FROM TEE TO GREEN:
MUNICIPAL PLANNING, GOLF, AND MOUNTAIN PROGRESS

by

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ABSTRACT

KENNETH A. DIXON. From Tee to Green: Municipal Planning, Golf, and Mountain Progress. (Under the direction of DR. AARON SHAPIRO)

On May 17, 1954, the United States Supreme Court decision *Brown v. Board* ruled the "separate but equal" doctrine, set in place by the *Plessy v. Ferguson* Supreme Court case in 1896, to be unconstitutional under the Fourteenth Amendment's "Equal Protection Clause." This moment marked the first federal initiative to end Jim Crow segregation by integrating public schools. The integration of public spaces, however, did not begin with public schools or the *Brown v. Board* case. As this thesis explores, public recreational facilities such as the Asheville Municipal Golf Club (the Muni) in Asheville, North Carolina, began abandoning Jim Crow practices such as racial segregation earlier that year. The city of Asheville was the first to integrate its public golf course(s) in North Carolina and arguably throughout the South. In order to understand how the city of Asheville became home to a social anomaly in 1954, this thesis examines the city's progressive culture that began developing at the end of the nineteenth century. By examining the city's environmental, economic, and political structure from 1880 to 1970, the thesis argues that Asheville experienced three consecutive progressive periods: business progressivism, *progressive experimentation,* and progressive culture, which ultimately led to a pre-*Brown* integration of the Muni.

DEDICATION

To the men that believed the game of golf to be a life-changing sport for everyone. Your fearless tenacity aided in dismantling one of America's most oppressive institutions at local and national levels. May we never forget the role of recreation in forming a more democratic society.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I want to begin by thanking my thesis advisor, Dr. Aaron Shapiro. With his guidance, mentorship, and patience, I was able to take an event close to my heart and turn it into a piece of scholarship. My gratitude is also indebted to my committee, Dr. Sonya Ramsey and Dr. Gregory Mixon, whose feedback, copy edits, and in-depth analysis allowed me to make sense of a complicated narrative. I would also like to thank the many wonderful archivists at the Pack Memorial Library who helped navigate me through the various available sources even when I was unsure of what I was hoping to find. Film producer, Paul Bonesteel, of Bonesteel Films also deserves recognition for this thesis as he was willing to share his wealth of resources from his documentary titled, *MUNI.* Paul was especially integral in serving as a local historian with an extensive knowledge of the Muni's integration and the development of its black golf community. I also want to thank Coach Ed Hoffmeyer who gave me the opportunity to play college golf at Mars Hill University and subsequently introduced me to the Muni's story. Nevertheless, my gratitude extends beyond the professionals involved in this project. To my graduate cohort, along with my roommates Suzanne and Laura, your own ambitions and healthy distractions not only encouraged me to complete this project but to distance myself from it when necessary as well. Lastly, I need to thank my parents and family for always supporting my decision to attend graduate school even when they did not always understand my love for history. To my Nan, Barbara Davis, your constant support and desire to learn always encouraged and inspired me to better myself and my education. I could have never accomplished this without any of you.

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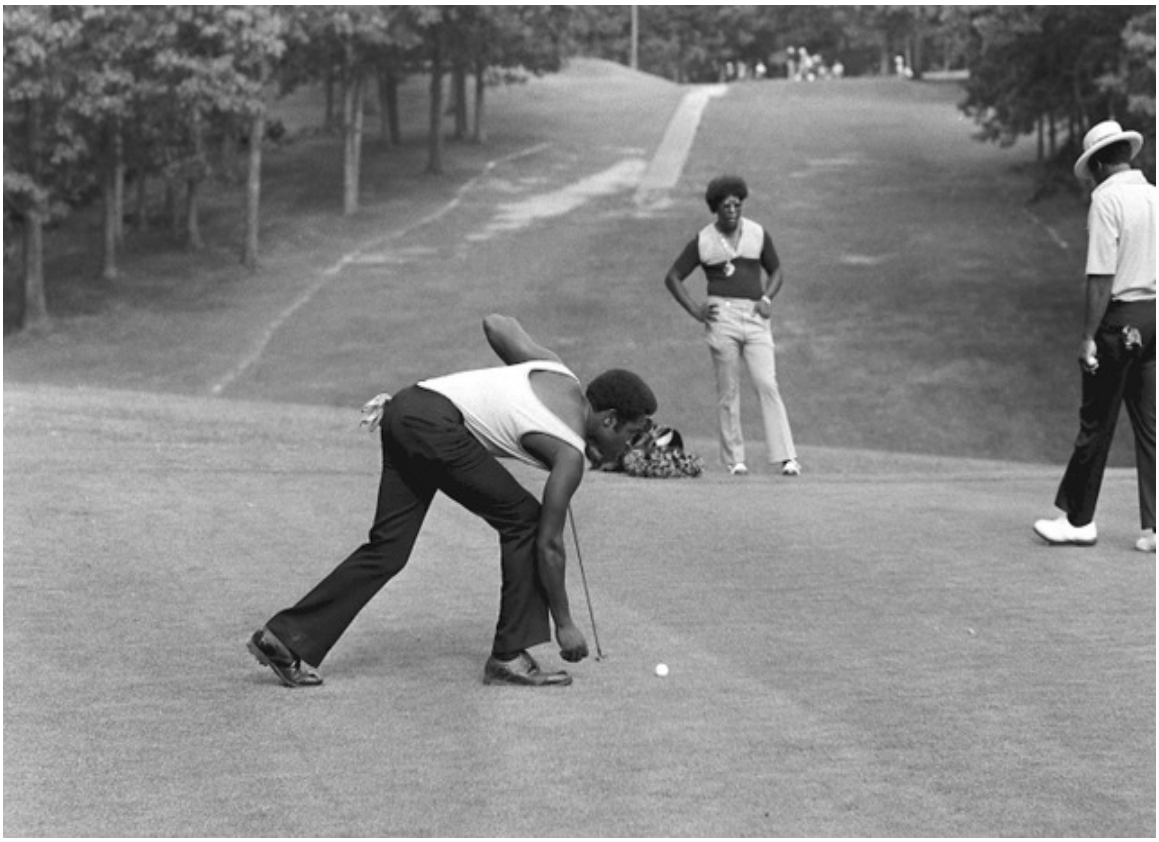

Figure 1: (Featured is a picture of three men playing the fifteenth hole in the Skyview Open at Asheville Municipal Golf Course, ca. 1970. This photo has been provided courtesy of the *Asheville Citizen-Times* Archive, discovered by Paul Bonesteel. The photo is also subject to be used in his 2019 documentary, titled *MUNI.*

INTRODUCTION

One year following the founding of the United States Golf Association in 1894, the first golf course emerged in Asheville, North Carolina--Asheville Country Club.[1] By the Great Depression in 1929, Asheville housed five golf courses. The mountain city was not only known for having the greatest abundance of courses in any Carolina city, but it was also frequented for having the longest golf hole in the world.[2] Already on the golf world map for its beautiful scenery and challenging course landscapes, in 1927 the city opened North Carolina's first municipally owned public golf course, Asheville Municipal Golf Course. "The Muni," as locals continue to recognize it, would eventually make Asheville home to the first racially integrated golf course in the state.[3]

The May 17, 1954 landmark United States Supreme Court decision *Brown V. Board* created an atmosphere in which African-Americans challenged segregated public spaces beyond public school systems. In Asheville and other cities, blacks immediately attempted to play municipal golf courses following the ruling.[4] In neighboring southern cities such as Atlanta, Greensboro, and Charlotte, blacks were not granted access to municipal courses until various additional lawsuits following *Brown v. Board*; however, instances of limited access to the Muni were noted in *The Asheville Citizen-Times'* newspaper as early as February 15, 1954, three months prior to the Supreme Court

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[1]"Golf Has Been Popular Asheville Sport For More Than Fifty Years," *Asheville Citizen-Times* (Asheville, NC), Mar. 26, 1950. From Pack Memorial Library Newspaper File Collection Vol. 111.

[2]Richard Morris, "World's Longest Golf Hole Is Real Toughie," *Asheville Citizen-Times* (Asheville, NC), Jun. 2, 1966. From Pack Memorial Library Newspaper File Collection Vol. 111.

[3]National Park Service, "National Registration of Historic Place Registration Sheet," Mar. 4, 2005. OMB No. 1024-0018.

[4]Ibid.

decision that deemed segregated public schools a violation of the Fourteenth Amendment.[5] Prior to 1954, blacks were allowed on the golf course but only as caddies. By February 1954 blacks could only play the course on Tuesdays and Thursdays. Although the Supreme Court decision directly addressed integrating public educational facilities, it also impacted American access to public space, such as parks. The integration process was met with resistance from the city's white elites as Asheville city councilmen listed Asheville Municipal Golf Club, or "the Muni," immediately for sale in response to the threat of full integration.[6] These restrictions, nevertheless, slowly dissolved within two years as local lawsuit threats for unconstitutional treatment of the black community emerged. In neighboring cities, state and local courts ruled in favor of African American access to public golf courses; therefore, the city of Asheville saw no use in delaying the Muni's inevitable integration since it was already partially established before *Brown v. Board*.

The integration process following *Brown v. Board* indirectly allowed Asheville Municipal Golf Course to host many prominent future amateurs and professional black golfers. One of the southeast region's most popular public golf tournaments, the Skyview, established in 1960 by several of the Muni's black golfers, was intended to grow the game among young, local, and regional African-American players and to prepare them for professional careers.[7] In his 2017 monograph, *Game of Privilege: An*

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[5]Lane Demas, *Game of Privilege: An African American History of Golf.* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2017). 165. African American golfers had "limited access" to the Muni. This means that they were only allowed to play during certain days and times when their presence was not an inconvenience to the larger white customer base.

[6]"Full" integration is used to define how the community reacted when black golfers were granted the same accessibility to the Muni's facilities as its white customers and no longer restricted to playing on limited days or hours.

[7]Ibid.

African American History of Golf, sports historian Lane Demas argued that black golfers dismantled the pillars of institutional racism in golf at the local level which was arguably true for Asheville.[8] Demas looks at state and municipal level legislation amid events, such as the Great Migration, the Harlem Renaissance, the Civil Rights Movement, and the Black Power Movement, along with their effects on recreational sport in the United States throughout the twentieth century. Despite its regional significance, Demas overlooked the integration of the Muni which suggests a different narrative of southern golf course desegregation than other golf courses throughout the South.

The story of Asheville's recreational past is related to broader historical topics, such as golf history, environmental history, and the history of civil rights in the twentieth century. Richard Starnes' *Creating the Land of the Sky: Tourism and Society in Western North Carolina*, Lane Demas' *Game of Privilege: An African American History of Golf* and others are used to frame the historical significance of the Muni within Western North Carolina golf history. While the Muni was partially integrated months prior to *Brown V. Board*, it was more than a product of the Civil Rights Era. The Muni's integration was a result of indirect causes, such as Asheville's tourist culture, local African-American golfers, and court cases in neighboring cities to which *Brown V. Board* served as the catalyst.

To best understand how the city of Asheville became home to a pre-*Brown* integration in the 1950s, the reader must become familiarized with several historical events that took place within Asheville and western North Carolina since 1880.[9] North

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[8]Lane Demas, *Game of Privilege: An African American History of Golf.*

[9]The term "social anomaly" is used to suggest that the Muni's pre-*Brown v. Board* integration represents an event that was very likely to take place at this time in the Jim Crow south.

Carolina civil rights historian William Chafe claimed that the best way to understand the Civil Rights Movement throughout the south is to study it's events from the view of local communities and local citizens.[10] His monograph, *Civilities and Civil Rights,* therefore, analyzes the movement through a single North Carolina community and its thirty-year history leading up to the famous Greensboro Woolworth sit-ins that occurred February 1, 1960. This project is separated into three chapters as a means to familiarize the reader with the region's significant past. It is imperative to understand that this study has a binary purpose. Until the twenty-first century, scholars have neglected Asheville as a region significant to developing the game of golf in the United States. There has also been a persistent belief that blacks did not have a significant impact on the region's history, according to a dissertation written by Darin Waters.[11] Second, because its recreational past is largely unknown, golf is overlooked by historians and social scientists as a factor in the economic, social, and cultural development of Asheville. By analyzing the history, origin, and rise of golf as a recreational sport in Asheville, this study proves how the sport acted as both the means and the motives to create a socially and culturally progressive community within an isolated, mountainous, and rural region of the United

[10]William H. Chafe, *Civilities and Civil Rights: Greensboro, North Carolina, and the Black Struggle for Freedom.* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1980). 2.

[11]Darin Waters, "Life Beneath the Veneer: The Black Community in Asheville, North Carolina from 1793 to 1900" (Doctoral Dissertation, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, 2012) 3.

States.[12] Thus, the game of golf symbolizes how the city forged a national identity through *progressive experimentation* during the first half of the twentieth century.[13]

Chapter one introduces the reader to the history of western North Carolina and Asheville between 1880 and the onset of the Great Depression in 1929. Because there is little scholarship that specifically focuses on the city of Asheville during this period, the works of scholars who have studied western North Carolina and Southern Appalachia are incorporated to frame the city's history. The chapter relies primarily on Starnes' *Creating the Land of the Sky*, Donald Edward Davis' *Where There Are Mountains*, Darin Waters' "Life Beneath the Veneer", and Kathryn Newfont's *Blue Ridge Commons* to demonstrate how nationally progressive initiatives, such as forestry conservation and environmental awareness, established themselves in the region. This development produced the city's tourist economy, and shaped a progressive culture as a means to attract tourists to the city. Chapter one demonstrates how Asheville's city commissioners planned to capitalize on its recently developed tourist economy and culture when they hired popular city planner, Dr. John Nolen in 1922.[14] His efforts put this culture into practice, devising municipal initiatives that eventually allowed Asheville to grow and thrive environmentally and economically for decades to come. These efforts inevitably

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[12]During the first half of the twentieth century, city officials embraced new, innovative, and progressive methods to enhance its reputation as a tourist attraction. Enhancing the social and recreational experiences of tourists eventually created a community where citizens themselves used similar progressive models to enhance their own social experience. Such initiatives symbolize the development of the city's progressive culture that eventually stemmed from its elected officials and citizens.

[13]"Progressive Experimentation" is a term coined for the purposes of this study to define the municipal agenda used by Asheville city commissioners to differentiate the city from others in the region as a means to attract visitors. "Progressive Experimentation" unintentionally functioned as a benevolent agenda for welfare of blacks in Asheville as it eventually became ingrained in the city's emerging progressive culture that developed among Asheville's city officials and residents.

[14]Consistent throughout my findings, Asheville's government officials referred to themselves as "city commissioners." Commissioners were officials elected to represent certain operational departments responsible for the entire city, such as a financial commissioner, Mayor, and a public safety commissioner.

impacted race relations, labor, and politics throughout the century. This portion of the chapter also uses primary sources, such as Nolen's Plan and the commissioner's correspondence, to link the emergence of golf in Asheville with the municipally planned progressive initiatives that ultimately granted access to the golf course beyond the middle and upper classes by the mid-century.

Chapter two discusses the development of Asheville as a "golf Mecca" in the early twentieth century. The chapter focuses primarily on the development of golf courses within the city that took place from the end of the nineteenth century to 1927 when the Muni opened. The chapter explores how the original lands of Asheville Country Club, formerly Swannanoa Hunting Club, were transformed into a golf course in 1895, less than a decade after the first nationally recognized golf course appeared in Foxburg, Pennsylvania.[15] It also discusses how the city became home to five golf courses because of its environmental landscape, the most of any city within the state. Relying heavily on primary sources, chapter two explores the intention behind building each golf course by linking the city's environmental and economic progressive consciousness to their construction. Finally, the chapter concludes by illustrating how the construction of North Carolina's first public golf course, the Muni, became part of a citywide effort to improve the quantity and quality of segregated recreational areas for its citizens while introducing the effect it specifically had on Asheville's black community leading up to the Civil Rights Era.

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[15]Dick Kaplan, "Golf Came to WNC in Early 1895," *Asheville Citizen-Times* (Asheville, NC), Jul. 17, 1960. From Pack Memorial Library Newspaper File Collection Vol. 111.

Chapter three highlights the Muni's role and historical significance regarding the influence of local citizens to produce change, intertwining the historiographies of racial segregation, black resistance, and African-American golf with the narrative of the Muni's most profound black player, Billy Gardenhight Sr. By drawing on secondary sources, such as Chafe's *Civilities and Civil Rights,* Demas' *Game of Privilege*, Robin Kelley's *Race Rebels*, Jeff Wiltse's *Contested Waters*, and Victoria Wolcott's *Race, Riots, and Rollercoasters*, the chapter demonstrates how Asheville's planned progressive culture inadvertently produced a pre-*Brown V. Board* integrated golf course while comparing the Muni to other integrated golf courses throughout the region. While many of the African-American men who witnessed and participated in the Muni's integration remain alive and well in Asheville today, Gardenhight's interview, among others, provides the reader with a comprehensive understanding of African American experience at the Muni. Gardenhight was one of the first black men to obtain access to the Muni's facilities and, at age 87, he still uses them. He was a caddy, an amateur and professional golfer, an advocate against white resistance, and one of the founders of the Skyview Open. Gardenhight's experience at the Muni epitomizes the role of other black golfers that ever stepped foot on the course which is why he serves as a central character to this study. He is present in an *Asheville Living Treasures* oral history project and as a soon to be focal character in Paul Bonesteel's soon to be released documentary, *Muni.*

This project is designed to synthesize a fifty-year comprehensive history of Asheville into one event: the integration of the Muni. It pays marginal attention to certain historical events that were less relevant to the Muni such as the effects that the Great Depression had on the city, which is why there is a twenty-year gap between the Muni's

grand opening and Gardenhight's narrative. Each chapter, whether focused on progressive municipal planning, environmental and landscape management, or African American and civil rights histories, has the potential to stand on its own as greater topics of historical scholarship. For that reason, the project does not rely heavily on many of the historiographical sources used; instead, it links the relevant aspects of each topic to offer a narrative that represents how an isolated mountain city in the Jim Crow South pioneered the integration of public spaces through its only public golf course before other cities in the region. The Muni's story is, therefore, one that can add to the \ historiography while simultaneously using these sources to contextualize the seventy years of Asheville's history that led to the Muni's integration.

CHAPTER ONE: REPLACE YOUR DIVOT

The town of Asheville formed at the conclusion of North Carolina Governor Samuel Ashe's only term in 1797. In order to understand how the game of golf influenced Asheville's city and regional development by the Civil Rights Era, one must be made aware of its economic and environmental history during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.[16] Geographically located within the Appalachian mountains of western North Carolina, tourists have frequented the city since the early nineteenth century.[17] Historian Richard Starnes is one of the few contemporary scholars to produce a post-Civil War history of the region. His book, *Creating the Land of the Sky: Tourism and Society in western North Carolina* argued that the region's promise of a wilderness experience and contact with people at odds with modernity drew wealthy white visitors to Appalachia. The commodification of the mountains and mountain culture, therefore, fueled Asheville's economy at the start of the twentieth century.[18]

The creation of Appalachian stereotypes was both a product of and a means to bring tourism to the region in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.[19] Travelers accounts, such as Frances Fisher Tiernan's "The Land of the Sky," portrayed the region as culturally and economically isolated from the rest of the South, a context that Starnes claimed skewed the perception of contemporary nineteenth-century scholars writing about the larger Appalachian region.[20] Stereotypical accounts regarding the

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[16]John Nolen, *Asheville city Planning Report*. (Harvard SQ. Cambridge: Massachusetts, 1922). From pack Memorial Library Collection NC-352, 4.

