

## Early History of Leavenworth Golf Club, Leavenworth, WA

Established 2-14-1927, Course Opened 5-1-1927 (First Six); 7-19-1970 (Second Nine)  
Course Architect: 1927: Jock Wood; 1970: Unknown

No doubt in 1926 many residents of the town of Leavenworth had read about the game of golf which had been sweeping across the country during the 1920s. Seemingly everywhere towns of any reasonable size were building their own golf courses. In 1926, Leavenworth, with a population of about 1700, decided to do the same. Nearby, some thirty miles away, Wenatchee Golf & Country Club (est. 1923), had been the first golf club to organize in the area.

“Golf Bug Bites and Leavenworth Folks Fall for It.” That headline appeared on the front page of The Leavenworth Echo, the town’s newspaper, on May 28, 1926. The spark which started the sudden interest in golf in Leavenworth came from an announcement earlier in the week by owner Harry G. Krollpfeiffer of the K. & V.B. Hardware Co. that a shipment of clubs and balls had recently arrived.

H. G. Krollpfeiffer (1884 – 1962), who was also Leavenworth’s mayor at the time, led a group of seven men and two women (!) out to Recreation Park. On what once had been the fishing grounds of the Native people, and then later the fairground and race track, the group laid out three holes to try their hands at the Royal and Ancient game. The newspaper article went on, “Well, the idea of playing golf spread and Sunday saw Tom Day, the only man in town, it appears, who knows the game, and several others, including Bert Rutherford, Harry G. Krollpfeiffer, Ben Roberts, Ray Dolsen, Wm. Martin, Deryl Motteler, Mrs. Dwight Darling, and Mrs. Tom Day out at Recreation Park.”

The game’s appeal was instantaneous, and the group went out the next week and expanded the course to eight holes. The course was no doubt primitive and the routing haphazard, but it was golf nonetheless, and it quickly gained popularity. Soon ads began appearing in the local paper urging residents to take up the game.



**Get Your  
Golf Togs**  
from  
**Bemis**  
They are “PATRIC” Garments  
and all wool.

Leavenworth Echo – 6-4-1926



**Get in the Game!**  
**IT'S GREAT!**  
We have the necessary equipment  
for a good game of golf  
Try it—you will like it  
**K. & V. B. Hardware Co.**  
Leavenworth, Washington

By early the following year, enough interest was shown to organize a club. On February 14, 1927, at a meeting attended by about thirty residents, the Leavenworth Golf Club was formally established. The club elected Harry G. Krollpfeiffer as its first President, J. B. Roberts, O. A. Lee, and Thomas Day as Vice-Presidents, and Henry Woldtvvet as Secretary-Treasurer. The club signed up twenty-one members.

The main order of business was to improve the golf course, and the club hired a professional to lay out six holes with sand greens. Jock Wood, a Scottish transplant who at the time was the golf pro at Riverside Golf Club (now Yakima Elks) in Selah, was called for the job. Wood had also served as the first pro at Wenatchee G&CC in 1924-25.



Leavenworth's Sand Green (photo courtesy of Leavenworth GC)

Sand greens were fairly common at the time on courses in dry climates as they required minimal maintenance. Sand greens were compacted down by a mixture of oil and sand, and made a reasonable putting surface. After the finish of each hole, caddies would “mop” the green to smooth out the bumps.

On May 1, 1927, the club officially opened its new course by holding its first tournament.

With the membership level now up to thirty-one, and an additional seventeen wives of members, the inaugural tournament got under way. The men went around three times on the six-hole course, and Hal Starks won the handicapped event with a score of 84-8=76. Tom Day was second with an 89-12=77, and Ray Dolsen third at 97-19=78. Starks was awarded a \$15 leather golf bag donated by Krollpfeiffer. The women played twelve holes and Mrs. J. A. Wilson was the winner with 75-18=57 score. Mrs. Wilson was awarded “a pair of chiffon Holeproof hose” donated by The Toggery.

At its first annual meeting in February, 1928, the Club set the dues for the coming year. Annual membership for men residing within 10 miles of Leavenworth was set at \$12.50, and \$5.00 for women. Non-resident annual membership was set at \$5.00.

As is the case of every other golf club that has ever existed, it did not take long for the Club to face the age-old controversy about member handicaps and sand-bagging. Under the by-line “Much-Cussed Committee Will Apply Screws and Slash Handicaps to the Quick,” the local newspaper reported the following: “There has been squealing and kicking about handicaps allotted to players of the Leavenworth golf club ... for the manner in which some of the dubs and duffers kept their scores on Sunday in the attempt to be among the prize-winners has given the handicap committee the opportunity to demand another pound of flesh...!” (Leavenworth Echo, 5-11-1928).

