become

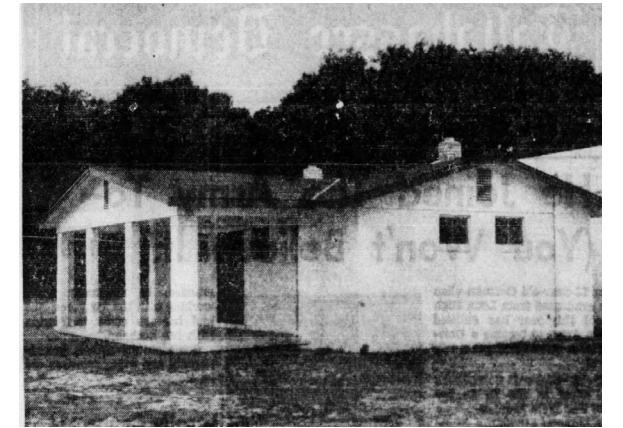
the golf course and park. By 1950, the Southern Packing Company had gone out of business and sold their slaughterhouse and equipment. A year later, in July 1951, the City of Tallahassee foreclosed on the property.

In January 1952, the City of Tallahassee officially purchased two tracts of land totaling 190 acres from the defunct Southern Packing Company for \$23,471. The 190 acres consisted of two separate tracts of land, a 120-acre tract that was the former pasture land and a 70-acre tract that contained timber.

City Attorney James Messer stated that City officials had been approached by several people who had wanted to lease the property. Messer believed it was doubtful if the City would ever recover the balance due on the mortgage because the Southern Packing Company did not have any assets.

A few months later in March, the city received several bids on leasing the 120-acre tract. R.H. Bradford, Jr. was high bidder at \$252 for a year's lease. The City Commissioners discussed the possibility of selling the timber rights on the separate 70-acre tract of land, but no formal decision was made at that time.

On April 29, the City Commission agreed to advertise for bids and a possible sale of the 70-acre tract formerly owned by the Southern Packing Company. A month later, on May 28, Ross Hannon of the Woodville Lumber Company submitted a high bid of \$7,150 for the sale of 66 acres of city-owned land southwest of town. During the June 3 City Commission meeting, the proposed sale of the 70-acre tract was deferred after Herald Jenkins, of the Tallahassee Civic League, requested that the land be reserved for use as a housing project/development and a park. Jenkins requested that the park be given priority over the housing



Original Jake Gaither Golf Course Clubhouse, 1956.

development. Commissioners discussed if the park could be self-supporting. During this discussion, it was brought up that a golf course for Blacks would pay for itself. Since the smaller tract of land was determined to be unsuitable for a housing project or park, the City and League began to look at the larger 120-acre tract of the former Southern Packing Company.

Although the City had previously agreed to lease the parcel, it was during the June 17 City Commission meeting that M.S. Thomas, representing the Tallahassee Civic League, asked the city to set aside the land (120-acre tract) as a possible future park for Blacks. Thomas also requested that the City provide restroom facilities, water, lights and help with layout, planning and advice before and after its establishment. In addition,

the Civic League stated that they were going to ask the county to clear the park site of weeds and bushes and to build a road to the site from County Road 373 (Orange Avenue). In addition, they would provide all picnic facilities and playground equipment and sponsor a long-range membership plan for those interested in developing a nine-hole golf course. During the June 23 County Commission meeting, at the request of the Tallahassee Civic League, tentative approval was given to open a road into the 120-acre tract reserved by the City southwest of town for a Black recreation area.



Photograph of Sonny Hay who assisted in designing the Jake Gaither Golf Course. Photograph taken in July 1950.



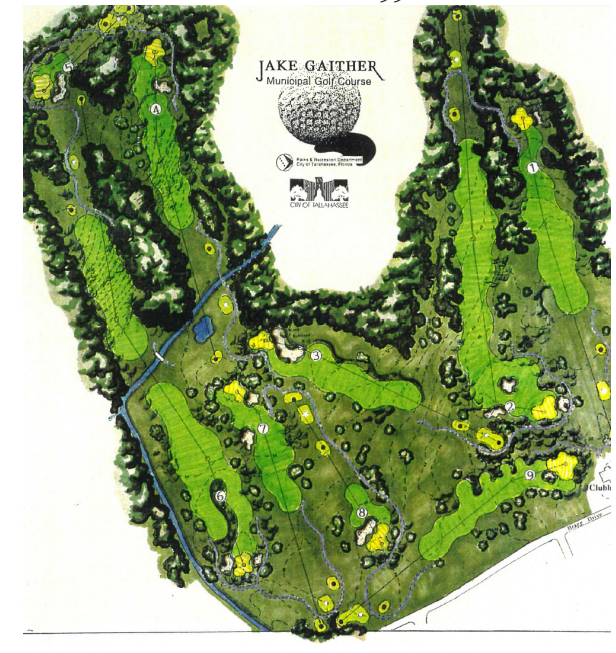
April 9, 1954



June 26, 1962



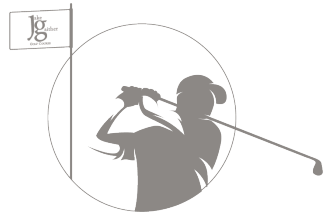
April 27, 1976



1998 Renovation Plan



**HISTORIC
SIGNIFICANCE**



ESTABLISHMENT OF THE GOLF COURSE, 1952-1956

In March 1953, the City Commission took under consideration the request of M.S. Thomas for assistance in building the proposed park. Thomas stated that the county has graded the road into the area, and he asked the city to extend

water and lights and construct two sheds and restroom facilities. All of the commissioners expressed willingness to assist in the development of the park but deferred action until future budget commission hearings. The Tallahassee City Commission agreed to build a golf course for Blacks in the new park in compliance with the policy of racial segregation, commonly found at all levels of government.

As work progressed on the park, it was announced that the formal opening would be held on Wednesday, May

20, 1953. The *Tallahassee Democrat* reported, “Buses would be provided for anyone wishing to attend the opening. Organizations planning to attend on opening day may bring picnic baskets, but refreshments will be on sale for the public.”

The day before the park was dedicated, a group of interested Black citizens met at the old Lincoln High School. The historic school, located at 438 West Brevard Street, served as the primary public education institution for African Americans in Leon County from 1869 to 1969. The group formed the Capital City Golf Association. A.C. Redding was elected as president, Philip Dorsey as vice-president, D. Small as secretary and Charles Ash Jr. as treasurer. The newly formed group discussed plans to contribute toward the development of the golf course.