[17]Starnes, *Creating the Land of the Sky: Tourism and Society in Western North Carolina.* 2.

[18]Ibid., 35.

[19]Ibid., 36.

[20]Ibid.

region's seemingly untouched landscape and its backward yeoman-esque peoples brought wealthy visitors such as George Vanderbilt to the region in the late nineteenth century in search of a tranquil escape from modernity and industry. By the twentieth century, however, city officials, local business leaders, and outside investors catered to tourism by making the region more attractive and accessible to middle and upper-class visitors. This model is what historians like Starnes refer to as "business progressivism," a term used to define how Asheville shaped its economy around tourism between the end of the nineteenth century and the Progressive Era. For instance, Asheville was home to only six hotels in 1883, all of which boarded less than fifty people.[21] By 1890, however, the city claimed twelve hotels, each with five times the capacity and modern amenities such as hot and cold running water.[22] Organizations such as the 1909 Good Roads Association were formed, not only to make the region more accessible to elites but to make specific picturesque views more accessible as well.[23]

According to historians, tourism represented Appalachia's "Economic Spirit of the New South."[24] Historians use the term "New South" to define modernizing industries or societies that emerged in former antebellum cities with booming agricultural economies prior to the Civil War. In his book *Henry Grady's New South: Atlanta, A Brave and Beautiful City,* historian Harold E. Davis stated, "[T]he New South Movement then took wing. Fermenting earlier, by 1880 it promised southerners a way out of

[21]Ibid., 49.
[22]Ibid.
[23]Ibid., 54.
[24]Ibid., 4-5.

economic trouble and a grip on self-respect."[25] According to H.E. Davis, proponents of the New South claimed the movement to offer an industrialized society with increased employment, better agricultural conditions, along with alleviating any lasting post-war tensions between the North and former confederate leaders. In Durham and Winston-Salem, natural resources were allocated to fuel New South industries in tobacco and textile production. New South cities such as these created products that were nationally distributed to consumers. In Asheville, however, these agricultural and forest resources served as the product in which consumers traveled to the city to discover a destination filled with recreation and beautiful scenery. City leaders envisioned Asheville's economy thriving through consumption rather than production-based industries.

The city's emergence as a New South city is evident in the founding of Asheville's famous Grove Park Inn in 1913 and the establishment of the city's first professional sports team (baseball) in 1924, appropriately named "The Asheville Tourists." By 1925, Asheville contracted its first city planner, Dr. John Nolen, who was one of the first graduates from the Harvard School of Landscape Architecture in 1905. Nolen received his training from professionals like Frederick Law Olmsted whose career began by designing the lands of the Biltmore Estate, and was hired to transform the city in similar fashion to work at Biltmore. The city planner was also hired in other municipalities nationwide, including Kingsport, Tennessee; Madison, Wisconsin; San Diego, California; and Myers Park in nearby Charlotte, North Carolina. Nolen's first initiative in Asheville was to embrace recreational tourism over tourism for health and

[25]Harold E. Davis, *Henry Grady's New South: Atlanta, A Brave and Beautiful City* (Tuscaloosa: The University of Alabama Press, 1990) 13.

leisure.[26] Thus, eleven scenic drives, twelve new parks, and a municipal golf course (The Muni) marked the beginning of Asheville's *progressive experimentation*: planned progressive initiatives that shaped the city's economy and culture around tourists and its existing population. Products of business progressivism, these recreational spaces, primarily intended for tourists, became more frequented by local citizens; thus, creating an environment of *progressive experimentation* atypical from the rest of the South. The progressive culture that developed from this, however, did not negate the traditional practices of the Jim Crow Era. For instance, Blacks served as the primary source of labor for many of these projects and their work did not go unnoticed.[27] According to Starnes, private investors hired over 400 black workers to build Edwin Grove's resort, the Grove Park Inn, while the city used primarily black inmate labor to build new roads and railroads; thus, they were at times the means produce progressive initiatives rather than the beneficiaries themselves.[28]

Many of the region's wealthiest figures, such as real estate investor George Pack and industrialist George Vanderbilt, supported the black community by establishing black educational centers. Vanderbilt funded the Young Men's Institute for black youth, and Pack established the city's first black kindergarten, along with funding the salaries of black teachers.[29] Historians agree that while segregation and institutional racism existed in the mountain city, race relations were no less complex than anywhere else in the South. Because plantation slavery never developed around the city, however,

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[26]Starnes, *Creating the Land of the Sky: Tourism and Society in Western North Carolina*, 86.

[27]The Term "Blacks" will represent African-American agency throughout this paper to illustrate how these agents were referred to during the time and throughout other historical scholarship of this time.

[28]Ibid., 50.

[29]Ibid., 73.

emancipation did not threaten to overturn the structure of the region's economy following the Civil War like other cities in the South.[30] Thus, tourism and political progressivism worked synonymously to benefit all citizens in some fashion. According to Starnes, the positive portrayal of blacks in the region was a business progressive initiative to attract southern tourists.[31] Initially, this idea would seem problematic as whites in the South during the twentieth century traditionally opposed close interaction with blacks; however, the philanthropic efforts of Vanderbilt and Pack support Starnes' idea.

Asheville historian and native Darin Waters agrees with Starnes; however, his study delves into the intricacies of these seemingly progressive initiatives by analyzing the city's black history. According to Waters, white city leaders constructed a veneer that suggested a progressive city.[32] The progressive veneer that attracted tourists after the arrival of the railroad in 1880 and throughout the first half of the twentieth century was built by Asheville's black labor force. City officials, therefore, recognized the value of its black labor force and rewarded the black community with churches, schools, and benevolent institutions.[33] Waters claimed that this model was established before emancipation. Because of the region's mountainous terrain, slavery grew from non-agricultural activity, meaning that most slaves worked for professional men. percent According to Waters prior to the Civil War twelve percent of slaves worked in the hospitality industry serving as waiters, maids, and service men among the city's hotels.[34]

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[30]Waters, "Life Beneath the Veneer: The Black Community in Asheville, North Carolina from 1793 to 1900. 2-5.

[31]Starnes, *Creating the Land of the Sky: Tourism and Society in Western North Carolina*., 84.

[32]Waters, "Life Beneath the Veneer: The Black Community in Asheville, North Carolina from 1793 to 1900. 6-8.

[33]Ibid., 7.

[34]Ibid., 14-15.

While tourism was developing before the arrival of the railroad in 1880, black slave labor emerged as the fiber of the region's economy. Since mountain agriculture was mainly used for subsistence, slaves had a diverse economic responsibility as they were labor was used in the home, on the farm, in the office, and even to support growing infrastructure. Thus, Waters claimed that slave owners took better care of mountain slaves as their role was indispensable to the regional economy. [35] Tourism served as the motivation to expand roads that were also necessary to support a growing livestock industry. After emancipation, blacks typically found themselves getting paid to do the same jobs that they occupied as slaves. Following the end of the Civil War in 1865, however, it was not long until former slave owners developed a convict labor system as a major tool to control black labor after the Civil War.[36] Similar to the black codes that prompted the oppressive social institution known as Jim Crow following the end of Reconstruction in 1877, regional laws developed to specifically target the black community. For instance, Waters stated that petty theft could earn a black citizen up to ten years in prison where they would be leased out to city officials and white elites in a model similar to slave leasing.[37] While the demand for expanding infrastructure created a convict labor system to occupy hazardous jobs like railroad construction in the 1870s and 1880, Waters claimed that blacks were still able to occupy jobs that invited African Americans from outside of the region to migrate towards Asheville.[38] Blacks, however,

[35]Ibid., 46.
[36]Ibid., 61.
[37]Ibid.,. 62.
[38]Ibid., 97-98.

were not the only demographic to migrate towards the city at the turn of the century; local mountaineers and wealthy capitalists moved to the city as well.

Perhaps the most evident model of Starnes' business progressivism was the creation of Great Smoky Mountains National Park in 1930, which relocated thousands of local mountain families that had resided on those lands for generations. While these local mountaineers sought to preserve their culture from the growing tourist population and continue living their daily lives like those of previous generations, the world around them was changing, and they could not survive without participating. Before the Great Depression in 1929, middle and upper-class citizens capitalized on the tourist initiative as middle-class white women owned a majority of Asheville's boarding houses.[39] Wealthier investors such as Edwin Grove, George Willis Pack, and George Vanderbilt not only made the region their second home but created initiatives for others to do the same. According to Starnes, Asheville was considered "a playground for the elite."[40] He neglects, however, that this identity was both actively planned and circumstantial.

As a result, the commodification of stereotypical backward mountain culture was the only way that mountaineers could survive rising taxes, land expenses, and the price of modernization. Showcasing their traditional practices at local markets was not a traditional practice within itself. Starnes claimed that there was nothing foreign about mountain handicrafts and tradition until outsiders discovered them.[41] While mountaineers relied on these traditional practices to survive prior to tourism, it was the commodification and exploitation of false isolationism and backward tradition that kept

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[39]Starnes, *Creating the Land of the Sky: Tourism and Society in Western North Carolina*., 173.
[40]Ibid., 50.
[41]Ibid., 151.

them alive throughout business progressive initiatives. Stereotypical ideas of geographic and cultural isolationism contributed to the most significant component of western North Carolina's economy, the tourist industry.

Affluence not only brought the service industry to Asheville and western North Carolina, the region's wealthy visitors, such as the Vanderbilts, also promulgated a national wave of environmental awareness that established roots in Appalachia. The region's environmental makeup was equally as important in shaping Asheville's culture as the tourism industry. Social scientist Donald Edward Davis stated that "Mountain culture has always exhibited ecological aspects. For this reason, environmental and cultural preservation in the southern Appalachians are closely intertwined."[42] A comprehensive analysis of D.E. Davis's and historian Kathryn Newfont's scholarship illustrates a regional setting that prompted the creation of the United States Forest Service. Such products should be viewed as successful and relevant models of Asheville's *progressive experimentation*. In his monograph, *Where There Are Mountains: An Environmental History of the Southern Appalachians*, D.E. Davis claimed industrial logging to be the single most substantial human activity to affect environmental and cultural change in the region.[43] While Starnes argued tourism to be the ultimate cause of cultural change in the region, his analysis specifically considered the city of Asheville while D.E. Davis' study encompassed the entire southern region of Appalachia. His analysis of western North Carolina is specifically useful in framing the city's economic development in the early twentieth century.

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[42]Donald Edward Davis, *Where There Are Mountains: An Environmental History of the Southern Appalachians.* (Athens: The University of Georgia Press, 2000) 214.

[43]Ibid., 166.

The region's environmental history is particularly significant to the development of Asheville's modern culture and national perception. Similar to Starnes study, the decades between 1880 and 1920 represent, as D.E. Davis claimed, the "Era of Industrial Railroad Logging."[44] Before the installation of railroad tracks, which became the means for industrial logging, the Appalachian landscape proved too inaccessible; there was just no way to reach the tops of mountains with industrial machinery. For this reason, mountain families were able to use Appalachian forests for their own subsistence needs even without the formal definition of property lines. According to D.E. Davis, the Great Smoky Mountains, an Appalachian Mountain range between Asheville and Knoxville, contained twenty-five to fifty thousand board feet per acre.[45] A mature chestnut tree could provide enough timber to construct a single cabin, which D.E. Davis claimed is the testimony to the abundance of old growth forest in the region prior to industrial logging.[46]

The establishment of the railroad proved equally problematic for the mountaineer and the environment. Once the railroad paved its way through the region, the landscape had become accessible to the middle class and logging incorporations. As mentioned previously, the Appalachian landscape had ill-defined property lines before industrial logging was established in the 1890s, which meant that no stand of timber was immune to being harvested.[47] According to D.E. Davis, industrial logging neglected homegrown

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[44]Ibid., 165.

[45]Ibid., 164. Board-foot is a form of measurement used to determine the volume of timber in North America.

[46]Ibid., 165.

[47]Ibid., 167. A stand of trees is used to reference a section of forest that contains trees uniform in size and age. Stands of trees were, and still are, the most efficient section of forest to harvest.

forestry methods that had been practiced by generations of mountaineers.[48] Conversely, logging was every bit as exploitative as any other extractive industry of the nineteenth century. Timber corporations harvested Appalachian forests with the intent to reach peak profitability. Commercial lumberman Alexander Arthur set the trend in 1895 with a purchase of 60,000 acres of forest in eastern Tennessee, funded by foreign investment. Just five years later, competition became so fierce that Alexander felt compelled to buy another 120,000 acres of forest in western North Carolina.[49] Inefficient practices like clear-cutting, slash and burn, and overgrazing left the region's landscape vulnerable to fires, erosion, and flooding.[50] Industrial logging was also responsible for the desecration of economic subsistence, traditionally practiced by generations of white mountaineer families.[51] The elimination of commons left mountaineers to depend on the intruding market economies and wage labor.

Amid economic and cultural exploitation, American forester Gifford Pinchot arrived at George Vanderbilt's private Biltmore estate in 1892 after studying forestry in Germany. Vanderbilt's landscape architect, Frederick Law Olmsted, recommended Pinchot manage his lands via scientific method to eliminate the harsh effects of corporate logging. In *Blue Ridge Commons: Environmental Activism and Forest History in Western North Carolina*, environmental historian Kathryn Newfont claimed that the threat of commercial timber was Pinchot's biggest concern as the timber logging industry already

[48]Ibid., 180.
[49]Ibid., 166-167.
[50]Ibid., 166.
[51]Ibid., 174.

overused much of Vanderbilt's land.[52] What happened during Pinchot's appointment as the Biltmore Estate's land manager, Newfont referred to as a "scientific forestry national phenomenon."[53] Pinchot used the scientific method, collecting and analyzing data from the Biltmore Forest, in order to discover the most effective methods in which to conserve forests on a broader scale.

Unlike resource conservation initiatives, the ideas of environmental and resource preservation were in effect on a national scale prior to the establishment of the nation's first national park, Yellowstone National Park, in 1872. The park was established before the development of "forestry." The same model made its way into Appalachia with the establishment of the Appalachian National Park Association in 1899 which lobbied Congress for a southern national park and forest reserve.[54] It was not until the Organic Act of 1897 that Pinchot was able to convince the government to form outlined goals of conserving resources as a means to produce an endless supply of timber, all while protecting watersheds and preventing depredations.[55] In 1905, working with President and friend Theodore Roosevelt as chief of the United States Forest Service, Pinchot was able to transfer the nations forest reserves from the Department of Interior to the Department of Agriculture.[56] Finally, in 1911, Congress passed the Weeks Act, which allowed the federal government to slowly purchase lands specifically for forest conservation; thus, the nation's first national forest established under the Weeks Act,

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[52]Kathryn Newfont, *Blue Ridge Commons: Environmental Activism and Forest History in Western North Carolina* (Athens: The University of Georgia Press, 2012) 50.

[53]Ibid., 55.

[54]Ibid., 63.

[55]Ibid., 52.

[56]Ibid., 51.

Pisgah National Forest, operated after a significant purchase of land from the Vanderbilt estate.[57]

The establishment of the United States Forest Service (USFS) in 1905 and the Weeks Act of 1911, however, did not spell relief for the mountaineer. While commons in the national forests are open to public use, the Forest Service established fish and game regulations, property boundaries, and burning restrictions that did not previously exist.[58] Although less oppressive than the ownership of private enterprise, a combination of industrial logging and the establishment of national forests forced mountaineers to abandon their subsistence lifestyle and relocate in search of jobs or accept temporary rank-and-file jobs from the USFS.[59] For instance, the average southern Appalachian farm size in 1880 was 187 acres, but by 1910, the average size dropped to a mere ninety acres, and the average family size dropped by two people.[60] Newfont stated that historians have found little surviving record of the mountain resident's responses to early federal landholding efforts.[61] There are records, however, of foresters such as William L. Hall who had a liberal and paternalistic outlook on the USFS role in shaping the lives of mountain residents. According to Newfont, Hall believed the USFS to be "a remedy for the poverty, lawlessness, and violence" exhibited by previous generations of mountain peoples.[62]

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[57]Ibid., 56.

[58]Davis, *Where There Are Mountains: An Environmental History of the Southern Appalachians.* 174.

[59]Any non-managerial employee position in an organization.

[60]Ibid., 179.

[61]Kathryn Newfont, *Blue Ridge Commons: Environmental Activism and Forest History in Western North Carolina*. 99.

[62]Ibid., 109.

Those who remained to work for the USFS battled seasonal employment, minimal pay, and the inconsistency of payments during the federal organization's infancy. Families that moved west likely found jobs in the coal mines of Kentucky and Tennessee, but those who moved towards Asheville found jobs that catered to the tourist industry. These jobs were not always service jobs, as mountaineers often marketed their skills and traditional way of life as a commodity. For instance, by 1922, city planner John Nolen proposed opening Asheville's first centralized city market that would "greatly stimulate the growing of truck produce and dairy products in the adjacent outlying countryside by giving the farmer a direct outlet for his wares."[63] His plan was two-fold as it intended to bring value to those along the city's perimeter and convenience those within; Nolen wrote in his city plan, "[I]t will also be a great benefit to the Asheville housewives as it will provide them with fresher and cheaper fruit and vegetables."[64] The establishment of the Forest Service in western North Carolina aligns with business progressivism model that continued to shape the region's economy while simultaneously spearheading the nation's first scientific forestry experiment and stimulating progressive city planning initiatives.

During the first half of the twentieth century, progressive initiatives brought nationwide recognition to the region. Blacks were the primary labor force in the service and hospitality industry.[65] By the 1880s, Waters claimed that the region's economy was dedicated to serving general tourism and leisurely travel as evidenced by the Battery Park

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[63]John Nolen, *Asheville city Planning Report*. 33.

[64]Ibid.

[65]Waters, "Life Beneath the Veneer: The Black Community in Asheville, North Carolina from 1793 to 1900." 75-76.

Hotel's numerous dining rooms, bowling alley, and billiards rooms that hosted prominent white figures and United States' presidents such as Theodore Roosevelt, Grover Cleveland, William Howard Taft, and Woodrow Wilson.[66] Although blacks served as the means to Asheville's economic success, racism kept blacks in all industries relegated to menial service jobs outside of their own businesses. Nevertheless, because of generational experience within the service industry, blacks were able to monopolize the city's barber industry and successfully operate their own restaurants along with other small independent businesses such as insurance agencies and funeral parlors.[67]

Regardless of their success with small service businesses, blacks ultimately lacked the political power to challenge their economic marginalization; thus, they were not fully integrated into the city's economic infrastructure even though they served as its primary labor force. Nevertheless, black and white leaders were aware that the city's progressive image was its biggest attraction. Waters stated, "After the arrival of the railroad in 1880, progress became the central goal of Asheville city leaders."[68] By 1888, the city operated the world's first electric streetcar line, but technological attractions were just one aspect of progress that the city emulated. Public tranquility was also essential to protecting the city's progressive image as both black and white leaders knew that visitors would be turned away by a place fraught with racial problems.[69] City leaders, thus, arguably used public spaces and benevolent institutions for blacks and whites as a method of social control. According to H.E. Davis, the New South Movement's most

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[66]Ibid.
[67]Ibid., 79.
[68]Ibid., 96.
[69]Ibid., 97

prominent advocate, Henry Grady, saw the movement as a means to regain social control in the South. Regarding Grady's view on rising atheism, H.E. Davis stated that "[H]e feared that social control would slip if religious practice eroded, and it was social control that concerned him."[70] Former confederates and New South advocates searched for new methods to control the lives of those enslaved less than two decades before the railroad arrived in Asheville in 1880.

