

The Greens

How the Greens developed.

By Guenther Tombragel

It was 1969 and history recalls this year as the year where Neil Armstrong was the first man to walk on the Moon. Antiwar demonstrations swept the nation. The first Woodstock Festival drew 500,000 plus to a small dairy farm in the town of Bethel in “upper state” New York. The greatest musical and cultural event of the millennium happened. First flight of the Boeing 747 and Concorde took place. After 147 years, the last issue of *The Saturday Evening Post* was published.

In the same year, **Tom Morris, Sr.** had an idea, a plan of a new development with homes, a regional shopping center, townhouses and luxury apartments, a hotel, office complex and a private country club with a 27-hole golf course, tennis facilities and swimming pools. This was to be located on the northwest side of the city.

The Community Plan was being undertaken by a joint venture partnership, Valley Verde Company, which was composed of Tom Morris Enterprise, National Life Insurance Company of Vermont and Home Mortgage Investment Company (HMIC). The latter were acquired by Liberty Bank. Liberty changed the name to RBM Inc., a Liberty employee Trust Fund. RBM Inc. remained a partner in the joint venture.

A parcel of land, west of Portland Avenue, east of Meridian Avenue, North of 122nd Street and south of Memorial Road in Oklahoma City was acquired by the joint venture.

On February 26, 1971, Tom Morris registered the name of the development as “**Valhalla**”. In Norse mythology, Valhalla is the “Hall of the Slain” into which Odin received those slain gloriously in battle. Upon learning the meaning of Valhalla, he legally changed the name to “**The Greens**” on March 30, 1971. The developed area of the Greens was 591.627 acres. Approximately 80 acres, (Section 7 and 8), are located west of Meridian Avenue (Val Verde). It is the area where three of the additional nine golf holes were to be located.

About the same time, Mercy Hospital, located in downtown Oklahoma City, made plans to move to northwest Oklahoma City. A proposed move to the site of the Oklahoma Health Center was rejected because community leaders could not guarantee certain points the hospital directors considered essential. A building site considered was on North Portland between NW 122nd and NW 150th streets. The tract on the west is the Rolling Hills 2nd Addition and the area east of the site is Quail Creek.

The surrounding home owner organizations protested the site selection, and the hospital and its board elected to move the building site to the northwest corner of “The Greens” subdivision, south of Memorial Road and east of Meridian Avenue. Mercy Hospital

building plans were announced by Sister Mary Coletta, R. S. M., Executive Director and Wayne A. Parker, advisory Board President. The new Hospital with a 400 bed capacity was scheduled to be completed by 1974, at a cost of \$15 to \$18 million.

The joint venture sold 20 acres and donated another 20 acres to the Sisters of Mercy on the northwest corner of the development. Later in 1980, an additional 40 acres, which was owned by the National Life Insurance Company of Vermont, was sold to the hospital for expansion. It is the area where the Heart Hospital is located today.

Construction of the 132.7 acre 18-hole golf course began in January 1970. The additional nine holes were never built. The sprawling golf course, designed by golf architect Don Sechrest, did utilize the valleys which honeycomb the development. Portions of the two lakes – 15 acres and 10 acres - come into play on six of the 18 holes. Greens average 1,500 square feet putting surfaces of Pencross Bent grass. Over 500 sprinkler heads deliver more than 33 million gallons of water per year to fairways and greens. Original championship yardage for the 18-hole course was 6,825 yards, compared to 6,790 yards today. Approximately one-third of the Greens building sites border the fairways.

The golf course area is rolling terrain with 55-foot variation in elevation between hills and vales. The original seeding, sprigging and planting were done in the fall of 1970. Unusual weather conditions including an uncommon cold October, a record setting dry spell and exceptionally high winds in February and March of 1971, created dust storms and ruined the planting efforts. A second seeding and sprigging began in late April, 1971. To keep the lakes on the golf course filled, a pump house was constructed at Spring Creek in Val Verde. The first nine holes opened in June, 1972. The second nine holes opened one month later. Over a period of ten years, 1970 to 1980, about 500 trees and 350 Austrian Pines were planted. Not many of them survived!

Groundbreaking for the 14,000 square feet \$750,000 clubhouse was on Friday, July 23, 1971 and construction began the following Monday. Included in the club house complex was a swimming pool for adults and one for children, two covered and two outdoor tennis courts, a golf pro shop, men's and women's locker rooms, and an elaborately decorated food and beverage facility. All was completed in 1972. By 1979, the club had grown into a several million dollar facility with over 1,000 members. Members enjoy a beautiful golf course, state-of-the-art tennis facilities, swimming pools, a large dining room and grill and a calendar of events which provides activities for all age groups.

Over the years many improvements and remodeling have been made to the clubhouse, golf course, tennis and swimming facilities. The clubhouse expanded to approximately 22,000 square feet. The new Tennis clubhouse with about 7,000 square feet was opened in October, 1989. There are six temperature controlled indoor tennis courts covering about 40,000 sq. ft. and six outdoor tennis courts. There are now three swimming pools. One is an Olympic sized pool for all members, one is an adult's only pool and one is a wading pool for children.

