

The Making of a Golf Course

By Rochelle Danielson

The idea for a course came about in the summer of 1917, when Enterprise Country Club members, Ian MacDonald and R .J. Campbell — considered golf experts from the east — declared the property that lay two miles north of town ideal for the game.

The club applied for a state charter, and contracted for the 43 acres. The fledgling organization incorporated with capital stock of \$5,000, and shares of \$25 each.

The charter application came at a time when optimism flourished in the county, where the population was growing in leaps and bounds.

It was also a time when golf, a game that had been played chiefly by people of wealth before 1913, had gained the attention of the broader American public, Wallowa County included.

Excerpts from the Enterprise Record Chieftain . . . “a four hole course is available on club grounds. There is a crop on part of the land, which can be of no use for golf until next year at the earliest. It will be plowed, harrowed and seeded this fall, and a good turf should form by early next summer. There is no brush to be cleared off, as what grows there will be permitted to remain. The ground will be pastured with sheep to keep grass down.”

Another excerpt, two months later, read . . . “golf has got a good start. The game has more than a score of followers already, who are seen morning and evening driving out to the alluring greens; and on street corners, men now stop and discuss their scores and how many strokes it took to get on the green at third hole, and what penalties they paid.”

But, during those early years the county’s optimism was replaced by the woes of war, loss of population and a “flu” scourge, not to mention, the Great Depression.

Sometime during that time the club relinquished its ownership. County records show the City of Enterprise eventually purchased the property for one dollar, on May 5, 1943.

During those two tumultuous decades the property remained a golf course, but was also used for other purposes, such as an emergency landing airport, sheep pasture, and a football field.

Bob Clegg, retired music director of Enterprise High School, lived in the two-story house on the course during the late-50s and mid-60s. In that 7 years, Clegg recalls that the city collected their rent, along with any green fees, and sales from the Coke machine. Walt Myers, a city employee, mowed fairways and irrigated.

Course enhancement became an issue as more people began to play golf. Golfers contributed evening time and planned weekend workdays. What had been described as a humble course, showed a renewed sense of pride. Golfers readily volunteered to mend and build new fences, weld pipe, and rake leaves and limbs.

The strong belief that Wallowa County would benefit from a golf course, showed itself mightily when the city decided to sell the land. A dozen or so businessmen/golfers went before the city council—more than once—to sell their story.

In 1966, the newly formed Wallowa Valley Golf Association succeeded in their quest, and signed a 30-year lease/contract agreement.

With the efforts of the late Harold Haller, who served as president of Northeast Oregon Vacationland, the golf association secured a \$50,000 FHA loan.

With the money a transformation of the course proceeded.

Boise-Cascade's road building crew, with Bill Patterson, BC's general manager, at the wheel, and a three-day window to get 'er done, the land was cleared, moved, dug, and leveled. Greens

were redesigned, tee boxes modified, and sod replaced sand. Included in the reconstruction, a new clubhouse was erected.

Today's nine-hole public golf course is the pride and joy of an enterprising group of people who over the years had a dream, and made it come true.