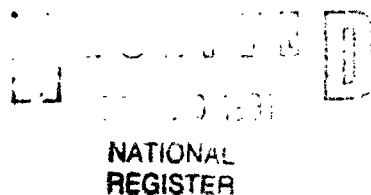


United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Registration Form



This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations of eligibility for individual properties or districts. See instructions in *Guidelines for Completing National Register Forms* (National Register Bulletin 16). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the requested information. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, styles, materials, and areas of significance, enter only the categories and subcategories listed in the instructions. For additional space use continuation sheets (Form 10-900a). Type all entries.

1. Name of Property

historic name Langston Golf Course Historic District
other names/site number Langston Golf Course

2. Location

street & number 2600 Benning Road, N.E. not for publication N/A
city, town Washington vicinity N/A
state District of Columbia code DC county DC code 001 zip code 20002

3. Classification

Ownership of Property	Category of Property	Number of Resources within Property	
<input type="checkbox"/> private	<input type="checkbox"/> building(s)	Contributing	Noncontributing
<input type="checkbox"/> public-local	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> district	<u>1</u>	<u>3</u> buildings
<input type="checkbox"/> public-State	<input type="checkbox"/> site	<u>1</u>	<u>6</u> structures
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> public-Federal	<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<u>1</u>	<u>9</u> objects
	<input type="checkbox"/> object		<u>0</u> Total

Name of related multiple property listing: N/A
Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register 0

4. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, I hereby certify that this nomination request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria. See continuation sheet.
[Signature] 8-27-91
Signature of certifying official Date
State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria. See continuation sheet.
[Signature] 9/30/91
Signature of commenting or other official Date
State or Federal agency and bureau National

5. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby, certify that this property is:
 entered in the National Register. Patrick W. Andrews 10/15/91
 See continuation sheet.
 determined eligible for the National Register. See continuation sheet.
 determined not eligible for the National Register.
 removed from the National Register.
 other, (explain:)

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions (enter categories from instructions)

Current Functions (enter categories from instructions)

Sports facility/golf course

Sports facility/golf course

7. DescriptionArchitectural Classification
(enter categories from instructions)

Materials (enter categories from instructions)

N/A

foundation _____

walls _____

roof _____

other _____

Describe present and historic physical appearance.

Langston Golf Course is a Federally owned public facility located in the Northeast quadrant of Washington, D. C. The 18-hole course is sited on 145 acres, within a man-made landscape of gently undulating terrain. The location is in Section G of Reservation 343, the Anacostia River Park, as maintained by the National Park Service, U. S. Department of the Interior.

The land for Anacostia Park was reclaimed from the Anacostia River wetlands by the U. S. Army Corps of Engineers. Creation of the flats was first promulgated in an appropriation act of March 3, 1909, and funding for planning and acquisition continued until 1928. The establishment of the Anacostia Park was a planning effort to increase recreational facilities and to protect the scenic river shorelines.

The Anacostia Flats Park reclamation area borders both sides of the Anacostia River from the convergence with the Potomac River north to the District boundary. Section G is bounded by Benning Road on the south, the Potomac Electric Company generating plant and Anacostia Avenue on the east, the National Arboretum and the District of

9. Major Bibliographical References

Ashe, Arthur. Afro-American Athletes, A Hard Road to Glory,

New York, New York: Warner Books, 1988.

Baltimore Afro-American. "Golf Course Opens Sunday," (June 10, 1939):

p. 21, Balt., MD.

Baltimore Afro-American. "New Golf Course Dedicated in D. C.,"

(June 17, 1939): p. 21, Balt., MD.

See continuation sheet

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested
- previously listed in the National Register
- previously determined eligible by the National Register
- designated a National Historic Landmark
- recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # _____
- recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # _____

Primary location of additional data:

- State historic preservation office
- Other State agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other

Specify repository: _____

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of property _____

UTM References

A

18	330280	4308200
Zone	Easting	Northing

C

18	329770	4307280
Zone	Easting	Northing

B

18	330040	4307700
Zone	Easting	Northing

D

18	329780	4306980
Zone	Easting	Northing

See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description

The boundary defines a 145-acre site located in the southwest corner of Section G of Reservation 343, the Anacostia River Park.