For Asheville, however, social control was less concerned with preserving an oppressive tradition than it was creating an inviting image to foreigners; although, it accomplished both. As mentioned previously, white elites and city leaders were aware of the essential role that the black labor force played in the city's economic success. While they were not willing to give up political power to blacks, city leaders supported providing black citizens with the opportunity to erect churches, own small businesses, and operate benevolent institutions. Benevolent institutions is a term that Waters used to define the educational, social, cultural, and recreational facilities developed to enrich the stability of black life in Asheville.[71] The Young Men's Institute (YMI) and Stephens-Lee High School were perhaps the most influential benevolent associations in Asheville's black community.

After the United States' first white Young Men's Christian Association (YMCA) opened in Boston in 1851, the nation's first black YMCA opened in Washington D.C. in 1853. Asheville's first white YMCA opened in 1883, and by 1886, black Ashevillians

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[70]Davis, *Henry Grady's New South: Atlanta, A Brave and Beautiful City.* 11.

[71]Waters, "Life Beneath the Veneer: The Black Community in Asheville, North Carolina from 1793 to 1900.", 97-98.

attempted to open their own, but ultimately lacked sufficient funds.[72] Black and white leaders supported opening YMCA facilities as a means to give those who migrated to the city in search of jobs a wholesome and productive alternative to bars and saloons.[73] Nevertheless, black leaders failed to obtain the necessary financial support among its local population. This left them in search for funding from external forces with George Vanderbilt loaning the city's black leaders $15,000 to open a YMCA in 1892. Nevertheless, these leaders feared that a YMCA did not completely encompass the interests and goals of black Ashevillians, so they opened their own institution in 1893 based on a similar model, called the Young Men's Institute (YMI).[74]

According to Waters, such a place "would provide the community with a center where their social, cultural, and economic interests could be advanced."[75] Waters also negates the idea that Vanderbilt's decision to fund the YMI was an act of paternalism simply because he was not granting them the money to erect an institution in his image. Rather, his loan of $15,000 is symbolic of his expectation to prove that blacks were capable of self-government and, thus, could eventually be fit for political influence. He stated that "the YMI became a social, cultural, and economic incubator for the black community."[76] The building was located downtown, just south of the city's largest black community in the early 1900s: the Town branch community. While it served as the leading cultural institution for blacks by offering a library, auditorium, classrooms, and

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[72]Ibid., 146-148.
[73]Ibid.
[74]Ibid., 151.
[75]Ibid., 151-152.
[76]Ibid., 165

gym, it also served as a leading economic institution for black businesses.[77] The first floor offered several retail spaces for rising black entrepreneurs. Most importantly, the YMI became a place where blacks could escape discrimination experienced everywhere else throughout the city.

While the YMI undoubtedly provided educational opportunities to blacks, including classrooms to support a night school for black teachers to continue their education, Asheville's only black public high school served as the beacon for black education throughout the region. According to Waters, Stephens-Lee high school was constructed and operated by black people in the interest of black education.[78] It served as another opportunity for blacks to build a platform to demonstrate that they were fit for self-government. Stephens-Lee High School was constructed in 1917 and dismantled in 1965 when the city decided to integrate its schools.[79] From the onset, school administrators developed a curriculum that neglected the typical black curriculum throughout the South consisting specifically of vocational and industrial education, a model established by Booker T. Washington thought to bring African Americans equal citizenship through economic advancement. Waters notes that white city leaders supported the high school's mission; stating, "if the city was to continue to draw tourists and their money, an uneducated, idle, and potentially disgruntled black community was not in the city's best interest."[80] Such thinking demonstrates that the city was severely interested in supporting its black citizens when their efforts benefitted the city as a whole.

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[77]Ibid., 164.
[78]Ibid., 131.
[79]Ibid.
[80]Ibid., 133.

Black Ashevillians did, however, benefit from such selfish thinking. Prior to 1920, city officials were simply interested in giving African Americans the opportunity to open such institutions; however, after hiring Nolen in 1922, black benevolent institutions became an, albeit small, city initiative in the form of recreation.

Whether serving as a second home to the nation's elite, increasing the rate of black employment, or pioneering scientific forestry methods, scholars have failed to address a larger theme in the region's history. Starnes hinted at *progressive experimentation* by analyzing how the business progressivism model developed to accommodate the region's large tourist industry. D.E. Davis placed Asheville at the headquarters of the region's ecological accomplishments, and Newfont's analysis illustrated how such initiatives shaped the region's modern culture and economy. The collective scholarship of the region merely addresses an essential theme during the first half of the twentieth century in which Asheville experienced a period of rapid *progressive experimentation* that has shaped its modern identity. A 2016 New York Times article symbolized this identity: "[I]t is now a top tourist destination in the South, one renowned for its creative spirit and progressive ideals."[81] The article continued to revere the city's substantial anti-discriminatory efforts in support of the non-heterosexual (LGBTQ+) members of the community.[82] Perhaps this article suggests that Asheville is still a region of *progressive experimentation*, but why has scholarship overlooked Asheville as a significant product or agent of the Progressive Era?

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[81]Jeremy Egner, "36 Hours in Asheville, N.C." *The New York Times,* The New York Times Company: 2018 (Oct. 13, 2016): https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2016/10/10/travel/what-to-do-36-hours-in-asheville-north-carolina.html

[82]Ibid.

In 1922, Dr. John Nolen published his plans for the city of Asheville. After taking a comprehensive survey of the city's climate, topography, demographics, infrastructure, and economy, Nolen produced a fifty-eight-page report to accommodate the city's growing tourist and residential populations. As Starnes pointed out, one of Nolen's most significant concerns was to promote Asheville's function as both a health and pleasure-seeking resort city for northern elites.[83] Starnes, however, regards this as the planner's primary initiative; instead, it was merely one of many. When describing the region at the time of his survey, he wrote:

> [T]he mountains, the climate, and the geographical location of this region produce a combination of conditions that offers unlimited possibilities for development. Because of its central relation to the mountains and other points of interests Asheville can well become the hub of the entire movement.[84]

Nolen refers to this movement as a post-Great war comeback taking place throughout the South. He wrote that "[I]t is no longer entirely an agricultural section of the country but is rapidly developing its natural resources..."[85] In his letter to city officials, he stressed that while many of his plans require more immediate action that the others, the early acquisitions of land for public spaces are crucial to the growing economy.[86] Municipally owned public spaces were the answer to economic prosperity in New South cities, and Asheville had the landscape and resources to compliment them.

By 1925, acquiring land and creating public spaces was already in effect. A republished edition of the Nolen Plan, complete with a presentation from city

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[83]Starnes, *Creating the Land of the Sky: Tourism and Society in Western North Carolina.* 86.
[84]John Nolen, *Asheville city Planning Report*. 1-2.
[85]Ibid., 1.
[86]Ibid., Introductory page.

commissioners, stated: "[T]he City Plan suggests steps which, in our opinion, the city government should take in order to make Asheville a city beautiful; to harmonize the work of improvement into a definite, unified program of civic progress."[87] This plan was just that, steps, and the first step was expected to be completed by the end of the year in 1925, just three years following Nolen's survey. Recognizing that the plan was meant to transpire over a long period of time, Mayor John H. Cathey described the plans that were already in progress: the acquisition of land to relocate three schools, a new thoroughfare to West Asheville, a new water reservoir, plans for a new municipal building, the widening of several streets, and three new parks.[88] The three parks expected to open by May 15, included a new city recreation park, a fifty-six-acre lake (Beaver Lake), and a municipal golf course. The culmination of these initiatives symbolized the city's desire to create public spaces for recreational and educational purposes while enhancing the means to accommodate them.

Nolen introduced the 1922 city survey by stating, "[T]o fit the city for the part it is to play in the future of the region is one of the chief objectives of the survey..."[89] So what future role was the city to play in the South? Before the survey, the nation recognized Asheville for having mountain and river scenery unparalleled by any other southern city that was best viewed from its resorts.[90] Hotels, such as the Grove Park Inn, were world famous institutions of hospitality that gave affluent visitors access to private

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[87]The City Planning Commission, "A Presentation by the City Planning Commission" in *Asheville City Planning Report*. (City Hall. Asheville: North Carolina, 1925). From Cornell University Digital Archive. 5.

[88]Ibid., 9.

[89]John Nolen, *Asheville city Planning Report*. 2.

[90]Ibid., 8.

recreation, which Nolen claimed to be the city's strongest tourist attraction.[91] The survey also discovered that most of the residents created communities on the plateaus carved by the French Broad River except for a densely populated black community settled within the Town Branch Valley.[92] The French Broad River separated West Asheville from central Asheville and caused many industries to settle along its banks as the railway contoured its natural boundaries. In 1920, the population measured 28,504: a 95% increase since 1900.[93] Streetcars and five bus lines occupied the main thoroughfares, and the topography, although rough, yielded limitless building material and the potential for a 200,000 horsepower water reservoir that had yet to develop.[94] Regardless of the city's economic stability and developmental potential in 1922, it was not prepared to handle the infrastructure growth necessary for its ever-increasing tourist and resident population.

[91]Ibid.
[92]Ibid., 9. Town Branch Valley can be viewed in figure 2.
[93]Ibid., 15.
[94]Ibid., 8.

Figure 2. (Map of Town Branch black community)[95]

Projected to reach 50,000 residents by 1940, Asheville's most significant challenge was congestion: a problem that Nolen claimed to be "[O]ne of the most difficult and embarrassing problems of modern cities…"[96] Recognizing that city plans for a city like Asheville can take twenty years or one generation to complete, his awareness demonstrated his experience with planning other municipalities prior to Asheville. It is

[95]John Nolen, image of *Asheville North Carolina Park System: Map of City Planning Proposals as a basis for development.* (Harvard SQ. Cambridge: Massachusetts, 1922). From artstor.org digital archive collection. This image has been cropped and formatted from its original (figure 3) to illustrate a clear image of the Town Branch community located east of the Battery Park Hotel and north of Patton Square.

[96]Ibid., 15.

evident, however, that Nolen planned to experiment with Asheville by remedying congestion via decentralization, which he claimed was underutilized at the time.[97]

Methods of decentralization took various forms, but the formula was to target residential and shopping areas by providing sustainable local recreation and amusement.[98] Even the railroad station qualified for improvement under this provision. The tracks were already well located as they entered the city from the north and west then ventured east accompanied by impressive scenery, the French Broad and Swannanoa river valleys that few other southern cities possessed.[99] The station, however, was located along Depot Street, a congested street at the bottom of steep grades. The new location was proposed to sit along Biltmore Avenue, several blocks east of Depot Street and a few miles north of an existing station in Biltmore Village. Nolen then proposed that a public park and local shops furnish the new railway station for present and future needs.[100] Similar to Gifford Pinchot, Nolen's city plans engaged the same concerns for conservation that were unique to the Biltmore Estate and the region's forests just decades prior. For instance, he admitted that the city held a distinct variety of trees and foliage that parks and public walkways should model to showcase the natural beauty of the region.[101] Planting trees, such as magnolia, oak, hickory, dogwood, and Carolina hemlock in public spaces would not only ensured their survival within a rapidly expanding community but also served as a means to attract visitors and potential residents by bringing elements of the "Land of the Sky" to city streets.

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[97]Ibid.
[98]Ibid.
[99]Ibid., 17.
[100]Ibid.
[101]Ibid., 14.

The city streets, however, could not adequately accommodate residential and tourist populations in 1922; thus, they were of high priority. By 1925, commissioners released plans to widen the three roads that intersect in the center of the city: College Street, Biltmore Avenue, and Patton Avenue. The plan was temporarily suspended, however, due to the lack of funding.[102] Nolen's plan, nevertheless, provided a thorough assignment for city commissioners as he suggested to extend or add thirty-six streets within city limits along with widening forty-three existing streets. Busier streets, such as Biltmore and Patton Avenue were to be widened to eighty feet while the rest were to be a standard of sixty feet.[103] Previously there was no standard width as Biltmore Avenue was a mere fifty-five feet wide, Patton Avenue was fifty-one feet wide, and the rest of Asheville's thoroughfares ranged from twenty-five to seventy feet in width.[104] These inconsistencies developed due to the problematic topography that made this proposal among the most expensive in the plan. Nolen stated that because of the challenging terrain, a grid of streets that ran parallel to the city's "chief traffic arteries" was impossible to implement; therefore, present and future streets must be built to a standard width to accommodate future growth.[105]

The compatibility of decentralization and "Land of the Sky" landscape was not always ideal; however, decentralization was still an experiment, and the city planning committee found positive ways to strategically benefit from infrastructural changes. Considering the growing age of the automobile and the ill-prepared city streets of

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[102]The City Planning Commission, "A Presentation by the City Planning Commission" in *Asheville City Planning Report*. 9.

[103]John Nolen, *Asheville city Planning Report*. 21.

[104]Ibid.

[105]Ibid., 19.

Asheville, Nolen proposed to strategically place traffic squares where new business and community centers could flourish. As opposed to traffic circles, traffic squares would serve as a marketing scheme by forcing commuters to pause in their vehicles and gauge their surroundings. Around them were storefronts, public spaces, and beautiful scenery.[106] Traffic squares would not only increase the circulation of travel, but act as a means to create sites for profitable business development as well. Public community spaces were also strategically placed conveniently near traffic circles. For instance, Asheville's Civic Center, a large square surrounded by public buildings that included a post office, library, federal building, and public auditorium just northwest of Pack Square and cornering Walnut and Spruce Street. According to Nolen, the proposed land was inexpensive at the time but expected to host a "beautiful but also unique community center" fit for the city's "land of the sky" theme.[107]

Plans for developing the "land of the sky," however, extended beyond catering to the future tourist and resident populations; they concerned the current community as well, a point that Richard Starnes' *Creating the Land of the Sky* does not emphasize enough. Efforts to understand the needs of the present community are evidenced by Nolen's understanding of the local population. For instance, he discussed the geographic and communal disconnect between West Asheville and Asheville Proper; however, rather than merely constructing more bridges and thoroughfares, Nolen proposed building community centers in West Asheville as well. Purchasing land that would also be large enough to host some combination of public schools, another Y.M.C.A, a library,

[106]Ibid., 25.
[107]Ibid., 29.

churches, a theater, and lodging was thought to bring a sense of pride and community that would reach West Asheville as well.[108]

Park systems were also believed to bring pride and attraction to a community. Only two parks existed between West Asheville and Asheville Proper at the time of the 1922 survey. Montford Park was a two-acre space in northern Asheville and Asheton Park in the southern portion of the city.[109] Two additional underdeveloped areas remained: an acre of land cornering Magnolia Avenue and Flint Street and eight acres of land in West Asheville. Nolen concluded that the lack of maintenance and general use of the lands represented their inadequacies; thus, he proposed a park system.[110] Such a system would highlight and be located along the French Broad River separating West Asheville and Asheville proper.[111] Developing cheap land along the river for a park system would provide a scenic way to move about the city while being available to communities on each side of the river. The project would subsequently enhance the attractiveness of local neighborhoods.[112]

The park system was designed to connect via park drives in order to make scenic trips more convenient. Nolen wrote, "[S]uch a development would tend to make people more contented with the Asheville region and less likely to use Asheville simply as a headquarters…"[113] His vision for park drives, however, was fueled by more than eliminating the need to leave the city to be surrounded by nature.

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[108]Ibid., 32.
[109]Ibid., 34.
[110]Ibid.
[111]Ibid., 35
[112]Ibid.
[113]Ibid., 36.

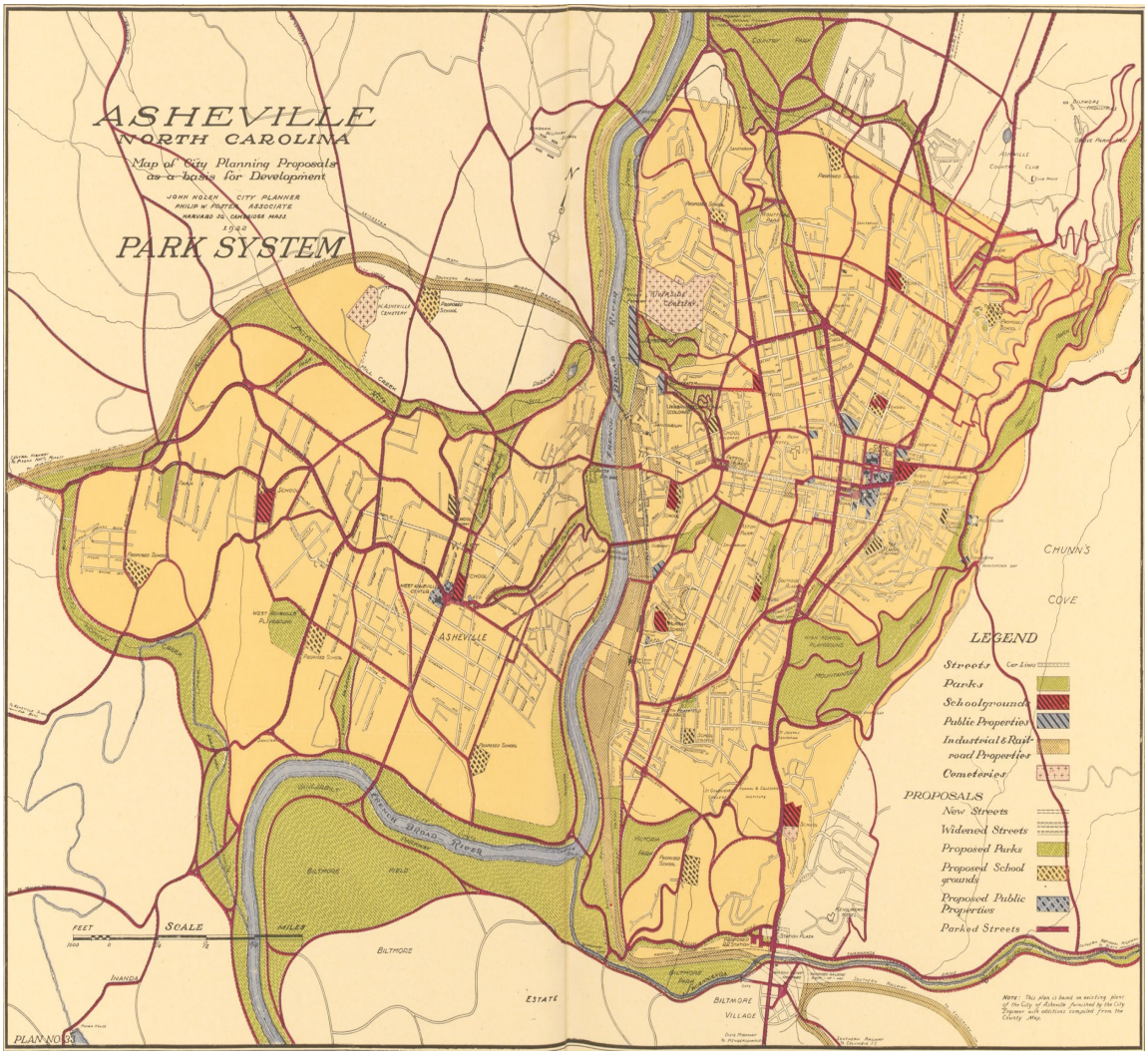

Figure 3. (Nolen's Park System Diagram.)[114]

Pictured above is a map that illustrates the park system. Highlighted in green are the proposed parks in both West Asheville and Asheville Proper. Also highlighted were the park drives that contour the French Broad River connecting several of the inner city

[114]John Nolen, image of *Asheville North Carolina Park System: Map of City Planning Proposals as a basis for development.* This map can be used to understand the above references to West Asheville (left), Asheville Proper (right), the French Broad River (center), the park system (green), public properties (striped gray), and school grounds (striped red).

parks. [115]Nolen believed the drives could serve as a means to establish small communities of high-class homes, but more generally, that the municipally owned roads would prevent environmental destruction. He stated "[E]very effort should be made to protect these gifts of nature, and near the city where private ownership would endanger their beauty and preservation they should be acquired and held in public control."[116] While the idea of promoting high-class residential developments to settle on municipal land designed to preserve the city's natural resources may seem contradictory, this enforces Richard Starnes' main argument that tourism was Asheville's New South industry in the twentieth century; thus, Nolen could not ignore the effects of a growing population.[117] Nolen was, nevertheless, given the task to use the methods of conservation, unique to the region, in an urban setting.

