

Baa Baa Black Sheep?

Submitted by Village of Richfield Springs Historian Harriett Geywitz

The year is 1897 and sports venues were always considered a big part of the entertainment provided for the visitors as well as the local population at the height of the summer resort season in Richfield Springs.

The Waiontha Hunt and Golf Club was one place which was available to members. It offered ample facilities for the care and training of jumpers. Located on what was then called Montgomery Road (now Millstone Road) just north of the Village, the club house was reported to have been updated from a cozy farmhouse into a still cozier clubhouse and became a rendezvous for Richfield society. Receptions and teas were held afternoons. The golf links were admirably arranged and were the scene of several interesting matches including those of women interested in the sport. Nine caddies were kept busy at the links and a professional instructor was available to teach beginners the technicalities of the play. In 1900 tennis courts were also available. They were covered with clay, thoroughly rolled

and reported to be excellent.

Mr. Robert Tailer and his son J. Lee Tailer were in charge of the property at this time. They bragged about having 138 employees at the golf club. That number, even with a large clientele making use of the club's facilities, seemed to be unbelievable. The answer to the mystery was solved by Mr. Tailer who had 'employed' sheep to do double duty as self-starting lawn mowers as well as furnishing picturesque views to the landscape!

Purdon Robinson, one of the editors of "Richfield Life" gave his opinion on these 'employees' and their caretakers: "Sheep, like people, have their little peculiarities; they object to being driven, but can be lead at the will of someone who is their mental superior. When they failed to recognize their mental superior in the person of the boy first chosen to be their master he was compelled to resort to throwing stones at them which, to say the least, was hard on the sheep. However, this state of things does not continue, as a new shepherd whose methods of control are not so heroic, has

replaced the first."

In August 1901, the Waiontha Golf Club held its annual competition for the Proctor cup. This was open to all men members. Mr. Tailer also offered a sterling silver, gold lined loving cup as a second place trophy. The President's cup, donated by Mr. Thomas R. Proctor, had to be won three times before it became the property of the winner. The entries for the tournament that year included: Dr. Ransom, Dr. Bailey, Gregory Flynn, James Flynn, Beverly Morris, Archie Stiling, G. E. Tunnicliffe, B. U. Livingston, Jr., P. Worman, C. Olendorf, F. T. Earle, O. D. Smith, E. T. Mostert, A. Young and H. Tuller.

In 1913, if you wished to join the club, the membership rates were \$25. A season ticket was \$15; ladies \$7.50; monthly for men \$10; weekly for men \$5; day rate of \$1.00. In August of that year, a barn on the property burned to the



At the Ninth Green, Richfield Springs Country Club



A Group of Golfers Resting.

ground. Fortunately, everything inside the building was saved except for the hay and men stationed on the roof of the clubhouse were able to extinguish sparks as they fell carried by the wind.

In 1916 the club was incorporated under the new name of the Richfield Springs Country Club. The group was active into the 1940s. The clubhouse is now a private home.