

Cool Crest Miniature Golf

THE COOLEST SPOT IN TOWN

by Elizabeth Porterfield • photos by City of San Antonio Office of Historic Preservation

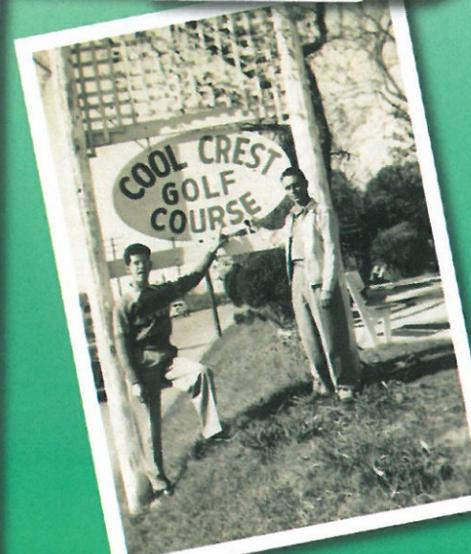
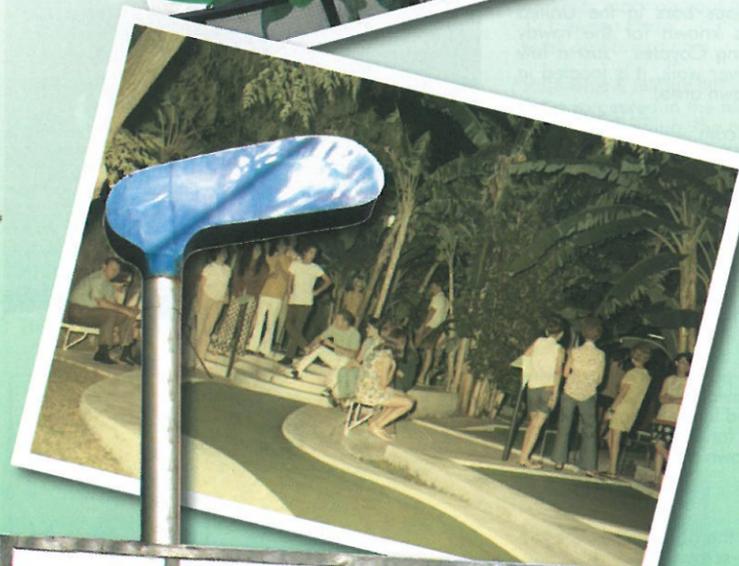
Looking for a fun outdoor activity with a vintage twist? Then you won't want to miss a stop at San Antonio's iconic Cool Crest Miniature Golf, recently restored and reopened!

Cool Crest, located atop a rise on Fredericksburg Road slightly northwest of downtown, has long been a favorite gathering spot for miniature golf enthusiasts of all ages. From childhood outings to first dates, Cool Crest has played a significant role in San Antonio entertainment for over 80 years. After a brief closure, Cool Crest Miniature Golf is now back in "full swing."

Cool Crest Miniature Golf was first referenced in newspaper articles in 1930, but the course may have initially opened in 1929. Once advertised as "the Coolest Spot in Town," Cool Crest is integrally sited along the slope of a hill to capture prevailing breezes. Angled pathways, streams and ponds, banana palms, and lush landscaping meander

along the naturally sloping terraces of the site.

Like most sports, miniature golf has evolved over the decades. In the early 1900s "Garden Golf" was played on real grass as a shorter version of regulation golf. The 1920s witnessed the emergence of the miniature golf craze with courses springing up all over the United States. Garnet and Frieda Carter, owners of the Fairyland Inn on Lookout Mountain in Chattanooga, Tennessee, are credited with promoting miniature golf in the 1920s on a national scale. Their "fairytale" miniature golf course for kids, created in 1927, was wildly popular with both children and adults and led to their development of the prefabricated Tom Thumb Golf Course, patented in 1929. By mid-1930, there were an estimated 25,000-50,000 miniature golf courses constructed around the country with 4 million players. The courses generally featured an 18-hole range with figures, obstacles, and miniature buildings.



Despite this popularity, miniature golf dwindled during the Depression years, with many courses shutting down. Its comeback would dawn, however, with the suburban age of the 1950s and 60s. Miniature golf flourished during the post WWII automobile era, and courses became a familiar aspect of roadside architecture at motels, drive-in movie theaters, beaches, and other tourist areas.

Cool Crest Miniature Golf is exceptional for its continued operation through most of the 20th century as well as for its naturalistic setting. Unlike many of the miniature golf courses of its time with whimsical figures and themed settings, Cool Crest has always featured a lush, natural landscape nestled within the sloping terrain of a small hillside. Although initially under different ownership in the early 1930s, Harold and Maria Metzger were the long-time owners of Cool Crest who turned it into one of San Antonio's landmark entertainment venues. Reportedly Harold Metzger, owner of a trucking company in San Antonio in the 1930s, played a game of miniature golf with a friend in Dallas and decided this was a business venture to pursue. He leased the existing Cool Crest Miniature Golf Course in 1937 and set about updating the site. Metzger incorporated a large neon sign along Fredericksburg Road that still stands today. Metzger purchased the property after WWII, and a second 18-hole course was added in 1959-60. Maria Metzger continued to operate Cool Crest after her husband's death in 1998 until 2008 when her health forced her to close the business. With the death of Maria Metzger in 2010, Cool Crest faced an uncertain future.

Recently, Cool Crest has experienced a renaissance, due to the efforts of the Andry family. The Andry brothers, life-long San Antonio residents, purchased Cool Crest Miniature Golf and carefully returned the course to its former glory as a beloved San Antonio entertainment spot. Cool Crest has now reopened for miniature golf Tuesday through Sunday (closed on Mondays). Special summer discounts are available, and the outdoor patio can be reserved for parties or events. Cool Crest is located at 1402 Fredericksburg Road. Additional information is available at www.coolcrestgolf.com or by calling 210-732-0222.

Come out to Cool Crest Miniature Golf and challenge yourself on the two 18-hole courses. Enjoy the shade of banana trees and the ripple of waterways as you experience one of San Antonio's most cherished family fun spots!