Conserving urban spaces, such as parks, meant that the city would have to invest in its recreational potential. Nolen used empiricism to appropriate the correct amount of recreational spaces for future populations which also parallel Pinchot's application of scientific method to forestry. When determining the size of playgrounds, Nolen cited a Dr. G. D. Strayer of Columbia University, who claimed that 100 square feet of space be provided per child or more if the land is purchased with the expectation of population growth.[118] Aside from determining the size of playgrounds, the city planner also determined that city commissioners prioritize twenty-six new parks, including two parks

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[115]John Nolen, image of *Asheville North Carolina Park System: Map of City Planning Proposals as a basis for development.* (Harvard SQ. Cambridge: Massachusetts, 1922). From artstor.org digital archive collection.

[116]Ibid., 37.

[117]Starnes, *Creating the Land of the Sky: Tourism and Society in Western North Carolina.* 5.

[118]John Nolen, *Asheville city Planning Report*. 41. Dr. John Nolen quotes a Dr. G. D. Strayer of Columbia University while giving no context to the source from which the quote was found.

labeled "colored" as they were explicitly designated for the black community.[119] According to Nolen's survey, roughly thirty-three percent of Asheville's 28,504 residents were black and were expected to increase with the same rate as the general population over the next few decades.[120] The African American population primarily resided in the northern portion of the city, known at the time as Town Branch Valley, in the northeast portion of the city just south of Riverside Cemetery.[121]

The institution of Jim Crow allowed governments to publicly separate white and black populations decades prior to the city survey in 1922; thus, Nolen had no interest in challenging legal segregation. This practice meant that thirty-three percent of the city's population had access to roughly eight percent of the city's public parks; however, this was an improvement from the complete lack of black designated parks before the city survey. In regards to incorporating the black population into future city plans, Nolen wrote:

> [I]t is in most respects a distinct advantage to the negroes to be separated from the white population provided the areas in which they live are suitable in location and character and provided furthermore that those areas are developed with due regard to good homes, schools, stores, and adequate facilities for recreation.[122]

Catering to the welfare of the African American population is even highlighted in the "Summary and Principal Recommendations" portion of his plan, which reinforced its significance as a priority.[123] His regard for the black population lacks

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[119]Ibid., 38.
[120]Ibid., 50.
[121]Ibid. Please refer to figure 2.
[122]Ibid., 50-51.
[123]Ibid., 58.

presence in city projects he conducted prior to Asheville, including Bristol, Connecticut; Madison, Wisconsin; and Montclair, New Jersey which are not southern cities.

By 1927, however, Mayor John H. Cathey's published review mentioned nominal improvements for the black community. Prior to leaving office, Cathey reviewed the years of progress made by city commissioners since the Nolen Plan. In his pamphlet, titled *Four Years in Review*, Cathey briefly mentioned the construction of a twelve-room African-American school that cost $18,000, a marginal cost compared to the $125,000 and $375,000 costs of white institutions, Rankin Grammar School and Hall Fletcher High School.[124] Initiating projects, such as building Pack Memorial Library, McCormick Athletic Field, constructing Beaver Lake, establishing a city market, widening nine streets, and purchasing lands for a new town hall and civic center, it seemed that the plan neglected the black community at the time. The recreational municipal project that was most influential to the black community, however, was almost complete during Mayor Cathey's review. In less than thirty years following the construction of Asheville's municipal golf course, the institution of Jim Crow would slowly unravel among its recreational initiatives that began during the Progressive Era when "council-manager" models of government were developing. This model included a mayor, manage, and governing council of elected officials. In 2019, Asheville's city government operates under a "council-manager" model with a mayor simply

[124]John H. Cathey, *Four Years in Review: and Recommendations upon Asheville's Civic Development of the future*. (Asheville, North Carolina: May 24, 1922). From Pack Memorial Library.

serving as ceremonial head of the council and the city manager is appointed by the council to oversee administrative operations.

In 1922, however, Mayor Cathey referred to his three governing officials as "commissioners" who were designated specific executive responsibilities where he operated as a "weak mayor." In this model of government, Mayor Cathey also served as one of the commissioners, the commissioner of finance. While it is unclear the exact form of government operating at the time of Nolen's appointment in 1922, the city's 1931 charter adopted the popular "council-manager" model that developed nationwide during the Progressive Era. Even before, Asheville's government proved to have progressive elements. In a governing body consisting of three commissioners: finance, public works, and public safety, Cathey led the trio as mayor. This governing body was responsible for instituting policies of *progressive experimentation* including the Nolen Plan that strategically used recreation to produce a progressive culture for generations to come.

Analyzing the development of recreation (specifically golf) in Asheville can provide answers to many questions regarding the region's history. Asheville has not only been neglected as a region significant to the development of progressive ideas but as a region significant to the game of golf as well. Starnes' book claimed that the city's geographic isolation played an insignificant role in shaping the region's culture, even though an isolationist perception drew visitors to the city. While he disputed the effects that isolationism had on the region, he failed to demonstrate how the region was similar to the rest of the South.[125] The game of golf, however, is a model that does; golf

[125]Starnes, *Creating the Land of the Sky: Tourism and Society in Western North Carolina.* 36.

demonstrates that the region was not actually isolated, but that its landscape and geographic location played a significant role in creating a culture atypical of a New South city.

For the city of Asheville, golf served as the means to demonstrate how progressive ideals both developed within and infiltrated a perceived isolated region. While golf courses were not created to maintain or improve the ecological elements of a specific region, they share many of the same roles and characteristics with the scientific forestry and national parks that developed in Appalachia. At the conclusion of the nineteenth century, business progressivism created a cycle in which tourists visited the region in search of a picturesque and isolated experience, from which came a wave of environmental awareness that inadvertently forced mountaineer families towards Asheville as a means to market their skills to tourists. This cycle, nevertheless, produced the progressive ideas of scientific forestry, landscape management, and public spaces original to the region. Golf courses continue to operate within similar characteristics. Depending on funding they are managed and produced by landscape architects, course designers, and agronomists for the sake of constructing a sustainable recreational space for customers; therefore, golf courses can serve as models to the kind of progressive development that Asheville experienced prior to the Great Depression. By examining golf's emergence in Asheville, one can understand how a sport known for promoting tradition allowed the city to experiment and pioneer progressive ideals in the South throughout the first half of the twentieth century.

CHAPTER TWO: "BUILD IT AND THEY WILL COME"

"[T]he royal and ancient game of golf has become firmly established in Asheville, as is evidenced by the success of Swannanoa Country Club."[126] A 1902 newspaper article referenced the City of Asheville's first and oldest Country Club, Swannanoa Country Club. In 1929, this organization was known as the Country Club of Asheville. Swannanoa Country Club was initially established five miles west of the city as Swannanoa Hunt Club. The club, which included men and women, transitioned its leisurely activities from foxhunting to golf in 1894 because of property disputes with neighboring farmers.[127] An encounter with a Scotsman who went by the name of McNorton, presumably his last name, inspired the club's master of the foxhounds, Dr. Thomas P. Cheesborough and secretary, Joseph J. McCloskey to build a crude three-hole course on the former hunting club properties in 1894.[128] Newspaper accounts credit McNorton for bringing the game of golf to the city as Dr. Cheesborough, and Joseph McCloskey discovered him practicing his swing in a vacant lot of West Asheville.

At the turn of the century, the game was expanding and moving closer to the city as it gained popularity among city elites. The small property that hosted the three-hole course could not accommodate to the demand for play. Swannanoa Country was then moved to a location within the city to make the game more accessible. The new seven-hole Swannanoa Country Club and Golf Links settled along the pasture of an old

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[126]Newspaper clipping titled "Asheville golf - Southland," (May 1902), From Pack Memorial Library Newspaper File Collection Vol. 111.

[127]"Grounds of Swannanoa Hunt Club Used For…" (1935).

[128]"Dick Kaplan, "Golf Came to WNC in Early 1895," *Asheville Citizen-Times*. (1960).

slaughter pen just off of Marimon Avenue on the north side of the city.[129]

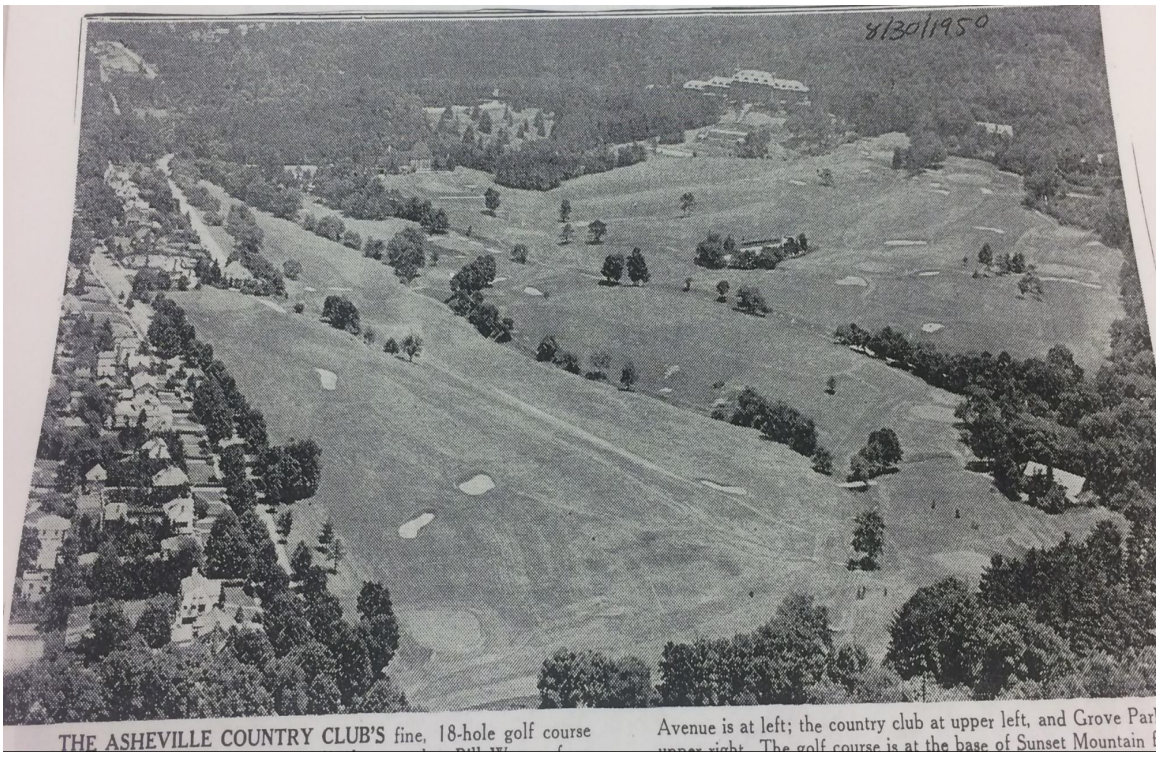

Figure 4. (Aerial Photo of Asheville Country Club.)[130]

In 1898, Swannanoa Country Club and Golf Links was still not good enough for city elites that founded the club; thus, real estate tycoon George W. Pack dedicated 100 acres of land to the club with intent to build an elite playing facility.[131] The new nine-hole course took residency on the property of Grove Park as pictured above (Figure 4.). While this particular photo is from an *Asheville Citizen-Times* article dated 1950 and

[129]"Grounds of the Swannanoa Hunt Club Used For…" (1935).

[130]Aerial photo of Asheville Country Club in 1950, (Aug. 30, 1950), From Pack Memorial Library Newspaper File Collection Vol. 111. This photo illustrates the location of the eighteen-hole layout of Asheville Country Club. Today, the golf course pictured is belongs to the Grove Park Inn as the public resort Grove Park Golf Club. The Country Club of Asheville moved to its permanent location on the former lands of former Beaver Lake Country Club, in 1980.

[131]Richard Morris, "Gutta Percha Golf Played here in 1890's," *Asheville Citizen-Times.* (Dec. 15, 1983), From Pack Memorial Library Newspaper File Collection Vol. 111.

represents the course's eventual eighteen-hole design, the Grove Park Inn is visible in the top right corner of the photo. The course was eventually remodeled by famous twentieth-century course designer Donald Ross with an eighteen-hole layout. By 1909, the course became known as Asheville Country Club. The development of Asheville Country Club set a trend that would lead to the establishment of thirty-five golf courses in Western North Carolina by 1969.[132] Since 1983, the region has been home to over sixty public and private golf courses, which is only appropriate for a city so close to where golf originated in the United States.[133] According to sports historian Lane Demas, most scholars recognize fifteenth century Scotland as the birthplace of golf, but are able to trace variations of the game as far back as 2000 B.C.E.[134] The founding of the Royal and Ancient Golf Club at St. Andrews, Scotland in 1754 marks the establishment of golf's modern rules and regulations.

Similar to Europe and Africa, North America's origins of the game are slightly controversial. Most scholars refer to golf's establishment in the late nineteenth century when national media sources, such as the *New York Times*, recognized the games presence in 1890. According to Demas, however, the first shipment of golf clubs and equipment arrived in Charleston, South Carolina in 1743, and by 1786, residents of Charleston established South Carolina Golf Club, the first documented golf club beyond the United Kingdom and North America's first private golf course.[135] Just a decade later in 1796, locals of Savannah, Georgia converted a popular public park used by residents

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[132]Richard Morris, "Golf First Came To Western North Carolina In 1895," *Asheville Citizen-Times.* (Jan. 26, 1969), From Pack Memorial Library Newspaper File Collection Vol. 111.

[133]Richard Morris, "Gutta Percha Golf Played here in 1890's," *Asheville Citizen-Times.* (1983).

[134]Lane Demas, *Game of Privilege: An African American History of Golf.* 1.

[135]Ibid., 2.

for golf into North America's first public golf course, known as Savannah Golf Club. These golf courses, nevertheless, were short lived as the Embargo Act of 1807 and the War of 1812 against Britain halted the game's presence until the late nineteenth century.[136]

While there is little known about American golf in the eighteenth century, Demas claims that scholars can infer much about how the game operated in the United States. For instance, the first golfers in Charleston were likely slave owners who used enslaved people for tasks, including finding golf balls, navigating the golf course, and carrying equipment, a job that was later referred to as "caddying."[137] Scholars like Demas have were able to trace the game's origins back to places and times where there is little evidence to suggest its existence, but Asheville's significant golf history throughout the twentieth century is largely unknown. Why? Did geographic isolation limit the story from appearing in larger North Carolina and sports historiographies?

Asheville's golf culture was in such high demand at the conclusion of the nineteenth century that professional golf infiltrated it before the city could build its second golf course. Just a year after the establishment of a national Professional Golfer's Tour (the PGA Tour) in 1916, Asheville Country Club held its first professional event.[138] The seventy-two hole tournament attracted the nation's most popular professionals and amateurs to compete in the mountain city. Upon the construction of Biltmore Forest Country Club, in 1922, and Beaver Lake Country Club, in 1924, The *Land Of The Sky*

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[136]Ibid.
[137]Ibid., 3.
[138]Kaplan, "Golf Came To WNC In Early 1895" *Asheville Citizen-Times*. (1960).

Open circuited each club until 1942.[139] The tournament's name reflects the historical tourist perceptions of the city's mountain landscape. Two more courses would open before the Great Depression: Malvern Hills Golf Club and Asheville Municipal Golf Club.[140] Both courses were established in 1927, and of the city's five original courses, Malvern Hills is the only one that no longer exists.

Prior to what a local newspaper referred to as "the expansion period of the 1920s," Asheville Country Club remained the city's only golf course. Biltmore Forest Country Club's opening on July 4, 1922, however, symbolized an expansive increase in the recreational sport's regional popularity. The same newspaper article stated, "Then, over a period of eight years, golf courses sprang up like toad stools, mainly through the work of Donald J. Ross"[141] Similar to the federal government's creation of Pisgah National Forest, Biltmore Forest Country Club members purchased it's land from the Vanderbilt Estate in 1920.[142] According to an interview of Asheville local Samuel Abdul-Allah in 2017, the Biltmore Forest community formed after a flood damaged 1,500 acres of the Biltmore Estate and the Vanderbilt family decided to sell the damaged lands as divided acreage lots to Asheville's elites.[143] Abdul-Allah attended Stephens-Lee High School in the 1960s and would have graduated from the school had it not closed down his junior year. His family history offers valuable insight into the construction of Biltmore Forest Country Club. After consulting with influential citizens and friends, a widowed

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[139]Ibid.

[140]Ibid.

[141]"Golf Has Been Popular Asheville Sport For More Than Fifty Years" *Asheville Citizen-Times* (1950).

[142]Dick Kaplan, "Golf Came To WNC In Early 1895" Asheville *Citizen-Times*. (1960). Article documented under a circled number "4."

[143]Samuel Abdul-Allah, interview by Pat Fitzpatrick at residency, courtesy of Pack Memorial Library, September 7, 2017. Transcript pp. 5.

