

Early History of Mount Si Golf Course, Snoqualmie, WA

Established 2-18-1927, Course Opened First Nine: 7-17-1927; Second Nine: 7-23-1933
Course Architect: Al Smith



A Snoqualmie Legend

Long ago, Snoqualm, or Moon, was chief of the heavens. One day he said to Spider, "Make a rope of cedar bark and stretch it from the earth to the sky."

Soon Fox and Bluejay found the rope and climbed up it. Late at night they came to the place where it was fastened to the underside of the sky. Bluejay pecked a hole in the sky, and the two of them crawled through.

Bluejay flew to a tree, and Fox found himself in a lake. There he changed himself into Beaver.

Snoqualm had set a trap in the lake, and Beaver got caught in the trap. Next morning Snoqualm took Beaver out of the trap, skinned him, stretched his skin out to dry, and threw the body into a corner of the smokehouse.

The next night Beaver waited until Snoqualm was asleep and snoring loudly. Then he got up, took his skin from the place where it was stretching and put it back on. While Snoqualm was still snoring, he examined the house and the sky world.

Outside he found a great forest of fir and pine and cedar trees. He pulled some of them up by their roots and then, with his spirit powers, made them small enough to carry under one arm. Under his other arm he put Snoqualm's tools for making daylight. He took some fire from below the smoke hole, put ashes and leaves and bark around it, and carried it in one hand. He found the sun hidden in Snoqualm's house and carried it away in his other hand.

Then Beaver found the hole Bluejay made, changed himself back to Fox again, and went down the rope to the earth. There he gave the fire to the people. He set out the trees. He made the daylight. He set the sun in its place so it would give light and heat to all. The people were happy because of the things Fox brought from the sky.

By this time Snoqualm had awakened. When he found the beaver skin gone and the sun stolen, he was very angry. He knew that one of the earth people had tricked him. Noticing tracks around the house, he followed them to the top of the rope Spider had made.

"I'll follow him to the earth world," Snoqualm thought. But as he started down, the rope broke. Both Snoqualm and rope fell down in a heap and were transformed into a mountain.

Today the mountain is called Mount Si. The face of Snoqualm, or Moon, can still be seen on one of its rocky walls. The trees which fox brought down from the sky and planted became the great forests of the Cascade Mountains.

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Long before the white settlers came, the Snoqualmie Tribe, known as the People of the Moon, lived in the shadow of Mount Si, a 4100 foot peak in the Snoqualmie Valley in the foothills of the Cascade Mountain range. That all changed in the 1850s when settlers arrived in the valley. One of the early pioneers was Josiah "Uncle Si" Merritt, who built a cabin at the base of the peak in 1862. Mount Si is named after him.

As more people arrived, businesses grew, and one of the largest among them was the Hop Farmers Association. Located near the town of Snoqualmie, the 900 acre Snoqualmie Hop Farm was considered, at the time, the largest hop farm in the world.



Hop Workers at the site of Mount Si GC c.1890 (Photo courtesy of Snoqualmie Valley Museum)

For a time the hop farm was a very successful operation. However, difficult economic conditions forced it to close in the 1890s. Businessman A.W. Pratt purchased the farm in 1904. Much of the hop farm was then turned into a dairy.

The Meadowbrook Farm, as it was called, would later become the site of the Mount Si Golf Course.

But Mount Si Golf Course was not the first golf course in the valley: that honor would go to the Snoqualmie Valley Golf Course. The 1920s saw a tremendous boom in golf's popularity all across the U.S. and the Pacific Northwest was no exception. New courses were springing up everywhere, and it reached the Snoqualmie Valley in 1926. A small group of men and women formed the Snoqualmie Valley Golf Club and in the summer of 1926, they laid out a rough nine-hole course on the Meadowbrook Farm located near the site of the present day Mount Si Golf Course.

There was much interest among the residents in the new game that few understood much less played. What they knew about the game was mostly from newspaper accounts and magazine articles. Nevertheless, soon over a hundred men and women had signed up with the club. Eager to learn, they invited golf professionals from Seattle to teach them the fundamentals of the game. The difficulties of the game soon became obvious: the local newspaper reported, tongue in cheek, that lumber mill store manager "Bill Hronek says that after just one afternoon on the course he was able to drive the ball ten yards without difficulty. Kelly Nye says that if he improves during the next two weeks as he has the past two, he will be able to make the round of 9 holes in 250." (*Snoqualmie Valley Record* - 5-13-1926)

