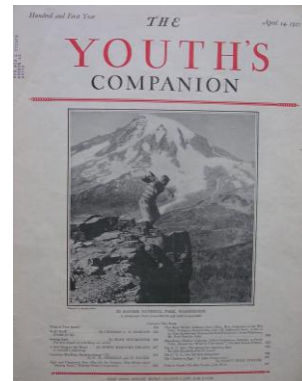


The Short, Spectacular Life of Paradise Golf Course, Mount Rainier, Washington

Like something out of Loyal Chapman's fantasy golf holes, the image on the cover of the April 14, 1927 issue of *The Youth's Companion* magazine appears unreal. It depicts a young man in knickers teeing off a precipice facing Mount Rainier, located 85 miles from Seattle, Washington, and rising to some 14,000 feet above sea level. Is this for real? How long was that drive? Did he make par?



Alas, no such golf hole existed on Mount Rainier in 1927. This was a staged photo opportunity. Yet, sometimes life imitates art, and in 1931 a nine-hole golf course was indeed built on Mount Rainier.

The idea for a golf course on Mount Rainier came from the Rainier National Park Company (RNPC) which had a concessionaire contract with the U. S. National Park Service. The company operated the Paradise Inn as well as numerous other lodges around the property.

While the number of visitors to Paradise Valley grew during the 1920s, they were mostly day-trippers from Seattle and Tacoma. Business at the inn and the restaurant was lagging. The company needed to find a way to entice visitors to stay overnight in their rooms.



Horace M. Albright, National Park Service Director

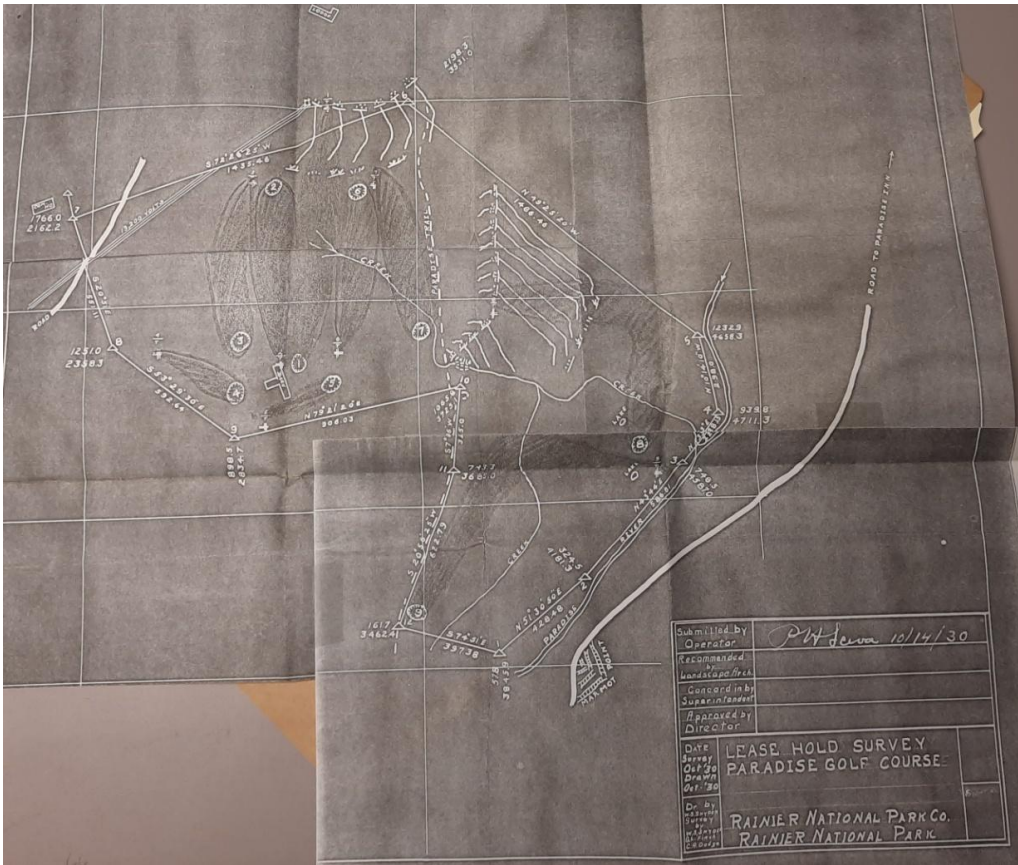
In 1930, Rainier National Park Company President H. A. Rhodes made his pitch for a golf course to National Park Service Director Horace M. Albright.

Golf had become wildly popular in America during the 1920s, and Rhodes saw it as a way to attract more visitors. Albright, though skeptical at first, eventually approved the plan, saying,

