

Earl Grey Golf Club Memories

Compiled by Club Historians Reg and Sylvia Harrill

Humble Beginnings

In the early years at the modest nine-hole Mount Royal location, Duncan Stewart (our founder in 1919) pretty well ran everything singlehandedly, and course maintenance was not a high priority. A twelve-year-old boy was given the job of matting the sand greens three times a week. There was no need to cut the grass on the first three fairways, because the sparse grass was pounded into the ground by children attending the local Earl Grey school.

The big leap forward came in 1933 when the club relocated to its present site next to the reservoir created by the new Glenmore dam and opened a full eighteen holes for a par of 70 over 6043 yards. As noted by The Calgary Herald:

"The fairways are receiving the attention of additional labour, the workmen at present concentrating on the aprons of the greens. When this work is completed the greens will receive their new coating of Manchester sand and oil."

As a bonus, mats were installed on the tees. In 1934 a heavy roller was used for ten days to even the fairways. The next big improvement came in 1937 when irrigation was installed. Another quote from the paper said:

"Earl Grey course is a picture worth seeing. In contrast to the dried up fairways lined with huge cracks in 1936, the course is green and spongy and the grass is becoming thicker each week. Members are looking forward to the day when they will be pitching to grass greens."

G.O.L.F.

(Gentlemen Only Ladies Forbidden)

While many golf clubs had gender membership restrictions in the early days, most have now changed. Until 1989 Earl Grey did not accept females as shareholders, though they could join as "Lady Elect". At the Annual General Meeting in 1988 this was changed with the female intermediates who had previously not qualified for membership being offered shareholder status and the field opened for all women to join in their own right.

Early Grey Tea, Football and Golf

A new picture now hangs in the entrance lobby of the clubhouse with a bronze plaque underneath it giving some explanation of the gentleman in Edwardian dress. The man is Albert Henry George, fourth Earl Grey, and our club bears his name.

Few people know much about him, outside of the connection with the Grey Cup which he presented to the Canadian Football League. Some confuse him with a blend of tea. He was in some ways a remarkable figure with an interesting history and ahead of his time in the way he discharged his duty as Governor General a hundred years ago.



In 1933 Earl Grey relocated from its 1919 location and by 1937 the members had a green, tree-lined, par 70 course beside Glenmore Dam.

Earl Grey was a typical product of the English upper class. Born in 1851, he was educated at Harrow (as was Winston Churchill) and then went on to Trinity College, Cambridge, where he studied history and law. He made his mark in Ottawa as a very active and popular Governor General.

After his term as Governor General ended, Lord Grey returned to England, where he became president of the Royal Colonial Institute (now the Royal Commonwealth Society) in London. He died at his family residence in 1917.

Running a Club in Wartime

With the absence in the armed forces of many of the younger workforce, members were called upon to do a lot of the essential jobs around the club. While the men did much of the work on the course, the ladies did their

part in renovating and redecorating the ladies locker room. Paint and supplies were delivered, a studio lounge was recovered, plate glass and a mirror donated for the dressing table, scarce fabric made available for curtains in the locker and dining rooms – with all of the work being undertaken by a team of volunteers.

The Spitfire Fund

The impetus for The Spitfire Fund appears to have originated from the Canadian Ladies Golf Union Central Committee to which body the money collected was eventually sent to support the war effort. Earl Grey Ladies organized regular bridge games and donations varying from one dollar to five dollars were received weekly throughout the season; raffles were run; and contributions made through tournaments or matches together with odd change from a "Spitfire Box." Considering that coffee was ten cents a cup during those days and that there were only about 25 lady members at that time, one can see that the eventual total raised at Earl Grey of \$156.56 was quite an achievement. Today the equivalent for those 1,565 coffees would amount to over \$3,000.

Gasoline Rationing

In April 1942 a special meeting of the Ladies Section was held by 23 members to discuss the transportation difficulties being experienced due to gasoline rationing. The membership was divided into three zones – Elbow Park, Rideau; Central; and North Hill

– with a convenient meeting place arranged for each area and telephone committees set up to allow golfers to arrange a ride each Tuesday. Remembering that in the 1940's there were only two bridges across the Bow River – Centre Street and the Louise Bridge at 10th Street – and that the Marda Loop was the end of the tram or bus line, it is easy to see the need to car pool and conserve gas usage in getting to the golf course which was well beyond the city limits. What would those ladies say now if they could see the lines of cars streaming down Crowchild and Glenmore Trails!

VE Day Celebrations at Earl Grey

On Tuesday May 15th 1945, a week after VE day, twenty-one ladies sat down to the opening lunch of the golf season at tables gaily decorated with spring flowers and victory flags. The war in Europe was over.