See continuation sheet

Boundary Justification

The golf course occupies all of the area within the above-described boundary, with which it has been historically associated.

See continuation sheet

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Joseph H. Cole, chairperson

organization Committee to Preserve Langston Golf Course date November 6, 1989

street & number 2905 14th Street, N.E. telephone (202) 526-7258

city or town Washington state DC zip code 20017

8. Statement of Significance

Certifying official has considered the significance of this property in relation to other properties:

nationally statewide locally

Applicable National Register Criteria A B C D

Criteria Considerations (Exceptions) A B C D E F G

Areas of Significance (enter categories from instructions)
Ethnic (Black) Heritage

Period of Significance
1939-1941

Significant Dates
1939

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Significant Person
N/A

Architect/Builder
N/A

State significance of property, and justify criteria, criteria considerations, and areas and periods of significance noted above.

Langston Golf Course, opened in June 1939, is significant for its symbolic association with the development and desegregation of public golfing and recreational facilities in the greater Washington, D. C., area and with the growth of golf as a popular recreational and professional sport for African Americans. The course served as a focal point for Black golfers in their effort, first, to encourage the development of golfing facilities for Black players and, later, to ensure equal access to, and equal quality of, recreational facilities operated by the National Park Service. The course is also significant as the home course of the Royal Golf Club and the Wake Robin Golf Club, the nation's first golf clubs for Black men and women. The development of Langston Golf Course is also significant for its association with the efforts of Harold L. Ickes, Secretary of the Interior (1933-1941), to offer equal access to all public facilities for Black citizens.

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Columbia boundary on the north, and District of Columbia public property on the west, including public schools, housing and streets. The golf course is in the southwest corner of Section G, west of the Anacostia River. It surrounds the part of Kingman Lake that lies north of Benning Road, and play action traverses the water.

The beginning holes of each nine are laid out in a northerly to northeasterly direction. The length of the course is 6340 yards, 3243 yards for the front nine and 3097 yards for the back nine. Typical golf course hazards are man-made sand traps and natural water hazards. A driving range is located at the far southeast corner of the area and is set off from the golf course by a natural berm. The course retains most of its historical layout, both the original nine holes and the nine holes added later. Some minor changes have been made to accommodate playing conditions.

Originally slated for 18 holes, the course opened in June, 1939, with only 9 holes, and remained so until 1955, when the course was completed as planned. Because of limited funding, the course never has been brought to PGA tournament difficulty, but it is noted for some challenging dogleg holes.

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The entire landscape of the golf course in its parkland setting is a contributing feature. From its farthest northern point, the golf course provides a magnificent and historic vista of undeveloped, open space along the Anacostia basin.

Noncontributing resources are the clubhouse, a maintenance shed, a hut at the driving range, two bridges over the waterways, two concrete piers and a concrete pump enclosure remaining from the Corps of Engineers reclamation projects, and a concrete remnant from a miniature golf course that no longer exists. Although these resources are located within the boundaries of Langston Golf Course, they do not contribute to its historic significance, due either to recent age, loss of integrity, or incompatibility with the golf course. Following are brief notes on these noncontributing resources.

Clubhouse: Built in 1955, the clubhouse does not meet the fifty-year age requirement of the National Register. Further, it is neither architecturally nor historically noteworthy.

Maintenance shed: Built in 1977, this 60' X 18' cinder block structure is used for servicing and storing golf course maintenance equipment.

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Driving range hut: Built in 1985, this 20' X 10' cinder block structure is utilized for washing, storing, and dispensing range balls.

Bridge #1: Built in 1954, this bridge spans the northern mouth of Kingman Lake, providing a return from the island golf holes to the mainland part of the golf course.

