

United States Department of the Interior National Park Service
NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES REGISTRATION FORM

1. Name of Property

historic name: OAKHURST LINKS
other name/site number:

2. Location

street & number: 1 Montague Drive, PO Box 639 not for publication: N/A
city/town: White Sulphur Springs vicinity: N/A
state: WV county: Greenbrier code: 025 zip code: 24986

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended, I hereby certify that this nomination ___ request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property ___ meets ___ does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant nationally statewide ___ locally.

Susan M. Pierce
Signature of Certifying Official

10/11/01
Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

Date

In my opinion, the property ___ meets ___ does not meet the National Register criteria.
(___ See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature of Certifying Official/Title

Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

Date

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4. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby certify that this property is:	Signature of Keeper	Date of Action
<input type="checkbox"/> entered in the National Register <input type="checkbox"/> See continuation sheet.	_____	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> determined eligible for the National Register <input type="checkbox"/> See continuation sheet.	_____	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> determined not eligible for the National Register	_____	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> removed from the National Register	_____	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> other (explain): _____ _____ _____	_____	_____

5. Classification

Ownership of Property:
(Check as many boxes as apply)

private
 public-local
 public-State
 public-Federal

Category of Property
(Check only one box)

building(s)
 district
 site
 structure
 object

Number of Resources within Property
(Do not include previously listed resources in the count.)

Contributing	Non-contributing	
1	3	buildings
1		sites
		structures
		objects
2	3	TOTAL

Name of related multiple property listing N/A
(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing.)

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register 0

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6. Function or Use

Historic Functions

RECREATION AND CULTURE:

Golf Course

DOMESTIC: Residence

SOCIAL: Clubhouse

Current Functions

RECREATION AND CULTURE:

Golf Course/Museum

SOCIAL: Clubhouse

7. Description

Architectural Classification:

LATE 19TH AND 20TH CENTURY REVIVALS: Colonial Revival

Materials:

Foundation: Stone

Walls: Wood Clapboard

Roof: Wood Shakes

Other: _____

Narrative Description

(See continuation on sheets.)

8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria

(Mark "X" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing.)

A Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.

B Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.

C Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.

D Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

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Criteria Considerations
(Mark "X" in all the boxes that apply.)

Property is:

A owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.

B removed from its original location.

C a birthplace or grave.

D a cemetery.

E a reconstructed building, object, or structure.

F a commemorative property.

G less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

Areas of Significance
Entertainment/Recreation
Landscape Architecture

Period of Significance
1884-ca.1912

Significant Dates
1884
1888

Significant Person
(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)
N/A

Cultural Affiliation
N/A

Architect/Builder
Montague, Russell W.; Torrin, Lionel; Grant, George;
MacLeod, Alexander & Roderick; Builders

Narrative Statement of Significance
(See continuation sheets.)

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11. Form Prepared By

Name/Title: Alan Rowe, National Register/Survey Historian, & David Steele, Intern, with assistance from Vikki Keller, owner.

Organization: West Virginia State Historic Preservation Office Date: September, 2001

Street & Number: 1900 Kanawha Boulevard, East Telephone: 304-558-0220

City or Town: Charleston State: WV ZIP: 25305-0300

Property Owner

(Complete this item at the request of SHPO or FPO.)

Name: Ms. Vikki Keller

Street & Number: 1 Montague Drive, PO Box 639 Telephone: 304-536-1884

City or Town: White Sulphur Springs State: WV Zip: 24986

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9. Major Bibliographical References

Bibliography

(Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested.
 previously listed in the National Register
 previously determined eligible by the National Register
 designated a National Historic Landmark
 recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # _____
 recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # _____

Primary location of additional data:

- State Historic Preservation Office
 Other State agency
 Federal agency
 Local government
 University
 Other

Name of Repository: _____

10. Geographical Data

Acreege of Property: 35.788

UTM References

Quad Map: White Sulphur Springs

A 17 563565 4186900
Zone Easting Northing
C 17 563200 4186610
Zone Easting Northing

B 17 563430 4186550
Zone Easting Northing
D 17 563362 4187012
Zone Easting Northing

Verbal Boundary Description
(See continuation sheet.)