On Wednesday, May 20, Tallahassee Mayor W.T. Mayo formally dedicated the Southwest Park and recreation area to a large crowd of approximately 500 people, including several City and County officials. City Commissioners H.G. Easterwood and W.H. Cates, along with City Manager Arvah Hopkins, were in attendance. Lincoln High School principal, Dr. Gilbert Porter, served as the master of ceremonies for the

dedication. Accepting the park on behalf of the Black citizens was Tallahassee Civic League president, G.W. Conoly, who announced that the nine-hole golf course had already been staked off and construction would begin within two weeks. The park opened with nine picnic tables and a softball field. Other speakers included Dr. George W. Gore, FAMU president; former County Commissioner John Sullivan, who helped in the development of the park; and Weldon G. Starry, who donated a portion of his land for the road into the park. Bethel A.M.E. Church pastor, Reverend. J.A. Roberts, provided music for the dedication along with band members from Bond Junior High School, Lucy Moten (which would later become FAMU High) and Lincoln High School. Following the dedication, faculty members from FAMU and Lincoln High School competed in a softball game.

The *Tallahassee Democrat* reported on June 21 that “officials of the Tallahassee Civic League have sent out letters of thanks to dozens of local merchants and clubs who donated money or equipment for newly opened Southwest Park. G.W. Conoly, president of the league, said the merchants donated 12 picnic units, 20 seats, four barbecue pits and a sand box. Total cost of the equipment was listed at \$925.” The park had been open for a

month and plans for the golf course were underway. Later that week, City Manager Arvah Hopkins discussed with James Mobley, former president of the Tallahassee Business League, the City's involvement in the construction of the golf course and other facilities at the park. Hopkins indicated that the City Commission had budgeted \$5,000 for the construction of the golf course and that the City was assisting with the engineering work on the course.

On December 2, the City Commission announced that the new park including the golf course would be named Jake Gaither Park in honor of Alonzo Smith "Jake" Gaither, who was the current FAMU athletic director and head football coach. By 1953, Gaither's football team had won a total of 39 games and only lost three games. The FAMU football team was selected as the 1950, 1952 and 1954 National Negro college football champions. Gaither was also recognized as a community leader in addition to his service at the university.

Construction of the golf course continued throughout 1954, including paving the road (Pasco Street) into the park.



An aerial photograph from December 20, 1954, shows the beginnings of the layout of the course. The first hole appears to be the most developed at that time. A fairway bunker and greenside bunker are evident in the aerial. Clearing had begun on holes No. 2, 3, 4 and 5, which were routed through the wetland area. Several greens appear to be in place as well. The City Manager's Report in January 1955 indicated that work was progressing on the golf course.

While work was progressing at the Jake Gaither Golf Course, the City's other golf course, the 18-hole Tallahassee Country Club, later named the Capital City Country Club, was having financial difficulties and in need of repairs. Losing approximately \$14,000 a year, board members of the Capital City Country Club began discussing the possibility of leasing the club. The City had acquired the golf course in 1935 with the provision that the original ownership would have first option to buy back the country club if the City ever decided to sell or lease the course. On February 14, 1956, the City Commission voted to approve the lease of the 18-hole municipal golf course (Tallahassee Country Club/Capital City Country Club) to a private corporation at \$1 a year for 99 years. During that same meeting, the Commission agreed to offer the same lease agreement on the Jake

Gaither Golf Course to "any responsible group" that wished to lease it or take over the new course. The *Tallahassee Democrat* reported in March 1956 that the City's tentative budget included \$4,000 to complete the construction of the clubhouse at the Gaither Golf Course.

In May 1956, City Manager Arvah Hopkins reported to City Commissioners that he was approached by an attorney representing a group who were inquiring about the possibility of leasing the Jake Gaither Golf Course. Hopkins advised the attorney to wait and come before the commission in about a month when the golf course would be ready for play. On May 22, Tallahassee Civic League representative, Rev. David H. Brooks, pastor of St. Michael's and All Angels Episcopal Church and Episcopalian chaplain at FAMU, submitted a petition to the City Commission opposing the leasing of Gaither Park, including the golf course and recreation area. The petition contained the names of 551 African Americans. Mayor Fred S. Winterle thanked Rev. Brooks for bringing the petition before the Commission; however, no formal action was taken.



PARK DEDICATION—Southwest park for Negro citizens was dedicated yesterday. Mayor W. T. Mayo is shown addressing the gathering and left to right in the background are Gilbert Porter, master of ceremonies; President G. W. Conoley of the Tallahassee Civic League which is backing the park development; City Commissioners H. G. Easterwood and W. H. Cates, W. G. Starry who gave a right-of-way for the park; City Manager Hopkins, almost obscured, and Dr. George W. Gore, A. & M. president, who spoke briefly. (*Democrat* photo).

Dedication of the Jake Gaither Park on May 20, 1953.

That same day, former Tallahassee Civic League president, G.W. Conoly wrote a letter to the *Tallahassee Democrat* urging that they do not lease the Jake Gaither Park, which included the golf course, as they recently did with the municipal course:

Some years ago, the Tallahassee Civic League asked the City Commission for a tract of land for the development of a city park which would be of use principally for Negro citizens.

We were hopeful that this park would always be a City park. With that in mind, we appealed to civic clubs and businesses, social clubs and fraternities which came to our aid to the tune of nearly \$1,000. Many more dollars were given in the form of free labor. A large number of brick masons would come by after a day's work and assist with the barbeque pits. Many other persons donated their time to help make the project go.

The labor and money were given because of the promise in the onset that it would remain a City park under

City regulations. Gaither Park is now developing as we hoped it would into a fine facility for outings for our group.

There are a few other cities in Florida that have developed similar for our group, but I believe in many respects we will be ahead of them. We are not anxious to just be ahead, we are anxious for Gaither Park to remain one of the City's parks so that it can be of the highest value to our people and to visitors

To lease this facility to private hand would mean cutting off recreational opportunities to a whole section of our population. We hope no formal request will go to the Commission to change the status of Gaither Park. To many citizens in this area, Gaither Park is the only public park that is available to them. G.W. Conoly.