Bridge #2: Built in 1977, this bridge spans the narrow part of Kingman Lake just north of, and parallel to, the Benning Road Bridge. It was constructed to provide access to the island holes and to the driving range, within the boundary of the golf course.

Concrete piers and pump enclosure: These concrete features are in the northern mouth of Kingman Lake, on both sides of Bridge #1. They predate the 1922 seawall construction and were associated with the sewage treatment facilities pertaining to Kingman Lake. These features were neither associated with the golf course nor the Anacostia seawall; nor do they serve any present function.

Remnant of miniature golf course: This concrete foundation is the only remaining legacy of a miniature golf course that was built on the southwest corner of the Langston site in the early 1950s.

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The history and development of golf as a recreational pastime and professional sport is flavored by the sport's "country club" image. For much of its history in the United States, golf has been perceived as the sport of a privileged few. For this reason, in the early years the Black golfer was somewhat anomalous, a departure from common perception. Yet an examination of golf's general history, and the history of Langston Golf Course in particular, reveals a long and continuing chronology of Black participation, enjoyment, and excellence in the sport.

The history of golf in the United States usually indicates its early emergence in the South in the 1780s, an import of the Scottish merchant class. Practice of the sport increased significantly in the 1880s and 90s. Emulating the renowned Royal and Ancient Golf Club of St. Andrews in Scotland, the first American golfers formed clubs which provided social as well as athletic outlets. Thus, golf's ongoing image as a club sport with exclusive social connotations emerged. This tradition and the segregationist practices of most country clubs resulted in social and, therefore, racial barriers that severely limited very early the participation of Blacks in the sport.

Ironically, while golf's strict social hierarchy restricted Black golfers from the clubhouses, it did not prevent their access to some

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of the best golf courses in the United States. Serving as caddies, some Blacks regularly could be found on the golf courses where they advised their clients/customers regarding the best way to play a hole. During the sport's formative years, the 1880s to the 1920s, Black servants and hired laborers, shouldering the burden of golf bags and clubs, followed their white employers around the courses. This role was elevated to a skilled art form, as the caddy became more important than just the "toter" of the bag. A skilled caddy became a premium in great demand. His knowledge of the course was important as each player took on the challenge. This knowledge was honed as the Black caddy played the course during the slack time or on special days. With the advent of the golf cart, the burden-bearing role lapsed in amateur golf, but the role of the caddy as companion/confidant in professional golf continued, as the golf pro and caddy were acknowledged as a team.

The golfing skill of the Black caddy was often recognized and even envied. In an undated article, Washington sports writer Walter McCallum noted the skill of Black caddies, "These boys--no fooling--can get around any course...in figures that would turn you green with envy. Scores like 70 and 71 slip off their clubs like magic, and yet you never hear of 'em---. Lots of golfers who think they are good would learn that bagtoters can play golf." ¹

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Early participation of Blacks in golf is also evidenced by the fact that the golf tee was invented by a Black golfer. In 1899, Dr. George F. Grant, a prominent Black dentist and an avid golfer, was granted a patent for the golf tee.

Dewey Brown became the first Black member of the United States Golf Association (USGA) in the 1920s. Over the next two decades, the USGA and the Professional Golfers Association (PGA) would become progressively more restrictive. In a manner similar to that of the National Football League and the baseball major leagues, the PGA adopted an unwritten but widely recognized policy of not admitting Black golfers to its tour stops during the 1930s. The policy was formally adopted in 1943, when the constitution of the PGA was amended to include a clause limiting its membership to "Professional golfers of the Caucasian race."²

The Black golf movement found its own path, however, in spite of these restrictions. The city of Washington, D. C. and Langston Golf Course provided the means for this development. The tradition of golf played by Blacks in Washington can be traced to the turn of the century. As in other cities, Black men regularly caddied at the area's public and private golf courses. Along with the caddies, some of the city's Black physicians, dentists, etc., also became golf enthusiasts.

