



MASTER PLAN DEVELOPMENT

APPENDIX A

TURQUOISE VALLEY GOLF COURSE
HISTORICAL NARRATIVE

Turquoise Valley Golf Course: A Historical Narrative

Naco, Cochise County, Arizona

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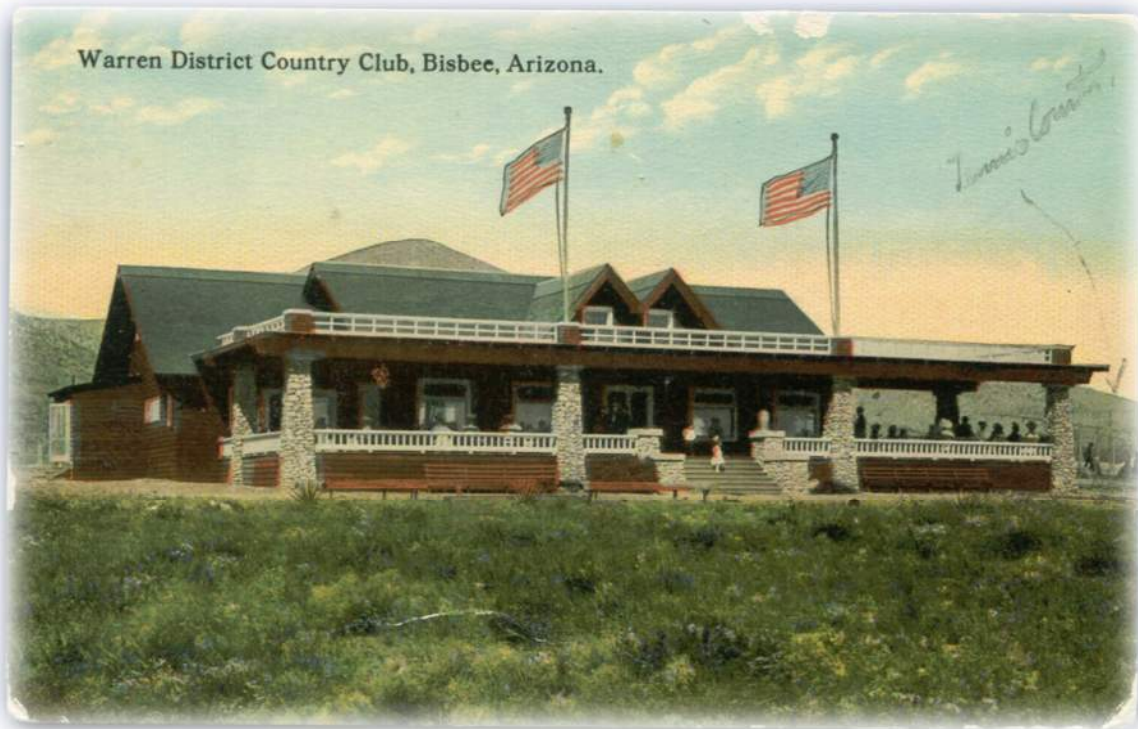
February 2024



Turquoise Valley Golf Course

Warren District County Club

The Turquoise Valley Golf Course began its history in the Town of Warren, a suburb of Bisbee, well before its 1936 construction in Naco, Arizona. In 1908, L.W. Powell, Jesse Yoakum, W.B. Gohring, F. E. Shine, H.A. Schwartz, George E. Buxton, F. R. Harrington, Roger T. Pelton, and J. T. Hood incorporated the Warren District County Club, the towns first golf course located about three-quarters of a mile south of Warren. Despite its peripheral location, the electric railway, through a short half hour route, brought townspeople to the club where they could play golf on oil washed sand for putting greens (there was no water for grass greens), practice rifle shooting, tennis, and participate in other social activities at the clubhouse. In March of 1908, improvements were made to the country club, most notably approval of plans for the construction of the clubhouse, and completion of tennis courts, and further conditioning of the putting greens. Three bids for the clubhouse were submitted; one by noted architect, Henry C. Trost, who is credited with designing much of downtown El Paso and lavish homes in Tucson, Arizona, F.C. Hurst, and contractor and builder, T.A. Holden of Douglas, Arizona. The board of the directors chose Holden's bid, which included a 100 x 115 ft building housing both large and small assembly rooms, a billiard's room, smoking room, individual locker rooms for men and women, a buffet, dining room, stewards' quarters, kitchen, toilet rooms and cellar. The adobe building was designed to resemble a rustic lodge with wide verandas highlighted by stone pillars.



