



## **History**

Riverside approached its fiftieth birthday in dramatic fashion by opening a brand new clubhouse in 2007. Our first half-century reflects Bozeman's evolution from farm town to thriving city, now with five golf courses in the area. The first Bozeman Country Club and Golf Course occupied land located east of the Bozeman cemetery. The land was purchased in 1922 from Gallatin County for delinquent taxes at a total cost of \$115.82. Serving the nine-hole, sand green course, the log clubhouse still stands near Lindley Park and is now known as the U.C.T. building. In the 1930's a second nine-hole course called Valley View was built along Sourdough Ridge, now occupied by homes.

During World War II, military service and gasoline rationing reduced membership, as it did in many golf clubs. The local Elks Club bought and operated the course and clubhouse. When gambling in charitable organizations terminated in the late 50's the Club closed. Negotiations began that aimed to combine the two golf courses and establish a new club. Instead of a merger, the split continued. Members of Valley View moved to Kagy Boulevard while the other group formed the Gallatin Valley Golf Association, and in 1959 and 1962 purchased two parcels (239) from Mary (Baxter) Nelson along the East Gallatin River at an average cost of \$307.00 per acre. This became Riverside Country Club.

The new nine-hole course (with grass greens) and clubhouse were finished in 1960-61 with about two hundred charter members. One of them recalls playing the first round in 1960. Those were the days when ladies of the club removed rocks from the fairways with screwdrivers and forks. The clubhouse was dedicated May 6, 1961.

Funding for construction came first from a membership fee of \$12.00, plus a Certificate of Indebtedness in the amount of \$388. (An accountant recommended the odd format to avoid possible tax liability for the Club from \$400 fees.) To guarantee its non-profit status, Riverside's original Articles of Incorporation stated that, in case of dissolution, all assets were to go to Montana State University, but this clause no longer applies. The Club obtained a loan from Treasure State Life Insurance Company, and later the Bozeman banks funded the development. Dues were set at \$15.00 per month. Additional debt relief came from the sale of lots along Gallatin, Park Plaza and Riverside Drives, leaving the Club with 197 acres.

Expansion and renovation have been continual. With a \$350,000 bank loan, the back nine, swimming pool and Fireplace Room were built in 1974-76. The Maintenance Shop was added in 1978. From 1970 until 1978, the Club supported a trap shooting range north of the sixteenth fairway. When it was phased out, the building was moved to its present location as the tennis pro shop. In 1979, Gallatin County deeded five acres of dedicated park land to the Club – the current site of the tennis courts. The entire Clubhouse and other facilities were relocated and refurbished in 1990 at a cost of \$380,000.

Bozeman's rapid growth in the 90's led to improvements at Riverside. In 1999 the Board of Directors authorized renovation of the front nine, including paved cart paths, new tees and reshaped greens. The cost was \$811,000 partly defrayed by a \$1,000 assessment, and the front back reopened June 3, 2001. This upgrade led to a decline in membership and a rejection of the Board's proposal (2002) to reconstruct the back nine. In 2005 members rejected a Board proposal to triple the size of the clubhouse. By the spring of 2006 golfing membership had fallen from 450 to 340, but then the Board proposed both a new clubhouse and infrastructure developments including interior furnishings, back nine improvements, pool and parking lot (estimated cost: \$6,990,000, with a \$5,000 assessment). This measure passed, and golfing memberships began to climb toward the current 410 limit. Three lots adjacent to holes 14, 15, and 16 were sold in 2007. Demolition and construction proceeded rapidly through the winter of 06-07, with a farewell celebration (the Hard Hat Ball) in the old clubhouse on February 17, 2007. Spring witnessed the reversal of the front and back nines, in order to accommodate the relocated clubhouse. Remarkably, Martel Construction (the contractor and member) kept construction on schedule and within budget by covering late additions with a voluntary assessment. Dedication of the new clubhouse and course occurred on July 21, 2007.

Like many clubs nationwide, Riverside has lived through trying times: a threat of foreclosure in the 60's, chronic cash flow crises, delinquent dues and high staff turnover. Thanks to the dedication and hard work of former and current members, many of whom have volunteered for Board and committee service or contributed funds for enhancing the clubhouse and the golf course, we now enjoy an outstanding full service country club. Our tennis, swimming and dining facilities experience capacity use. As tales of rowdy men's stag nights in the early years fade, the Club retains its informal and congenial atmosphere and promises to remain on of Gallatin Valley's most attractive places.