By June, Jake Gaither Park and Golf Course were nearing completion. The City had spent \$5,650 on the golf clubhouse and budgeted over \$13,500 (including \$4,000 in County funds) in 1956 to continue the park improvements. The funds also covered the grading and filling of the softball field as well as the construction of the two tennis courts. Only five holes were ready, but it was expected that the remaining four holes would be completed shortly. The African American community donated funds for the construction of permanent picnic tables, and seven had already been built. The local African American Civic and Business League presented a proposal to the commission to set up a committee of leading Black citizens who would make rules and policies for use of the park.

In conjunction with the upcoming

opening of the golf course, the City planned a two-day, city-wide Black golf tournament. Qualifying began on Wednesday, December 12, and the golfers had until Friday to post a nine-hole score which would be used for tournament grouping. The day before the official opening (Friday, December 14), the *Tallahassee Democrat* reported that Mayor John Y. Humphress was scheduled to officially open the golf course at 9:30 a.m. Saturday morning with the first tee shot and a golf tournament would follow.

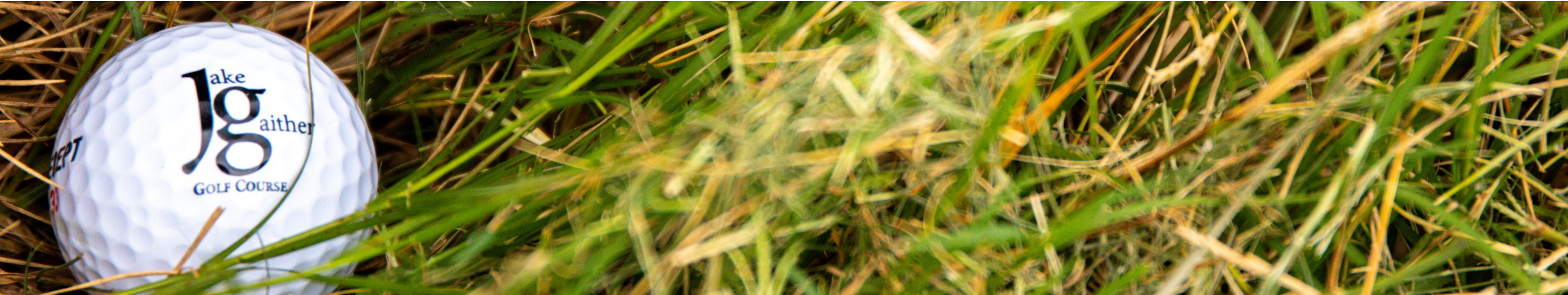
The City hired William Crumbie to be the first manager for the golf course. Crumbie was a Tallahassee native who grew up in the old Smokey Hollow neighborhood. For the previous eight years, Crumbie was working as a groundskeeper at the Tallahassee

Municipal Golf Course (Capital City Country Club). In addition, the City hired John White as the golf course foreman. He had 14 years of greens keeping experience at Capital City Country Club. The foreman was usually responsible for assisting in the daily management and operations of the golf course and reported directly to the golf course superintendent.

Construction of the golf course was a collaborative effort between the City and County, splitting the labor and \$45,000 cost for building the golf course, clubhouse and recreation hall. The greens fee for 18 holes was 50 cents during the week and 75 cents on weekends and holidays. It was reported that the City Engineering Department designed and laid out the golf course with Clifford E. 'Sonny' Hay Jr. and William

Crumbie supervising the construction. Brenda Crumbie-Brown, William Crumbie's daughter, recalled that Hay and her father designed the golf course with support from the City. Hay had recently left the Tallahassee Country Club where he served as the head golf professional for 12 years. Crumbie would often travel with Hay to caddy for him in golf tournaments.

The nine-hole, par 36 golf course opened in December 1956 with a length of 3,118 yards. Holes 3, 4, 6 and 7 took advantage of the elevation on the south side of the parcel where there was as much as 20 to 30 feet in elevation change. Several of the holes (2, 3, 4 and 5) were routed into and/or through the wetlands and across the drainage ditch. However, future flooding issues would force changes to the course layout.



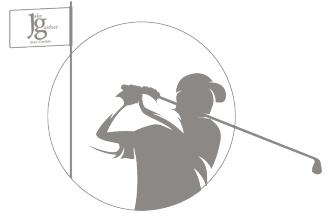


GOLF COURSE REOPENING—The nine-hole golf course at Jake Gaither Park will be reopened Monday at 12 noon. The course has been closed about 11 months because of flooded fairways and water damage. A golfer, getting set for a putt, finds the greens have also been reworked.

The Jake Gaither Golf Course and adjacent park were completed in the midst of the struggle for Civil Rights in Tallahassee. Attorney General Richard Ervin stated, “I think most everyone will recognize that Florida is not ready at this time for integration of the races at public parks and playgrounds.” It is evident that the Jake Gaither Golf Course was created on undesirable land to appease the Black community and offer them an alternative to the private City course. A bus boycott occurred in Tallahassee from 1956 to 1957, with the integration of all City buses in 1957. The dates of the bus boycott coincide with the opening of the Jake Gaither Golf Course and the conversion of the Capital City Country Club into a private entity. Each of these events directly connect with the unequal society of the time. The Jake Gaither Golf Course represents a recreational property designated specifically for Blacks due to the racial climate.

Golfer at the Jake Gaither Golf Course, 1958.





OPERATION, FLOODING AND REDESIGN, 1956-1963

Unfortunately, bad weather on opening day forced the cancellation of the golf tournament and postponed it until the following weekend. On Saturday, December 22, the start of the first ever golf tournament to be held at Jake Gaither Golf Course began. The 36-hole tournament would be played over two days (18 holes each day), and golfers were placed into four “flights,” or “groups,” based on their ability. The better golfers played in the first or championship flights. First and second place winners were recognized in each flight.

In the first flight, Joseph Austin captured first place by shooting a two-day total of 163 (82-81), with Elmer Ash coming in second one stroke back. In the second flight, David Hall’s 170 [86+84] was seven shots better than second place finisher James White. In the third flight, Emanuel White shot a 165 to win, with Walter Carter at 184 coming in second

place. In the fourth flight, Jimmy Wesley won with a 172, followed by Theodore Allen in second place with a 177. All four winners, along with tournament director James Lawrence, were pictured in the Tallahassee Democrat newspaper.

