

Clio Golf Course, Inc. - The Early Years  
By Ira D. Bare

## THE IDEA

In the beginning, there were several people in the Clio Area who perceived a need for a golf course in this area to serve Northwestern Genesee County and Southwestern Saginaw County - the Clio, Mt. Morris, west Flint, Montrose, Frankenmuth, Birch Run area. The golfers among us were required to drive to Brookwood, Kearsley, Swartz Creek, Genesee Hills, Chesaning, Green Acres, etc. The first meeting of this nucleus was held in the office of the author, but, unfortunately, we do not have a record of the date nor the people in attendance. Clio Golf Course, Inc. was officially awarded corporate status by the Michigan Department of Commerce on October 26, 1960. Four or five meetings had been held prior to that time.

I will not dwell upon nor recite long lists of names of people who were instrumental in this formation process, and there were many. However, the people who devoted a great deal of effort to the organizing and formation of a cohesive group to proceed with the golf course would include Donald L. Scott, Cashier of the then Clio State Bank (now Clio Branch of NewCentury Bank), Bernard Dyball, owner of a gas station in Clio where the mini-park is now located, Oscar Hall, a retired Clio High School agricultural teacher, William Tobias, local realtor and insurance agent, and your author. They were among the 13 original incorporators and were the primary original movers.

The idea was to build a golf course in this area at a minimal investment in terms of money. Part of the inspiration came from the construction of the Chesaning golf course which was constructed to a great extent with unpaid efforts of local golfers. At that time, the going rate for construction of each hole of golf, including the green, was approximately \$10,000.00. We felt that using the efforts of members would result in a great cost savings in this area. Also, it was part of our plan to encourage and seek public play of the facility during the early years to form a source of badly needed revenue with the plan of discontinuing public play when the course was completed and finances were under control. I quote from the original stock selling prospectus which was approved by the Michigan Corporation Division in 1961.

“The Clio Golf Course, Inc., was organized and is being developed for the sole purpose of providing good golfing facilities for persons who are in the lower income bracket. It is being developed under a non-profit corporation basis to provide golfing pleasure to a degree of convenience and enjoyment that lies somewhere between the virtues of a public golf course and a limited membership-entirely private golf club.

“The idea for this golf course was conceived by a small group of people in the Clio area who were confronted with the difficulty of having to travel several miles from Clio in order to play golf. These people felt that there are enough golfers in the Clio, Mt. Morris, Montrose, Birch Run, Frankenmuth and West Flint area to support, build and maintain a golf course located centrally between these various locations.”

The first recorded minutes appear in our record books on August 31, 1960, and this meeting was held in the Clio State Bank building with 38 people present. That meeting

determined that we would be a non-profit corporation and that we would attempt to sell 250 memberships at \$250.00 each. It was also decided that we would attempt to get a Class C Liquor License. More about that later. Thus, we began. Subsequent sections of this history will deal with the various problems and undertakings that were involved from these beginnings until the completion of the 18 holes.

## LAND ACQUISITION

Although the minutes are not available, the first meeting directly relating to land acquisition was held at the Jerry Davidson Buick sales (presently the Clio School Bus garage facility, across from the Clio Shopping Center), and we divided into pairs with each pair of people being assigned certain sections of land to study and investigate for suitability and availability. Within a few weeks, the search narrowed to two parcels. One is the present site, which was owned by Ora E. Selby and her brother, Guy Selby. The other was owned by Richard Houghton and is now the location of the present Clio Square Mall. Both of these properties were traversed by the Clio Creek and contained sufficient area for a golf course and both were available.

At the August 31, 1960 meeting described above, the members unanimously approved the acquisition of the Selby property, since more acreage was available, there was a building for temporary club house use, and the price per acre was substantially lower. We thereupon negotiated a sale with the Selbys and took an option upon the property. The total purchase price was \$47,000.00

The parcel was 160 acres in size, being a half mile square. Located upon it was an old farm house, a small metal garage, a barn and a silo. The house was located at the present site of the Dick and Norma Henry house, with the garage nearby and the barn was located in the vicinity of the house built by Jack and Hazel Carreras.