By fall of 1926 the Snoqualmie Valley Golf Club was already seeking to move to a new location. The course was rudimentary, and as golfers improved their skills, they sought better playing conditions. Perhaps it was a revolt, or perhaps a coup. Clearly there were some disgruntled golfers who questioned

the condition of the golf course as well as the management of the club. By spring of 1927 a whole new cast of characters had appeared on the scene and there was no more mention of the Snoqualmie Valley Golf Club. The new group, yet unnamed, was led by C. Beadon Hall, a local banker, Charles Ingram, and Dr. Samuel Max. They met on February 18, 1927 at Meadowbrook Inn and sought to "... have better playing conditions this year by making this early start under a more practical financial plan."
(*Snoqualmie Valley Record* - 2-24-1927)

The new group established itself as the Mount Si Golf and Country Club. Initially a private club, it cost \$100 for membership. The Club obtained a ten-year lease from A. W. Pratt for a 46 acre tract on Meadowbrook Farm. With \$3000 in the bank in subscriptions from prospective members, they hired a local golf architect, Al Smith, to lay out a nine-hole golf course. They also hired Jock Wood, a Scottish transplant, to be the Club's first golf professional and greenskeeper.

Al Smith was a Seattle-based golf architect who designed a number of courses in the Puget Sound region from the 1920s well into the 1960s. Among his early courses were Maplewood GC (est. 1927), Wayne GC (est. 1930), and Brookdale GC (est. 1931). His later courses included Glendale G&CC, Twin Lakes CC, North Shore GC, and Walter Hall GC.

Jock Wood was born in Newburgh, Aberdeen, Scotland in 1889 and served his golf apprenticeship at Cruden Bay Golf Club, near his home. He emigrated in 1913, first to Canada, then to the U.S. in 1923. That year, he was hired as the first golf professional and greenskeeper at Wenatchee Golf & Country Club. In addition to serving as golf professional, he laid out a number of golf courses in Washington including Yakima Elks GC (originally Riverside), Leavenworth GC, Okanogan Valley GC, and the now defunct Redmond Golf Links. To the members' regret, the popular Wood would only stay a short time at Mount Si, moving on to accept a job at Maplewood in Renton, and then later at the Redmond Golf Links.



Mount Si Golf Course – c.1930 (Photo courtesy of Snoqualmie Valley Museum)

In March, 1927, work began on constructing a golf course and by May, 1927 six temporary greens were set up and golf was being played once again in the Snoqualmie Valley. On July 17, 1927, the nine-hole Mount Si Golf Course officially opened with a tournament:



Margaret Weeks at Mount Si Golf Course – c.1927 (Photo courtesy of Snoqualmie Valley Museum)

“About 100 members and families gathered at the Mount Si golf course Sunday and gave the course its official baptism with a nine-hole medal tournament and putting, mashie and driving contests.

Fleet Parsons of North Bend carried off the honors in the main event with a 44. Mr. Parsons received a golf club as his reward, the first prize given by the club.

Mrs. Harry Snyder of North Bend won the women’s competition over the full course with a 65. Mrs. Snyder won a golf club as her prize.” (*Snoqualmie Valley Record* - 7-24-1927)



Harry Snyder, Carl Rud and Gene Hill at Mount Si Golf Course – c.1927 (Photo courtesy of Snoqualmie Valley Museum)

The first inter-club match tournament (commonly referred to as “home and away” matches), a popular form of competition in the 1920s, took place on Oct. 2, 1927 against the team from Linden Golf and Country Club (est. 1926) in Puyallup. Linden prevailed by a score of 32 ½ to 21. In a return match, the Mount Si team fared a bit better losing by a narrower margin of 37 ½ to 31 ½. Professional Jock Wood shot a course record 37 for nine holes during the event. A rivalry later developed between Mount Si and Maplewood clubs as they contested numerous matches over the years.



Aerial View of 9 hole Mount Si Golf Course – c.1930 (Photo courtesy of Snoqualmie Valley Museum)



Aerial View of 18 hole Mount Si Golf Course – 2017 (Google Earth)

As with most other courses in the region, and across the country, Mount Si Golf Course suffered through the Depression years. In January, 1933, the Mount Si Golf and Country Club turned over its operation to Emmett Jackson, a prominent resident of nearby Cedar Falls. Jackson immediately began working on building a second nine. He hired Al Smith, the architect of the first nine holes, to complete the work. Jackson also installed an irrigation system to water the greens, very much improving the playability of the golf course. Jackson would later be instrumental in the construction of the nearby Snoqualmie Falls Golf Course in the 1960s.

On July 23, 1933, the second nine opened for play. At the time, Mount Si Golf Course would be one of only a few 18-hole courses in the State. Green fees were set at 50 cents. Due largely to Jackson's dedication and skill, the course survived the Great Depression and remains today a popular golfers' destination.



Mount Si Golf Course – clubhouse and first tee c.1934 (Photo courtesy of Snoqualmie Valley Museum)

Over the years the course has undergone numerous modifications. Aside from the majestic view of Mount Si, the tree-lined course of today would be unrecognizable to the niblick-wielding golfer of 1927.

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