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Opportunities to practice were severely limited, however, as the city's only golf facility open to Black players was the nine-hole course located in what is now Constitution Gardens, portions of the Lincoln Memorial north ground, and the old Naval Hospital grounds at 24th Street and Constitution Avenue, NW. The greens were round, about 25 feet in diameter, and were covered with sand. All but three of the holes could be driven with irons. This course had been built for "colored" golfers. Even under these restricted circumstances, the ranks of Washington's African American golfers continued to grow. Two of the sport's first Black professionals, John and Cyrus Shippen, helped to inspire Washington's young Black golfers. The Shippen brothers were of mixed African and Indian heritage, and occasionally they would "pass" in order to play on restricted courses.³ John's skills enabled him to play in the U.S. Open in 1913. His brother Cyrus in 1928 became the golf coach at Dunbar High School, Washington's academic high school for Blacks.

As the number of Black players grew, their frustration due to the limited number of accessible golf courses mounted. Players often traveled great distances to courses without discriminatory policies, in Boston, Pittsburgh, Philadelphia and New York, to enjoy the open courses in those cities and the camaraderie of fellow Black golfers. Such was the case in 1926, when two Washingtonians, Dr. George Adams

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and Dr. Albert Harris, traveled to Mapledale Golf Course in Stowe, Massachusetts, to participate in the first annual tournament of the United Golfers Association (UGA).

The United Golfers Association was founded in 1926, as an outgrowth of the Negro Golfers Association which had been formed in 1920. The UGA functioned as the Black community's counterpart to the segregated PGA. The UGA established a sport and social exchange for Blacks along the East Coast, in the Midwest, and in Los Angeles. While increasing the level of play among Blacks as a key aspect of its stated mission, the UGA encouraged the establishment of Black golf clubs and the popularization of the sport. Dr. Albert Harris won the UGA tournament in 1926, setting a precedent for Washington's active involvement in the UGA. Representatives of Washington's Black golfing community became a strong force in the leadership of the UGA, as the organization pressed for the end of racial discrimination at the amateur and professional levels.

This group of Washingtonians figured prominently in the development of Langston Golf Course. Returning from Stowe, Dr. Albert Harris and Dr. George Adams set out to organize a golf club in Washington. With others, they established in 1927 the Capital City Golf Club, the nation's first golf club for Blacks. Its founding members were

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architect John Langford, Dr. Dwight Holmes, Dr. George Adams, John and Cyrus Shippen, William Carter, Dr. Albert Harris, George Harrison, and Dr. M. T. Grant. The name of the organization was changed to the Royal Golf Club in the fall of 1933. In 1937, several of the wives of members of the Royal Golf Club founded the Wake Robin Golf Club, the nation's first such organization of Black women. Thus the Royal Golf Club and the Wake Robin Golf Club were important factors in establishing firmly the tradition of golf among Blacks in Washington and throughout the United States.

The lack of adequate accessible facilities severely hindered the activities of these two clubs, as well as of Washington's other Black golfers, and the movement to gain better facilities became a rallying point for the city's Black golfers. The group's lobbying methods point to the relative sophistication of its members. Letters were sent, meetings with prominent officials were arranged, and daring demonstrations of defiance were staged. The establishment of Langston Golf Course was the culmination of at least fifteen years of concerted effort. The opening of the course was a major achievement in the long campaign toward accessible public golf courses of high quality. The earliest documentation of the Black community's push for a separate, accessible golf facility is a letter by John Langford, a prominent Black architect, community leader, and avid sportsman. Langford,

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noted above as a member of the Capital City Golf Club, wrote to the Department of the Navy in 1927, requesting that a public facility for Black golfers be included in the then emerging plans for recreational development along the Anacostia River.⁴

It was not until 1934 that public officials complied with the request. At that time a delegation of golfers met with Capt. Guy Finnan, Superintendent of Public Buildings and Grounds at the Navy Department, to present a formal request for adequate golfing facilities on behalf of local Black golfers. The delegation, representing the Royal Golf Club, included Langford, Dr. George Adams, Dr. Albert Harris and James N. Saunders, a teacher at Dunbar High School. Finnan indicated that plans for an 18-hole course in Anacostia Park, which would include an up-to-date clubhouse, were already under advisement. The work was to proceed under the administration of Public Works "in the very near future."