An aerial photograph from April 1957 conveys the original, completed layout of the Jake Gaither Golf Course. A February 1957 article in the *Tallahassee Democrat* described activities at the Jake Gaither Golf Course, with a special mention that the golf course was open to women as well as men. It was reported that several women were interested in learning to play golf but had not yet come out to the course. FAMU was providing instruction on golf, in addition to Jake Gaither Golf Course head professional, William Crumbie being available for lessons. Green fees for Jake Gaither Golf Course were set by the City at \$50 a year or \$5 per month. In continuing to introduce the game of golf to the African American community, free golf lessons were offered at Jake Gaither Golf Course to local African American youth. On April 21, the City Recreation Department sponsored an Easter egg hunt at Jake Gaither Park.

On Wednesday, September 18, 1957, five acres of the golf course were under water due to flooding. It was reported



that the problem was an inadequate canal originating in the Indian Head Acres development, flowing along Orange Avenue and then southwest through the golf course. The canal drains into Lake Henrietta, where the water was backed up from Lake Munson.

Rain and flooding would continue to be a problem well into the next year. City Manager Arvah Hopkins addressed concerns from the community about flooding. Hopkins stated that the City and County were working together and had put in considerable money to address the problem. He went on to state that the County was attempting to lower

the water level at Lake Munson, which in turn would lower the level in Lake Henrietta and help drain the golf course. In addition, low areas in the fairways were raised up as far as possible.

By 1958, James Lawrence, City Recreation Department worker, reported that the fairways were being raised and the greens had been reworked. After being closed for nearly 11 months due to flooding issues, the golf course reopened on August 11, 1958.

In May 1959, a meeting was held at the Jake Gaither Recreation Center to organize a golf league for the African



American community and to create interest in the game. The newly formed Tallahassee Golf Club selected Charles Smith as its president along with Dr. M.C. Rhaney (constitution), Leroy Ash (membership), C.C. Hayling Jr. (program and tournament), U.B. Engram (finance), D.C. Collington (public-city), Frank Parrish (rules and regulations) and Hansel Tookes (instruction) as officers. The group extended an invitation to all interested African American golfers to attend the next meeting.

In a June meeting of the City Commission, Tallahassee Golf Club President Charles Smith appeared in front of the Commission to discuss the flooding issues at the golf course. Smith stated that only three holes of the golf course were playable. The Commission assured Smith and a delegation of Black golfers at the meeting that the current flood damage would be repaired and that a future drainage solution was currently under way. The City also advised Smith to consult with the County since the golf course is in the county and part of their drainage program.

Flooding issues from heavy rains continued to affect the golf course well into the next year. At the March 8, 1960,

City Commission meeting, a petition bearing 231 signatures was presented, urging that action be taken to prevent the flooding issues on the golf course where only three of the nine holes were playable. City Manager Hopkins indicated that the County was working on a joint drainage program involving the City, County and State to drain lands outside the city limits. The Commission suggested that Hopkins consult with officials from Florida A&M University since it used the course for golf classes.

Later that month, the City of Tallahassee decided to lease the 120-acre Jake Gaither Park, which included the nine-hole golf course, tennis court, recreation building and picnic area. The City offered the State Board of Control a five-year lease for \$1 a year, with option for renewal by the Board at \$1 a year on a year-to-year basis for 20 years. The City cited several factors in making this decision. First, the facility was used predominantly by faculty at FAMU. Second, the golf course had been a “financial headache” for the City, losing \$12,575 in 1959. Third, according to engineers, remedying the flooding issue at the golf course would be very costly.

Less than a month later, a group of concerned African Americans responded to the City's decision for leasing the golf course. In the Editorial section of the *Tallahassee Democrat*, they laid out their response:

*EDITOR
THE DEMOCRAT*

This letter is directed to you as a response to the recent publicity and article in regard to Gaither Park and Golf Course, Saturday, March 26. The Negro citizens of Tallahassee are inclined to believe that statements made by the city commission reflecting the use and problem at Gaither Park are truly misleading and fictitious. Statements were made by the Commission indicating that there has been a loss of monies in the sponsoring of Gaither Park and Course: that this facility is used predominantly by A&M University personnel, and finally, that there is a real problem in regard to flooding conditions.

The citizen's views in response to these statements are as follows:

(1) Through the years. There has been a loss of monies in the overall financing of the park, yet there was no mentioning of the real reasons in the article. The situation is this: we have had from time to time three to

six holes on the golf course that were playable. During this time, we have been paying half green fees for play, which automatically indicates an abnormal loss of money. It also indicates that the City has been appropriating monies for an inoperative facility. We hope that the governing body of our municipality is not expecting a break-even situation. This we can hardly expect when we are paying the full fees for participation. It wasn't expected when the city had the country club under its auspices and supervision. However, it can be expected that the percentage of loss will be less, or not as great as the loss that was indicated in Saturday's paper, should the course be maintained in playable condition.

(2) A statement was rendered in regard to the use of the facility – predominantly A&M University personnel. We do hope that attendance records were checked and that there is evidence to support this statement, because we do not feel that this commitment is accurate. That portion of the facility that is in operation is duly used by all of the citizens of Tallahassee

(negroid). It is used more-so by golfers, and these are predominantly people or residents of this community. We also have an overflow of golfers from neighboring cities. We should think that the percentage of golfers and participants from the A&M University campus are minute in number.

(3) Flooding Conditions: The present drainage program now in operation by the City, County and State is by all means bringing more water to the Gaither Park area and it is causing flooding conditions of the golf course. We know that this is a real problem for the city to solve or attempt to solve. Yet the City officials have made promises, commitments and favorable indications that efforts would be made in reaching a solution. Until this present date, nothing has been done.

Now, in an attempt to get around a possible solution, negotiations are being made by the City Fathers to lease the facility to the Board of Control. Thereby eliminating the entire problem and getting it off their hands. Then it would be a state function.

We the citizens of Tallahassee are interested in this recreational facility and would like to see that it is maintained and kept in operational condition. We are also interested in golf and want to play the game, whether it be separate, integrated or what have you. We just want to play golf.

*SPOKESMEN FOR THE GROUP
Erelson W. Knowles, Robert H. Pryn, Charles W. Johnson, Paul Williams, Larry E. Austin, Roosevelt Callaway, Oris Dixon, Willie Robinson Jr., Robert Newman, Willie Jordan, Earl F. Glenn*



During the July 6, 1960, County Commission meeting, two African Americans, Edwin Norman and David C. Collington, along with Director of the City Recreation Department Jim Hadaway, appeared to ask if the County would help drain a submerged portion of the golf course. The Commissioners requested that the City Engineering Department submit a proposal to them for study. It was estimated that it would take approximately 32,000 cubic yards of fill dirt to raise the grounds in the submerged portions and make the whole golf course playable. Another option would be that they would have to deepen the drainage ditch, which runs through the course. It was also reported that the State Board of Control had not taken any action on the lease proposal by the City.