For many years the Greens Country Club hosted the Virginia Slims of Oklahoma and IGA Tennis Classic tournament which brought some of the best female tennis players in the world, like the Williams sisters, to Oklahoma City. Throughout the years, The Greens Golf and Country Club has been a good friend to the home owners and is a proud supporter of the Greens Homeowners Association.

Home construction did not get a running start in 1970. Perhaps the political climate was too unstable and the economy was suffering from the Vietnam War. Although the golf course was under construction, prospective buyers were uncertain if the new Country Club could survive in the present economic climate. Even after the golf course was “finished” in 1972, lot sales were only marginal. When OPEC doubled oil prices in 1973, it became the gas crisis of the 70’s. Oil prices went from \$1.50 to an **unbelievable** \$11.56 a barrel! It did not help sales or home buyer confidence, and caused a national economic crisis.

While the nation’s economy was struggling with the rising oil prices, the local oil and gas industry started to boom, and with it, the housing industry flourished. Naturally, greed and con were not far behind. In April of 1981, oil prices peaked at \$36.95 a barrel and then began to fall. Penn Square Bank of Oklahoma City had made large and speculative loans, especially to the oil and gas industry. Loans were in excess of 2 billion dollars. When Penn Square Bank failed in July of 1982, it caused a chain reaction of bank failures and the collapse of the local oil and gas boom. By this time, however, most of the Greens subdivision had been completed. You will notice the rapid growth of home construction in the Greens from 1974 to 1981.

Early, but only spotty home construction in the square mile started on Inverness Avenue and Pinehurst Road, where homes were finished in 1962. Greater concentrated home building started in the southeast quarter around NW 125th Street in 1965 and on Saint Andrews Drive in 1966. More activity was on Saint Andrews Terrace 1965 - 1973. This area is called Rolling Hills 2nd Addition, which was started before “The Greens” was planned. Houses on the east side of Saint Andrews Drive up to house number 12716 are also part of the Rolling Hills 2nd Addition and were constructed from 1965 to 1971. Home owners in this area have their own private park which is located in the triangle, bordered by NW 125th, Saint Andrews Terrace and Saint Andrews Drive. The park is called Medera Park and has no public access.

Because Rolling Hills 2nd Addition, the Quail Ridge to Rolling Hills Addition and Green Valley Plaza are located in the “Mile Square”, (NW 122nd – Memorial Road – Portland Avenue and Meridian Avenue) they are commonly referred to as “The Greens”. The Greens Homeowners Association maintains islands and entrances there. Homeowners in these areas can also be members of the Greens Homeowners Association.

With the Golf Course as the focal point, area development followed the fairways. Saint Andrews Drive (west side) bordering on fairways No. 10, 11 and 12, were constructed from 1972 to 1975. At the same time, construction also progressed on Green Valley Drive which views the 13th and 14th fairways on the east side and the 15th and 16th fairways on the west side. Home construction on Green Valley Drive, from NW 122nd Street to the club house, was from 1972 to 1975. Luxury apartments called The Invitational, north of 122nd Street, west of Saint Andrews Drive, were built in 1982. A few years later in 1985, the Augusta Apartments were erected west of Green Valley Drive. The commercial area, west of the Augusta Apartments was not part of the Greens development. A gated condo community, “Saint Andrews Court Condos”, was added in 1997 - 1998. Also, at about that time, the Office Park developed north of 122nd Street and east of Saint Andrews Drive.

When buyer confidence had returned, home building moved to the southwest quarter of the neighborhood... Arrowhead Drive bordering on the 17th and 18th fairways was started in 1975. Arrowhead Lane, next to fairway No. 1 and Arrowhead Terrace with some homes on fairway No. 2, was also built in 1975 -1976. Tamarisk Drive abutting the 3rd and 4th fairways with a view of one of the lakes, had most of its construction in 1977 to 1978. Building at Arrowhead Way, Cherry Hill Lane and Windsong Way was underway from 1974 to 1979. Windsong Way was originally scheduled to be a commercial site.