We had to have a rezoning from Residential-Agricultural to C-4 (Intensive Commercial) in order to sell alcoholic beverages for consumption on the premises. At that time, we needed a percentage of the adjoining land owners in order to accomplish the rezoning (my memory is 70%). After many visits with Mr. and Mrs. Lloyd Falkenhagen who reside in the farm house on the South side of Farrand Road facing Country Club Drive, Bill Tobias and Oscar Hall were able to persuade them that the use of our property for a golf course would not be detrimental to their enjoyment of their property. With the consent of the Falkenhagens, the rest of the necessary consents fell into place quickly. With the full cooperation of the Township Zoning Board and the Township Board of Trustees, the rezoning was accomplished.

Fred Ellis, a golf course architect, and Dick Sincerbeau, Supervisor of City of Flint golf courses, walked over the property with us for the purpose of advising us as to the suitability for a golf course in terms of topography, water, trees, size, etc. Both of these gentlemen stated very decisively that it was an excellent site for the construction of a golf course in those terms.

Oscar Hall, with his expertise as an agricultural teacher, took soil tests throughout the property to determine the suitability of the soil for the growing of grasses required for the golf course. Zach Whaley, an extremely active member during these years, was a chemical engineer with the Flint water department and he tested the creek water for its suitability for golf course watering purposes. He also tested the well water at the club house for its suitability as a public water supply. All tests were positive.

When all of the above matters (zoning, topography, soil, water, etc.) were resolved favorably to the golf course use, the sale was finally consummated and the property was purchased from the Selbys in May, 1962. \$13,500.00 was made as a down payment and the balance was payable over a period of time at 4 ½% interest. They were both very pleased with the proposed use.

Guy Selby was a Clio native and a prominent Flint attorney (Selby School is named after him), and he was a very calm, patient, low-key and soft-spoken person. Your author approached him about the possibility of waiving interests on our obligation in exchange for us naming the course "Selby Golf Club". His reply was, "Why don't you name it Clio Golf Course?" (End of that discussion!)

During this period of investigation, a 20-acre parcel of land owned by Hazel Hoyt became available for sale. This is the site of the present driveway and parking lot. The asking price for this property was \$8,000.00 total price, with a \$1,000.00 down payment and the balance at \$75.00 a month, including 6% interest. We were very short of money, and our decision to buy that property was very difficult. The purchase was made in May of 1962, also. In my opinion, this was one of the more significant decisions made by those in control at that time. This opened up the Farrand Road frontage to complete subdivision purposes. Also, it moved the club house and parking lot locations away from neighboring homes who could have been disturbed by the noise and traffic associated with the club house and its activities.

## FINANCING

As stated earlier, we set out to sell 250 memberships at \$250.00 each, and this was done. This entailed the necessity of preparing a selling prospectus which some of the earlier members still have in their possession. This prospectus had to contain a history and summary of the golf course and maps, lay-outs, by-laws and the names of the original incorporators. It was a very frustrating experience to get this prospectus approved by the Michigan Corporation Division. Obtaining the approval of a bureaucrat named Donald Holcomb was frustrating beyond belief, inasmuch as he had an abiding fear of approving anything. However, after many changes, including changes of changes, and several trips to Lansing, approval was obtained. To a lesser degree, we had the same problem with the second stock sale prospectus a few years later.

At any rate, sales were started and the November, 1961, minute book indicates that we had sold 71 shares of stock at that point. Parenthetically, it is interesting to note that the first official Board of Directors under the by-laws of the corporation was elected on December 7, 1961. Its members were Bill Tobias, Oscar Hall, Bernard Dyball, Bill Calhoun, Norman Plunkett (the second President), Norbert DeMars, Doug Gooch, Bill Rummel and George Fuller.

Two key provisions to the sale of stock were included within the by-laws. One of these has been deleted by membership vote in recent years. That provision had to do with the encouragement of members to contribute time and effort to construction of the golf course, but such effort was not mandated. The other provision required the approval of any special assessment by two-thirds of the members attending a meeting held only after notice of the vote would be mailed to each member at least fourteen days prior to the meeting. At that time, we were looking at an open field, and many prospective members were very fearful of having to pay an assessment for an enterprise that might result in failure. We could never have sold the stock

without the two-thirds provision in the by-laws.

