

History 1925-1935

THE YEARS 1925-35 Conception of the Hassayampa Mountain Club

by Ruby Harkey Scmieder

The Mountain Club originally was called the Hassayampa Mountain Club Here we look back many years to discover how it began how it developed into the Mountain Club and how it functioned through the years to the present time.

The Hassayampa Mountain Club covered an area originally owned by a Mr. Fry and generally known as Fry's Ranch. Not much is known about how Fry obtained this land or his use of it, but that is not important to this story. Fry built a small ranch house at what is now the intersection of Hemlock and Clubhouse Drive, on about an acre of land. Vegetables were grown on the fertile, level ground bordering the Manzanita Creek.

Four conditions made the development of the Hassayampa Mountain Club possible:

1. About 800 acres (reports vary from 600 to 900 acres) of beautiful uncut forested Ponderosa pine lands, complete with running creek (it did run before wells were dug and the weather changed!).
2. A depressed economy, which halted the summer exodus of Phoenix families to the beaches of California. The stock market crash of 1929 and the ensuing bank failures, followed by the great depression, had a bearing on the beginning development of the Club. Later changes were the result of turning the dream of a luxurious resort into a reality, practically a suburb of Prescott.
3. Men who had the capital and the vision for the possibilities of a summer resort closer to Prescott than the Iron Springs Resort. Milton Smith and Eben Lane were those men. They were partners in the Lane-Smith Investment Company of Phoenix in 1925. They had a dream of developing a luxurious summer resort to attract prestigious families for a retreat from the summer heat. They searched several areas around Prescott and other spots of the State. They finally decided the ideal location was this beautiful, wooded area, only a mile from the center of town. They reasoned, "That is within walking distance of town and yet in the forest". It seemed perfect, so they purchased 600 acres of Fry's Ranch and added other parcels to total about 800 acres. Thus the land and the vision were in place.
4. A plan of development to sell the lots. In early 1927 a local surveyor by the name of Harlowe D. Phelps was hired to survey and set stakes for the lots. He was assisted by a young man just graduated from high school named Howard Jenkins, who carried the surveyor's chain and actually set the wooden stakes. Jenkins had previously dug a water pipe ditch across White Spar Road to bring the water to the area. (In 1929 Jenkins moved to California; not to return for 30 years. He is at present a resident of the Mountain Club).

It was a challenging problem to survey this very rugged hilly area, as the building lots were not all standard sizes (they depended upon the terrain). Of course, the selling price of a lot

would reflect its size and location. Since the ambition was to present a luxury resort, it was important to include luxury amenities. Thus, in the survey, a golf course was laid out along the Manzanita Creek from Maricopa Drive to Manzanita Avenue and from there south to Clubhouse Drive. A small golf house was built at the intersection of Cherokee and Maricopa Drives. A residence sits on that site now.

Black-topped tennis courts were built on what is now Arroyo and Clubhouse Drives. This property now is also occupied by a residence.

The largest level area was found on what is now Canyon Drive (formerly Maricopa Drive) between Monte Vista and Manzanita Avenue. That area was designated as the Playground, and was provided with picnic tables and children's equipment.

Since swimming pools were virtually nonexistent in Prescott, it was decided that one should be included in the plans. In 1927 a cement pool 35' by 70' was built near Maricopa Drive (at present this area is occupied by mobile homes). Vic Lytle, who later served as Mayor of Prescott was employed as a lifeguard, as did his friend Charles Dunning, who still owns the house his father built then. An unfortunate accident later occurred at the pool: the drowning of a small child. This incident resulted in closing and filling in the swimming pool.

Before the clubhouse was built, a lodge called Marstons, located on what is now Sunup Road, was built. This was the center of all social activities and was patronized by residents of Prescott as well as the Mountain Club members. This lodge burned to the ground about 1933. Remnants of the fireplace, crockery, etc., are still in evidence on the site.