The exact date when construction began on the Langston Golf Course in the early 1930s is unclear. References do indicate, however, that the golf course was a component of the larger development of the so-called "Anacostia Water Park," planned by the Commission of Fine Arts to balance northeast community development with that found in the city's northwest quadrant. Work on the golf course was carried out by

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the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) and the Work Projects Administration (WPA).

The new golf course was named to honor John Mercer Langston, the first and only person of color from Virginia to serve his state in the U. S. House of Representatives. Early plans refer to location of the golf course in the general area of Anacostia Park called Kingman Lake, referencing the island created along the west shore of the Anacostia River. Early official correspondence refers to it as the "Kingman" or "Benning Road" golf course.

Langston Golf Course opened with much fanfare on June 11, 1939. Officials of the Department of the Interior and the National Park Service were present, along with representatives of the local golf clubs. Dr. Harold A. Fisher, president of the Royal Golf Club, took the podium along with Mrs. Helen W. Harris, president of the Wake Robin Golf Club. Other citizen representatives included J. Finley Wilson, grand exalted ruler of the I.B.P.O.E.W., and Edgar G. Brown, president of United Government Employees. The golf course was touted as "modern in every respect," with bent grass greens.

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While the opening of Langston Golf Course was a real victory for African American golfers in their efforts to gain golfing facilities, the course did have its shortcomings. Although an 18-hole course was promised, Langston was hurriedly opened with only nine holes. Some of the greens lacked grass, and some holes were later to be relocated. Having caddied and played at other courses, Washington's Black golfers were acutely aware of Langston's inadequacies. Its shortcomings were such that the local golf clubs were unable to sponsor tournament play there and were still forced to travel regularly to New York and Philadelphia to play 18-hole courses.

Despite Langston's inadequacies, its players were less unfortunate than most Black golfers. In 1939 there were 5209 golf facilities in the country, of which 3288 were private, 711 were municipally owned, and 1210 were daily fee courses. Fewer than twenty of these courses were open to Black golfers.

The disparities in golfing facilities were added to the long list of grievancies held by African Americans against the public policies of segregation. Early in Langston's history, Black golfers registered complaints with the Department of the Interior through the National Park Service concerning the inadequacy of the course, the maintenance of the concessions, and other issues. Concurrently, the push to

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provide quality facilities at Langston, as well as access to better facilities such as the East Potomac Golf Course, was continued.

In July of 1941, just two years after Langston's opening, a group of golfers, led by Royal Golf Club members Edgar G. Brown and Dr. George Adams, requested access to East Potomac Golf Course. Their organized effort to integrate the course was rebuffed by crowds of whites, some of whom threw rocks. The golfers turned to Secretary of the Interior Harold Ickes to re-examine the discriminatory policy of that public facility. In keeping with his landmark policy decision to allow Marian Anderson to perform at the Lincoln Memorial, Secretary Ickes supported the Black golfers' petition for access to the East Potomac Golf Course. Ickes' sentiments are documented in his diaries, "They are tax payers, they are citizens, and they have a right to play golf on public courses on the same basis as whites. To be sure, we have maintained a golf course for Negroes in Washington [Langston], but the cold fact is that we have not kept it up and it is not surprising that Negroes do not care to play on it---." In spite of Secretary Ickes' position and the great strides made to liberalize public land use during his administration, Black golfers played on Washington's public courses at great risk, being subjected to taunts, racial slurs, and harassment. Although policies regarding the administration of the National Capital Parks clearly called for concessionaires to

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operate on a non-segregated basis, this policy had little relation to the reality of the daily operation of Washington's public golf courses. In 1942, when the Wake Robin Golf Club petitioned the National Capital Parks for permission to use East Potomac Golf Course for its tournament, so vociferous was the outcry that the club withdrew its application for the sake of safety. The wartime emergency resulting from the country's entry into World War II was cited as the official reason for their withdrawal.