Although all of the original organizers worked very hard at the sale of stock and most of us sold five or ten memberships to relatives and friends, the real movers in this area were Bill Tobias and Oscar Hall. They took it upon themselves to follow up on any phone calls that came in to any of the organizers generally, and they spent many evenings visiting homes of prospective members, going over the information in the prospectus with them, and encouraging them to buy. The Clio State Bank, at that time controlled by the local people on the Board of Directors, permitted us to have a selling booth, which consisted of a table and chair in the Bank lobby on Friday evenings. The Bank also authorized loans to prospective members by the Clio State Bank if the cash was not available. Oscar Hall spent dozens of Friday nights in the lobby of the Clio State Bank taking membership applications, issuing stock, etc. His location enabled him to take the applications for financing directly to Don Scott, who was in charge of the Bank, and the loans would be made and the stock sold in a matter of minutes. The stock sale was a success and we had 125 people attend a general shareholders meeting at the Vienna Township Hall on June 12, 1962.

In the meantime, again largely through the efforts of Bill Tobias, the Farrand Road frontage was subdivided and lots were made available for sale. These were being sold for \$3,000.00 payable in cash or upon a ten-year land contract, with a minimum down payment of \$500.00. From the sale of stock and the sale of lots, money was obtained to construct the first nine holes.

There was a second sale of stock authorized in December, 1962, and a second prospectus was prepared and approved. This stock was priced at \$400.00 per member, and many shares were sold in 1964. For example, 25 new members were approved in June, 1964, and 28 new members were approved in September, 1964. The impetus for the success of the second stock sale came mainly from two sources. First, the front nine had been completed, and the doubters now were willing to come forward and put their money on the table. Secondly, Brookwood, which had been a family-owned semi-private course, was sold to the IMA for use of General Motors people only, and many non-General Motors people were looking for another golf course to play.

The front nine was opened for play on July 6, 1963, and this became a source of revenue, inasmuch as we did cater to public play. The green fees were set at \$1.50 for the first nine holes of play and 50 cents for each additional nine holes. A person could buy a 35 nine-hole round card for \$35.00.

## CONSTRUCTION

As earlier stated, the by-laws did not required, but did encourage, all members to actively participate in the construction of the golf course facility, and the amount of cooperation received from members was overwhelming. People like Zach Whaley, Bill Underhill, Ray Tufford, Verl Newman, and others brought their tractors and farm implements upon the property and plowed and fitted the ground while other members did all of the hand work that was required. A gentlemen named Connelly was the original Superintendent of construction, and he was later replaced in this capacity by Bernard Dyball. On July 17, 1962, Bernash Construction was awarded a contract for the front nine construction in the amount of \$18,000.00. The A.P.

Englehart Co. was given the plumbing contract for \$4,800.00. In August, 1964, Burnash was awarded the contract for the second nine construction in the amount of \$41,000.00.

On March 1, 1962, the Board of Directors authorized aerial photos to be taken at a cost of \$1,070.00 and authorized the retaining of Fred Ellis as golf course architect at a fee of \$3,000.00. Fred Ellis was a highly qualified golf course architect, and the topographical photos were required in order for him to accomplish his design of the course. The course was designed in his office, not at the site. This was a large expenditure for us to authorize at that time, and it was not done without considerable debate and sole searching. This was another significant and far-reaching decision. Obviously, nothing is perfect, but the golf course is well designed and utilizes topography very well. It is certainly one of the fine golf courses in this area, and this is a tribute to the 1962 Board of Directors which bit the bullet and spent money which it did not have for this purpose.

Unfortunately, we have lost some trees which were part of the design at that time. There was a very large Elm tree between fairways 5 and 6 approximately 200 feet South of number 6 green, which added a great deal to both of those holes. There was also a very large Elm tree located at the right front of number 7 green, and that hole has never been the same without that tree.

To detail the efforts of members in this construction phase would require a volume, not a short history. The seeding, the raking, the shoveling, the removal of brush, the removal of stumps, the thousands of hours of hard work were generously given. The Clio Golf Course would not be there if this had not been so.

The second nine was completed and opened for play on April 16, 1966.

## CLUBHOUSE

As indicated earlier, the old farm house was utilized as a club house until the completion of the present club house in 1970. Jack Simms, a bank supply salesman, was the Chairman of the club house renovation committee, and there was a lot of renovating to do. Approximately \$5,000.00 was authorized to remodel the building in January, 1963.

Again, the time and effort contributed by the membership was monumental. There was a lot of sawing, nailing, painting, sanding, etc., and eventually we did have a club house with a bar, a kitchen, a dining area, a pro shop, and two card rooms upstairs. There was no shower room, and it sometimes became a little gamey under crowded conditions. The pro shop had various managers, and the most memorable operator of the kitchen was a fine lady named Frannie Hitko. Frannie had soup, hamburgers, dessert and one meal of the day, usually spaghetti, swiss steak, goulash or similar fare. There were no waitresses, and Frannie would put your meal on the serving counter, you picked it up and paid your money and took it to the table and ate it.

