

## **HISTORY OF THE TACOMA LAWN BOWLING CLUB**

**as compiled by Llewellyn Thomas, one of the organizers of the club**

In May of 1929 Mrs. Marsh, who came to Tacoma from California, induced the Park Board to put in several different kinds of games in Wright Park, one of them a clay surface bowling green. She made a trip to Vancouver, B.C., and bought ten bowls, two of a kind, used wooden bowls. A few former lawn bowlers from the British Isles came there to play every chance they had the time to play and soon found out there were some of the old timers here who had brought their woods when they came here many years ago. The rest of us got busy and bought bowls from Canada and England.

We called a meeting in July 1929 and formed the Tacoma Lawn Bowling Club. Arthur Green was chairman of this meeting. Officers elected were: President A. S. Drummond, Vice President Wm. Reid, Secretary Lew Thomas, Treasurer George Wilkinson. We had a membership of ten players and enjoyed playing on what had formerly been a road through the park. We played on this for several years; had match games with Seattle's Woodland Park Club.

Then along in July 1930 we called a meeting of the club and it was agreed that we try to induce the park board to put in a full-sized bowling green. Selected to attend the next park board meeting on August 30, 1930, were A.S. Drummond, Wm. Reid, Lew Thomas and George Wilkinson. We were unable to get the Board to do so but they gave us permission to go ahead ourselves and donated \$50.00 towards same. So we started in right away to try to make the full-sized green, but soon found out it was going to take quite a little money to accomplish this undertaking so Mr. Drummond as President and myself as Secretary set out in our spare time to sell associate memberships to some of the downtown businessmen at \$12.00 per year so we could get started. One of our players, George Wilkinson, undertook to put in this green and started work on same in September 1930, but the \$200.00 we had on hand did not go very far along this line. We had a full sized green but lacked the money to finish the work the way we wanted it. We raised another \$150.00 and put in a hawthorn hedge around the bowling green. Then, with the aid of Mr. Bossemeyer, the Superintendent of Parks, we induced the park board to let him finish the green we had started. He plowed up the whole green and put in drainage, gravel, sand and topsoil, etc., and did a wonderful job.

We got the hawthorn plants shipped in from Portland, Oregon, and the board planted same. So it was largely Mr. Bossemeyer who came to our aid at the right time and made us a real topnotch bowling green in one of the finest small parks on the coast and quite close to the center of the city. It was thought a terrible thing that this work should be done for a few men calling themselves a "Lawn Bowling Club." Some of the ladies clubs here got after the park board and tried to stop any kind of recreation, even the children's playground in the park. This seared condition resulted in the discharge of Mr. Bossemeyer, which was just too bad. Working with Mr. Bossemeyer was Tom Skinner, a very faithful member of our club and an old country Scotchman, retired from the U.S. Government Service in Hong Kong, China.

We would very much like to have another green along side but see no hope at the present time for same. Also a clubhouse, but the board will not give us the space. We very much need another green, as it crowds us very much during our Northwest L.B. Association tournament each Memorial Day for the Saturday, Sunday and Monday days and nights on one green. We have around sixty members but could soon build it up to a much larger club with another green and a clubhouse. Mr. Drummond and I worked hard to get lawn bowling started here as it was an entirely new kind of game to most everyone around here including the park board.

A.S. Drummond served as president continually from the formation of the club in 1929 to 1936, and I served as secretary from 1929 to 1938. We now have a very fine club, a beautiful green, a lot of very nice people, and several good players.

My wife, Bess Thomas, won the open ladies singles cup in Victoria, B.C. in 1943. This was the first and only time the cup came to the United States. She played in the finals again last year and lost on the last end to a lady from Vancouver, B.C. She also won the ladies singles cup in the big Labor Day Northwest Lawn Bowling Tournament in Seattle last year, 1948. She has won this trophy in Seattle five times in different years. She also with myself won the mixed doubles in the Northwest Lawn Bowling Tournament held in Tacoma in 1948.

Mrs. Sydney M. MacLean won the ladies club singles cup in 1948, Lew Thomas the men's singles cup in 1948. Dr. Ray W. Monaghan won the Northwest Lawn Bowling Club's champion of champions cup in Portland the same year. So you see we have some fairly good players in our club, and fared pretty well with trophies this last year in Tacoma.

We present each member of the park board with a complimentary membership card each year, and previous to the last war we arranged to have the park board members play the city commissioners. They have been very busy the last few years but we hope to have them going again later on.

We joined the American Lawn Bowling Association in 1942 and E.L. Cleveland was appointed delegate to the national convention at that time, I believe it was held in Chicago, and at this writing he is still the delegate.