In October 1960, the City authorized an estimated \$2,500 to redesign Jake Gaither Golf Course to help with the flooding issues. City Engineer Miller Walston was in charge of the course redesign. Crumbie was recruited to help rearrange the unplayable holes and create better routing, which would remain dry in wet weather. This routing is still used in the current layout. At the November County Commission meeting, City Manager Arvah Hopkins and City Engineer Miller Walston appeared before the County Commissioners and



requested their cooperation in renovating the golf course. The redesign would require a considerable amount of moving dirt to build three new tees and four new greens.

Walston indicated that the total cost of the project would be approximately \$4,200. The County Commission agreed to assist the City in remodeling the golf course and committed to spend about \$2,000. It was reported that the State Board of Control never accepted the lease offered by the City.

On February 28, 1961, four African Americans appeared before the County Commission and asked for assistance in rebuilding the golf course. The men had just recently talked with City Manager Hopkins and were told that the City would continue to rebuild the golf course as long as the County participated. The City indicated that more dirt was needed to fill in low areas and requested the County provide a dragline and trucks. During the meeting, Commission Chairman H.G. Easterwood stated that the City had more at stake in the golf course since it turned over the white golf course to a private organization several years ago. The County agreed to provide additional funds and equipment for the project. It was noted that the County had already provided \$2,500 into the project

and that they annually contribute \$2,000 to the maintenance of the golf course.

A month later on March 23, 1961, the City Commission voted to cut \$10,000 out of \$15,189 budget for the golf course. This decision was made in part due to the fact they had a nearly \$14,000 loss last year. Total revenue from the golf course from 1960 was only \$989 while the budget was \$14,967. Subsequently, the Commission voted to either lease the golf course or close it down. The next day, the *Tallahassee Democrat* reported that City Manager Hopkins had been directed by the City Commission to offer a lease to an interested group for \$1 a year. If they could agree on the lease, the City would provide an additional \$3,000, including \$1,500 in County funds, on course improvements to help the flooding issues. However, if they could not come to an agreement, then Hopkins was told to halt improvements and close the golf course. The *Tallahassee Democrat* reported that the interested group was a made up of Black businessmen and Florida A&M University people and the \$1 a year lease would be similar to the agreement that the City worked out with the Capital City Country Club. However, after the March report, there was no other mention of leasing or closing the golf course. The

following year, the City budgeted \$5,621 for the golf course. An aerial photograph from June 1962 conveys some of the changes made on the golf course in 1961.

In 1963, the City Recreation Department introduced a monthly golf membership program. Family memberships cost \$9, individual was \$5 and junior was \$2.50. City Manager Hopkins reported that the golf course was in top shape. Also in 1963, the City began work on the Jake Gaither Park Community Center. The center was designed by local architect Robert Maybin and constructed by J.O. Carlie for \$49,600. On January 19, 1964, the City dedicated the new gymnasium and recreation hall. Speakers for the dedication included Tallahassee Mayor Pro Tem Hugh Williams and Alonzo S. “Jake” Gaither. A tour of the facility and basketball game followed the dedication.

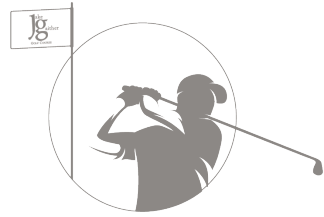
Over the next few years, the Jake Gaither Golf Course continued to be open for play and hosted many golf tournaments. The FAMU Golf Team used Jake Gaither Golf Course in the 1950s, 1960s and early 1970s as its home course. Although the course suffered from poor conditions during these years, the FAMU Golf Team continued to support the facility. Throughout the 1960s and into the early 1970s, the FAMU Golf Team hosted their Spring Sports Carnival and golf

tournaments at the Jake Gaither Golf Course.



Members of the 1965 FAMU Golf Team at Jake Gaither Golf Course.

Back Row: Ronald Tate, Coach Hansel Tookes and Nazareth Brim.



JAKE GAITHER GOLF COURSE, 1964-2021

Following 1963, flooding continued to plague the golf course over the years prompting the City to close the course and make improvements in November 1972. Interest in and usage of Jake Gaither Golf Course greatly increased in 1970 and 1971. A record 9,000 people played at Jake Gaither Golf Course in 1970, which was an increase from 3,000 in 1966. The City Parks Department and its crews, headed by Bill Coleman, carried out the renovations. Assisting the project was Bill Schoenfield, golf course superintendent at Killlearn Golf and Country Club, who volunteered his services as a consultant. Reopening four months later in February 1973, the golf course featured new tees, greens and improved bunkers. Randy Trousdell, Tallahassee's recreation director, stated the work had made the public golf course much more interesting. An aerial photograph from April 1976 conveys the layout of the course and large number



of mature trees on the south side of the course.

The nine-hole Jake Gaither Golf Course remained the only municipal golf course in town until the City purchased the Winewood Country Club on Blair Stone Road. The 18-hole Winewood Country Club would reopen in 1982 as the Hilaman Park Municipal Golf Course.

In January 1985, the City proposed the construction of a new 1,700 square foot golf shop for the Jake Gaither Golf Course and completed it later that year. 1985 was a good year for local African American golfer Johnny Lee Brown, who recorded a score of 59 for 18 holes at Jake Gaither Golf Course, a record that still stands today. Brown learned to play golf while caddying at Capital City County Club in the 1950s.

The following year, two of Jake Gaither's golf holes were locally recognized as some of the toughest in the Tallahassee area. The recognition included the 558-yard, par 5, sixth hole and the 200-yard, par 3, seventh hole.

In August 1989, a white golfer was severely beaten while playing golf at the course by a large group of Black men. The community was shocked. Charles Billings, a Black professor of political

science at Florida State University who also served as a community columnist with the *Tallahassee Democrat*, wrote shortly after the incident, "The recent savage beating of a golfer by a gang of toughs who roam the Jake Gaither Golf Course came as a shock to me." Billings personally invited the victim to come play a round of golf with him and his friends. "I can guarantee him that the chaps I have in mind are more than a match for the ruffians he encountered the last time he played." Billings went on to say, "Although he will find us to be of many political persuasions from red-neck conservative to black panther militant, and though we come in a variety of ages, handicaps and colors, on the golf course, like all true lovers of the great game of golf, we are all of us one color – very fair." Billings also wanted to create a golf tournament to improve race relations after the incident.