The Clio Golf Club social life began in the old club house, and all of us who were members then have fond memories from fun-filled parties and social events.

The one-car garage mentioned earlier became the golf club storage facility and its adequacy could certainly be questioned. A carport type of golf cart storage facility (no walls) was erected Northwest of the club house and the sage of the use of privately owned golf carts on Clio Golf Course began with that. The fees for the use of golf carts was established at \$25.00 per year in April, 1963.

No history of the club house would be complete without mention of the trials and tribulations regarding a liquor license. Under the 1960 census, Vienna Township was entitled to award two liquor by the glass licenses in the Township. There were sixteen applications, and the Vienna Township Board was kind enough to grant the golf course one of those licenses. After many trips to Lansing, a great deal of paperwork and a great deal of time, the Michigan Liquor Control Commission finally decided in 1964 that we should not have a public liquor by the glass license (Class C) inasmuch as we would be competing with privately owned and profit motivated bars, although we were in a non-profit club status. We were anxious to obtain a Class C license in order to make public sales since the revenue from such use would be welcomed and possibly necessary. For reasons best known to itself, it took the Liquor Control Commission over three years to make the decision described above. Finally, in July, 1964, we obtained our club license.

I think that I can safely state on behalf of all the early members that there are fond memories of the old club house, with the many good times had by all of us there, including the enjoyment of Frannie Hitko's bill of fare. There was a feeling of togetherness which has never been duplicated.

#### THE NUMBERS

It might perhaps be interesting to some of the newer members to learn that we have had three hole numbering systems at the Clio Golf Club since its inception. I have prepared the following chart which describes the three systems. Column 1 consists of the present numbers; Column 2 consists of the holes as they were numbered at the completion of the first nine. The third Column consists of the numbers which were used upon completion of the 18 holes but still utilizing the original club house as the pro shop.

| COLUMN 1 | COLUMN 2 | COLUMN 3 |
|----------|----------|----------|
| 1        | 9        | 9        |
| 2        | -        | 10       |
| 3        | 2        | 2        |
| 4        | 3        | 3        |
| 5        | 4        | 4        |
| 6        | 5        | 5        |
| 7        | 6        | 6        |
| 8        | 7        | 7        |
| 9        | 8        | 8        |
| 10       | -        | 17       |
| 11       | -        | 18       |
| 12       | 1        | 1        |
| 13       | -        | 11       |
| 14       | -        | 12       |
| 15       | -        | 13       |
| 16       | -        | 14       |
| 17       | -        | 15       |
| 18       | -        | 16       |

## SUMMARY

In November, 1964, the Finance Committee gave a written report to the Board of Directors, and this report was approved by the Board of Directors. This action provided for annual dues of \$100.00 for active members and \$50.00 for inactive members (inactive members were not given golf privileges). Guest fees were established at \$3.50 for weekdays and \$5.00 for weekends, and an assessment of \$150.00 was to be presented for vote at the annual meeting to cover \$60,000.00 of a total indebtedness of \$70,000.00. This report stated "Since this corporation was conceived and born as a workingman's golf club, we should lean toward a compromise most suitable to the lower income members of the club." The report also stated that "The time has come for reserving the primary use of our course unto those who have invested in and built it." This report also recommended the elimination of regular outside leagues. This Finance Committee report was also approved at the annual meeting of the membership.

Some of the original stock purchasers who bought the stock to help us get started with no intention of ever utilizing the facility were given the opportunity to re-sell their stock back to the club for an amount equal to their original investment. Approximately 50 people accepted that offer, since an annual dues obligation was eminently unfair to them.

We had accomplished at this point that which we had set out to do. With an enthusiastic group of people and limited sources of revenue, we had turned a farmer's field into a fine golf course facility and were now in a position to utilize it for the benefit of those who invested in it and who built it. I know of no other club which was organized, constructed and financed on that basis. All of us who took part in that effort have a right to be extremely proud. Viewing the facility today with the new club house, the mature trees, fairways and greens, the watering system, the cart barn, etc. does nothing to diminish that pride, and in fact enhances it. The enjoyment and relaxation that we have received from this facility over these twenty-five years has made every dollar of contribution and every hour of effort well spent. We can only hope that the members over the next twenty-five years will nurture it, appreciate it, and enjoy it as much as we have.