Competitions in our club are men's and ladies' singles cups which are played for each year. We do not play rinks here now but play triples every Sunday morning at 10 o'clock. We have a draw game of men and women players and play doubles and triples, each player donating a dime and the team with the most wins takes the money. We play the pennant system, three games each, and find it a wonderful way to get most of our players out and we have a wonderful time. We enjoy playing this way very much as it helps to keep the players from getting "cliquey."

We had a commercial league here several years ago and played every Tuesday evening, with prizes donated by the businessmen; also the businessmen sponsored each team in the league at \$5.00 per team. This was in 1938 but it was quite a job to get the players all out the same night so we have not tried it since.

We have the Northwest Lawn Bowling Tournament here at Tacoma every Memorial Day for three days and have players from all clubs in the Association, also from Vancouver and Victoria. Then we all meet again at our Labor Day tournament in Seattle on Saturday, Sunday and Monday. The Canadian players come down here to play in our tournaments and we do likewise in their tournaments in Canada.

(The foregoing was written by Lew Thomas and gives an account of the early days of our club.)

**Following is a list of the officers of the club from its organization July 30, 1930, to 1948 inclusive, as compiled by Mr. Thomas.**

Year 1930

President	A. S. Drummond
Vice President	Wm. Reid
Secretary	Lew Thomas
Treasurer	George Wilkinson

Year 1931

President	A. S. Drummond
Vice President	Arthur Green
Secretary	Lew Thomas
Treasurer	George Wilkinson

Year 1932

President	A. S. Drummond
Vice President	Thomas Skinner
Secretary	Lew Thomas
Treasurer	John Wood

Year 1933

President	A. S. Drummond
Vice President	W. O. Chapman
Secretary	Lew Thomas
Treasurer	John Wood

Year 1934

President	A. S. Drummond
Vice President	Wm. Reid
Secretary	Lew Thomas
Treasurer	Bill Reid

Year 1935

President	Dr. August Mirenta
Vice President	E. L. Cleveland
Secretary	Lew Thomas
Treasurer	Bill Reid

Year 1936

President	Dr. August Mirenta
Vice President	Frank Craig
Sec'y-Treasurer	Lew Thomas

## Year 1937

President	Dr. August Mirenta
Vice President	Frank Craig
Sec'y-Treasurer	Lew Thomas

## Year 1938

President	Dr. August Mirenta
Vice President	Frank Craig
Sec'y-Treasurer	Lew Thomas

## Year 1939

President	J. G. Dickson
Vice President	Roy Thompson
Trustees	Dr. Mirenta and E. L. Cleveland

## Year 1940

President	J. G. Dickson
Vice President	Roy Thompson
Sec'y-Treasurer	W. L. McCormick
Trustees	Dr. Mirenta and E. L. Cleveland

## Year 1941

President	W. Yale Henry
Vice President	W. L. McCormick
Sec'y-Treasurer	E. J. Doherty
Trustees	J. G. Dickson and Wm. O. Dunckley

## Year 1942

President	W. Yale Henry
Sec'y-Treasurer	E. J. Doherty
Trustees	J. G. Dickson and Wm. O. Dunckley

## Year 1943

President	Wm. O. Dunckley
Vice President	C. S. Reynolds
Trustees	W. Yale Henry and W. L. McCormick

## Year 1944

President	Wm. Dunckley
Vice President	C. S. Reynolds
Sec'y-Treasurer	Ernest M. Card
Trustees	W. Yale Henry and J. G. Dickson

## Year 1945

President	W. L. McCormick
Vice President	Walter Heath
Sec'y-Treasurer	Frank Craig
Trustees	Louis Muscek and Wm. O. Dunckley

## Year 1946

President	Dr. Sydney M. MacLean
Vice President	Louis Muscek
Sec'y-Treasurer	Clyde Martin
Trustees	Dr. Ray W. Monaghan and C. S. Reynolds

## Year 1947

President	Dr. Sydney M. MacLean
Vice President	Louis Muscek
Sec'y-Treasurer	Clyde Martin
Trustees	Dr. Ray W. Monaghan and Silas Mentzer

## Year 1948

President	Louia Muscek
Vice President	Dr. Ray W. Monaghan
Sec'y-Treasurer	Gile H. Walker
Trustees	W. Yale Henry and J. G. Dickson

## Year 1949

President	Louis Muscek
Vice President	Dr. Ray Monaghan
Sec'y-Treasurer	Gile Walker
Trustees	Yale Henry and Jim Dickson

## Year 1950

President	C. J. Mentzer
Vice President	Dr. W. B. Penney
Sec'y-Treasurer	Gile Walker
Trustees	Yale Henry, hold over Jim Dickson Louis Muscek, automatically as Past President

## Year 1951

President	C. J. Mentzer
Vice President	Fred Walker
Sec'y-Treasurer	Gile Walker
Trustees	Yale Henry and Gile Walker

## Year 1952

President	Gile Walker
Vice President	Leo Feidler
Sec'y-Treasurer	E. G. Kallasch
Trustees	E. F. Myers was elected as fifth member on this committee for one year term.