Langston finally became a full 18-hole course in 1955. The enlargement and redesign of the course provided Washington's Black golfers with the type of golfing facility they had sought for so long. Desegregation of Washington's public facilities opened courses such as East Potomac and Rock Creek to Black golfers. A few private golf facilities also became fully accessible to Blacks. Although there was freedom to play at other courses, Langston continued to have Black golfers as its predominant patrons and to serve the Black community as its primary course.

With Langston as its home course, Washington's Black golfing community continued to grow. As the Royal Golf Club, the Wake Robin Golf Club, and the Arlington Divot Golf Club (established in 1940), along with other UGA affiliates, pushed for golfing excellence, professional

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players began to emerge. The professional player most often associated with Langston is Lee Elder, who became a fixture on the UGA circuit.

The gulf between the sport's white and Black circuits remained wide, however, until 1959 when the PGA finally lifted its "whites only" clause. In September of that year, Charles Sifford became the first Black professional golfer to gain a PGA membership card. Eight years later, in 1967, Lee Elder became the PGA's second Black member. In 1968, Langston had become Elder's home course, but rather than to defend his UGA championship at Langston, Elder chose to enter the PGA's Westchester Golf Classic, influenced by the considerable difference between the UGA and PGA prize moneys. The UGA offered \$2,000; the PGA offered \$250,000. A national television audience saw the 33-year-old "rookie" challenge the era's most noted player, Jack Nicklaus, in a play-off for supremacy on the course. Though Elder lost to Nicklaus, his second-place finish earned him a national reputation. Part of this acclaim was attributed to Elder's perfecting his game at Langston Golf Course. Elder went on to hold his own tournament at Langston, and later he and his wife, Rose, managed the course. Although the course was closed for a time because of mismanagement, Langston's traditional patrons returned upon its re-opening by Golf Course Specialists, Inc.

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While Langston Golf Course is frequented by golfers of many ethnic backgrounds, it is traditionally and predominantly played by Black golfers. The Royal Golf Club, the Wake Robin Golf Club, the Arlington Divot Golf Club, and the Oxon Blades Golf Club continue to frequent the course along with several other golf clubs and numerous unaffiliated players. Tournaments are scheduled on a regular basis. Over the fifty-year history of Langston Golf Course, Black golfers have been consistently loyal to Langston as much from the tradition of playing golf there as from the strong emotional bond of their hardships and their achievements in the long struggle begun in the mid-1920s for accessible golfing facilities of high quality.

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Footnotes

1. Walter McCallum, undated article. Royal Golf Club, unpublished club records.
2. Arthur Ashe, Afro-American Athletes, A Hard Road to Glory. Warner Books, New York, 1988. vol. 2, p. 148.
3. Ibid. vol. 1, p. 65.
4. National Capital Parks, Anacostia Park, unpublished papers and records. Letter from John Langford to the Department of the Navy, 1927.

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UTM References (continued)

	Z	Easting	Northing		Z	Easting	Northing
E	18	329400	4307010	F	18	329120	4307070
G	18	329130	4307330	H	18	329230	4307330
I	18	329230	4307520	J	18	329190	4307520
K	18	329190	4307680	L	18	329130	4307680
M	18	329130	4307710	N	18	329000	4307710
O	18	328950	4307810	P	18	329160	4307920
Q	18	329570	4307920	R	18	329750	4308300
S	18	329930	4308360				

Verbal Boundary Description (continued)

The drawing shows the boundary as defined by line segments joining the UTM coordinates. The eastern boundary is the west bank of the Anacostia River, ABCD. The southern boundary is Benning Road, DEF. The complex western boundary is comprised of: 26th Street, FG and LM; an indentation for a school stadium and tennis courts east of 26th Street, GHIJKL; I Street, MN; and 22nd Street, NO. The northern boundary is comprised of: Maryland Avenue, OP; M Street, PQ; and the southern boundary of the National Arboretum, QRSA.