Boundary Justification
(See continuation sheet.)

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Architectural Description

Summary:

The Oakhurst Links golf course is located approximately two miles northeast of White Sulphur Springs in Greenbrier County. The nomination boundary follows the course property line and encloses about thirty-five acres. Within the boundary are one contributing building, one contributing site, and three non-contributing buildings. The course occupies rolling terrain at the head of a narrow valley cut by Dry Creek, one of the tributaries of Howard Creek, which flows southwest toward the town of White Sulphur Springs and eventually empties into the Greenbrier River. The property outline forms an irregular rectangle that is tilted along a northeast to southwest axis that parallels the general trend of the Allegheny Mountains through the state. The course retains its integrity and continues to reflect its historic design, setting and appearance. The Montague house and the layout and vegetation of the course have changed only slightly since the beginning of the twentieth century, and the later intrusions of a small supply shed, barn, and guest house result in only a slight impact on the appearance of the course overall. A modern golf player sees and experiences essentially the same vistas that players did in the 1880s when the course was new.

General Setting:

Conceived by American golf enthusiast Russell W. Montague and his friends in 1884, Oakhurst Links is a nine-hole golf course based upon traditional Scottish design elements. Montague and company had first-hand knowledge of English and Scottish golf courses when they prepared the design for Oakhurst, which was less a formally designed landscape than it was a functionally integrated part of the topography; very little earth moving or wholesale modification of the pre-existing pasture was necessary to create the greens, fairways, traps, and tees. As a result of this naturalistic design philosophy, the course on first glance often appears to be a rolling sheep pasture ringed by a mixture of deciduous and coniferous trees and steep ridges. This geographic isolation at the far end of a narrow valley has kept modern development at bay and preserved a high level of historic landscape integrity.

The main historic building on the course was the home of Russell W. Montague and a part-time clubhouse when golf was being played. The two-story house is located on a knoll in the southeastern corner of the course, and constitutes a focal point of play. The course is designed so

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that a round of golf would begin near the southwest elevation of the house and end just below the main elevation on the northwest side. There is a small modern supply shed located approximately 98 feet from the northeast corner of the main house that creates a minor visual intrusion. To the southeast and on the hillside above the Montague house is a modern guest house built in 1977. It is deeply recessed within a grove of pine trees and is not visible from most areas of play. Located across the second green approximately 386 feet from the main house is a barn, originally built for horses in 1968 and presently used for sheep and maintenance equipment. The one-story barn is shielded by a stand of trees on the northwest side and the slope of a hill on the southeast side, which collectively work to lessen its visual impact on the course. There are glimpses of modern houses visible beyond the northwest and the southwest boundaries of the course, but they are well shielded from the areas of play by groves of pine trees and underbrush.

Physical Description:

The areas of play continue to represent the main elements of the historic Oakhurst Links golf course. When the course was designed and constructed in 1884, the house and attending pasture were already in existence, providing a natural context of land-use patterns that the golf player traveled over, around, and through. Livestock grazing continued on the land following the end of play ca. 1912, and continues today following the restoration of the course. The same natural features evident to the player of 1884 are still present in the form of forested mountain sides, clumps and lines of trees at the edge of the property, and grassy rolling hillocks. The original appearance of the main house and the course can be documented in photographs found in magazine and newspaper articles dating back to 1913. Unfortunately, due to poor copy quality, reproductions of those magazine and newspaper images have not been included with the nomination.