Undated postcard of the Warren District Country Club Clubhouse (see the pencil notation of the location of tennis courts adjacent to the clubhouse).

The country club became a popular destination for the communities of Bisbee, Warren, and outlying suburbs, and the local newspaper frequently remarked on the social, cultural, and recreational activities offered by the club. In the spring of 1908 for example, *The Bisbee Daily Review* [BDR] described the women's rifle and golf tournaments at the country club as the "scenes of ma[n]y interesting encounters between those of the weaker sex. Some appropriate prizes have been put up for the winners...and the struggle to secure them will be the most interesting ever witnessed on the ground." Later that same year, *BDR* gave additional colorful commentary on the happenings at the country club when they stated, "[a] succession of entrainments such as has never before been attempted by the leaders of social affairs in the Warren District will be given by the Warren District Country Club during the coming winter." The article goes on to describe the club's winter social calendar as including dances, musicals, smokers, card parties, and a "score of other pleasing diversions", along with the regular fare of golf and shooting tournaments, tennis matches, and other "field sports galore." In addition, the club offered golf instruction, as described by the *Douglas International American*, which noted the departure of Mr. and Mrs. John Adams of Douglas who were traveling to Warren to instruct club members on the game of golf.

On September 7, 1909, the one-year anniversary of the opening of the country club was celebrated with a local dance and two musical concerts. At the time of its anniversary, the club membership totaled 200 people, attainable only through purchasing stock in the club after the retirement of a former member. Since its establishment a year earlier, the golf greens had matured and were composed of both natural and manmade hazards, railroad embankments, and ditches; all of which were tended by hand and not scraped over by rails as had been done the year prior. By 1909, the success of the Warren District Country Club was noted by other cities in Arizona, including Tucson whose leaders met with the Warren District to discuss how they too could restore their existing golf links and bring in tourism revenue and club memberships.

Despite admittance to the club being through paid membership, the Warren District Country Club often opened their doors to the wider community through various philanthropic events and fundraisers. One such event was a benefit dance in February of 1919, following the end of World War I, to benefit French children who had been orphaned during the war. Interestingly, the timing of this event shares many parallels with the modern day Covid pandemic. At the time, the benefit coincided with the Great Influenza Epidemic and as described by the local paper, had to be canceled and rescheduled multiple times to not spread the disease among the community.

The following year, in the fall of 1920, the Warren District County Club would play host to a golf tournament with neighboring teams from Douglas, and house professional golfer D.K. White from Toledo, Ohio who was arriving to provide instruction to the Bisbee team and club members. In advance of the tournament and White's arrival, the course, now a 9-hole course, and conceded to be the best of its kind in the southwest, was being prepared by a team of men under the supervision of Roger Pelton, chairman of the greens committee (Pelton later became the Bisbee district golf champion in both 1935 and 1936 following the move to Naco). The country club persisted for another decade until it too became a casualty of the Great Depression.

The Town of Naco and The New Deal

Twin Cities of Naco

Between 1879 and 1880, mining towns, smelters, and stamp mills were established in Bisbee, Tombstone, Douglas, and Benson. During this same period, mines were also in operation across the border in Mexico, including at Nacozari and Cananea. Because of the rich mineral deposits in these areas, a joint partnership between the U.S. and Mexican governments led to the construction of the Arizona and South Eastern

Railroad. Between 1898 and 1899, the Arizona and South Eastern Railroad crossed the border, transporting mineral resources. At the point where the railroad crossed the border, the twin towns of Naco, Arizona and Naco, Sonora emerged.

