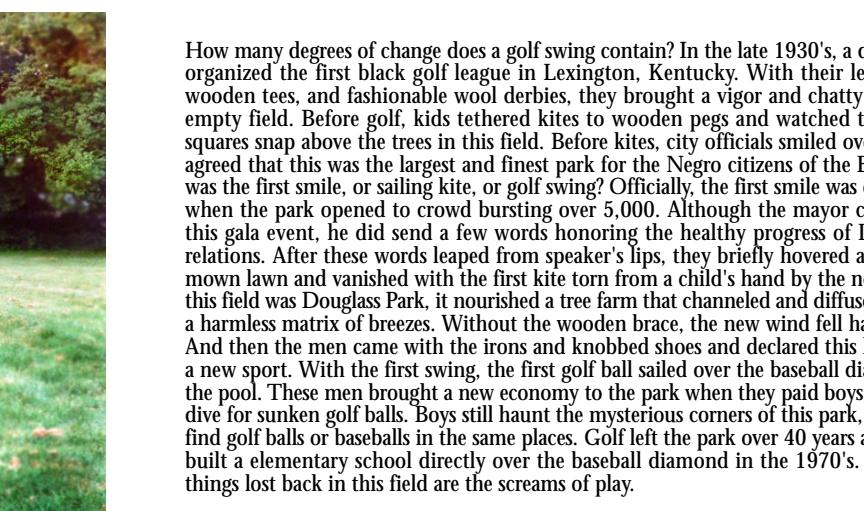


360° of Golf in Douglass Park, 1997



Joy and Sons Share

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How many degrees of swing does a golfer swing in a day? In the late 1930's, a dozen black men organized the first black golf league in Lexington, Kentucky. With their leather golf bags, wooden tees, and washable wool drives, they brought vigor and chutzpah to this empty field. For golf, kids tethered kites to wooden pegs and watched the small cotton kites sweep over the trees in this field. Before kites, city officials sliced over the grass and agreed that this was the largest and finest park for the Negro citizens of the Big Bluegrass. When there was a smile, sailing kites or golfing? Officially, the first mile was only 4.16, when the park opened to crowds over 500. Although the mayor or city council attended this gathering, he did not attend a word about the steady progress of Lexington's race relations. After these words faded from speaker's lips, they briefly hovered above the freshly mown lawn and vanished with the first kit torn from a child's hand by the new wind. Before this field was Douglass Park, it nourished trees that at one time had diffused the wind into a harmless matrix of breezes. Without the wooden braces, the wind fell hard on this field. And then the men came with irons and knobbed shoes and declared this land would host a new sport. With the first swing, the first ball sailed over the baseball diamond and into the hole. The men brought a new economy to the park when they paid boys nickel to keep five for sun golf balls. Boys still haunt the mysterious corners of this park, but they don't find golf balls or baseballs in the same places. Golf in the park over 40 years ago, the city built a elementary school directly over the baseball diamond in the 37° of day, the only thing lost back in this field are the scars of play.