Judith Stuyvesant Vanderbilt designated the appropriate lands for the town of Biltmore Forest, a golf course, clubhouse, and residential community to the family-owned Biltmore Company.[144]

While not exclusively private, the course was intended to be used by those who lived within the community. Biltmore Forest C.C. became a members-only private club in 1948 when it appropriated a lease-to-own plan with the Biltmore Company.[145] According to Abdul-Allah, the golf course was a Donald Ross design but constructed entirely by black Ashevillians. This group was led by his grandfather, Samuel Barnes. Prior to the Vanderbilt's decision to create the Biltmore Forest Community, Barnes served as the head landscaper of the Biltmore Estate, working second to Chauncey Beadle who replaced Frederick Law Olmstead as the Estate's Architect in 1890.[146] Although there is little to no recognition of Barnes correspondence in local newspapers, Abdul-Allah claimed that Barnes served as the project foreman under Donald Ross during the construction of Biltmore Forest Country Club and as the golf course's first assistant superintendent during the first four years of its operations between 1922-1926.[147] Abdul-Allah claimed Barnes influence to be evidenced by the two log cabin homes that he built using reclaimed wood salvaged from constructing the golf course in 1924. The two cabins remain in the Biltmore Forest Community. Barnes' symbolizes the labor role that Waters claimed African Americans occupied between 1880 and 1920.

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[144]Biltmore Forest CC, "Club History: A Brief History of Biltmore Forest Country Club," Biltmore Forest CC, 2018, accessed: Nov. 2018, http://www.biltmoreforestcc.com/history.

[145]Ibid.

[146]Samuel Abdul-Allah interview., 3.

[147]Ibid. 6.

Beaver Lake Country Club originated as a nine-hole course just north of the city in January 1921.[148] Initially established as a member-exclusive private club, under member ownership, the club opened its links to the public in 1924, which prompted its plans for an additional nine holes. Just one year later, the renamed Beaver Lake Golf Club unveiled the world's longest golf hole. Determining the previous location of the world's longest hole has been difficult to trace, making this claim speculative. The *Asheville Citizen-Times*, however, stated that the course held this record when its thirteenth hole debuted as a 690-yard par-five.[149] All designed by Donald Ross, Asheville C.C., Biltmore Forest C.C., and Beaver lake G.C. served as the means to bring prominent professional and amateur golfers to the region for both competition and recreation.

The most successful years of Asheville's PGA Tour event, the *Land of the Sky Open,* circuited Asheville C.C., Beaver Lake C.C., and Biltmore Forest C.C. between 1939 and 1942.[150] This seventy-two hole tournament rotated through each venue during the spring on an annual basis; its presence symbolized the region's role in the development of professional golf. Throughout its four year circuit, the tournament posed a $5,000 purse and awarded many of golf's hall of fame players: Sam Snead, Byron Nelson, and Ben Hogan, who won the last three tournaments.[151] The tournament, which

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[148]"Golf Has Been Popular Asheville Sport For More Than Fifty Years" *Asheville Citizen-Times* (1950).

[149]Draughn Miller, "Ross Designed Three of City's 4 golf Courses," *Asheville Citizen-Times*, (Jul. 27, 1952), From Pack Memorial Library Newspaper File Collection Vol. 111. "Par" is the standard to beat on the golf course. In the traditional game of golf the player is competing against par. Each hole, based on length, is assigned a par number. This refers to the number of strokes that it should take the player to advance the golf ball from the tee-shot to the hole.

[150]Dick Kaplan, "Golf Came To WNC In Early 1895" Asheville *Citizen-Times*. (1960). Article documented under a circled number "4."

[151]Ibid., Hogan, Nelson, and Snead share a total of 198 PGA Tour wins. A "purse" is the disproportionate aggregate payout between all of the players who made the initial thirty-six hole cut in a seventy-two hole event. Amounts are paid based on the players place finished.

began in 1917, offered a winning purse of $500-$700 until 1922.[152] After World War I, however, it gained Tour popularity when Walter Hagen won the Asheville-Biltmore Forest Open Championship in 1923, nearly a year after Biltmore Forest C.C.'s opening. With a $2,000 payout in the same year, the tournament became one the PGA Tour's richest tournaments.[153] In 1923, the seventy-two hole event was split between Asheville C.C. and Biltmore Forest C.C. in thirty-six hole portions and attracted a Tour attendance record of 1,000 fans.[154] Asheville was more than just a stop on the Tour for some prominent players. Aside from remaining the nation's most successful amateur golfer, Atlanta lawyer and native Bobby Jones is most famously known for founding Augusta National Golf Club and golf's most prestigious tournament, The Masters.[155] Jones frequented the region regularly; aside from playing in professional events between 1923 and 1926, Jones spent a thirty-day honeymoon at the newly opened Biltmore Forest Country Club.[156] According to a 1952 *Asheville Citizen-Times* article, Jones swore not to play golf on his honeymoon, but eventually gave in to the outdoor temptation that he admired from the window of his lodge.[157] Jones' experience symbolized the role that the region played in attracting its wealthy visitors, but the game's popularity ultimately extended the focus of city officials beyond those who had the resources and financial

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[152]Richard Morris, "Golf First Came To Western North Carolina In 1895," *Asheville Citizen-Times,* (1969).

[153]Ibid., Article documented under a circled number "3." Walter Hagen was a forty-five time winner on the PGA Tour with eleven majors, placing him third behind Tiger Woods and Jack Nicklaus.

[154]Ibid.

[155]Bobby Jones has thirteen major victories on the PGA Tour and was inducted into the World Golf hall of Fame in 1974.

[156]Draughn Miller, "Ross Designed Three of City's 4 golf Courses," *Asheville Citizen-Times*, (1952).

[157]Ibid.

means to organize exclusive institutions of leisurely activities, which golf has always symbolized.[158]

Figure 5. (Muni 18-hole Design)[159]

The city of Asheville developed North Carolina's first municipally owned public golf course as a city-wide park project designed to bring recreation to tourists and the middle-class. In a local news article, Frederich Severance wrote, in regards to the city's park commissioner, "Mr. Green believes that McCormick Field, the city recreation park

[158]Lane Demas, *Game of Privilege: An African American History of Golf.* 3.

[159]Map of Asheville Municipal golf course. "Asheville's Splendid New Municipal Golf Course," Printed in *The Sunday Citizen* (Dec. 17, 1925). From Pack Memorial Library Miscellaneous Newspaper File Collection - 121. The holes that run perpendicular to one another, pictured on the right portion of the map, are the original front-nine holes (1-9). The holes running parallel to one another, pictured on the left portion of the map, represent the original back-nine (10-18). The two nine-hole portions have since been swapped and are now in opposite order. For the purposes of this paper and those who are familiar with the Muni's contemporary setup, the original back-nine in this map is referred to as the front-nine and the original front-nine in this map as the back-nine.

and municipal links will draw thousands of summer recruits to Asheville," while previously stating that "The first city-owned and operated golf course in this state is expected to add fully fifty percent to Asheville's golf population, opening the game to hundreds who know of golf only through newspaper accounts."[160] Asheville's new mayor, John H. Cathey, was so determined to provide a public golf course to Asheville tourists and citizens that he hired the nation's most famous course architect, Donald Ross. Ross, the designer of other world-famous courses such as Aronimink Golf Club in Pennsylvania, East Lake Golf Club in Atlanta, and Pinehurst No. 2 in North Carolina, had already designed the city's most exclusive courses. As evidenced by the picture above (figure 5), Ross had a specific agenda in designing North Carolina's first public golf club. The front nine holes, located on the left side of the photo, were designed to awe the golfer with "land of the sky" landscape.[161] The front nine is relatively flat and free of trees, making the surrounding mountain landscape come into view on every shot. The back nine holes, pictured to the right, were designed to immerse the player in the very landscape that he or she was viewing on the front-nine. Hazardous landscapes and natural obstructions challenged the player's ability to remain consistent throughout the entire round.

According to a speculative 1950 newspaper account recalling the Muni's history, there was no other course like the Muni east of the Rocky Mountains.[162] The purpose of

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[160]Frederich Severance, "Only Municipal Golf Course In State Is Formally Opened As Cathey Defeats Cathey." *Asheville Citizen-Times.* (May 22, 1927). From Pack Memorial Library Miscellaneous Newspaper File Collection - 121.

[161]"City Dedicates Municipal" *Asheville Citizen-Times*. (May 21, 1924). From Pack Memorial Library Newspaper File Collection Vol. 111.

[162]"Golf Has Been Popular Asheville Sport For More Than Fifty Years" *Asheville Citizen-Times* (1950).

the Muni, therefore, was to offer the nation's only accessible year-round golf course to middle and working-class tourists and residents. City Planner John Nolen wrote, "[M]oreover, Asheville has not merely mountain and river scenery of unusual beauty, but it has an all-the-year-round-climate with which that of no other American Mountain City compares. Its hotels are first class, and some of them not known merely throughout this country but in Europe as well."[163] The project did more than provide an aesthetically pleasing mountain landscape in front of the player's eyes; it placed the landscape in front of their golf ball as well. The Muni's establishment was a direct effort to attract tourism. Plans for the Muni were strategically designed to showcase the city's unique natural geographic and environmental characteristics as Nolen's survey claimed Asheville to have an average elevation of 2,250 ft. above sea level, 256 days of sunshine, an annual average of 40 inches of rain, and a mean annual temperature of fifty-five degrees Fahrenheit with a range of 28.8 to 74.1 degrees in 1922. The Muni, therefore, was designed to complement the very landscape that it occupied.[164] Amid the Muni's construction, a news article noted, "Mayor Cathey is highly pleased with the prospects for the municipal links and is confident that it will be a greater step forward in making Asheville one of the best-known tourist cities." The opening of the Muni, thus, was nothing less than grand.

Featured below (figure 6) is a flyer promoting the festivities of trick shots and professional competitions, along with an invitation to be a spectator.[165] The golf course

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[163]John Nolen, *Asheville city Planning Report*. 8.

[164]Ibid., 13.

[165]City of Asheville, Flyer of Asheville Municipal Grand Opening. (May 21, 1927). From Pack Memorial Library Miscellaneous Newspaper File Collection Vol. 121.

opened on May 21, 1927, just in time to cater to an influx of summer visitors. This flyer illustrated Asheville's golf culture at the time of the Muni's opening.[166] Advertised as being designed by Donald Ross, the Muni's promotion not only reinforces Ross' legacy as a course designer, it also promoted a sense of prestige to a public course. The Muni's sense of prestige diffused class conflict by offering an affordable outlet to the game for those who could not afford to play at privately owned golf clubs. It also allowed those who could afford to play at privately owned golf clubs to play at a cheaper price without sacrificing a quality experience. The flyer also suggests that the grand opening was designed to be a community event, encouraging people to attend regardless of their skill and knowledge of the game.[167] The main event entailed a competition between Asheville mayor John Cathey and the mayor of nearby Bee Tree Village, Allen Coggins. A lecture and trick shot demonstration by the first Australian born professional to win on the PGA tour, Joseph Kirkwood, along with and personal lessons from the Muni's club professional, Ray Cole, suggests that the general public was merely introduced to the game in 1927.[168]

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[166]Ibid.

[167]Ibid.

[168]Ibid. Joseph Kirkwood recorded total of nine PGA Tour wins prior to his appearance at the Muni.

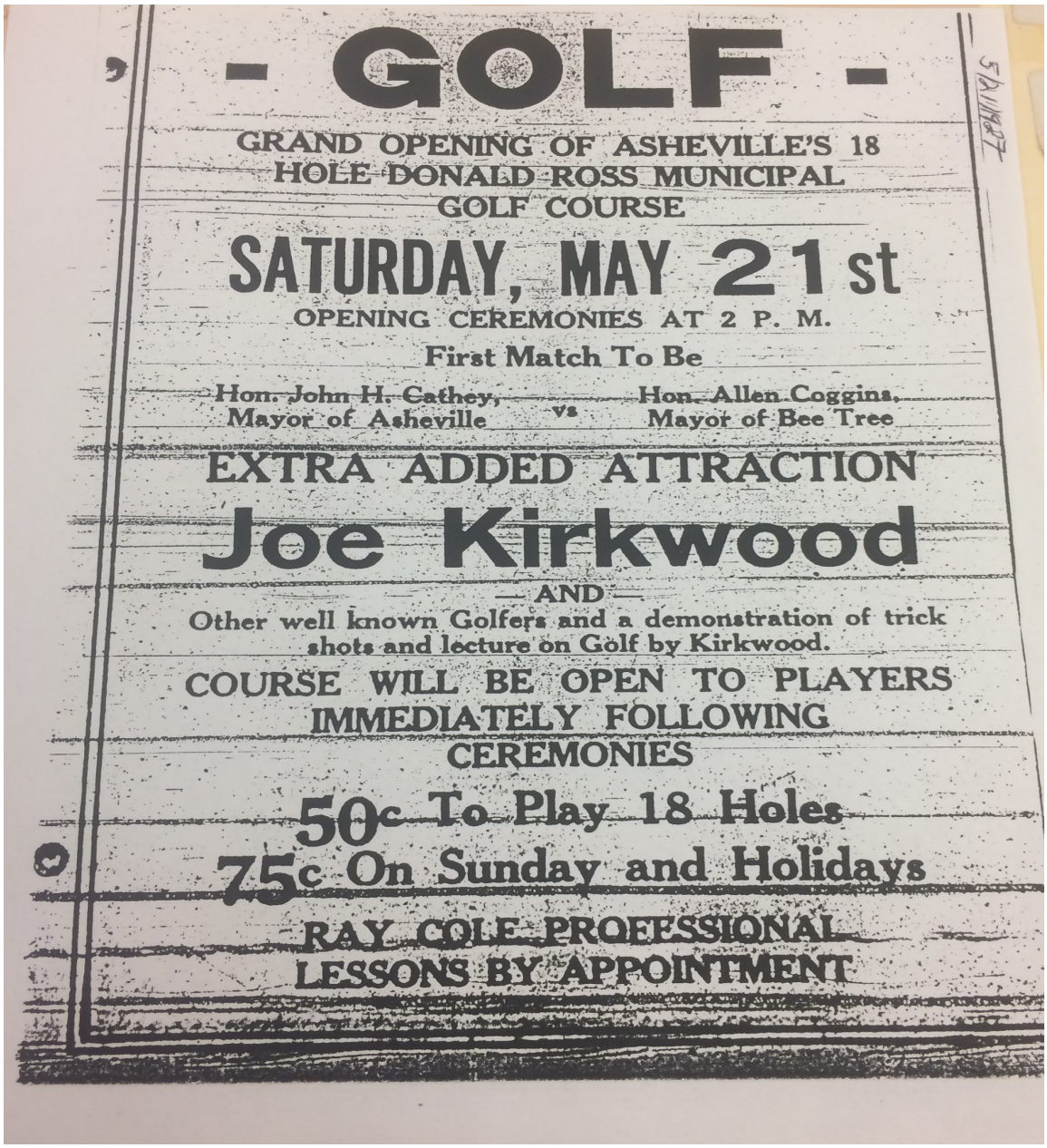

Figure 6. (Muni Grand Opening flyer)[169]

Today, a quote by Donald Ross sits on a plaque visible to those who are approaching the Muni's practice putting green from the parking lot. The quote reads

[169]City of Asheville, Flyer of Asheville Municipal Grand Opening. (May 21, 1927). From Pack Memorial Library Miscellaneous Newspaper File Collection Vol. 121.

"[T]he development of municipal golf courses is the outstanding feature of the game in America today. It is the greatest step ever taken to make it the game of the people, as it should be."[170] It is not clear whether this quote was recorded during the construction of the Muni or what prompted Ross to make the comment. The quote does, however, allude to his appointment as the Muni's course architect; the quote simply embodied the characteristics that the Muni was to symbolize to the community. He also constructed three of the region's most prestigious golf courses to the city just a decade prior. A local newspaper article dated, February 22, 1923, demonstrated that Ross' ideas of golf course development aligned with Nolen's ideas of city development:

> "[I]n modern times, says the expert, golf courses are not built at one time with the idea of obtaining perfection, but work is so planned that additions come gradually and keep the devotees of the links gratified with such progressive manners always under way."[171]

The statement was in response to his recent work on Biltmore Forest C.C. where he expressed his love for working in the "middle south." According to the article, like those who frequented Asheville, Ross preferred the region because of its diverse, year-round recreation.[172] Immersed in the culture of the region, Ross planned to construct the Muni in the same ways that Nolen planned to build a new city by making it modern, accessible, and adaptable.

Aside from making access to the golf course more affordable, the Muni made the entire golf experience accessible, except to the black population that still lacked access to

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[170]Plague titled "Municipal golf Course" stamped to a rock located between the front steps of the clubhouse and the practice green. The plague is most visible when approaching the putting green from the parking lot.

[171]"Municipally Owned Golf Course Needed Here Says Donald Ross Is On Arrival," *Asheville Citizen-Times.* (Feb. 22, 1923), Accessed March 13, 2019 from Newspapers.com.

[172]Ibid.

the game. An ad featured in an unknown local newspaper (Figure 7.) demonstrated that the Muni offered a comprehensive experience to working and middle-class visitors; from the rental clubs to temperature controlled showers and a caddy service, the Muni was a place where golf could be enjoyed by amateur and professional, young and old, beginners and veterans, along with local and foreign. While there is no date to accompany this document, the price to play a round of golf and a mention of the club professional suggests that it was printed shortly after the grand opening.

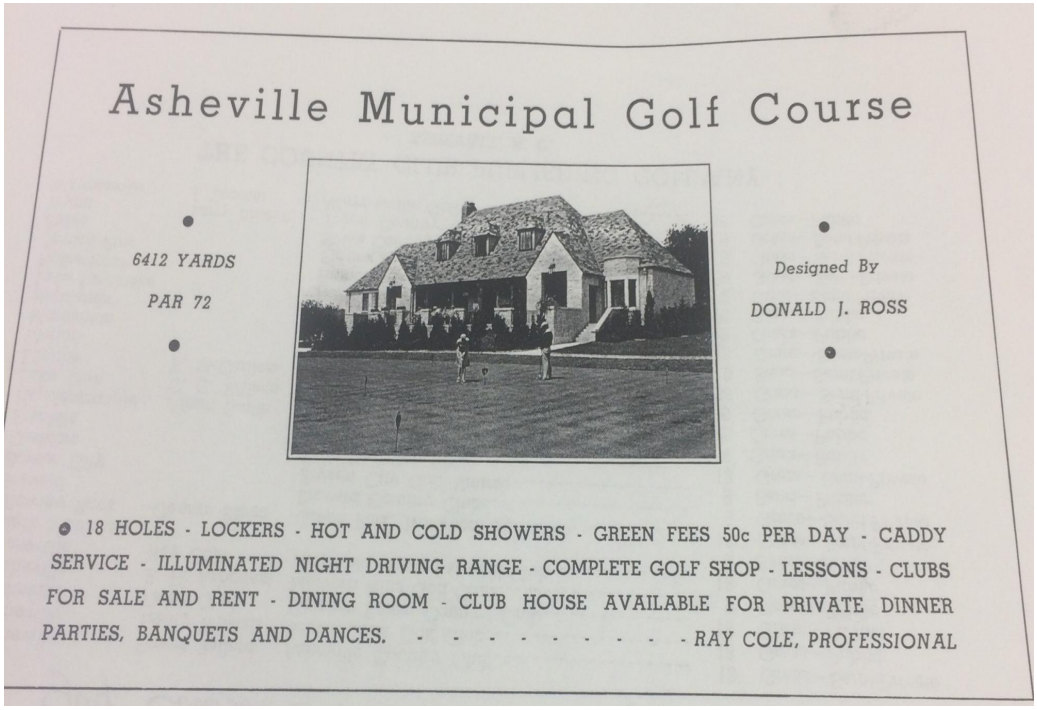

Figure 7. (Muni Newspaper Advertisement .)[173]

Asheville Municipal Golf Club was not the region's only course with strategically marketable characteristics. While it managed to capture a real "land of the sky"

[173]Unknown newspaper advertisement of Asheville Municipal Golf Course amenities, (date unknown), From Pack Memorial Library Newspaper File Collection Vol. 111. The clubhouse pictured in this photo no longer contains a second story. A fire in 1956 destroyed the upper portion of the clubhouse and eliminating many of the listed amenities even though its structural integrity remained intact.

experience, Beaver Lake Golf Club and Black Mountain Golf Club became world record holders. As previously mentioned, Beaver Lake G.C. notoriously hosted the world's longest hole.[174] Black Mountain G.C., a nearby nine-hole course, originally designed by Ross in 1929, superseded this record with the design of a second-nine, constructed in 1966.[175] As pictured below (Figure 8.), the seventeenth hole at Black mountain G.C. ranged 754 yards and was sanctioned by the Professional Golf Association as a par-six. The seventeenth hole at Black Mountain exceeded the previous record holder, Beaver Lake G.C.'s thirteenth hole, by fifty-five yards. Constructing the second-nine at Black Mountain G.C. demonstrates the region's demand for recreationally unique public spaces.