In 1898, Naco, Arizona began as a service center for people and supplies moving across the border. Within a few short years this border checkpoint began attracting residents, resulting in a small town of 500 inhabitants. By 1904, the town boasted a hotel, stores, saloons, a barbershop, a bank, a drugstore, and a telegraph office. Despite local desire for continued town growth, the Mexican Revolution quickly put an end to such aspirations. As the twin towns of Naco grew, political problems in Mexico were also brewing. The focus of the unrest was the dictatorial policies of President Porfirio Diaz. In a bid to keep his political seat, Diaz jailed his main political opponent, Francisco Madero. Madero, however, escaped from jail and rallied Mexican citizens around him, calling for reform of and overthrow of the Diaz government. Revolts soon broke out, spreading rapidly throughout the Mexican countryside, including at the town of Naco, Sonora. In 1910, the Mexican Revolution was in full force, a cause of great concern for many who lived along the border. Fearing that rebel activity would spill over onto American soil, the U.S. Government began stationing troops along the border. Troops were charged with preventing the smuggling of arms to rebel forces and maintaining peace along the U.S. side of the border.

These concerns prompted the U.S. government to send cavalry regiments to the border. On November 6, 1910, troops of Company B of the Eighteenth Infantry, previously stationed at Fort Whipple (near Prescott, Arizona), were reassigned to the border town of Naco. At the beginning of the following year, additional members of the Eighth Cavalry were sent to Naco, followed less than a year later by the Fourth Cavalry. Between 1910 and 1913, these cavalry units were involved in minor border skirmishes, but by the spring of 1913, tensions in Naco had worsened. On April 8, 1913, Mexican and Yaqui Indian forces, led by General Pedro Ojeda of the Mexican federal government entered Naco, Sonora. Ojeda's forces were sent to stop rebel forces under the leadership of General Alvaro Obregon. Over the next five days, Naco was the scene of battle between Ojeda and Obregon. By April 13, Obregon's rebel forces had defeated Ojeda, forcing him and his remaining troops to flee across the border into Arizona.

In response to the Siege at Naco, the U.S. military dispatched four troops of the Tenth Cavalry along with six troops and the machine gun platoon from the Ninth Cavalry to Naco. The Ninth and Tenth Cavalry Regiments, like other troops stationed along the border, were charged with protecting U.S. citizens and enforcing neutrality laws. These "neutrality laws" required that American troops ensure U.S. sovereignty by preventing violence from spilling over into the U.S., but troops were required to do so without taking up arms or firing at military forces stationed on the Mexican side of the border. Despite being under attack, both the Ninth and Tenth Cavalry units followed their mission and did not return fire. After the Siege of Naco, the Ninth and Tenth Cavalry remained stationed at Naco where they continued to guard the community. The end of the siege, however, marked the beginning of a U.S. military presence at Naco. By August 1919, construction of Camp Naco was underway and remained in operation until 1923, after which time, in 1935, it housed Camp 3839, SCS-18-A of the Civilian Conservation Corps who made repairs to the remaining buildings at the military installation.



Historical panorama of Camp Naco Military Installation, 1919.

The Great Depression

Beginning in September 1929, severe declines in stock prices led to a catastrophic stock market crash in October of that same year, known as Black Friday. With the onset of the Great Depression, Arizona witnessed a marked population decrease and through the course of the 1930s, saw limited economic growth. However, life began to improve with the inauguration of Franklin Delano Roosevelt and the creation of various government bureaus, referred to as Roosevelt's *New Deal*, which were established to counteract the negative impacts of the depression and provide jobs for American citizens. The "alphabet agencies", like the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC), Works Progress Administration (WPA), and Public Works Administration (PWA), among others, began work projects throughout the country and employed veterans and men (and later women) between the ages of 18 and 25 whose families were on the relief roles.

