

To: Sandra Weibe
From: Irene Kerr
Re: High River Tennis Club History

Hi Sandra:

Here is some information that I have gathered for you. Attached are a couple of early photos. There were some in the archives from the 70's and 80's, but unfortunately they were *High River Times* negs and lost in the flood.

According to Lillian Knupp in *Life and Legends*, former runner-up in the Manitoba Provincial Tennis Championship, Arthur Bowman arrived in High River and an interest developed in the game. She doesn't say exactly when he arrived, and he isn't on the above list. She also wrote that **two courts were built on the corner of Sixth Ave. and Second St. S.W.** These would be in the background of the attached photos.

There are a couple of interesting stories, and a W.O. Mitchell connection that I never knew about before I saw this:

"The tennis court fence ... is the spot where the de Foras family used to tether their old grey horse and buggy before going to church nearby., or on longer jaunts by train to Calgary. Undoubtedly the horse watched many a tennis match, unperturbed.

In 1926 the tennis courts included a pavilion.

During the 1940s, Bill Mitchell, having sold his "Jake and the Kid" tv rights, bought the old tennis court property intending to build a much-needed apartment building on the site For some reason the site was not considered suitable.

Meanwhile two courts had been built on the south east corner of Seventh Ave. and First St., immediately east of what was then the Catholic Church site.

In the late 1970's interest in tennis once again revived, a club was formed and courts were built south west of the swimming pool on Tenth Ave. S.W.

From the *High River Times*:

- the first reference to a tennis club in High River is in the May 3/06 edition:
"A membership fee of \$3 was fixed by High River Tennis Club for 1906. Officers for the year are A.H. Exkford, John Brazier, Dr. Douglas Stanley, George Ash, Louis Roberts, Alfred Kelly, Dr. Learmouth, J.R. Anderson, Dr. Hamilton and H.W. Blaylock"
- on May 10, 1906 the ladies got into the game:
"Officers elected at the formation of the High River Ladies Tennis Club included Mesdames Baines, T.W. Robertson, J.R. Anderson, G.E. Ash, G.E. Learmouth, Blaylock and Thompson and the Misses Heslip".
- in 1908 at the organizational meeting - the fee was \$3 for men and \$1 for ladies.
- tennis was more than just a sport and often the tennis clubs ventured into social territory - most likely for fundraising. In November 1908 the *Times* reported on an evening featuring Miss Lena Duthie and "presented under the auspices of the High River Tennis Club" that would "no doubt receive large patronage". Admission was 50 cents and seats could be reserved.
- in 1910 the rates went up to \$4 and \$2 and matches were planned with players from Macleod and Calgary and "other towns along the line".
- See attached for a story from August 7, 1913
- In 1916 the fees were still \$4 and \$2 although a special fee of \$1 was set for soldiers
- In 1920 a Tennis Club dance was held in the Town Hall. Gents: \$1.50, Ladies 50 cents, Spectators 25 cents!



- Interestingly in April 1921 there is an article about the Chalmers Church tennis club (formerly the North End tennis club). Some of the officers were Tom Betton and Lyle Snodgrass. It doesn't mention what courts were used, but the church was located where the United Church is now.
- woah - I'm sure there is more to this story - who knew tennis could be a religious thing? In June 1921 the *Times* reported that "the Anglican tennis courts, situated in the south part of town, are being put into shape. An extra court is nearing completion to alleviate the lengthy waiting periods expected as of late".
- It looks like the Anglican courts won out, as in May 1922 yet another meeting was held to form another tennis club. The gender gap was narrowing: fees were \$3 for gentlemen and \$2 for ladies. "The grounds of the Anglican Club will be used and the two courts there will be put into play. Tom Brown of the "Hoop House" has been engaged to put the grounds in order and he is now on the job...".
- In May 1925 a second court was added and the courts were "completely" enclosed with wire.
- In June 1925 several members of the High River tennis club travelled to Blackie for a tournament. "Blackie players again demonstrated their superiority".
- In August 1925 the tennis club held a Labour Day dance with music by Percy Proverb's "Georgians".
Gentlemen \$1.50, Ladies free.
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