Montague House/Oakhurst Links Clubhouse ca. 1880 Contributing Building

The Montague house is an I-house in plan with sparse Colonial Revival stylistic elements. It is a two story side gable house which is likely to have originally been rectangular in plan. Subsequent additions have given the house more of an ell shaped footprint. The entire house roof has wood shingles with white clapboard siding on all elevations. There is a shallow cornice accompanied with dentils at the eaves extending the main elevation. The main elevation consists of three bays with a central entry. The second floor has three 6/6 double-hung sash, wood windows with green shutters. The first floor has two windows, one on each side of the entry which are also 6/6 double-hung sash, wood windows with accompanying green shutters.

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The entry is simple and un-pedimented with a four-lite transom. At each side of the door a carriage style lantern is mounted on the wall at approximately transom height. Outside the entry door is a wood screen door painted green. To the left of the main body of the house the elevation of the present day clubhouse is visible. The clubhouse has a side gable roof and clapboard siding. There are two double doors with multiple lites and exterior screen doors. Centered between the doors is a single 6/6 double-hung sash, wood window with shutters. Beneath each pair of doors there is a single wood step.

On the southwestern elevation the rear ell addition can be seen. The roof joins the main house ridge forming a cross gable. A square brick chimney extends through the addition's ridge just prior to joining the ridge of the original house. Along the elevation a hip porch roof extends from the bottom edge of the second floor windows. The porch is supported by six square wood columns and is open beneath exposing the rafters and decking. The columns have wide base blocks and begin an inward taper one-third of the way up beginning at a dado band. There are three 6/6 double-hung sash, wood windows with green shutters on the second floor, two in the end of the original structure and a third in the addition elevation. On the first floor beneath the porch there are two pairs of ten-lite double doors. Each set of doors has a pair of exterior three-panel screen doors. Beneath each set of doors there is a single wood step that rests on the porch floor. The porch surface is tiled with 6"x 8" terra cotta tiles. Also visible from this elevation is the kitchen/pantry addition which extends out beneath the roof of the wrap-around porch. The entrance to the kitchen from this elevation is through ten-lite double doors with exterior three panel screen doors.

The southeast elevation shows the gable end of the ell, the back side gable of the main body of the house, and the hip kitchen/porch roof addition. There are four 6/6 double-hung sash, wood windows with green shutters on the second floor. Extending from the side of the second floor above the kitchen addition is a second floor bathroom. The shed roof bathroom extension has a window somewhat smaller the others surrounding it. The gable end of the ell has one centered window. The back side of the main body of the house has two windows. On the first floor the kitchen has two pairs of 6/6 double-hung sash windows also with green shutters. The kitchen windows are slightly shorter than the majority of the windows in the house. To the right of the kitchen a covered breezeway separates the house and the modern clubhouse building. Originally, a T-plan, gambrel-roofed servant's quarters addition of roughly the same scale stood at this location, but was destroyed by fire in the 1970s. The clubhouse is a one story side gable building with wood shingles and clapboard siding. There is a massive stone chimney that tapers at the top near the southeastern end of the rectangular plan building. There are three 4/4

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double-hung sash, wood windows and one larger 6/6 double-hung sash window. The windows in the clubhouse are not accompanied by shutters. The northeast elevation is the gable end of the main body of the house. There is virtually no overhang at the eaves. A large stone chimney covered in stucco stands just left of center. There are four 6/6 double-hung sash wood windows, one on each side of the chimney on the first and second floors.

On the northernmost corner of the elevation there are two larger 6/9 double-hung sash, wood windows. None of the windows on this elevation have accompanying shutters. To the left the one story kitchen addition is visible beneath the hip roof. There is a door with an attached exterior screen door beneath the breezeway to the modern clubhouse. A carriage type lantern is mounted to the wall at the left side of the door. To the right of this entry there is a second door which is the pantry entrance. The door has three horizontal lites and has an exterior screen door. To the right of the entry there is a 6/6 double-hung sash, wood window. From this side the gable end of the clubhouse is also seen. It has a single 6/6 double-hung sash window with shutters at the extreme right of the elevation. There is a rectangular louvered vent near the peak of the gable.