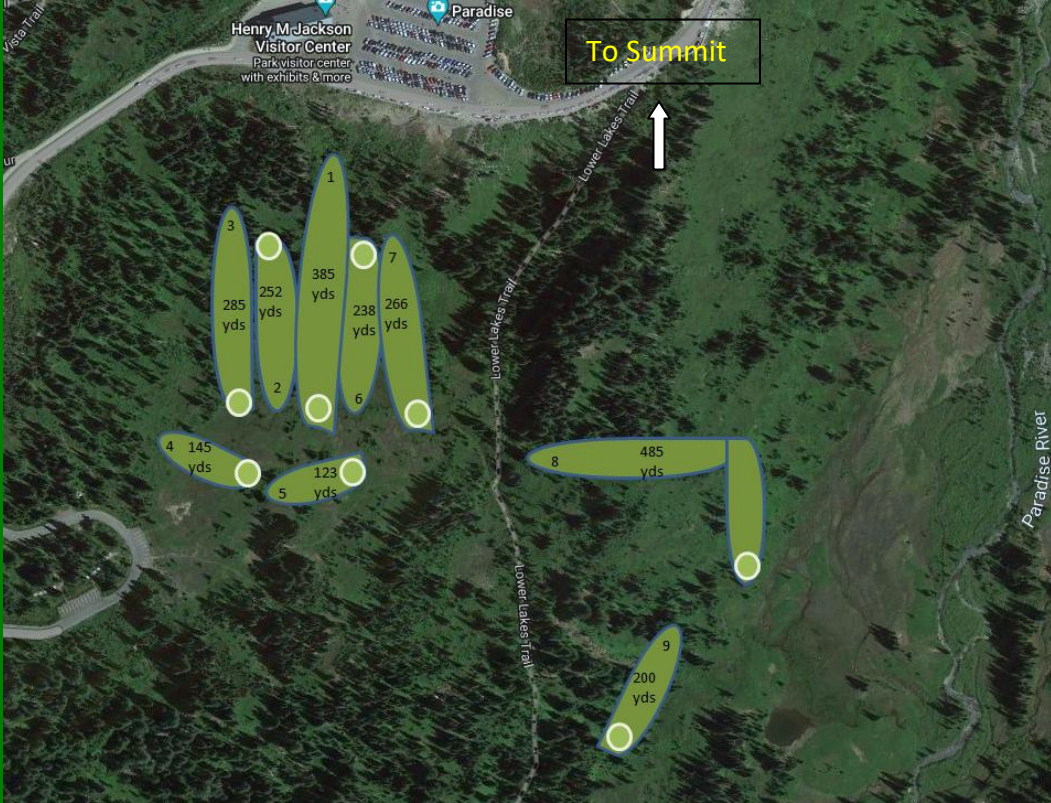
“Golf is a country game not a city one. It can be justified in parks easier than tennis. Anyway, I want to try out the thing and as the Rainier Company needs revenue more than any other Company I am disposed to let them try the experiment.” (Wonderland: An Administrative History of Mount Rainier National Park by Theodore Catton, 1996).

RNPC hired Roy Herbert Dobell to lay out and manage the golf course. Dobell was a building architect who at one time taught architecture at the Oregon Agricultural College in Corvallis, Oregon. An avid golfer, Dobell expanded his practice to include golf course design. He is credited with designing Albany Golf Course in Albany, Oregon, and the Cedarcrest Golf Course in Marysville, Washington.

The course officially opened on August 8, 1931. Named Paradise Golf Course after the nearby Paradise Valley, the course at that time claimed to be the highest in America at 5,500 feet above sea level.



Paradise Golf Course Blueprint – 1930 (Courtesy of U.S. National Park Service)



Approximation of Paradise Golf Course Layout based on 1930 Blueprint

The course measured a respectable 2349 yards with four par 3s, four par 4s, and one par 5. The first tee was 300 feet above the landing area. Every hole was downhill, and when nine holes were completed, a car transported the players back to the first tee.

The view from every hole was spectacular. The rarified air, the scenic beauty, and the favorable topography were all designed, as one wag put it, "... to make profane golfers contemplative, and the contemplative golfers better men." (Seattle Sunday Times 8-9-1931)



Hole No. unknown, Paradise GC, 1931 (Photo courtesy of U.S. National Park Service)



Putting on Green, Paradise GC, 1931 (Photo courtesy of U.S. National Park Service)

The course brochure read:

GOLF COURSE

The 9-hole golf course, one of the most scenic in America, is located a short distance from Paradise Inn. Every green and tee offers a striking mountain scene and is also a test of golfing skill.

9-hole play.....	\$1. 50
18-hole play.....	2. 00
All day play.....	3. 00
Annual tickets.....	50. 00
Rental of 5 clubs and bag, 18-hole play or less.....	1. 00
Rental of 5 clubs and bag, all day play.....	2. 00
Caddy service for each 18 holes or fraction thereof.....	1. 00
Prereservation fee.....	1. 00

Players are transported free from last hole near Marmot Point back to No. 1 tee.

Equipment on sale in caddy house at standard prices. Light refreshments also on sale.

NOTE.—Course under construction will be ready for play August 15. If snow conditions permit it is possible course will be ready by August 1.



Hole No. unknown, Paradise GC, 1931 (Photo courtesy of U.S. National Park Service)



Golfers and Others, Paradise GC, 1931 (Photo courtesy of U.S. National Park Service)

Golfers vied with all manner of wildlife for the use of the golf course. A pair of bears roamed the course claiming their rightful territory and expressing their curiosity, or perhaps their displeasure, by snapping off the bamboo flag sticks and removing cups on a regular basis.

While the golf course enjoyed a brief popularity among the curious and the ardent, this was the beginning of the Great Depression. The number of visitors to the National Park dropped precipitously and the number of players dwindled. In addition, the season was exceedingly short. Snow would blanket the course by early October.

Two short months after it opened, the Paradise Golf Course closed, for good. It had been doomed from the start. The fairways and greens soon returned to the alpine meadow that defined the natural beauty of Paradise Valley. The bears had reclaimed their land.

Martin Pool
Northwest Hickory Players
fas1863@hotmail.com
November, 2016
Rev. July, 2023