A few months later, Billings and his friends eventually played a quiet round of golf with the victim. Former Jake Gaither Golf Course Manager William Crumbie was instrumental in raising money to replace the victim's golf clubs and bag.

Billings continued efforts, and the support of the community led to the creation of the *Greater Gaither Golf Games Gathering*, later to be known as

the “5 Gs Golf Tournament” to be held during the first weekend of the 1990 Springtime Tallahassee celebration. Billings stated, “The purpose of the event is to provide an opportunity for Tallahasseeans to get together in an atmosphere of neighborliness to celebrate our freedoms, to play golf and to enjoy the rich variety of games and diversions brought to our remarkable town by its diverse citizenry.”

The response for the event was overwhelming, along with the golf tournament, the day was filled with games and crafts. Live entertainment was scheduled with FSU’s chapter of Kappa Alpha Psi fraternity to demonstrate and teach their version of “step/cane” dancing. The local Scottish dance group also taught and performed. The legendary football coach Jake Gaither and his wife Sadie served as honorary co-chairs of the first annual event. Money raised from the tournament went to pay for some of the victim’s medical expenses, a medical research fund and to improve security on the golf course. Billings stated, “When, out of fear or ignorance, we allow ourselves to become segregated into the races, tribes, ethnic groups and nationalities that together comprise our population, we, in effect, cease to be America.” The inaugural event drew 76 golfers and was

just about equally attended by both races, according to Bill Mansfield of the *Tallahassee Democrat*. Mansfield went on to state, “Symbolically, we took back the park” and indicated that this might become an annual event. The tournament ran for the next 18 years.

Over the next few years, the condition of the park and golf course deteriorated.

In November 1993, the Jake Gaither Golf Association (JGGA) was formed to promote participation in golf by minority youths and females.

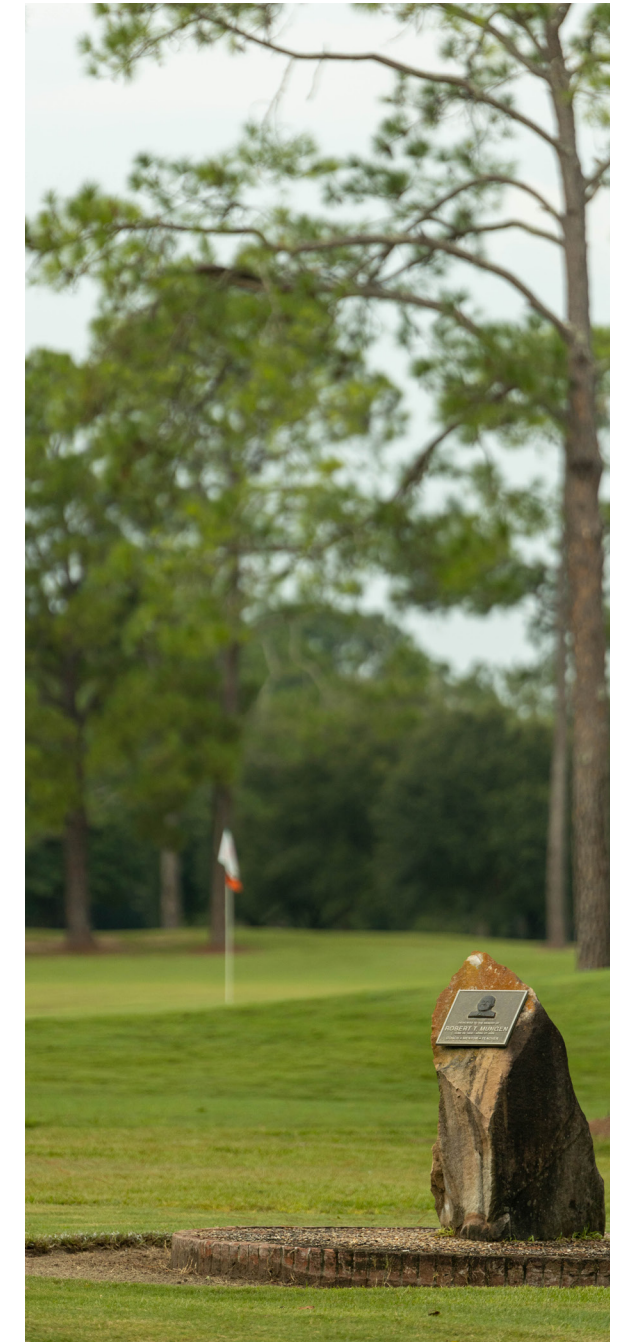
On February 18, 1994, Alonzo Smith “Jake” Gaither passed away at the age of 90.

In May 1994, City Commissioner Ron Weaver was invited to take a tour of the Jake Gaither Golf Course by Tyrone McClain, president of the JGGA. The course was recently flooded (March 1-2), which left eight holes under water and closed the course for a week. Commissioner Weaver stated that the course was “in need of a lot of serious work” and went on to state, “To have a City-owned facility that bears (Jake Gaither’s) name in such disrepair is a disgrace.” Tallahassee Parks and Recreation director Randy Trousdell supported Weaver’s efforts but

disagreed with some of his assessments. Trousdell stated, “I’m in total agreement with what Commissioner Weaver is recommending because this is what we’ve been asking for, for years.”

Trousdell noted that they had recently built a new pro shop, installed fencing around the course, a sprinkler system around the greens and were planning to build a new restroom building. He also stated that he had been trying for years to secure money for a fairway irrigation system. McClain emphasized that improving the golf course was not a minority issue. This was supported by a City survey that revealed that more than 85% of the 19,000 golfers who play Gaither annually are white. “Our concern is the City has lost revenue because of the condition of Gaither,” McClain stated. “We feel if the City invests money to improve Gaither, it will bring more people out to play golf.”

At the June 8, 1994, City Commission meeting, Commissioner Weaver presented slides showing patchy grass, flooding and trash at the golf course. Trousdell apologized for the condition but also reminded the Commission that he had requested money in the past to address these issues but they were not funded. The Commission approved the \$185,000 proposal to improve



the golf course, which included a new maintenance building, the purchase of new mowers and rebuilding of greens, tees and bunkers.