The full committee is as follows: Gile Walker, President; Leo Feidler, Vice President; E. G. Kallasch, Secretary-Treasurer; D. J. Mentzer, Club Immediate Past President, and E. J. Myers, one year term elected.

## Year 1953

President	Leo (Doc) Feidler
Vice President	Gordon K. D. Pearson
Sec'y-Treasurer	E. G. Kallasch
Trustee	Walter Heath
Parliamentarian	Jim Dickson
N.L.B. Association Representative:	Walter Heath

## Year 1954

President	Walter Heath
Vice President	Clyde S. Martin
Sec'y-Treasurer	Mrs. Theresia England
Trustee	Earl Farris
N.W. Lawn Bowling Association:	Cy Mentzer, one year term; Walter Heath, two year term

## Year 1955

President	Clyde Martin
Vice President	Chas. Middleton
Sec'y-Treasurer	Earl Farris
Trustee	Harry Kinney
N.W.L.B.A. Representatives:	C. J. Mentzer and Walter Heath
Alternates:	Lew Thomas and Earl Farris

## Year 1956

President	Clyde Martin
Vice President	Earl Farris
Sec'y-Treasurer	Mrs. Earl Farris
Trustees:	President, Vice President, Secretary-Treasurer, Immediate Past President
New Member	Ernest Kallasch

**Random Notes taken from the Secretary's books and written by W. O. Dunckley**

In the latter part of 1941 there was considerable agitation for the erection of a club house in the park just west of the green. The park board had almost given us permission to erect the club house at our own expense. Harry A. Lyddon offered to draw plans for the building which he did and enthusiasm ran pretty high and it really looked like we would get a club house. After all plans were made and the financing of same, the park board changed its collective minds and put a veto on our plans and we were without any club house.

At a later date it looked like we might get a sort of a club house. There was a vacant room in a building across the street from the green that might do in a pinch for a meeting place. Mr. Virges, who owned the building, was contacted and he agreed to rent the room for \$30.00 a month until such time as a permanent renter could be found. Committees were appointed and plans were made for some alterations. Before any of these could be perfected, lo and behold we were notified that the building had been rented for a much greater rental than the club could afford. So for the time being all thoughts of a club house were put aside.

In 1950 Mr. Dunckley took up the matter of an electrical outlet inside the green so we could have radio during the world series, or a connection for a hot plate to heat coffee and hot dishes for picnics. E. M. Anderson was contacted and was told that the club would pay for any wiring, etc. After the job was finished Mr. Anderson stated that he was able to get the material from some former job so we got the connection at no cost. The outlet has been used at a number of occasions and has been proved very useful.

In 1942 Roy Cleveland was appointed to the executive council of the Northwest Lawn Bowling Association, which position he held until 1953, when on account of ill health he was forced to resign and Chas. Middleton of Seattle was appointed.

Back around 1946 the lady members of the club requested full membership in the club and agreed to pay the same fees as the men. This made the Tacoma club the only club in the Northwest that the ladies had a vote in the transactions of the club.

In 1937 arrangements were made with the city light department and the park board for the installation of flood lights so that evening bowling could be installed. The lights were installed at a cost to the club of around \$465.00 which was paid in two installments.

A prominent Chehalis banker, N. B. Coffman, had three alley bowling greens in his large yard and inter-city lawn bowling matches were played at different times.



Around 1938 there was some agitation of installing a bowling green in Olympia and Olympia had petitioned for membership in the Northwest Association. The lack of a green in the capital city prevented Olympia from getting membership.

In 1946 the champion of champions contest was started. The object was for each club in the Northwest to hold singles contests to pick the champion from each club and the winners to meet at a given date for a play-off, the winner to receive a cup.

In 1946 Louis Muscek advocated incorporating the club and described the advantages the club would receive. After some discussion the members agreed with Mr. Muscek and he was authorized to proceed. Mr. Muscek donated his services for the incorporation.

E. McNeil offered to build lockers for the club members to keep their bowls in and also as a place to keep the mats, jacks, and other property of the club. Only once have the lockers been broken into. At that time Roy Cleveland lost one bowl and Mina Archer lost her four bowls. At that time I with Frank Dille's help figured out a method of protecting the doors. A heavy iron bar was installed across the front of the lockers. Since that time the lockers have not been bothered.

A couple of years ago there was some talk of a bowling green in Bremerton. At one time the College of Puget Sound thought some of putting in a green. The government hospitals at Fort Lewis thought some of putting in greens so that some of the mental patients might get some pleasure and benefit out of the games. The time it would take to get the greens established seemed to be the main factor in discouraging the matter.

