

## In the beginning...

The club was organized around 1900. Two clay courts were constructed on the shore of the old Sarnia Bay, on a site of land called Bayview Park. Two more were added later and a small boathouse converted into a clubhouse, which provided a headquarters for several years.

In the early 1920s, the club moved to its present location. Three cement courts were built. There was a clubhouse with a verandah and shutters. There were a couple of table tennis tables, card tables & cards for the players to use while they waited. In 1929 the tennis club was incorporated.

In 1935 there were 24 men @ \$10.00, 23 ladies @ \$7.00 and 11 juniors @ \$3. There were also 5 ladies @ \$5.00, probably non-residents. Visitors paid \$.50. In addition to their club fees, each family had to contribute \$10. toward a building fund.

Improvements in these days meant an awning built over the verandah and the addition of beach umbrellas and tables. A big improvement was the installation of a water line and a pay phone in 1939. A caretaker, hired at 25 cents an hour for no more than 8 hours a week, cleaned the clubhouse, washed dishes etc, and collected visitors' fees, for which he received 20% of what he collected.

The club reorganized after a period of virtual inactivity during the war and in 1949 a \$3,000. clubhouse containing lockers, showers and a change room was built. Through voluntary efforts of the club's almost 100 members, two clay courts were constructed, (where the social services' building now sits) and a professional instructor hired. Toby Hanson came from Detroit weekly to teach. (Bobby Riggs was among many of the great tennis players *he* taught.) A large crowd was, according to the Windsor Star 'thrilled to see special professional exhibition matches opening the club's courts'. Other professionals, and the head of the U.S. Lawn Tennis Association, also attended this opening.

In December that same year (1949), the club brought in the Bobby Riggs professional tennis troupe to the Sarnia Arena and Community Center. Can you imagine seeing these in Sarnia – Great names in tennis such as Tommy Kramer, Pancho Segura, Mrs. Pauline Betz Addie and Gertrude “Gorgeous Gussie” Moran!

The newspaper clipping notes that the tennis club is now within the city’s boundaries due to recent annexation.

Four years later hydro was brought in – so two courts were dimly lit with arena lights. They were the only lit courts in Sarnia!

1956 rules stated white was to be the regular dress on the court, including white tennis shoes and, until 1959, it was against the lease to play tennis on Sundays.

The club was very active at this time, both adults and juniors traveling all over Ontario. Juniors competed successfully. For example, Rene Donohue was one of the junior girls and Jon Burley won the under 13 provincial championship.

At this point the clay courts were being little used, as they needed much up-keep, so they were seeded, to be used as grass courts. (They could be turned back into clay courts if needed.)

The county began construction of their county buildings and took over the grassed courts, erecting the children’s aid building. It was awkward for members to get to their three remaining courts, and damage to the court fencing, and practice board and pad by the workers caused membership to really drop off. In 1962 there were 22 men, 11 ladies, 2 couples and 27 juniors.

The club hosted an annual Sarnia and District Tennis Tournament. The 3rd one in 1966 attracted 100 entries to the week-long tournament, using the Germain courts as well as those at the Riding Club

The next year the lighting was improved. The members of that day were thrilled to have a string of floodlights strung lengthwise between courts 1 & 2 , & 2 & 3. (When the wind blew, the lights waved back and forth.)

In the 70's the club had a resurgence with numbers around 450. Membership actually closed and a waiting list established. As a result lighting was again upgraded and about 20 years ago courts 4, 5 & 6 were built. More recently the concrete base from the first three courts was removed and an asphalt surface laid, and in 1998 lighting poles were repositioned and tournament-level lighting installed.

2015 - Membership 290

Present Day.....

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