Established in 1935, the WPA became the leading New Deal work program in the United States with a budget of over 4 billion dollars allocated towards small-scale work projects initiated by local and state governments. Naco was the recipient of at least four New Deal-era projects, Camp Naco by the CCC, Naco School by the WPA, Turquoise Valley Golf Course (called Bisbee Golf Course at the time) by the Civil Works Administration (CWA) and WPA, and a paving project between Naco and Bisbee by the WPA. In 1936, an average of \$165,000 a month was being spent across six southern counties in Arizona, among which Cochise County was the recipient of 24 federal projects by the WPA. Bisbee (or rather Naco) was not the only WPA golf course project at the time, as a similar golf course was being undertaken in Douglas that same year.

Establishment of Bisbee/Naco Golf Course

Following the closure of the Warren District Country Club in the early 1930s, the country club became the focus of a federally funded New Deal project. Work began in 1934 by the Civil Works Administration, which was a new program under the Federal Emergency Relief Administration to jumpstart massive reemployment through simple public works projects. The program employed over 4 million men and women during its short tenure between November 1933 and March 1934 and its legacy of providing work projects over direct relief would be utilized in future New Deal projects, most notably with the WPA. The CWA began with small work projects at the original Warren District Country Club, until work was halted and taken over by the WPA in 1936. The WPA took on the task of dismantling the original adobe country club building brick by brick and relocating and reconstructing the building at its present-day site in Naco. The WPA also added a new wing to the building along its west end, stuccoed the building, planted over



Current Aerial image of Turquoise Valley Golf Course with Camp Naco directly west of the course.



WPA plaque commemorating the work of the WPA at the Turquoise Valley Golf Course.



Pro golfer, E. R. Kelley at the “Bisbee Golf Course” in 1937. Image courtesy of University of Arizona Special Collections.



View of the golf course from the veranda of the country club, 1937. Image courtesy of University of Arizona Special Collections.

5,000 trees, installed a 9-hole grass golf course, cobble retaining walls, a well, and a plaque commemorating their work to establish the new golf course.

The new course became a popular golfing destination following the departure of the WPA, with many professional golfers both playing the course and participating in tournaments. During this period, the property was under the ownership of the City of Bisbee and operated as a 9-hole, semi-private golf course. Local and national newspapers commented on the course, both in its difficulty and in its beauty. For example, in 1940, press coverage included a story remarking on how Vance M. Johnson, brother of Captain V.L. Johnson made a hole-in-one on the 114-yard par 3-hole No. 3 on the Naco course, a story worth noting based on the notorious difficulty of the course. More humorous stories about the property during this period made national press. In 1948, the Kansas paper, *Butler Times Press*, remarked on the clubs somewhat lax penalty rules, noting a “ball lying within club length of a rattlesnake may be moved two club lengths without penalty.” In addition to golfing, the course made a picturesque backdrop for the film industry. In 1955, the film noir crime drama, *Violent Saturday* starring Victor Mature, was partially shot in Bisbee with additional scenes filmed on the veranda of the Bisbee Golf Course Clubhouse overlooking the greens.

At an unknown time, a Recreational Vehicle (RV) park was added to the property. Despite the course’s popularity, the City of Bisbee was unable to regularly maintain the course, which cost on average \$60,000 a year annually to maintain. At first a private interest purchased the course in 1991, but the course once again began to deteriorate. It was finally sold by the City of Bisbee in 2001 to Peter and Leslie Lawson of Okotoks, Canada who made the most improvements to the project since the WPA.