As the course matured, golfers from other parts of the Northwest came to visit. Many complimented the course declaring to be the finest among towns of its size, and praised its “location, scenery and general qualities.” “It is becoming an attraction,” noted a member, “and if we can enlarge it, adding three more holes, it may be the means of bringing many visitors to the city.” (Leavenworth Echo, 4-20-1928).

It would be another nine years before those three additional holes would be added. Undoubtedly the club suffered, as did nearly all golf clubs in the country, from the Great Depression. But indirectly, the club was also the beneficiary of the Depression. From 1935-36, under the direction of President Earle Little, the Club applied for, and received, a \$5,000 grant from the Works Progress Administration (WPA) to add the three additional holes. Forty-six men were employed for the project. The new nine-hole course, rated at par 32, was opened for play on April 18, 1937.

The local paper declared it “The best, most beautiful, most scenic, most interesting and sportiest 9-hole course in the United States.” Yardages and pars in 1937 were as follows:

Hole	Yards	Par
1	365	4
2	135	3
3	180	3 (adjacent to river)
4	297	4 (adjacent to river)
5	174	3 (adjacent to river)
6	486	5
7	277	4
8	157	3
9	155	3 (straight uphill)
Total	2226	32

While the original routing of the holes may be lost to history, it is clear from the yardages that it was quite different than it is today. “Old Man River gobbled up a lot of balls Sunday. Driving from tees 3, 4, and 5 the river is a constant threat to the chronic slicer, and caddies fished 15 balls out of the water in front of 5, the ‘worstest’ water hazard in the whole country.” (Leavenworth Echo, 4-23-1937).

Perhaps to showcase its new layout, the Club organized the first Pacific Northwest Sand Green Championship on June 19, 1938. It was to be a 36-hole medal competition, played over one day. To be eligible to enter, players had to be members of golf clubs with sand green courses.

Twenty-five players from three clubs, including a strong contingent of Native American players from the Nespelem tribe, entered the tournament. Tribe member twenty-two year-old Al Williams won by five shots in the inaugural event with a score of 67-72=139 on the par 64 course. Chief George Nanamkin, an avid golfer, who had laid out his Evergreen Golf Club course in Nespelem in 1923 and who had introduced golf to his tribe, shot a respectable 82-86=168.



Nespelem Tribe Member Val Avery teeing off at Evergreen Golf Club in Nespelem, Washington

The following year, in 1939, Chief Nanamkin wrote to Leavenworth Golf Club President Earle Little:

“I plan to bring a teepee, providing you can furnish the teepee poles. They are too long and heavy for me to bring in the car, as they must be 14 feet long and 14 to 16 in number. I will also bring my tribal costume.

“The Indians use to have their camp where you now have your golf course. They had their fish traps there when the river receded after July 4, and stayed there until fall, going back to Wenatchee and Cashmere for the winter.

“After the dam was built the salmon couldn’t get through in as great numbers as formerly and the Indians couldn’t catch as many, so they finally quit going to Leavenworth altogether.

“I know there are many white people in your district who have never seen a real Indian in their lives, especially the children, so putting up our teepee will be a treat for them. I may also demonstrate some of the things we used to do – probably prepare food on an open campfire – and if you can furnish me with a salmon, I will show how to cook it as my forefathers did.” (Leavenworth Echo, 6-2-1939)



Nepelem tribe members gathering at Indian Canyon GC in 1936

Al Williams, defended his title by shooting a sterling pair of 66s, six shots better than his clubmate and Ferris Tatshama, who finished second. Tatshama, also a member of the Nespelem tribe, was nineteen years-old at the time. Thirty-three players representing sand-green golf clubs from seven towns (Nespelem, Wilbur, Toppenish, Coulee Dam, Sunnyside, Mason City, and Leavenworth) competed in the championship. In subsequent years, clubs from St. John and Goldendale would send players to join the competition.

In 1940, with 45 entries representing ten clubs, Ray Moran from Mason City took the title. Al Williams finished third.

Al Williams returned in 1941 to recapture the title. However, by the following year, America had entered the war in Europe and Asia, and due to gas rationing, Williams could not return to Leavenworth to defend his title. It was won by Art Geri, from Wilbur Golf Club, with a score of 147. The Sand Green tournament then was suspended from 1944 to 1945 due to the war.

In 1946, the Sand Green tournament resumed, and this time another Nespelem tribe member, Ferris Tatshama, took the title with a 144 score. In 1947, Leavenworth converted its sand greens to grass greens, and the tournament was moved to Mount Adams Country Club in Toppenish, where it was held for several more years. By 1952, however, Toppenish had also converted to grass greens and the Pacific Northwest Sand Green Championship had become a remnant of the past.

The 1960s saw the transformation of the town of Leavenworth with the introduction of the Bavarian theme that we see today. The Leavenworth Golf Club was also transformed during that time when it opened its second nine on July 19, 1970.

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