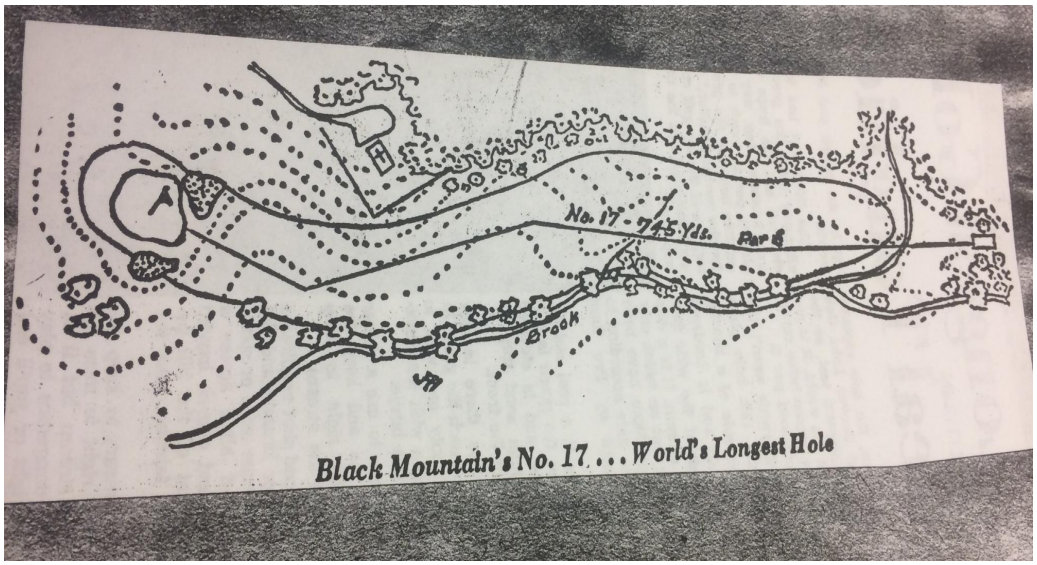

Figure 8. (World's Longest Hole.)[176]

Of the region's original courses, several established an individual niche due to their construction in the Progressive Era: Asheville C.C. was the city's first Country

[174]Draughn Miller, "Ross Designed Three of City's 4 golf Courses." *Asheville Citizen-Times*, (1952).

[175]Richard Morris "World's Longest Golf Hole Is Real Toughie," *Asheville Citizen-Times*, (1966).

[176]Ibid.

Club, Biltmore Forest C.C. constructed its course on lands of the famous Biltmore Estate, Beaver Lake G.C. featured a signature hole with a world record, and Black Mountain G.C. eventually followed. Although these courses were open to the public, they only catered to visitors who were familiar with the game and had the means to play; suitable arrangements existed for affluent visitors who wished to play the region's private courses.[177] City commissioners and Dr. John Nolen used the land and the concept of public accessibility as the Muni's niche. Evidently, attracting tourism was one of the primary goals for establishing the Muni, but after examining the Nolen Plan in Chapter One, one can recognize the philanthropic goals that the plan encompassed to serve its existing community. An accessible public golf course, therefore, was an economic necessity and a marketing tool. Similar to other products of Asheville's parks initiatives, such as a professional baseball team and a public park, it is evident that public spaces were more than gifts of circumstance to the city's middle and working classes.

[177]John Nolen, *Asheville city Planning Report*. 9.

CHAPTER THREE: LIFE BELOW PAR

In 1929, two years following the birth of the Muni, the city's bonded indebtedness reached the highest debt per capita of any city in the nation. Asheville required bond issues and annexations to extend its city limits to areas of developing real-estate.[178] Despite the decline of a "second-home" real estate boom in 1927, city commissioners continued to push tourist initiatives because the region's visitors constituted the largest contribution to its economy. The Nolen Plan was only a fraction complete and did not prove to be immune to the effects of the Great Depression.

On November 20, 1930, the region's largest financial institution, the Central Bank and Trust Company closed as a result of a crashing land market.[179] The city remained without operating funds and defaulted debts totaling forty-one million dollars. Outraged citizens forced present city commissioners to resign and inadvertently caused Mayor Gallatin Roberts to commit suicide. At the end of the previous administration in 1927, Mayor John H. Cathey expressed in his four-year review that the new administration needed to raise its tax rates.[180] In 1927, the city was expecting to collect nearly six million in taxes; however, the tax rate at that time reflected the city's value in 1923. Since then the value had increased by nearly fifteen million, but the tax rate did not increase to match.[181]

City commissioners were aware of the potential of a financial disaster in 1927

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[178]Starnes, *Creating the Land of the Sky: Tourism and Society in Western North Carolina.* 88.

[179]Ibid., 89.

[180]After 1927, Mayor Roberts' administration inherited a gross debt of $16,983,975--a net debt of $10,350,718.69.

[181]John H. Cathey, *Four Years in Review: and Recommendations upon Asheville's Civic Development of the future*. "Financial Summary" and "The Tax Rate."

and, by 1930, they were still clinging to tourism for a solution. Between the Nolen Survey in 1922 and the Great Depression in 1929, the population increased from 28,504 to 50,193.[182] Over the next two decades, the population increased by less than 3,000. According to Starnes, the financial disaster instead forced Asheville to develop a more diversified economy--one which linked its municipal properties to its local community members.[183] Prior to the Great Depression, Asheville's urban development was a product of tourism, but throughout the Depression, the city was one of the strongest benefactors of the federal government's New Deal policies.[184] Projects such as the Blue Ridge Parkway and Great Smoky Mountains National Park helped to maintain some semblance of the city's previous tourist industry. Like the rest of the nation, involvement in World War II eventually leveraged the city's financial damage. Nevertheless, the need to adopt a more diversified economy during the Depression meant that every citizen, regardless of race, gender, or class played a more vital fiscal role, even if society considered their roles of unequal value. Particularly in Asheville, the African American presence in public spaces slowly increased into the Civil Rights Era.

Throughout the country, the period from the Great Depression through World War II proved crucial to successfully forging a Civil Rights Movement. Jim Crow laws told blacks that they were second class citizens in the United States, but when it came to paying taxes or fighting for liberation overseas, they played an equal role. By the 1950s African Americans were resisting the hypocrisy of the federal law and white culture,

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[182]"Number of inhabitants, North Carolina." www2.census.gov. Accessed 28 July 2019. https://www2.census.gov/library/publications/decennial/1950/population-volume-2/06586136v2p33ch1.pdf, 9.

[183]Starnes, *Creating the Land of the Sky: Tourism and Society in Western North Carolina.* 90.

[184]Ibid., 118.

especially in the South and more particularly in public spaces. According to Victoria Wolcott's monograph, *Race, Riots, and Rollercoasters: The Struggle over Segregated Recreation in America*, the Great Depression increased recreation; due to lack of employment, Americans had more leisure and spent their scarce resources on activities.[185] This notion also appears in Jeff Wiltse's book, *Contested Waters: A Social History of Swimming Pools in America*. Wiltse stated that between 1933 and 1938 that the federal government built 750 public pool across the U.S. and remodeled hundreds more.[186]

While both Wolcott's and Wiltse's scholarship focused primarily on public amusement parks and swimming pools in the North, they offer particular insight into the broader themes of class and race along with the effects of desegregation--all of which are relevant to the Muni. In order to draw general conclusions about the desegregation of public spaces, historian William Chafe sought to understand how blacks challenged segregated public spaces by studying the civil rights movements of Greensboro, North Carolina. According to his book, *Civilities and Civil Rights*, Greensboro's antebellum legacy was one in which the economy was never dependent on slavery and crop production. This history created a common belief during the Progressive Era that the city had atypical racial attitudes destined to pioneer social change in the South.[187] Chafe referred to this thought as the "progressive mystique." As Greensboro emerged into an industrial New South city, however, laws like the Enactment of 1914 barred blacks from

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[185]Victoria W. Wolcott, *Race, riots, and Rollercoaster: The Struggle over Segregated Recreation in America* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2012) 32.

[186]Jeff Wiltse, *Contested Waters: a Social History of Swimming Pools in America* (Chapel Hill: university of North Carolina Press, 2007) 93.

[187]William H. Chafe, *Civilities and Civil Rights: Greensboro, North Carolina, and the Black Struggle for Freedom.*17.

living on streets with a white majority and, by 1920, blacks and whites could no longer work alongside each other in factories and offices.[188] By the 1950s when *Brown V. Board* legally desegregated public schools, the Greensboro community that was once thought to pioneer progressive racial thought ultimately took an additional seventeen years to integrate its public schools.

Typically owned by local, state, or federal government, public spaces had to be monitored by predominantly white government officials. Robin Kelley's *Race Rebels: Culture, Politics, and the Black Working Class* asserted that for whites, public spaces represented a democratic environment where people from different class backgrounds could interact. For blacks, however, these spaces were dominated by whites, undemocratic, and dangerous.[189] Public spaces embodied the most repressive and violent aspects of racial oppression, yet they afforded blacks more opportunities to gain equality than in the workplace.[190] Michael Worth Irvin's thesis, "'Public Order is Even More Important than the Rights of Negroes': Race and recreation in Charlotte, North Carolina 1927-1973" added to Kelley's argument by claiming that public leisure spaces were seen as a critical component to achieving access to the greater American consumer culture, negating the idea that black expulsion is based on hygiene, and dismantling the most visible manifestation of Jim Crow.[191]

Public golf courses throughout the South were just this--avenues to gain racial

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[188]Ibid., 20-21.

[189]Robin D.G. Kelley, *Race Rebels: Culture, politics, and the Black Working Class.* (New York City: The Free Press, 1994). 56.

[190]Ibid., 75.

[191]Michael W. Irvin, "'public Order is even More Important than the rights of Negroes': race and recreation in Charlotte, North Carolina, 1927-1973" (Masters Thesis, University of North Carolina at Charlotte, 2015), 9.

equality. In cities like Charlotte, Atlanta, and Greensboro, contesting public golf courses took years of battling civil lawsuits, imprisonment, and acts of white supremacy, yet served as the first successful step towards completely integrating public spaces. In Asheville, however, the integration of the Muni was atypical to that of other courses throughout the region. Unlike Greensboro, Asheville's racial attitudes were no "mystique." This notion was most evident at the Muni. Like Chafe's methodology, Asheville's civil rights history is best understood from members of the local community who lived through those movements, including Billy Gardenhight Sr.

Billy Gardenhight Sr. was one of the most profound Ashevillians to capitalize on the Muni's accessibility and to pioneer Asheville's golf culture. Born on September 27, 1934, just seven years after the Muni opened its doors, Billy Eugene Peter Gardenhight grew up in segregated Asheville during Jim Crow, spending most of his adolescent years residing on College Street, a hub of black community and business in the 1940s, located in the city's first ward district with his mom and four sisters.[192] By 1950, the city's first and fourth ward districts occupied the area formerly known as Town Branch Valley. Residents in these wards were primarily African American and accounted for roughly twenty-eight percent of the city's 53,000 residents.[193] Gardenhight's father, Edward Gardenhight, passed away when he was just three years old; thus, Gardenhight began

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[192]"Bill Gardenhight Sr. Biography" found in *Asheville Living Treasures Oral History Collection*. Ramsey Library: UNC Asheville, 2013.

[193]"Number of inhabitants, North Carolina." www2.census.gov. Accessed 28 July 2019. https://www2.census.gov/library/publications/decennial/1950/population-volume-2/06586136v2p33ch1.pdf, 21. Today, Asheville continues to maintain a substantial African American population. Nevertheless, their presence has declined since the emergence of its booming New South tourist industry. Nolen claimed that African Americans constituted for thirty-three percent of the city's population in 1922 which is seemingly high; however, by 1950, blacks accounted for at least twenty-eight percent of the population. In 2019, African Americans consist of approximately twelve percent of Asheville's total population and is perhaps why modern scholars, minus Waters, have neglected their presence and significance to the city's history.

working at an early age to relieve the financial burden of his mother, Fannie, who was supporting a family of five on an income of fifteen dollars per week.[194] While working at Shandler's Grocery on Oak Street for six dollars per week, Gardenhight heard of a job opening as a caddy at Biltmore Forest Country Club.[195] By age eleven, he traveled south by bus to caddy for a wage of one dollar and twenty-five cents to two dollars per round for every golf bag he carried.[196] Such wages allowed Gardenhight to potentially earn his weekly pay from Shandler's Grocery in just three rounds of golf. In a 2017 interview for a documentary film titled *MUNI*, he expressed to film director Paul Bonesteel, "and the first eight hours, I made three dollars. Man, I thought I was rich."[197] Little did he know at the time, caddying for the region's white elites would eventually provide him with more than an opportunity to earn a decent paycheck.

Cognizant of young black children such as Gardenhight, school administrators such as Lucy Herring, his principal at Mountain Street School, would often adjust the school day to accommodate the students that caddied throughout the area.[198] According to historian Lane Demas, this practice was common for young black and working-class white children to shape their school and daily schedules around well-paying caddy jobs that were often seasonal.[199] Gardenhight and his friends, however, used this time for more than carrying golf bags as they spent their spare time teaching themselves the game

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[194]Ibid.

[195]Ibid.

[196]"Billy Gardenhight Sr. Interview" by Paul Bonesteel of Bonesteel Films. (Summer 2017), Interview was taken to be used in a documentary called *MUNI* and is expected to be released in 2019. Transcript interview in possession of author.\

[197]Ibid.

[198]Bill Gardenhight Sr. Biography" found in *Asheville Living Treasures Oral History Collection.*

[199]Lane Demas, *Game of Privilege: An African American History of Golf.* 9.

on Mountain Street's school grounds.[200] Mimicking the swings of those that they caddied for, Gardenhight and friends would use old golf clubs that were thrown away, given to them, or lost and unclaimed to hit golf balls into the four holes in the ground that were dug up, occupied with a tin can, and packed in place with loose dirt.[201] When asked why he wanted to learn golf, Gardenhight responded: "I started reading a couple of books that weren't as fun as they were supposed to be in your library, but I read about a couple of black golfers, and I just wanted to be one of them. And we had a fellow here in Asheville named John Dendy."[202] John Brooks Dendy was a three-time winner of the United Golfers Association (UGA) Negro National Open and was a hometown favorite among Asheville's black community and prospective golfers like Gardenhight.

Dendy was considered one of the first great players to emerge from the UGA, and he was from Asheville. His popularity, however, did not mean that he was immune to many of the same facets of Jim Crow that barred blacks from public golf courses throughout the South. Dendy, however, was able to secure a caddying job at Asheville C.C. in the 1920s and was eventually able to play at his discretion because of his relentless talent and passion for the game. According to Asheville native Pete McDaniel, former Biltmore Forest C.C. caddy and the author of *Uneven Lies: The Heroic Story of African-Americans in Golf*, Dendy "had to use every bit of his imagination to fashion a set of clubs."[203] At the age of twelve, Dendy collected various broken club heads and whittled old wooden broom handles to a flexible thickness. He would fit one end into the

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[200]"Billy Gardenhight Sr. Interview" by Paul Bonesteel of Bonesteel Films.

[201]Ibid.

[202]Ibid.

[203]Pete McDaniel, *Uneven Lies: The Heroic Story of African-Americans in Golf*. (Greenwich, CT: The American golfer Inc., 2000). 47.

club head and shaped the other end into a grip.[204] At the beginning of the twentieth century, fabricating golf clubs was about the only way to gain remote access to the game. In *Game of Privilege*, Demas recalled the testimony of a U.S. Navy surgeon who witnessed a black caddy swing a club made from tree root and thicket. According to Demas, a white golfer's praise for black caddy's abilities often translated into gestures of respect.[205] Members for whom Dendy would caddy slowly allowed him to practice with them and eventually sponsored him to travel throughout the South competing in the UGA's black tournaments. With notable wins at the Southern Open and the Negro National Champion, he is estimated to hold fifty-two career wins as a professional.[206]

Pioneering the road to professional success proved costly for Dendy as he struggled to earn a living even with his success. Although Asheville was the wealthiest stop on the PGA Tour throughout Dendy's career, the Tour's "Caucasian-only Clause" was formally written into the bylaws in 1934, but informally practiced decades before.[207] With the African American designated UGA Tour still in its infancy, there was not enough money to earn a living wage even by winning tournaments. Dendy returned to Asheville in 1940 and retired as the locker-room attendant at Biltmore Forest C.C. Although Dendy failed to support himself through the newly organized UGA, his daughter, Cissy Dendy, explained in an interview that her dad's golf career afforded his family a comfortable lifestyle.[208]

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[204]Ibid., 48.

[205]Lane Demas, *Game of Privilege: An African American History of Golf.* 12.

[206]"John Dendy, Ethiopian golfer born." Africanamericanregistry.org. https://aaregistry.org/story/john-dendy-ethiopian-golfer-born/. (accessed 8 March 2019).

[207]Pete McDaniel, *Uneven Lies: The Heroic Story of African-Americans in Golf*. 48

[208]Cissy Dendy, interviewed by Zoe Rhine and Loiuse Maret at residency, courtesy of Pack Memorial Library, April27, 2017. Transcript pp. 14.

Cissy Dendy currently resides in the home where she grew up with her family on Madison Avenue, just north of downtown and the old Town Branch community. According to Cissy, being her dad's child was a good thing because his friendship with elite whites afforded her family the opportunity to experience things that most working class black Ashevillians never could.[209] In his book titled *Our Kind of People: Inside America's Black Upper Class,* historian Lawrence Otis Graham claimed that class allowed elite blacks to limit interactions with Jim Crow indignities.[210] Cissy's upbringing allowed her to avoid harsh aspects of Jim Crow throughout her adolescence. Born in 1948, she was the middle of three children who grew up to witness desegregation unfold in Asheville.[211]

In her interview, Cissy described her neighborhood as the "Strivers' row of Asheville" because it had homes occupied by the city's only black doctor, the city's first three black policemen, several principles of Stephen's-Lee High School, and the owner of the YMI drugstore.[212] Although her dad was the locker-room attendant at Biltmore Forest Country Club, his years of sponsorships on the UGA tour coupled with his meager winnings, left him with no debt. Cissy's mom, Marge Dendy also worked as a house cleaner at the Biltmore Estate and a part-time hairdresser who eventually became a licensed practical nurse (LPN) in 1966.[213] Her parent's occupations, specifically her dad's access to golf, afforded her to sit in white-only movie theaters and libraries simply

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[209]Ibid.,

[210]Lawrence O. Graham, *Our Kind of People: Inside America's Black Upper Class*. (Harper Collins e-Books., 1999) 26-27. https://play.google.com/books/reader?id=_FWTEBzgNdcC&hl=en&pg=GBS.PA2.w.2.3.0

[211]Cissy Dendy interview., 2.

