

Golf Historical Society

The Two Roosevelts by John Jones (March 2013)



1952 aerial showing 9-hole Roosevelt Memorial in Griffith Park

The original Roosevelt of 1937 was made up of the last remaining holes of the 18-hole 1914 Tom Bendelow designed Griffith Park Municipal Links #1. The well loved old links had natural fairways and oil sand greens. When the new George Thomas designed all-grass Harding opened in 1923, the old municipal was still 18-holes, and still in use, until Wilson construction started in 1925. When Wilson and the remodeled Harding opened in 1927, the remains of the oil sand green Municipal Links #1 were reworked into nine holes.

In 1937 the course was redone by Superintendent William Johnson and Billy Bell, who had them fully grassed, and renamed the Roosevelt Memorial golf course. The hilly 2623 yard, par 34 course, only had a couple of bunkers and was "the place for a marksman to polish his skills".

In the early 1960s Los Angeles decided to build the new zoo in Griffith Park, and the remains of Municipal Links #1 were slated for demolition. After a huge uproar from golfers, not about the history of the old course, but about losing 9 holes, Recreation and Parks built the new Roosevelt in Vermont Canyon and opened it on the same Saturday in June 1964 that they planned to close the original, which was kept open for the weekend, before being demolished on Monday for the new zoo!

They claim to have spread the turf from the old course on to the other city golf courses. It is likely that David Kent did the design, along with landscape architect for the department John Ward.

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