During their ownership of the property, the Lawsons purchased additional land adjacent to the course and expanded the RV park from 20 to 100 sites, increased the golf course from 9 to 18 holes as designed by former pro golfer and Cochise College physical education instructor Dick Atkinson; changed the name of the course to Turquoise Valley Golf Course, and garnered the course a reputation of being the 10th longest golf course in the world and Arizona’s only par 6 course. Moreover, during their ownership the course celebrated its 100th anniversary in 2008 and was congratulated by renowned golfer and course visitor, Jack Nicklaus on their centennial anniversary. In 2015, the Lawsons put the property up for sale and it was sold and changed hands several times until the current owner, Bisbee Ventures One, LLC led by Joseph Lewis purchased the property in 2018. Lewis presented a plan to redevelop the golf course and make it a 9-hole course so that it would become economically feasible to operate. The plan was rejected by the community and the course was permanently closed in 2019. The current plan is to redevelop the site and restore the clubhouse and its restaurant, bar, and ballroom.



2019 image of the Turquoise Valley Golf Course Clubhouse. Image courtesy of James West.

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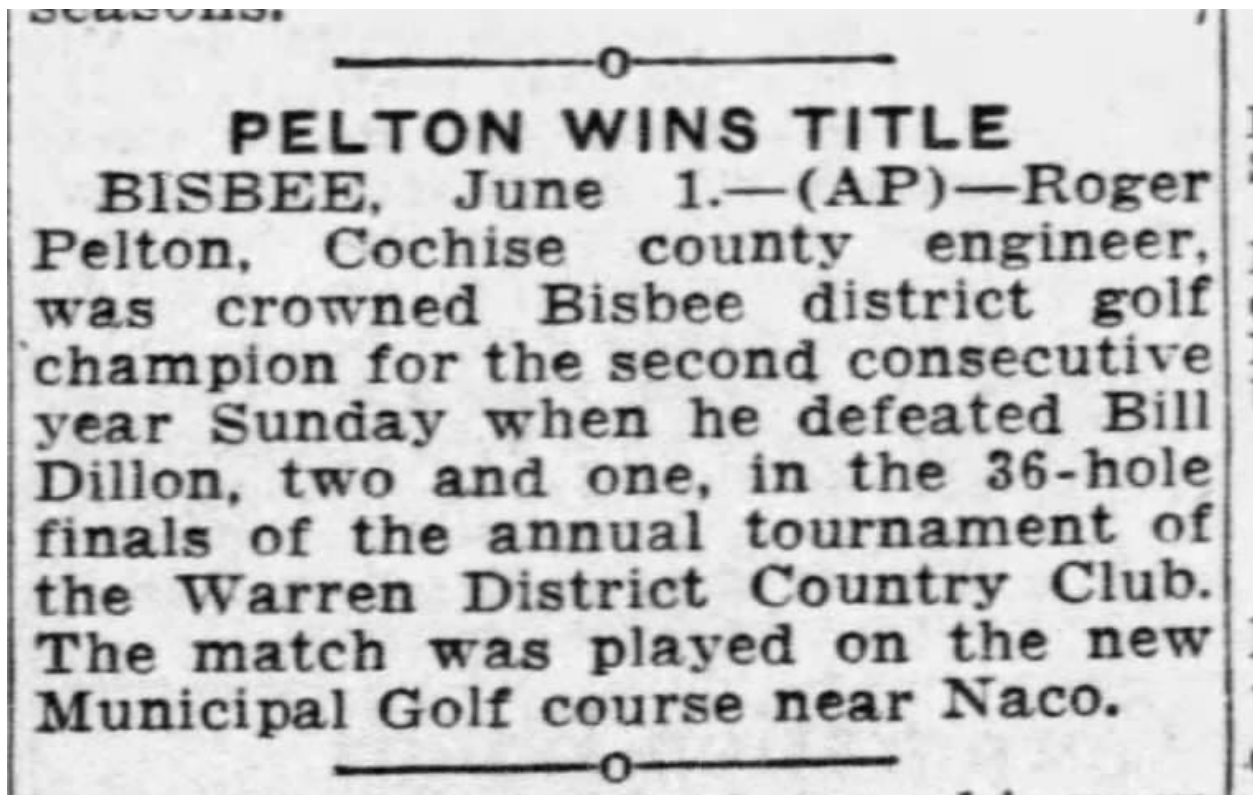
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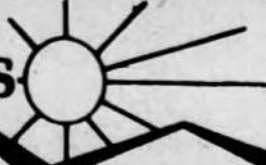
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Appendix A: Ephemera



1936 clipping from the *Arizona Republic* announcing the first tournament held at Turquoise Valley Golf Course (note that Roger Pelton won the tournament. He was the former grounds manager at the course when it was located in Warren).