In 1995, Jake Gaither Golf Course was the setting of an attempt at setting a record for the Guinness Book of World Records. On October 23, 1995, Leroy Kilpatrick, president of the JGGA, played 1,363 holes over a five-day period beating the previous record of 1,319 holes set by central Florida golfer Joe Crowley two months prior.

Eight months later, Crowley would take back his title, setting the new mark at 1,702 on June 28, 1996, at the Valley Country Club in Clermont, Florida. Kilpatrick, who taught the JGGA junior program, took on the challenge again. “My juniors inspired me to go on and on,” stated Kilpatrick. “When the young kids are just getting into golf, you want to do your best to show them and that’s what I wanted to do.” Kilpatrick would end up playing 1,776 holes in just six days, but the accomplishment was never officially recorded.





The JGGA continued to use the golf course to work with local Black youths, introducing them to the game of golf by providing free lessons and practice. In June 1996, the Jake Gaither Golf Association sponsored the “Fathers of the Game” Golf Tournament to honor Willie Crumbie Sr. as being the first groundskeeper and manager of Jake Gaither Golf Course.

In the summer of 1996, the City selected Frank Burandt of Burandt Golf Course Planning & Design, Salt Lake City, Utah, to update the golf course. Burandt was a former associate in the Jack Nicklaus golf course design company. The City also selected Mike Russo of Gulf Coast Irrigation, Pensacola, Florida, to design the irrigation system.

The City proposed enlarging the greens and elevating some for better drainage. Additional plans included replanting the fairways with Bermuda grass and installing a course-wide irrigation system. The City also made plans for constructing cart paths and building three sets of tee boxes for each hole.

The major areas of the renovations at Jake Gaither Golf Course consisted of the greens, tees, fairways and irrigation system. The original routing remained relatively the same; however, the new

design would make significant changes relative to the playability of the course.

The project was bid in October 1996 but came in at \$131,000 over the allocated funding. The City scaled back the project and re-bid it in January 1997. ForeSome, Inc. of Vestal, New York was awarded the contract. On Monday, February 24, 1997, the City had planned to begin the renovation project for the golf course. However, the re-bid delayed the start of construction moving the projected opening back by several months.

By 1997, the majority of people who played at Jake Gaither Golf Course were white. People who frequented the course often were not allowed to play at the Capital City Country Club, could not afford membership to CCCC or wanted to play for less money.

More setbacks occurred when two of the irrigation wells failed. In addition, drought conditions during August, September and October prevented the grass from growing, again delaying the process. A decision was made to wait until the spring of 1998 to re-plant the fairways. The overall number of sand traps were reduced, and the ones that remained were enlarged.

Through spring and summer 1998, work continued on the golf course and improvements were noticeable. On June 4, the City held an open house at the Jake Gaither Golf Course to showcase the \$800,000 worth of renovations. Attendees toured the golf course, used the new practice putting green and were offered free “soft spikes” conversions, since metal spiked golf shoes would no longer be allowed.

Leroy Kilpatrick, who was an advisor on the renovation, was pleased with the results. Kilpatrick stated, “Our main mission was to get this course up to par. Some of the holes are just beautiful. This is a brand-new course.” The greens were enlarged and re-designed to add contour and character. They were built to U.S.G.A. standards and sodded with Tift-Dwarf Bermuda Grass. The par-5, sixth hole, still reflects Kilpatrick’s design influence. Known for his hook shot, where the golf ball starts out to the right and swings to the left for right-handed players, Kilpatrick had them design the back tee box so that it aimed at the right side of the fairway. This would give a golfer who can hook the ball the best advantage. “You pull up a blade of grass on that tee box, and it has Kilpatrick’s name on it,” joked Tony Billups, Jake Gaither Golf Association member.

The reopening was scheduled for August, and as part of the reopening ceremonies, former LPGA golfer Renee Powell was invited. Powell provided a golf clinic and talk about her experiences of being a Black female golfer. Powell was the second Black woman (1967-1978) to play on the LPGA Tour. She worked at the Clearwater Golf Club in East Canton, Ohio. Powell’s father, William, designed and built the golf course in 1948 during times of racial adversity and segregation. The Clearwater Golf Club is the only course ever designed, built, owned and operated by an African American. It was listed in the National Register of Historic Places in 2001. Powell talked about the contributions of Blacks in golf, including how a Black dentist, Dr. George Grant, invented the wooden golf tee. Powell stated, “Golf didn’t start with Tiger Woods, and African Americans have deep roots in the game.”





On Saturday, August 1, 1998, after 19 months, the newly renovated golf course was opened to the public. The reopening was combined with the eighth annual Greater Gaither Golf Games Gathering event. Later that month, the golf course was officially rededicated on August 25, 1998. The ceremony included City Commissioners Charles Billings, Debbie Lightsey and John Paul Bailey; City Manager Anita Favers; City Recreation Director Randy Trousdell; City Golf Superintendent Bill Zimmer; and former Jake Gaither Golf Association President Leroy Kilpatrick. It was reported that more than 300 golfers per week were playing the course. The renovations proved to be a great success. Over 1,700 rounds were recorded in August producing \$25,419 in revenue,

which was more than double what the course made last year during the same month. Robert Mungen, course regular, explained, "...this is not a Black golf course. This course belongs to the City and Leon County, so anybody has the right to come out here and play."

In 2020, Jake Gaither Golf Course's par 5, 600-yard sixth hole was recognized as one of Tallahassee's most memorable golf holes by the *Tallahassee Democrat*.

In 2021, the City provided funds to the golf course for new cart paths and two new irrigation pump stations to completely cover the greens. Today, the Jake Gaither Golf Course serves as a City amenity, open to all members of the community.





PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION

Golf Course (site)

The Jake Gaither Golf Course is a nine-hole, par 36 golf course that features three sets of tees playing to 2,475, 2,849, and 3,109 yards. The course has a few hills but is mainly straight-forward. Many trees surround the holes, adding to the importance for straight shots. The Jake Gaither Golf Course has always had nine golf holes. The course has three sets of tees on each hole, black, orange and green. Red and white poles are placed in the fairway of each hole, marking 100 yards to the green.

Hole 1

The first hole is a 400-yard par 4. The west, east and south sides of the hole are lined with trees. A bunker is located on the west side of the green. A swamp and wetland are behind Hole 1 and behind the Hole 2 tees.

Hole 2

The second hole is a long, 503-yard par 5 with trees surrounding the east and west sides. A bunker is along the east side of the fairway and about 70 yards from the green. The middle of the fairway is open, while trees surround the back of the hole. A long bunker is along the west side of the green.