[212]Ibid. 6-15. Strivers' row is a colloquial term used to describe a street in Harlem occupied by wealthy black families after the 1920s.

[213]Ibid., 23.

because he knew the owners or operators from the golf community. While she fails to allude to this concept in her interview, it is evident that John Brooks Dendy's presence among Asheville's elite golf culture afforded himself and his family opportunities that were unreachable to most of Asheville's black citizens.

Nevertheless, even before he gave up professional golf, Dendy's lifestyle inspired black youth, like Gardenhight. His experiences caddying at Biltmore Forest gave him the confidence to take a new caddying position at Asheville Municipal G.C. in the summer of 1946.[214] His friend's father, Mike Tate Sr., had been hired as the caddy master at the Muni, and although many of the Muni's clientele carried their own bags and paid less when they did request a caddy, working at the Muni was more ideal. Gardenhight was just nearing his twelfth birthday, the Muni was much closer to home, and the job compensated him with a priceless opportunity.[215]

By 1947, like Dendy, Gardenhight was hired as the locker room attendant and was given the opportunity to play at the Muni. Head golf professional Ernie Ballard allowed Gardenhight and his friends Mike Tate Jr. and Red Gudger to practice during early weekday mornings as long as they were off the course by nine a.m. when customers began to show up.[216] These privileges, however, were not merely perks of the job. Mondays were, typically, the day of the week when golf courses dedicated access to employees because the white community was least likely to play on that day. "Caddy's Day," as this day was termed, is still practiced on many of the nation's private courses. In 1947, this practice still excluded black caddies. At the Muni, however, Gardenhight and

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[214]Bill Gardenhight Sr. Biography" found in *Asheville Living Treasures Oral History Collection.*
[215]Ibid.
[216]Ibid.

his friends earned the opportunity to play early mornings and on "Caddies Day" by occupying spare time around the clubhouse picking up trash, collecting range balls, and washing the porch.

By age thirteen, Gardenhight became quite the player as he posted scores in the "80s" and began gambling with the older black caddies, including his godfather Charles Collette. In his interview with Paul Bonesteel, he stated that his older partners would split the money with him if they happened to win the match but would cover the costs if they lost.[217] After acquiring his first clubs at age eleven, Gardenhight won his first tournament at the Muni by age fourteen. He entered the junior division of a caddy tournament that was organized by John Dendy where he won a dozen golf balls and a trophy.[218] Dendy was not only successful on the course but within the community as well; he was the only black man in the region allowed to host a golf tournament and enter the clubhouse when not working, yet he still used those privileges to benefit the African-American youth.[219] Gardenhight stated: "[A]nd we used to go out and he'd caddy for us, and he'd have tournaments and things. So I just got involved and fell in love."[220] Although many black golfers from North and South Carolina traveled to the Muni to compete in Dendy's tournaments during the late forties, they remained banned from the property on regular customer days.

The Muni's employees of color lacked access to the pro shop in the clubhouse, and although there were no signs that said "White Only," he mentioned that everyone

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[217]Ibid.
[218]Ibid.
[219]Ibid.
[220]"Billy Gardenhight Sr. Interview" by Paul Bonesteel of Bonesteel Films.

was aware of the limitations.[221] If a caddy needed something that was not in the caddy-shack, he had to sneak in through the back door of the clubhouse to get it. When asked how caddies felt about segregation, Gardenhight exclaimed, "You can't express the way you feel. You know you're a human being, and you know you can't do what other people are doing, you know?"[222] There was still, however, something different about the Muni:

> "[B]ack then, some of them would call you a 'nigger.' Someone would call you a 'boy.' I don't care how old the kid it was, he was never a man; he was always a 'boy.' And it's just...Biltmore Forest was just different from Asheville Country Club, and Municipal Country Club was just a little bit better than Biltmore Forest."[223]

Race relations at the Muni and other recreational spaces operated within an awkward middle ground of Jim Crow. Blacks were granted marginal, yet supervised access to some public spaces specifically designated for whites, because of their pre-existing caddy-player relationships. According to Gardenhight, legal segregation was much less fluid in other areas of Asheville, such as designated bus seating, water fountains, and storefronts.[224] It seemed that, in Asheville, public recreation was the weakest pillar on the foundation of Jim Crow.

The atypical social characteristics of the Muni remained vulnerable to challenges though. An *Asheville Citizen-Times* article printed on May 7, 1954, detailed a group of black golfers showing up to a weekly city council meeting to protest the city's rumored proposal to sell the Muni.[225] By this time, blacks were allowed to play the Muni on

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[221]Ibid.
[222]Ibid.
[223]Ibid.
[224]Ibid.
[225]Karl Fleming, "Negro Group Protests 'Move' To Sell Municipal Golf Course," *Asheville Citizen-Times.* (May 7, 1954), Accessed March 11, 2019 from Newspapers.com.

Tuesdays and Thursdays, along with Mondays if they were an employee. While there is no exact date given, the same article made it clear that the council's consideration to sell the Muni was a result of an offer of $75,000 from the recently incorporated Haw Creek Community Club and a projected annual loss of $5,000. African-American attorney Ruben Dailey asserted that the recent permission to play more than one day per week prompted the idea to sell. There is no evidence of whether Gardenhight was at this meeting, but he did recall attending several meetings with the city council in his interview with Paul Bonesteel. Gardenight described the first time that he, accompanied by his Godfather, Charles Collette, and attorney Ruben Dailey, protested the city council after giving a speech about how much the Muni meant to the African-American community and how he hoped to become a golf professional one day: "[I]ts kind of a stick in my craw now that the councilmen laughed at us, 'Y'all boys go on back home. We ain't going to sell that golf course.' And here we are with a lawyer and another elderly man, they called them 'Boys'."[226]

Regardless of what they told Gardenhight and the "boys," Earl Eller and the rest of the city council kept an open mind to the sale. The mayor's use of "boys" represents a form of paternalism that historian William Chafe stated was a key element to keeping African-Americans in Greensboro subservient to their white lawmakers.[227] In this case, paternalism operated on the premise that the city council had Gardenhight and the black golfers' best interests at heart. The reality, however, was that the city was not profiting from the Muni, and it was struggling to pay off a bonded debt of $200,000 left over from

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[226]"Billy Gardenhight Sr. Interview" by Paul Bonesteel of Bonesteel Films.

[227]William Chafe, *Civilities and Civil Rights: Greensboro, North Carolina and the Black Struggle for Freedom. 8.*

projects of the Nolen Plan prior to the Great Depression.[228]

Ten days following the first council meeting, the *Brown V. Board* U.S. Supreme Court Case challenged the Muni's racial boundaries head-on. The case ruled state-mandated racial segregation in public spaces, specifically schools, a violation of the United States Constitution's Fourteenth Amendment. As of May 17, 1954, racial segregation was deemed unconstitutional in public spaces across the country; thus, the Muni and thousands of public golf courses suddenly became accessible to blacks under federal law. Gardenhight, among others across the country, planned to capitalize on this landmark decision. The following Sunday morning, he showed up to the Muni with pal Boyce Layton, laid down their money and proceeded to play. They managed to play eighteen holes at the expense of some foul looks and stares; however, their actions were featured in local newspaper headlines the next day: "Negroes Showed Up To Play Golf."[229]

Historian Lane Demas has demonstrated that blacks directly challenged the pro shops of segregated municipal courses throughout the region before *Brown V. Board*. Demas primarily examined the segregated municipal courses in cities, such as Atlanta, Charlotte, Greensboro, and others. Charlotte was the first major southern metropolis to encounter a civil rights movement on its municipal links. In 1951, sixteen black golfers sued the city of Charlotte to integrate Bonnie Brae Golf Course (today's Dr. Charles L. Sifford Golf Course).[230] The lawsuit reached the state Supreme Court, and the city was

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[228]"Council Hears Golf Course Sale Protest," *Asheville Citizen-Times.* (July 2, 1954), Accessed March 11, 2019 from Newspapers.com.

[229]Bill Gardenhight Sr. Biography" found in *Asheville Living Treasures Oral History Collection.*

[230]Lane Demas, *Game of Privilege: An African American History of Golf.* 175.

ordered to integrate six years later: Demas stated, “They quietly won the case in 1956 when the state’s only female judge ordered the city to integrate all of its courses.”[231] But how “quiet” was this lawsuit that lasted for six years?

According to newspaper accounts from the *Asheville Citizen-Times*, the lawsuit was anything but. An article responding to the U.S. Supreme Court's emphasis on desegregating public spaces in 1955 demonstrated that Charlotte Parks Commissioner, Joe W. Grier, had no plans to integrate public facilities until the state reached a ruling on the Bonnie Brae G.C. case.[232] Reverter clauses, legal statements with the power to revoke an action, delayed the desegregation of Charlotte’s forty-four parks which was most evident on the links of Bonnie Brae. The lands of Charlotte’s Revolution Park were initially donated on the legal consent that blacks would never be allowed to use them, yet this park hosted the Bonnie Brae G.C. According to the same newspaper article, many park deeds included a reverter clause stating that ownership of the land would be reverted back to its original donor if blacks gained access to the properties.[233] In 1956, however, Susie Sharpe, the first elected female state Supreme Court justice in U.S. history, ruled such clauses inadmissible and forced Bonnie Brae G.C. to integrate.[234]

Desegregating municipal courses in Atlanta and Greensboro proved even more challenging than in Charlotte. Born to an affluent black family, Alfred “Tup” Holmes was privileged enough to be a member at the only course available to African-Americans

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[231]Ibid.

[232]The Associated Press, “Reaction Varies In This State,” *Asheville Citizen-Times.* (Nov. 8, 1955), Accessed March 11, 2019 from Newspapers.com.

[233]Ibid.

[234]Lane Demas, *Game of Privilege: An African American History of Golf.* 175.

in the city of Atlanta, New Lincoln Country Club.[235] Tup's father was a physician and an avid golfer himself. When it came time for Tup to attend college, he received the opportunity to play golf at Tuskegee where he won the school's first tournament and became the two-time consecutive conference champion in 1938 and 1939.[236] Tup was turned away from the NCAA's National Championship in 1939 because of his race. Upon his graduation, he moved back to Atlanta to compete as an amateur on the UGA Tour where he won three consecutive amateur championships and became a fierce competitor of Joe Louis, the famous world champion boxer. In order to support his family throughout his amateur career, Tup held jobs as a funeral director and a union steward.[237]

Tired of being limited to playing at one golf course in all of Atlanta, Tup, his dad, and friend, Charles Bell, petitioned to play the city's most famous municipal course, Bobby Jones Golf Course, in 1951.[238] The city's continued to deny the Holmes family and the black community access to the golf course. The Holmes family responded by suing the city on behalf of the Atlanta golf committee which consisted of 300 local African-American golfers. The case reached the state Supreme Court and ruled in favor of Holmes just two months after *Brown V. Board*.[239] The court ruled that the city of Atlanta should either build a separate municipal facility for blacks or that they should provide segregated access to all white public golf courses. Demas stated that the city proposed building a $75,000 black municipal golf course back in 1953 and would have to reconsider that option. In the meantime, however, the city's plan remained to dedicate

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[235]Ibid., 170.
[236]Ibid.
[237]Ibid., 172.
[238]Ibid.
[239]Ibid., 155.

unfavorable days and times, like Mondays and Tuesdays for black access to the course--a common practice also used in amusement parks.[240]

The Holmes family was not satisfied and filed an appeal in 1955 that reached the U.S. Supreme Court with the belief that they should be able to play whenever and wherever they please. Holmes constantly battled threatening phone calls from agitated white and black members of the community.[241] Blacks that did not play golf felt as if Holmes' persistence made race relations worse. Even the local NAACP chapter struggled to support Holmes because they felt that access to golf would only benefit affluent black community members.[242] According to Demas the NAACP failed to reach consensus on the game's social significance and its value to African Americans. Although the NAACP was comprised of elite blacks, its intentions were to invest its time and money in initiatives that supported the social liberation of all blacks. Regardless of resistance, Holmes won the appeal, and the city was ordered to desegregate its golf courses immediately. Demas stated that Atlanta's Mayor Hartsfield was challenged to shut down the municipal courses, but golf proved to be too popular in the city, and he assured the defeated white community that the sport's elite status would naturally keep Atlanta's links separated.[243] Atlanta's municipal courses integrated on Christmas Eve, 1955, three weeks after the Montgomery Bus Boycott and roughly a month after the bombing of Martin Luther King Jr.'s household in Birmingham.[244] Demas mentioned this to

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[240]Victoria Wolcott, *Race, Riots, and Rollercoasters: The Struggle over Segregated Recreation in America*. 18.

[241]Lane Demas, *Game of Privilege: An African American History of Golf.* 156.

[242]Ibid.

[243]Ibid., 158.

[244]Ibid.

demonstrate that golf's elite reputation did not actually limit its role in the Civil Rights Movement.

National media outlets planned to cover Tup's arrival to Bobby Jones Municipal, prompting consistent threats of violence from the community.[245] The Holmes family thus decided to play their first round of integrated golf at North Fulton Municipal G.C. instead, where Demas mentioned that whites on the course responded cordially to their presence. Even after the *Brown V. Board* decision deemed segregated public spaces unconstitutional in 1954, Tup Holmes still had to go through the U.S. Supreme Court to access his local municipal facility. In 1960, instances of threats and violent acts targeted Atlanta's golf courses as a group of white men drove their car onto the sixth fairway at Black Rock Golf Course while firing guns in the air and shouting racial slurs.[246] Their threats even proved to be effective as Black Rock G.C. canceled an upcoming black tournament in fear that large black crowds would incite violence. According to Wolcott, incidents such as this were used to label blacks as "troublemakers" and justified slowing the integration process and keeping blacks away from recreational facilities.[247]

A similar integration story took place in nearby Greensboro, North Carolina. Gillespie Park Golf Course was the city's first and only golf course. Completed in 1940, Gillespie was a product of the Works Progress Administration and was owned and operated by the city parks administration. In 1949, city commissioners built a nine-hole municipal course, Nocho Park Golf Course, to satisfy the black community and to keep

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[245]Ibid.

[246]Ibid., 159.

[247]Victoria Wolcott, *Race, Riots, and Rollercoasters: The Struggle over Segregated Recreation in America*. 7.

them from showing up to Gillespie Park G.C.[248] According to Demas, the city only had two golf courses but chose only to maintain one of them, Gillespie. Dissatisfied with the Nocho Park G.C.'s conditions, local dentist George Simkins led five other black men, including Philip Cooke, Samuel Murray, Elijah Herring, Joseph Sturdivant, and Leon Wolfe to Gillespie G.C. on December 7, 1955, just two weeks after the Supreme Court ruled in favor of the Homes appeal.[249]

Simkins' group was denied access at the front desk, so they simply laid their fee on the counter, walked to the first tee, and proceeded to play. By the third hole, the police arrived and arrested all five of the men for trespassing. The media referred to the group as the "Greensboro Six."[250] Simkins brought the case to the state Supreme Court stating that it was legally impossible for them to trespass on municipal land. The prosecution then slightly altered the charges and claimed that the men were not members on the course.[251] Even though Gillespie Park G.C. offered memberships, it was still open to the public, but the state Supreme Court ruled in favor of the city and sentenced the members of the Greensboro Six to thirty days in jail. In 1957, Simkins brought the case in front of the United States Supreme Court in *Simkins V. City of Greensboro* and won despite the lack of financial assistance from the local and national NAACP chapters.[252] Although Simkins won the case and received access to Gillespie three years later in 1960, his lawyers neglected to challenge their jail sentence. Another member of the Greensboro Six, Leon Wolfe had to challenge their jail sentence in *Wolfe V. City of Greensboro* and lost. The

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[248]Lane Demas, *Game of Privilege: An African American History of Golf.* 171.
[249]Ibid.
[250]Ibid., 172.
[251]Ibid.
[252]Ibid., 173

men ultimately never served their sentence as the state's governor at the time allowed them to pay a small fine for their original crime of trespassing.[253]

Following the Supreme Court's ruling favoring Simpkins in 1960, members of the Greensboro Six became victims of threatening phone calls and house bombings. Gillespie's clubhouse burned down a week later and the course shut down for seven years. Regardless of the lack of support and nominal help from the NAACP and Simkins legal team, the Greensboro six was still able to integrate the city's public recreation facilities. Demas claimed that the famous Woolworth's student sit-in and other local civil rights initiatives began with Simkins determination to play Gillespie Park G.C.[254] Golf had a significant effect in local civil rights initiatives as such movements often began on the golf course itself, but his theory is not as universal as he claimed it to be. Although he briefly mentioned that Charlotte's neighboring city, Gastonia, unusually allowed blacks to play on its municipal course during caddies' day as early as 1950, he concluded that the events of Charlotte, Atlanta, and Greensboro had a snowball effect on neighboring cities, like Asheville. According to Demas, Asheville integrated in 1957 along with other cities, such as Asheboro and Winston-Salem. This was certainly not the case as Asheville's unofficial integration prior to *Brown V. Board* means that it was the first racially integrated public golf course in North Carolina.[255]

At age nineteen, Billy Gardenhight was one of the few black men to take advantage of desegregation at the Muni as some of his friends, especially the older guys, were too nervous. When asked about white retaliation, he stated that there was no

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[253]Ibid.
[254]Ibid., 174.
[255]Ibid., 178.

physical violence in Asheville; however, the clubhouse mysteriously burned down within a week following his post-*Brown* Sunday round and rumors immediately surfaced that white families in the surrounding Beverly Hills community were listing their homes for sale.[256] According to Gardenhight, rumors to sell the golf course were unavoidable, the clubhouse was an unfortunate coincidence, and the closest retaliation to physical violence were whites shouting and throwing stuff from their car when they saw blacks playing on holes two, six, and seven, the only holes to parallel Swannanoa River Road.[257]

For the next two years, *Asheville Citizen-Times* newspaper covered plans to sell the Muni. An article printed on July 2, 1954, revealed the conversation between local black attorney Ruben Dailey and the chairman of Haw Creek Community Club, H. Oliver Hoover, during a city council meeting.[258] At the meeting, Hoover assured the council that the course would be open to the general public at regular greens fees. Dailey responded by asking if blacks would be allowed use of the clubhouse like they were under city operation to which Hoover replied: "Anyone who was a member of the club would be allowed to use the clubhouse and facilities." That statement begged Dailey's next question of whether blacks would be allowed to purchase a membership. Hoover then deflected the question by stating that he could not speak on the matter until the Haw Creek governing board established rules and regulations, all of whom were white. Dailey then asserted that the sale of the golf course without a clause to allow blacks continual access would be worth filing a civil lawsuit on discrimination. Charles Collette accompanied Dailey, his attorney, to the meeting where he stated that the Muni's revenue

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[256]"Billy Gardenhight Sr. Interview" by Paul Bonesteel of Bonesteel Films.
[257]Ibid.
[258]"Council Hears Golf Course Sale Protest," *Asheville Citizen-Times.*

increased when African-Americans gained two days of access per week. He asserted that profits would continue to grow if they were permitted to play seven days per week.[259]

White members of the community also agreed that the city council exaggerated the Muni's financial losses. *Asheville Citizen-Times* writer Karl Fleming, who covered the initial controversy on May 7, decided to publish his thoughts on the issue on September 3, 1954.[260] According to Fleming, he suddenly felt as if his tax dollars were going to waste as he witnessed the lazy city employees of the Muni loafing on the clock which did not seem to be an issue prior to its desegregation. Although Fleming's article detailed his support of the sale, he provided some critical insight into the motivations of each party involved in the potential transaction. He claimed that while the city insisted that it took annual losses of $5,000, the Muni only had a deficit of less than $500 the prior year. He then mentioned that the race question is to be determined by lawmakers but that it was only fair that the two interested parties be open and honest with the public: "[T]he race issue is the reason why the city wants to rid itself of the course, and the same issue is the reason why the Haw Creek club wants to buy."[261] Fleming failed to provide any direct evidence from city commissioners or members of Haw Creek; however, he did eliminate any legitimate excuse of an economic incentive to sell.