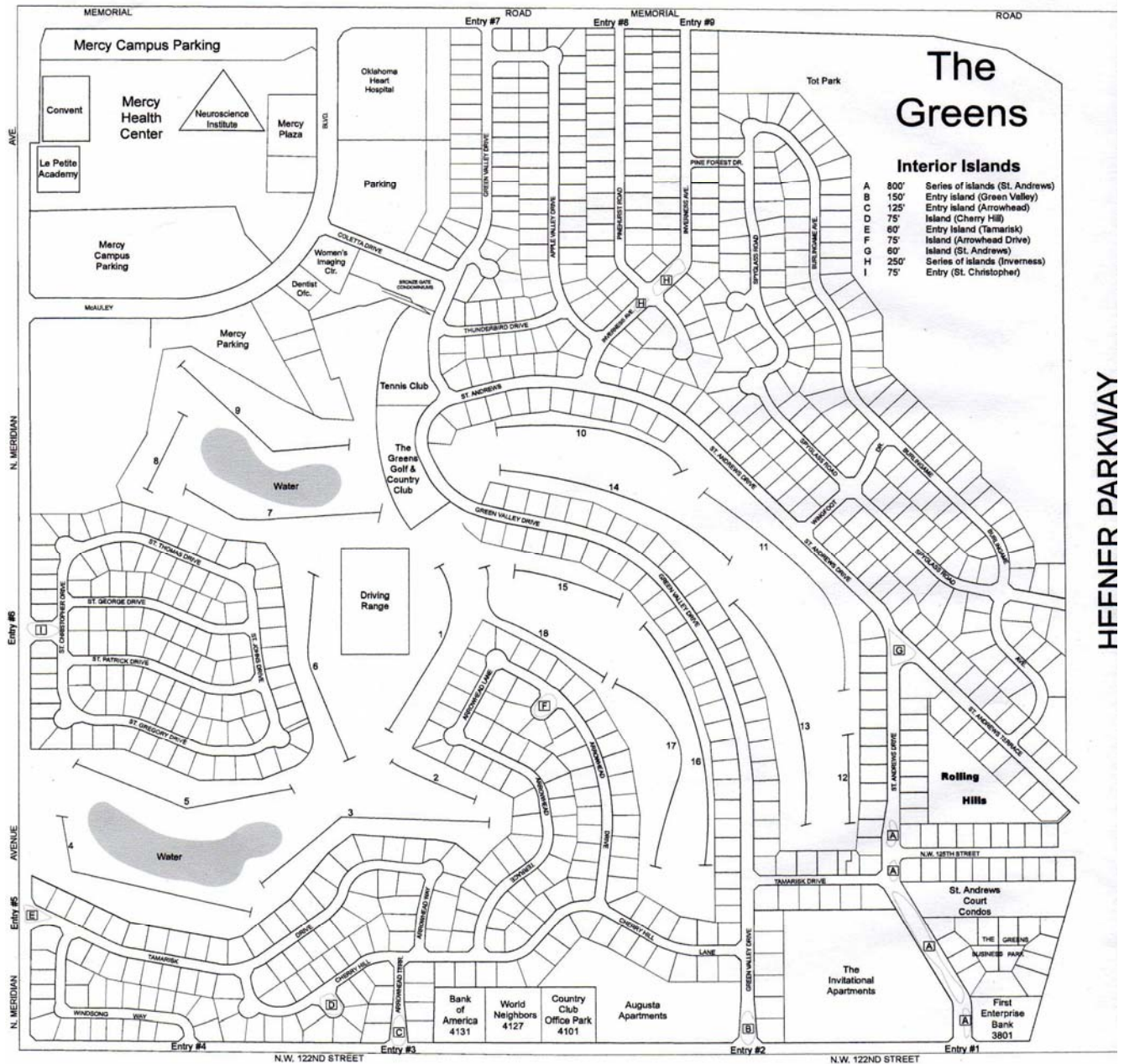
One part of the Greens, the "Saint" section, was named after six of the seven sons of Tom Morris, (Chris, Greg, Patrick, John, George, Tom) and opened for development in 1978. William, number seven son, has his street in Val Verde as Williams Court. Saint Gregory Drive next to No.5 fairway, has a view of one of the lakes; Saint Johns Drive, adjoining fairway No. 6. Saint Thomas Drive is adjacent to No. 7 fairway and has a beautiful view of a lake. Construction in this area lasted until 1980.

The northwest quarter of the Greens was opened for development in 1977. Homes on Green Valley Drive, Apple Valley Drive and Thunderbird Drive were built in 1977 to 1978. In 1989 a row of Townhouses filled in the space on Coletta Drive. The doctor's offices on Coletta Drive were built in 1979.

In the northeast quarter, Wingfoot Drive, Spyglass Road and Burlingame Avenue were under construction from 1980 to 1982. This area was originally scheduled for six of the additional nine golf holes. It should be noted that Burlingame Avenue and Spyglass Road are also located in Green Valley Plaza. On the north side where Spyglass Road and Burlingame Avenue meet, is a small (.6759 acres) city children's park.

The area between Burlingame and Portland Avenue (or Hefner Parkway), became the property of the National Life Insurance Company of Vermont when the joint venture was dissolved in 1979. It is zoned for commercial use.

Note: The years of construction mentioned above, are the years the properties were first recorded on the County tax records. Some properties may have been completed and occupied in the prior year.



Note: Information for this article was obtained from the following:
 Events of 1969 web-site; The Oklahoman; The North Star News; Friday Paper; Guffey's Journal; Valley Verde Company files; Archives of the Greens Golf & Country Club; Oklahoma County records.

Any errors or omissions are unintentional. Dates are approximate.

3/18/2010