An attraction for the horsemen was a place to quarter their horses and the many miles of scenic forest trails to ride. Stables and stalls were built on the corner of Copper Basin Road and what is now Hemlock Drive (it was then Fry Drive). Many original members took advantage of this attraction, and numerous events focusing on horsemanship were planned. Captain Mosse of Phoenix brought up a string of riding horses and offered riding lessons and Polo playing on the playground.

One very important development of the "Hassayampa Mountain Club" was the building of a clubhouse in 1928. The next most level spot (after the playground) was the intersection of the present Milton and Clubhouse Drives, a location that was also centrally located. Milton Smith contacted the Halstead Lumber Company of Phoenix for lumber and supplies. About that time Eben Lane decided to dissolve his partnership in the company; this action severely hampered the company resources and cash flow. It appeared that the only way to pay the Halstead Lumber Company was with land. Thus the Halsteads (as well as other persons) became owners of certain parcels of land (ten lots), and the Clubhouse was built.

A contract was agreed upon with the city of Prescott for a source of water for the whole area. A master meter was installed at the corner of Copper Basin Road and Pine Knoll. Pipelines were installed to each cabin site. These were laid on the top of the ground and were drained when the cabins were closed for the winter. The excellent taste of the water was always noticed by the summer residents.

Promotion and Selling of Lots

When the four conditions for development of the Hassayampa Mountain Club were met, it was time for the promotion and selling of lots.

Milton Smith, a large, jovial, extroverted man, developed a successful plan for selling the lots in the Mountain Club. Besides his personal contacts and advertising in Phoenix, he arranged bus tours for prospective buyers, who were usually affluent professionals. Three days a week, on Tuesdays, Thursdays and Fridays, a small bus would travel by way of Wickenburg up the steep Yarnell hill to the Hassayampa Trail (now the White Spar Road). It was a three hour trip, if all went well. The bus would arrive about 11:00 a.m., in time for the guests to look around. At lunch a picnic Bar-B-Que was served on the playground, and afterward a salesman escorted the guests over the terrain where hopefully a good percentage would commit themselves to a purchase. Walter A. Wood was director of the sales for the company. For those who were undecided, Marstons Lodge was available for an overnight stay. Also a simple tourist court on the east end of the area was built to house prospective buyers for longer stays. The average asking price for the lots was \$300.00 to \$450.00.

It was appealing to have a membership in a club in which home ownership included use of all recreational facilities, and that was a major point in selling building sites. The Hassayampa Mountain Club was reported to be the first subdivision in Arizona offering these amenities. During the first two seasons, about 400 lots were sold but not built upon.

Electricity and water were available at every site, but if gas was desired the owner used bottled natural gas (butane) for cooking, water heaters, and house heating. Very few telephones were found in the Mountain Club: even in 1946 only 14 telephones were listed in the Mountain Club. Prescott telephone numbers were very simple: Burris Furniture had the number 1; Sam Hill's Hardware was 16; Prescott Liquor was 36; the Feed Store 208; and the Auto Supply 146. Numbers in the Mountain Club contained a letter: George Bruckert number was 157W; Warner Dixon was 815M; and Morrough O'Brien was 016J5. Practically no summer residents had telephones, but those who did put them on vacation at reduced cost for the months they were away. A telephone was located at the "Howdy House" for the use of the summer residents.

The "Howdy House"

Milton Smith had a small rock house built adjacent to the club house to use as a temporary land sales center. Later it was used as lodging for a social director and the mail center for all summer residents who did not have a P. O. Box. Mail call time was 10:00 a.m. each morning, and it was the social hour for those picking up their mail. A small library was also contained in the mail room. The "Howdy House" lost its usefulness when mail was finally delivered directly to the individual residents. In 1972 we regretfully said good-bye to this special center when it was taken down and replaced with a retaining wall.

Ruby Harkey Schmieder moved to The Mountain Club in 1944 and lived here for 58 years until her death. Her book can be checked out at the City of Prescott library.