

# SAND TRAP

McMENAMINS

For decades and generations, the Sand Trap has been a lightning rod for camaraderie and epic gatherings of golfers and non-golfers alike. The place has survived dire economic downturns, war, even calamitous fire. In the context of the history of the remarkable beach community of Gearhart and a rich tradition of golf that predates almost all others in the Western United States, the Sand Trap's saga brims with some of the greatest characters, achievements and antics of the region: Livingstone the Scot, a Headless Horseman of Halloweens past, Sittin' Seagulls, night putting and paper chases.

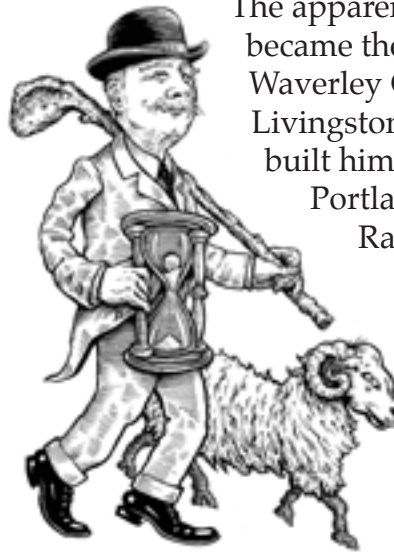
Much of this colorful past is on display throughout the property in the form of historic photos and original paintings created by artists Olivia Behm, Kolieha Bush, Joe Cotter, Lyle Hehn, Jennifer Joyce, Isaka Sham Su Din, and Myrna Yoder. Our hearty thanks go to the artists and the many people and organizations that have shared their images and recollections with us. The Sand Trap is, in a very real sense, your place, and we are pleased to be the new custodians.

The Sand Trap has always been about people and a sense of community, and not so much about lumber, concrete and glass. Illustrating this point, on the afternoon of August 16, 1998, a large contingent of the Sand Trap faithful converged upon these familiar grounds for a wake. Dressed in black, they gathered to pay their respects to the original clubhouse that had long been their most congenial host, but had suffered an untimely demise at the hands of a most unwelcome fire. Though a somber occasion, it was not perceived as an end; more like the end of the beginning. The faithful kept the spirit of the place alive, moving the party temporarily into a mobile home, dubbed The Cinders, that was brought to the site. Three years later, they moved the festivities again, into a beautiful, new edifice built overtop the footprint of the original 1926 structure.

Golf itself boasts a long and mythical residency in Gearhart, appearing almost from the moment nails were

being pounded into boards to build Gearhart's first homes. In 1891, before any formal golf course existed west of the Mississippi River, a clutch of homesick Scotsmen confounded the locals by digging tin cans into the dunes and then knocking balls with sticks until they dropped into the cans. For these Scots, the landscape at Gearhart strongly recalled their native, ancient courses of St. Andrews and Montrose.

The apparent ringleader, Robert Livingstone, became the founding president of Portland's Waverley Country Club a few years later. Livingstone, much to our delight, also built himself a fine home at another site in Portland, now occupied by McMenemy's Rams Head Pub.



Seemingly derived from its Old-World links, the Gearhart course has retained a sort of archaic manifestation of the game: an opportunity for collegial and less-formal play amidst breathtaking scenery. It's always been a public course, and there has been no

absence of experimentation and shenanigans. Early on, Angora goats were employed for greenskeeping purposes. In 1914, night golf was invented here, or so the claim was made, when late one evening, players arguing about their chipping and putting prowess (perhaps while



This 1926 image shows the first clubhouse built on the spot of the modern-day Sand Trap. The third and final Gearhart Hotel looms large behind it. OHS Photo file # 430



Oh, what a difference two decades can make. This view of the clubhouse, taken from a similar perspective, dates to the 1940's. Courtesy Mary Cornell.

flags, and a refreshment-cart-toting mule named Egad.

Make no mistake, though, excellent golf has been and continues to be played on this course. Many of the premier golfers of the Northwest, past, present, and future, have played here. It was here that the classic annual Oregon Coast Tournament originally and for decades was held.

From the start, the Gearhart links has been hailed as a leading course on the Pacific Coast. In 1923, The Oregonian remarked, "There is perhaps no course in the United States that is so truly similar to the famous home course of modern golf, that of the Royal and Ancient Golf club, at St. Andrews in Scotland. Both courses run parallel to and within a short distance of the ocean, both are constructed on turf that has reclaimed former beach sands and both are lined with great sand dunes."

Of course, part of the golf course's popularity and charm is due to the beach community in which it is set. Gearhart was different from the outset. Its founders in 1890 planned a residential resort community that celebrated and respected the natural beauty of forest, gentle rolling dune meadows and wide, sandy beaches that characterize this section of the North Oregon Coast. There was no desire to recreate another tourist Mecca like Seaside just to the south.

Over the ensuing decades, a genuine sense of community prevailed at Gearhart, despite the larger portion of its population appearing only during the warm, summer months. But they returned year after year, as did subsequent generations of the same families. These seasonal residents have mostly been of prominent Portland stock, the names of many of whom can be found on buildings, hospital wings and streets back in the Rose City. Once at the Coast, however, class distinctions have always seemed to fall away like a beach rain.

And everyone—Empire Builder and dairy farmer, Hollywood star and garage mechanic—came together at the Sand Trap.

indulging in a wee bit of drink) returned to the course with their car lights blazing.

Over the years, too, it was deemed entirely appropriate for equestrian events, such as annual paper chases, to be run over the golf course.

The Sittin' Seagulls Tournaments of 1959-68, however, stand as the most unorthodox golf events held at Gearhart. It wasn't really even about golf. It was about people coming together, having fun, doing silly, even surreal things on and around the golf course. For each tournament, a different theme was selected, and participants dressed accordingly: Hawaiian, pirate, kilt-wearing Scots, Spanish bullfighters, etc. Parties



The 1961 Sottish-themed Sittin' Seagulls tournament featured Egad the mule. Courtesy Herron family.

erupted in the Sand Trap and across the street at the grand, old Hotel Gearhart. Golf was played, sometimes of a high quality, more often a laughable one, prompted by trick holes, dummie