In 1952 the national tournament of the American Lawn Bowling Association was held in Tacoma and Seattle. The year before Bill Hay, of Amos and Andy fame, came to Tacoma and Seattle to check up on the greens to see if the Northwest was equipped to handle this large affair. The tournament was a huge success and will be repeated again this year when Tacoma and Seattle will again be hosts for this event.

Last year, 1956, Seattle and Tacoma entertained a number of English bowlers who were on a tour of the United States and Canada. The visiting bowlers stated that the Tacoma greens were the best that they had played on during their tour.

This has been a rambling affair and may be of some interest to the members of the Tacoma club.

A number of our members have been elected president of the Northwest Bowling Association. Among them were Roy Cleveland, Wm. Dunckley, who was also secretary one year, Louis Muscek, Cy Mentzer, Dr. J. Oliver and others.

Up until 1949 the Bellingham club held tournaments during the 4<sup>th</sup> of July holidays. Bellingham had the best setup in the Northwest, two excellent greens and a modern club house. Internal dissention and a number of the players moving away and others having outside interests caused such a drop in membership that the club was disorganized and the game abandoned. I understand that a caretaker keeps one green in shape. The Tacoma members had some good times visiting Bellingham. For a time some of the bowlers went to Vancouver for the annual tournaments there. The visiting bowlers were supposed to leave their wives at home as the events were for men only. In fact one year a number of Tacoma bowlers attended the tournament and took their wives along. The ladies were there for a week and did not throw one bowl and the men were lectured for bringing the ladies along. The ladies' tournament was always a week later. This matter discouraged the men from attending any further tournaments.

In 1954 the park board decided that the old unsightly tool shed in the park should be destroyed so the board decided that a more modern and up-to-date building should be erected. The voters of the Metropolitan Park District had voted bonds for the building. The building houses all tools and equipment for the care of the park. Besides a large room was added for use of the oldsters as a gathering place in rainy and cold weather to play cards and other indoor games. The room is also used by groups as a meeting place. The Tacoma club uses the room for meetings and picnic dinners.

The club also has a number of trophies that are played for each season. These include: Reid Memorial trophy for ladies' singles and W. Reid cup for men's singles (the winner of this event to represent Tacoma in the Champion of Champions playoff in Seattle the last day of the Labor Day tournament in Seattle); Fraser cup for men and women club singles; Brus Buick trophy for men's doubles; Armstrong trophy for inter-city doubles play held in Seattle, with lead of not more than three years experience and experienced skip; President's cup for club singles, men and women; MacLean trophy for ladies' singles; Weisfield cup for novice singles. These were in addition to the cups offered by the Northwest.

Among those who organized the Tacoma Lawn Bowling Club were Lew Thomas, George Wilkinson, Eugene McNeil, John Wood, Arthur Green, A. S. Drummond, Wm. Reid, Bill Reid, Thomas Skinner.

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### **Addendum**

The American Lawn Bowling Association was organized in Buffalo, New York in 1915. It was not until 1970 that the American Women's Lawn Bowling Association was formed. In 2000 the two organizations merged and became the United States Lawn Bowls Association (USLBA), and then in 2013 became Bowls USA, the name used to this day.

Without question, Pat Boehm, a member of both the Tacoma club and Jefferson Park, made the greatest contributions to the game of lawn bowls, not only in the Pacific Northwest but also on the National and International scene. Pat was one of six delegates who met in California on February 21, 1970, at the inaugural meeting of AWLBA. Pat was the third President of AWLBA and was a Councilor for many years. Her accomplishments on the bowling green included many U.S. Championships as well as representing the U.S. team in Pretoria, South Africa; Worthing, England; Wellington, New Zealand; Toronto, Canada; and Melbourne, Australia. She was manager for the Pacific Games in Fiji in 1989, for World Bowls in 1992 and for the first Atlantic Rim team in Florida in 1993.

Myra Wood, a former member of the Tacoma club who now lives in Sun City, Arizona, was President of the AWLBA in 1995 and represented the United States as a member of several international teams.

Donna West served as a Councilor for many years and competed in the United States Championships in Sun City, Santa Barbara and Seattle. In 2000 at the time of the merger of the AWLBA and the ALBA, Donna was elected to be the first President of the USLBA and she served in that position for two years.

Tacoma, in the Northwest Division, has come on hard times. In 1961 there was a total of 34 members, 27 men and 7 women. Today we can possibly muster two or three people for a make-up game.

In 2006 the park board closed the green for renovation. A chain link fence was put around the green preventing its use for recreational purposes. The hawthorn hedge was removed and in its place a black wrought iron fence with a padlock was installed.

Today the setting is impressive. The green is again accessible and it looks inviting to anyone walking past, but the drawback is that membership in the Tacoma club was decimated for the greater part of two years while the green was closed.

**December 2014**