BISBEE'S



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1½ MILES SO. OF HWY. 92

**ESCAPE
THE HEAT!**

**SAVE
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(Bring warm clothing — the mine's fresh air ventilation maintains a 47° temperature)

SPEND 3 DAYS & 2 NIGHTS with us (at a total cost of \$25 per person, double occupancy) and receive special "GOLDEN COINS" good for 2 admissions to the QUEEN UNDERGROUND COPPER MINE TOUR (value \$7) and 2 paid greens fees for DAY-LONG use of the nearby BISBEE GOLF COURSE (value \$12).

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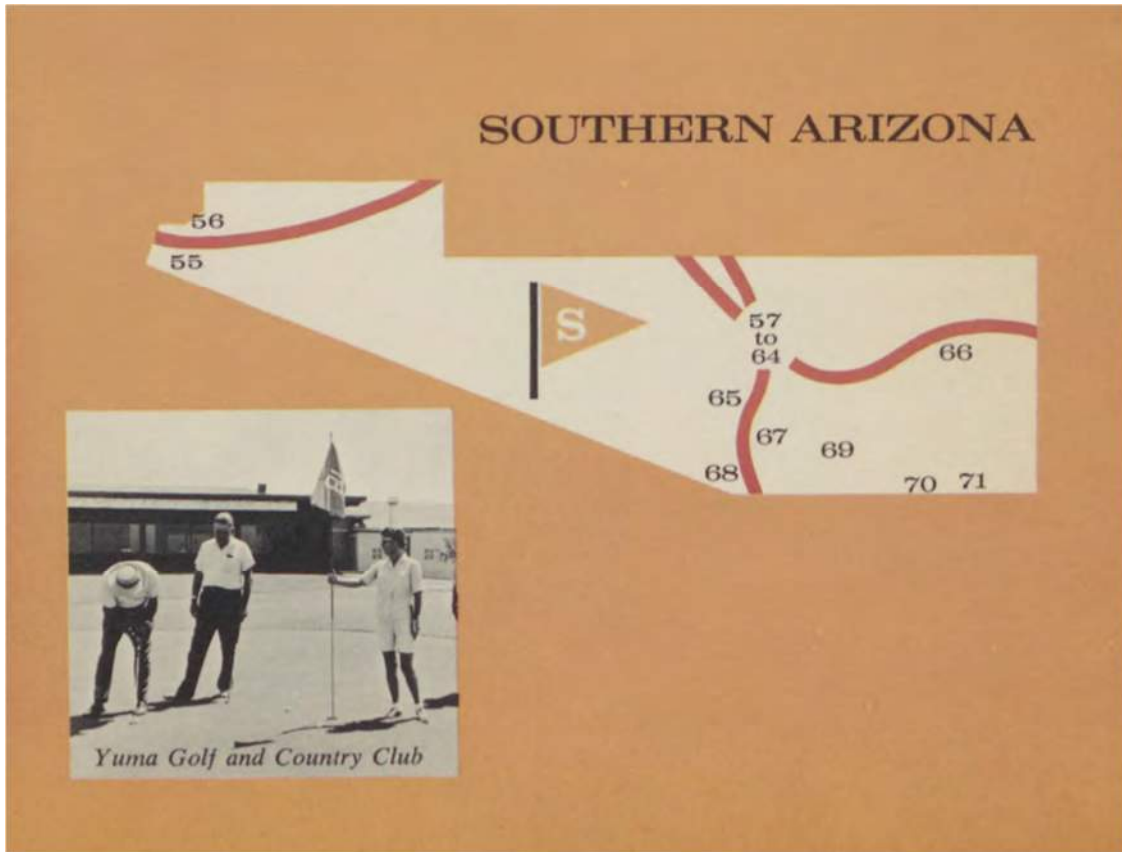
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1978 Advertisement for San Jose Lodge in Naco in the *Arizona Daily Star*, promoting Bisbee Golf Course.