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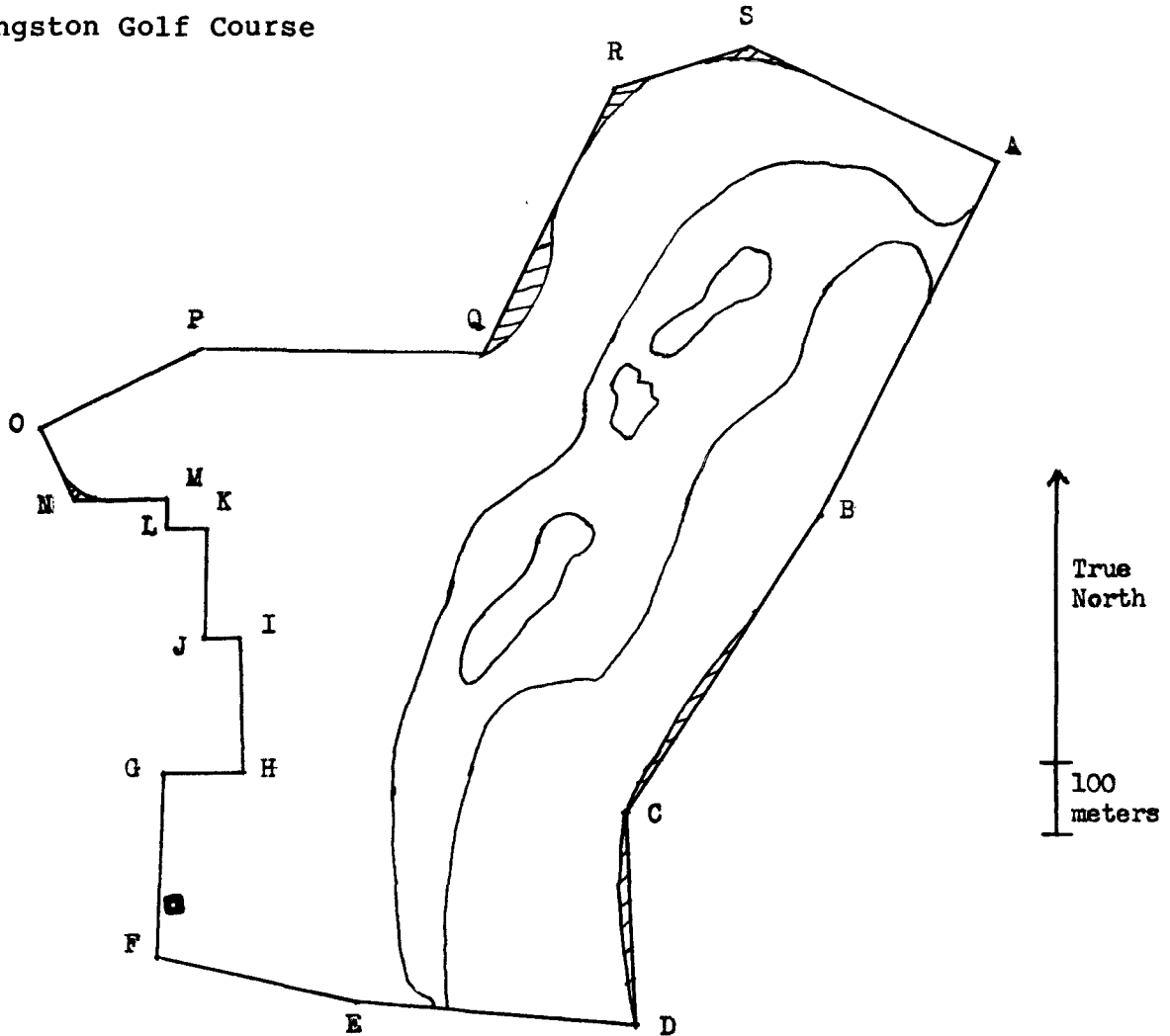
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Boundary Drawing

Langston Golf Course



The square near point F is the clubhouse, centered at UTM coordinates Z18 E329150 N4307140. Kingman Lake and its three islands are shown.