The conversation carried on for another year until the state Supreme Court reasserted its support of integration in public recreational facilities and another *Asheville Citizen-Times* article highlighted the response of Asheville's city councilmen on

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[259]Ibid.

[260]Karl Fleming, "Solving The 'Links' Robbery;" "City Passing The Buck;" "Contract Doesn't Look Binding;" "Just Give Me The Facts, Mam" *Asheville Citizen-Times.* (Sep. 3, 1954), Accessed March 11, 2019 from Newspapers.com. This is one article listed under the authors names with a series of subtitles quoted above.

[261]Ibid.

November 8, 1955.[262] The article detailed that many commissioners did not want to share their opinion. One council member who did not want his name to appear in the paper, however, said that he still favored selling or leasing public facilities to private individuals and that his opinion may change in light of further facts. The article then quoted the mayor's opinion: "Mayor Earl W. Eller said last night he believed Asheville 'is most fortunate in the excellent relationships between its white and negro citizens'."[263] As Demas demonstrated, this statement was correct when compared to the cities of Greensboro, Atlanta, and Charlotte. However, the statement still reflects a sense of paternalism rooted in Jim Crow, the same type of "progressive mystique" that Chafe claimed propelled white supremacy in Greensboro. Nevertheless, the local papers kept Asheville councilmen and citizens aware of the court rulings in nearby cities, and the mayor clearly felt that fighting the Muni's inevitable integration would be pointless, especially since it was already integrated to a certain extent.

The Muni never sold for reasons otherwise unknown. Perhaps it was the threat of a civil lawsuit that kept city from selling the course to Haw Creek, or perhaps it was because the course unofficially integrated two years prior, and white citizens simply did not care enough about having to share the course with blacks seven days a week rather than three. The lack of a lawsuit also reflects the lack of the NAACP's presence and support in addressing golf course desegregation. According to Gardenhight, he felt that Asheville remained one of the best places to find camaraderie between blacks and whites

[262]"New Ruling Meets Varied Reaction Here," *Asheville Citizen-Times.* (Nov. 8, 1955), Accessed March 11, 2019 from Newspapers.com.
[263]Ibid.

on the golf course.[264] According to Demas, "municipal golf was actually poised to mix the races better than other forms of public amusement and recreation.[265] On a busy day, municipal courses would encourage players to group themselves into foursomes regardless of their race or class orientation. This structure would often force strangers to spend four to five hours with people they have never met. Needless to say, privacy remained an afterthought when playing on a municipal course.

One theme that Wolcott and Wiltse claimed to be present among other public spaces, such as swimming pools and amusement parks, was the idea that physical intimacy being a component of leisure. The physical intimacy that took place when black and white customers were forced to ride next to each other at the amusement park or the visual intimacy that most apparent when members of both races would shed their clothes to enjoy the amenities of the swimming pool did not occur on the golf course. According to Wiltse, physical intimacy was an inevitable component of municipal pools after the *Brown V. Board* decision; however, the interracial physical intimacy that occurred was still socially unacceptable and heavily contributed to the proliferation of privately-owned swimming pools.[266] Nevertheless, the physical space of a golf course required little, if any, physical intimacy when compared to other forms of recreation. While women were playing golf at the Muni in the 1950s, it was much less of a heterosocial space than a public swimming pool and is perhaps another reason why the Muni never sold.

Paul Bonesteel asked Gardenhight if he was trying to start trouble on that first

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[264]"Billy Gardenhight Sr. Interview" by Paul Bonesteel of Bonesteel Films.

[265]Lane Demas, *Game of Privilege: An African American History of Golf.* 149.

[266]Victoria Wolcott, *Race, Riots, and Rollercoasters: The Struggle over Segregated Recreation in America*. 16. Jeff Wiltse, *Contested Waters: a social history of Swimming Pools in America.* 3.

Sunday following the *Brown V. Board* decision when he showed up to play the Muni with Boyce Layton. He responded, "[N]ot trouble, but I believed I had a right to live like anybody else."[267] He then credited his mother for his courage and stated: "because we'd be walking through town a lot of times and people used to step off the sidewalk to let white folks by, and they'd (Gardenhight's parents) tell me to stay on that. So I just grew up that way. I had a great mom."[268] Gardenhight was just as confident in his golf game as he was in his self-worth.

Following the desegregation of public facilities, Gardenhight announced his professional status in 1954. He spent a majority of his youth gambling with older men at the Muni that would travel from all over the Carolinas to play. According to Gardenhight, general wages in the 1950s ranged from thirty-five and fifty cents per hour, and he could make twenty-five dollars in a four-hour round of golf by gambling. He made a career for himself and his family as they traveled with him throughout the South to compete in North American Golf Association (NAGA) tournaments, a smaller black professional tour similar to the UGA. At his best, however, Gardenhight only took second place, so he retracted his professional status in 1971.[269] By then, he contributed to black professional golf in more ways than as a player.

The Skyview Golfers Association was established in 1960 with the Muni as its home. Started by working-class men like John Brooks Dendy, Charles Collette, Boyce Layton, Billy Gardenhight, and several others, the Skyview Golf Association was a nonprofit organization that provided social and recreational opportunities to the African-

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[267]"Billy Gardenhight Sr. Interview" by Paul Bonesteel of Bonesteel Films.
[268]Ibid.
[269]Bill Gardenhight Sr. Biography" found in *Asheville Living Treasures Oral History Collection.*

American community.[270] Still operating today, the organization is most famous for its Skyview Open tournament that has taken place every summer at the Muni since 1960. The tournament was a product of Dendy's black tournaments, and the perseverance of youth, like Gardenhight, whose passion for the game proved relentless. It eventually became a permanent stop on the NAGA Tour and a pathway to the PGA tour for black professionals.[271] Charles Collette served as the Tournament Director until his death in 1972 when Gardenhight was asked to take his Godfather's place.[272]

The three-day tournament was initially an all-black event but admitted white participants in 1961. Since its establishment, the Skyview Open hosted several black professional golfers that eventually made it to the PGA Tour once the "Caucasian-only Clause" was lifted in 1961. These players included Jim Thorpe, Chuck Thorpe, Charlie Owens, Jim Dent, Lee Elder, and professional boxer Joe Louis.[273] Lee Elder won the Skyview four times and became the first black golfer to qualify for the Masters, golf's most prestigious tournament.[274] Boxer Joe Louis never became a golf professional, but he became the first black man to play in a PGA Tour event.[275] Chuck Thorpe never won on the PGA Tour, but he did win the Skyview six times. Charlie Sifford, a Charlotte native and arguably the most notable African American golfer besides Tiger Woods, was the first black winner on the PGA Tour; however, he never played in the Skyview. According to Gardenhight, he had no reason to: "[H]e was in the big stuff, so he didn't have nothing

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[270]Ibid.
[271]"Billy Gardenhight Sr. Interview" by Paul Bonesteel of Bonesteel Films.
[272]Ibid.
[273]Ibid.
[274]Pete McDaniel, *Uneven Lies: The Heroic Story of African-Americans in Golf*. 165.
[275]Ibid., 88.

to do with this."[276] Aside from Joe Louis, these men were not considered black elite. Like Dendy, they were struggling to make a career on a black golfer's tour. By the sixties, however, golf's popularity among the black community increased with its accessibility and professional players could make a living wage, unlike Dendy whose professional success did not earn him a living wage in the thirties. At that time, Dendy lacked the opportunity to reach the PGA Tour. The Skyview, nevertheless, was a gateway for racial equality and was born in the most appropriate of settings throughout the South.

The Skyview tournament peaked in 1975 when it had 254 participants and 1,000 people registered for the Thursdays after party that had to take place at Asheville's Civic Center because of its popularity.[277] Over the years, people came from various places outside of the region, including California, Hawaii, Canada, Bermuda, Nevada, Michigan, Pennsylvania, New York, New Jersey, Illinois, and Washington D.C. to participate in the Skyview. The Skyview represented an organization that could be built by black people, operated by black people, and successfully serve all people. When asked what it felt like to organize such an event, Gardenhight replied: "[C]ouldn't nobody tell you nothing. We were on top of the world...and anywhere you go just about...around any elderly black man that played golf, the mention the Skyview."[278] The Muni did more than grant black people access to a golf course; for many, it launched their professional careers, and for others, it merely gave them a sense of progress.

In 2019, the Muni is very much a golf course for the working-class people with ample tee times of seven minute intervals, prime-time rates under forty dollars including

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[276]"Billy Gardenhight Sr. Interview" by Paul Bonesteel of Bonesteel Films.
[277]Ibid.
[278]Ibid.

a golf cart, and golfers of all skill levels, ages, and ethnicities. The Skyview remains a three-day tournament with Billy Gardenhight as its director. He works at the Muni as a starter and plays golf when he is not battling the minor health issues that come with being eighty-eight years old.[279] In his prime, he could match par, but today, he swears he can still shoot his age. To Gardenhight, the best thing about being on the golf course is being able to hit the ball: "[Y]ou can't play baseball all your life. You can't play football. You can't play basketball, but golf, from the cradle to the graveyard. Golf, it's just something that's different. It's a soul stirrer." When asked about his hometown, Gardenhight stated, "[A]sheville was just a place...it was different from other cities."[280] There was one thing that the game of golf and the city of Asheville had in common; they were different, and this was never more evident than at the Muni.

[279]A starter is a golf course employee that regulates the tee sheet, a schedule of reserved times to begin each round of golf throughout the day.

[280]Ibid.

EPILOGUE

While the integration of public golf courses in southern cities such as Charlotte, Atlanta, and Greensboro garnered attention in federal and state courts, the Muni did not. Instances like shutting down Gillespie G.C. inspired black community leaders to register to vote and occupy public office. At the Muni, however, accessing the golf course was not as aggressively contested nor was there a large civil rights movement that followed. Perhaps that is why it has been overlooked by historians in the larger narrative of golf and civil rights histories; progress in Asheville was not simply a product of the Civil Rights Movement nor solely prompted by *Brown V. Board*. In Georgia, Thomas Brewer lost his life for threatening to sue the city of Columbus after he was turned away from a local municipal course based on the color of his skin.[281] After gaining media attention, Brewer was shot seven times in a department store by an agitated employee. Conversely, the Muni witnessed minor white resistance when compared to other cities throughout the region, such as threats to sell the course. Although the resistance that threatened the Muni's integration reflect Jim Crow racism, the city still witnessed an unthinkable event take place within the Jim Crow institution, a pre-*Brown* integration. The Great Depression did not halt Asheville's progressive ideas that developed nearly fifty years prior, and that is what makes the Muni a valuable case study for historical scholarship.

The Muni's integration and atypical racial attitudes that developed in the city of Asheville can be partially credited to the region's environmental landscape. The ways in which geographic location shape regional culture have been well studied, but the Muni

[281]Lane Demas, *Game of Privilege: An African American History of Golf.* 178.

can assist scholars to understand how the combination of physical landscape, geographic location, and culture reveal the fluidity of social constructs such as race within the context of recreation and physical landscape. Regardless of region, racism still remains prevalent throughout the United States today. In Asheville, the mountainous landscape and comfortable year-round weather created a tourist driven business progressive model and economy that became Asheville's New South industry. Because its economy was shaped by the city's tourism, commissioners put these elements into practice, via *progressive experimentation*, which came in the form of golf courses and other public spaces. This development produced a progressive culture that fostered moderate racial attitudes atypical of other southern cities.

The city of Asheville, although no longer rapidly expanding like it once planned to, is still nationally recognized for its world-famous resorts, biodiversity, recreation, and progressive community culture. A simple internet search of the city's history, however, including the city's own travel site, fail to mention the Muni as an event or place of historical significance.[282] This is ironic considering that the city originally established the golf course to boost tourism in 1927. Even when visiting the Muni, it is evident that its history is still only known primarily by those who play golf there regularly. There are no plaques, signs, or monuments that give recognition to its pre-*Brown* integration. There is also nothing to promote that its Skyview tournament was once the hub for black professional golf in the South throughout the 1970s.

Until this project and Paul Bonesteel's documentary titled *MUNI*, its historical

[282]"Asheville History", Exploreasheville.com. Accessed 26 July 2019. https://www.exploreasheville.com/iconic-asheville/about-asheville/history/

significance could only be found by talking to the men who lived through its integration that are still playing golf today. This is in part due to the fact that regional scholars of the past studied Asheville's history through a singular lens. Historians such as D.E. Davis and Starnes glossed over the Muni's historical significance because they sought to understand the region primarily through environmental or economic development. The Muni and the history of Asheville, however, are best understood by examining the intersection of various historical themes including, race, environment, economics, and recreation. This study lends itself to a new way of approaching local history. Although challenging, approaching history with a multi-dimensional lens can give relevance to historical events and places that have been overlooked by previous scholars. For Asheville, this multi-field approach lends the city's significance to larger studies connecting civil rights to sport and recreation. The Muni's history is a significant aspect of the city's development and is now known beyond those citizens whom play golf.

Place is another important area where this study lends itself to golf history. Although Asheville was once the most popular destination on the PGA Tour prior to World War II, its modern courses and culture have a much less significant impact professional golf today. Studying places such as the Muni remove professional golf from the conversation about race and class in regards to recreation and the game of golf. For instance, Demas and other golf historians search well-known people and places, such as Tiger Woods and Pinehurst, to discuss the social impacts of golf on society. However, places like the Muni add to the narrative. Rather than speculating the impact that golf had on the average person and community through the game's famous figures, this study demonstrates the game's impact in different communities based on place.

Today, Asheville remains a place that caters to retirees and year-round adventure seekers. Other southern states, such as Alabama, have attempted to use certain elements of Asheville's *progressive experimentation* to build a utopian retiree and business reputation. The home of events such as the Montgomery Bus Boycott, Selma, Dr. Martin Luther King's "Letter from Birmingham Jail," and radical segregationists like George Wallace, Alabama experienced some of the most famous racially contested events throughout the Civil Rights Era. Recently, it has become home to the Robert Trent Jones Golf Trail--a system of twenty-six golf courses and eleven resort locations throughout the state. The Trail is the world's longest collection of golf courses constructed as one project.[283]

Sociologist Mark Fagan followed the development of the Trail from the start of construction in the 1990s until the opening of its final course in 2008. His book, *The Robert Trent Jones Golf Trail: Its History and Economic Impact* documents the Trail's development since its conception as a mere idea. Alabama constructed golf courses to meet the desires of the nation's affluent retirees, tourists, and business population.[284] The Trail is also designed to stimulate the economy of local communities throughout the state. Funded by the state's teacher and employee pension fund (RSA), the Trail intended to create jobs and tax revenue for its target audience.[285] By constructing resort environments and physical landscapes (golf courses) within communities that offered moderate climates, low crime rates, low costs of living, outdoor recreation, and various scenic

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[283]Mark Fagan, *The Robert Trent Jones Golf Trail: Its History and Economic Impact.* (Montgomery, Al: New South Books., 2016). 17. https://play.google.com/books/reader?id=qZZ-CwAAQBAJ&pg=GBS.PR15

[284]Ibid., 19.

[285]Ibid., 16.

natural features, golf attracted tourists and retirees to Alabama by attempting to represent the state differently. Unlike in Asheville, tourism in Alabama did not produce a business progressive economy that prompted the state to adopt practices of *progressive experimentation*. Rather, the idea of retirement communities, resorts, and tourism prompted the RSA to strategically pursue recreation as a means to accomplish its vision of a diversified economy.

With all 468 holes designed by Robert Trent Jones, a prodigy of Donald Ross, the Trail also parallels Asheville in the sense that all of Asheville's five original golf courses were designed by Donald Ross. It is still too early to tell whether the Trail has actually produced any kind of progressive culture in Alabama; nevertheless, its existence has directly employed 3,133 employees, along with stimulating jobs in real estate, banking, construction, retail, insurance, recreation, and health care.[286] Alabama and the RSA have consciously used elements of *progressive experimentation* to construct and manage a landscape intended to shape a particular culture to stimulate the economies of the communities where each course resides. While not intending to use this landscape as a method to strategically shape race relations, the Trail may help reshape the national perception of Alabama--one that does not solely remind its visitors and residents of its racially hostile past.

The Muni, and arguably the Trail, demonstrates to scholars the ways in which social constructs such as race develop and how physical landscape, whether natural or constructed, shapes the social perceptions of specific communities. This project addresses three major subfields of historical study: environmental history, the history of municipal

[286]Ibid., 18.

development, and the history of civil rights and recreation. Each of these fields have been thoroughly developed and researched by scholars; however, analysis of Asheville's history in the first half of the twentieth century demonstrates how these themes intersect. This project is not only meant to suggest how natural landscapes shape cultural and social norms but to reinforce that some historical events can be better understood with interdisciplinary study. This project lends itself to anyone seeking to understand the relationship between nature and culture and to those interested in studying the dynamics of social constructs within sport and recreation.

The study also reinforces the arguments of William Chafe's and Robin Kelley's scholarship, that civil rights is best understood from the working class people and individual communities where Jim Crow operated every day. Billy Gardenhight's and Cissy Dendy's testimonies offer insight to understanding how African-Americans perceived, lived within, and challenged legal segregation, especially on the golf course. African-American resistance is symbolized in their relentless will to play the game. Whether creating a makeshift golf course on public school grounds or constructing golf clubs from brooms and thicket, the golf course became a place where people like Gardenhight and John Brooks Dendy could be equal among whites.

Without studying the game of golf and people like Gardenhight, scholars' understanding of how institutionalized racism operated on a regional or national level would be inaccurate. Gardenhight's account reflects the ways in which Asheville's landscape and developing tourist culture shaped race relations within public spaces. Nevertheless, by analyzing Asheville's physical landscape, one can understand how a natural environment atypical to the rest of the South created an economy and culture to

match. Today, Asheville and the Muni remain rich in the same aspects that made them a commodity at the beginning of the twentieth century.

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