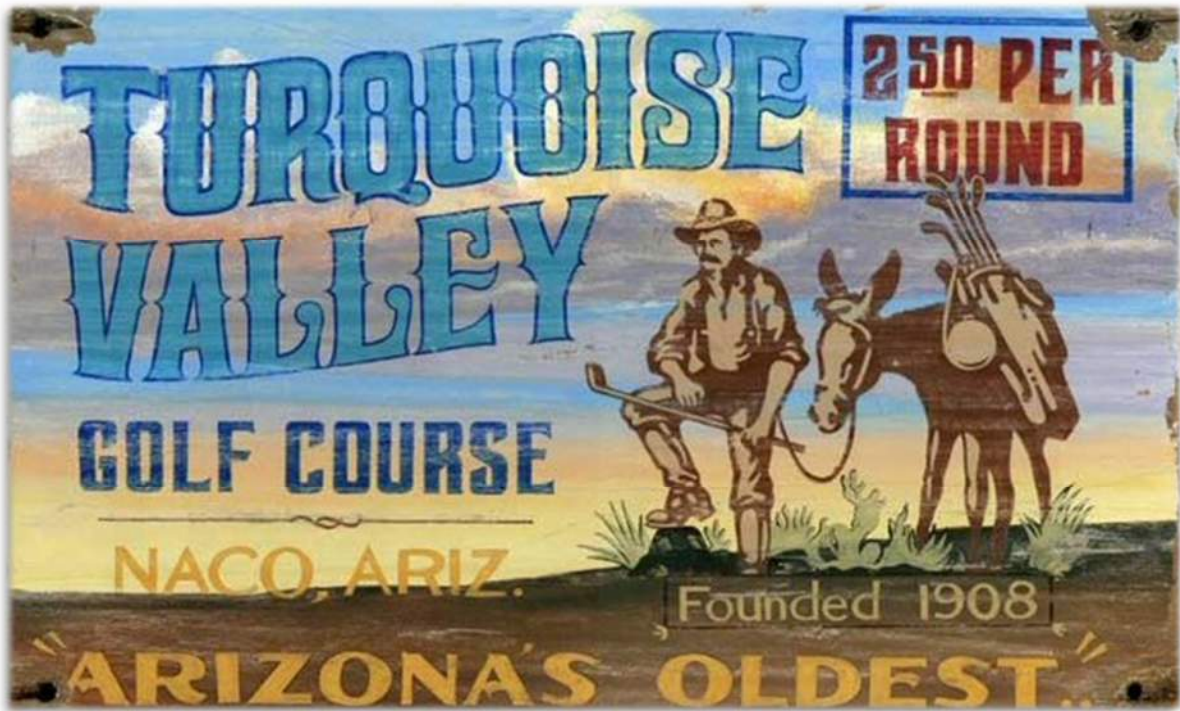


COURSE & CITY	MAP NO.	HOLE	YARDS	PAR	G. P. *
BISBEE - NACO Bisbee C. C.	70	9	6714	72	SP

Excerpts from the 1965 *Golf in the Sun*, a promotional brochure on Arizona golf. Note that the golf course still went by the name of Bisbee Country Club, was 9-holes, and was considered semi-private which seems unusual for a municipal course.



Commemorative plaque at Turquoise Valley Golf Course, noting 100 years of Arizona golf as of 2008.



Replica sign for the Turquoise Valley Golf Course and RV Park are available online courtesy of <https://www.jatashop.com/pp-m1323-custom-turquoise-valley-golfing-vintage-style-metal-sign-red-horse-signs/>