Hole 3

The third hole is a 320-yard par 4. This hole is lined with trees on the west side and scattered trees on the east side. A long bunker is along the west side of the green.

Hole 4

The fourth hole is a 380-yard par 4, which is lined with trees on both the west and east sides. A canal runs perpendicular through the middle of the fairway. A long bunker is along the north side of the green.

Hole 5

The fifth hole is a short, 138-yard par 3. Trees line the south side of the hole, while a few scattered trees are along the north side. A large bunker is along the north side of the green. The green on this hole is the highest point of the course.

Hole 6

The sixth hole is a long, 600-par 5. A restroom facility is to the east of the fairway. Thick rows of trees line the west and east sides of the fairway. A canal, which was first seen on the fourth hole, runs perpendicular to the middle of the fairway. A bunker is along the southeast part of the green.

Hole 7

The seventh hole is a 275-yard par 4. This hole has scattered trees on the west and east sides of the fairway. A deep bunker is along the northwest side of the green.

Hole 8

The eighth hole is a 188-yard par 3. The northern section of the fairway has trees on the west, north and east sides. A long bunker is along the southeast side of the green.

Hole 9

The ninth hole is a 305-yard par 4. This hole is parallel to Bragg Drive and is lined with trees on the north and south sides of the fairway. A deep bunker is on the southeast side of the green.



Bridge over Canal on Fourth Hole

This is a wooden bridge, wide enough for a golf cart. This wooden bridge potentially dates to 1962. While the boards have likely been replaced, the bridge was in this location according to aerial maps from 1962.

Bridge over Canal on Sixth Hole

This is a concrete bridge with metal support beams. This concrete bridge likely dates to 1962 and appears on a 1962 aerial map.

Putting Green

The putting green is located south of Bragg Drive, and due northwest of the first tees. The putting green dates to 1966, constructed after the golf course was redone.

Tennis Courts

The tennis courts were constructed before the completion of the golf course, in June 1956. While the tennis courts have been updated over time, the design and location of the tennis courts have remained the same.

Softball Field

Located southwest of the tennis courts and laid out in June 1956 before the completion of the golf course is the softball field. The north and west sides of the softball field are sheltered with a row

of trees.

Community Center

The original center section of the community center dates to 1956. The middle portion of the building is a meeting hall, while the east side is a recreational space with a weight room. A game room is off the south end. The gym on the west side of the community center is a later addition to the building. This building has been heavily altered with at least two major non-historic additions, which have negatively impacted the design and material integrity of the building. It is therefore classified as non-contributing for historic designation purposes.

Jake Gaither Pro Shop

The Pro Shop is currently being renovated and was built in 1985. A rectangular, horizontal window with four square panes is by the northwest corner. This building has one story, with the entry on the middle of the north side. A concrete platform is under two rectangular columns, beneath a hipped roof. A pair of brown metal doors with glass in the upper portion are located beneath the hipped roof. This building has a green, standing seam metal roof. The building is non-contributing for historic designation purposes due to age.



Golf Cart Shed

The golf cart shed is located south of the tennis courts, and dates to 1990. This building has a metal exterior with a front gabled roof. A vertical entry with a rusticated metal door is along the southeast section of the east side. A large, horizontal opening is along the center of the façade.

Warehouse Buildings

There are two warehouse buildings next to the golf cart shed. These buildings date to 1995. The warehouse buildings are obscured from view, behind a mesh covered chain link fence.

Restroom Facility

Previously, there was a restroom facility constructed on the sixth hole, which likely dated to the early 2000s. The current restroom facility was completely rebuilt in June 2021. This restroom structure is located along the east side of the sixth fairway. The building is situated on a concrete pad with grey painted wooden pillars supporting the foundation, and a porte cochere extends over the façade. Orange painted vertical wooden boards encase the building. Two separate restrooms with gray metal doors are located in the southwest and northwest corners of the west side.

Pump Shelter

A pump shelter is located by the sixth green and dates to 1998. The pump shelter is supported by three wooden beams on the north and south sides and horizontal braces on all four sides. This structure has a side gabled roof with black painted wooden boards below the gable. A chain link fence is between the wooden beams on all four sides. Double chain link gates are located on the south side. A pump and utility boxes are located within the structure.

Monument to Robert Mungen

Along the west side of the tees for the seventh hole is a monument for Robert Mungen. A brass plaque is perched on a stone pillar. The plaque says, "Dedicated to the Memory of Robert Mungen June 29, 1928-April 27, 2003, Coach-Mentor-Teacher." The monument was constructed from September 18-19, 2003, and officially dedicated on September 26, 2003.

Basketball Court

Located west of the Jake Gaither Community Center, the basketball court dates to the early 2000s.



Acknowledgments

Within these pages, you've read the history of the City of Tallahassee's Jake Gaither Golf Course. This extensive research effort culminated in the course being added to the National Register of Historic Places, the official list of the nation's historic sites worthy of preservation. Mayor John Dailey and Commissioners Curtis Richardson, Dianne Williams-Cox, Jeremy Matlow and Jaqueline Porter accepted the nomination by the State for this prestigious designation in 2022. The City is thankful to Scott Edwards with the Florida Department of State who spearheaded the research along with Ruben Acosta, Chief of the Bureau of Historic Preservation and Alissa Slade Lotane, Director of the Division of Historical Resources and State

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2022 City of Tallahassee Golf Staff

Jan Auger, General Manager

Jake Gaither Golf Course

Tiant DeWindt, Supervisor
Johnny Isom, Pro Shop Staff
Michael McCray, Pro Shop Staff
Shane Bass, Golf Course Superintendent
Jason Stewart, Golf Course Foreman
Kris Hannah, Teaching Pro

Hilaman Golf Course

Matt Chason, Golf Course Foreman
Buddy Driggers, Service Manager of Golf Operations
Dwayne Holloman, Golf Course Mechanic
Matt Wells, Supervisor
James Brad Harper, Teaching Pro

Volunteer Rangers

Tony Billups
Curtis Corbin
Marvin Farmer
Johnnie Gardner
Conrad Gillispie
Fred Glen
Jimmy Hall
Willie Hightower
Tony Levall
Brad McGuire
Willie Richardson
James White
Dallas Williams
Phillip Shelton
Waverly Sterling



The Jake Gaither Golf Course's cultural significance was solidified on August 9, 2022, when it earned its spot on the National Register of Historic Places.

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