The floor layout during the period of significance echoed the typical I-house scheme, with two rooms up and two rooms down divided by a centered hallway and a rear ell. It is very likely that the house was increased in size and architectural sophistication ca. 1880 by Russell Montague, judging by the heavy log beams underpinning the present-day study on the first floor. It is possible that the house began as a humble, possibly two story, log house which was then doubled in size with an addition to the south of the original log section. Photographic evidence reveals that a servant's quarters stood to the rear of the main house at an unknown date, which was replaced by the modern clubhouse and connected to the main house in the 1970s. Externally, photographs in newspaper and magazine articles from 1913 and 1929, and a 1959 photograph reproduced in an undated article, indicate that the house was most likely covered with stucco at an unknown date after the period of significance. The August, 1929 issue of *Golf Illustrated* reports in a photo caption that the "old clubhouse in the foreground has been reconditioned, but the original walls remain," a statement that implies changes were made to the house at some date between 1884 and 1913. An undated photograph published in *A History of Greenbrier County* by Otis Rice (page 451) shows the house with board and batten siding, which most likely represents the appearance of the house in the 1880s. Post-1959 changes include the application of wooden siding over the stucco, the replacement of the original windows, and the removal of two peaked wall gables on the southwest elevation. Interior changes in the original part of the house have been slight, with the hardwood floors, wainscot, and door and window trim surviving intact.

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Due to the evidence of post-1959 alterations, and the question of when the pre-1959 changes were wrought, it is necessary to evaluate the main house not on its architectural merits, but on its importance under Criterion A for Entertainment/Recreation as the location of the club facilities for the Oakhurst Links golfers. It is also important to note that despite the changes in exterior materials, the main house continues to function in its role as a center of action on the course without causing an adverse impact on the viewshed as a whole.

Golf Course

1884

Contributing Site

Laid out over an existing pasture in 1884, the Oakhurst Links golf course operates in a generally counter-clockwise pattern of play and covers most of the thirty-five acres within the present property boundaries. When viewed from Big Draft Road adjacent to the southwest margin of the property, the course appears at first to be nothing more than open pasture land ringed by trees and mountains. Upon entering the property and traveling on the gravel drive to the main house, however, it is possible to make out areas of different color and texture on the valley floor that delineate the greens, fairways, and the rough areas of the golf course.

The nine holes of the course add up to a total of 2,235 yards, with most holes requiring two shots to reach the green. Holes two, three, and eight require three, one, and three shots, respectively, to travel from the tee to the green. The first tee is located a short distance from the southwest side elevation of the main house, and play rarely leaves sight of the main house through the entire round. The first hole is known colloquially as the "road hole," since it passes over the gravel drive that leads to the house, which emulates the feature of the same name at the St. Andrews course in Scotland.

The tees are unique in their design and use of materials, since they are not planted in short grass as modern courses are. Each tee, for the most part, is a slightly raised, rectangular earthen platform with a hard-packed sand surface. Using a bucket of water and a pinch of sand from a second bucket, the golfer forms a sand tee to support the ball for driving. The conditions evident in the fairways, rough, and greens are worth mentioning as well. Grass height in the fairways would be considered unforgivably long on a modern golf course. Although mowed to a more consistent height (about 1 7/8") than that attainable using the hand scythes of the past, the course is much closer in appearance to a pasture than its modern counterparts. Conditions in the rough are left in a near-natural state--the grass is allowed to grow its maximum seed bearing height

The first green provides a model for the eight greens that follow it. As a concession to modern expectations, the greens are planted in modern bent grass and mowed fairly short (about 3/8"). The original greens at Oakhurst, if they were planted with grass at all, would have been

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native pasture grass and left to grow much longer than what is normal today. The hole is marked by a three foot tall wooden stick painted in black and white horizontal stripes with a small cloth pennant tacked to the top. Originally, the cups used at Oakhurst were heavy cast iron sleeves, as discovered in the location of the old eighth hole by property owner Lewis Keller and his son, Lewis Jr., several years ago.

The tight fit of the course within the margins of the property is worth mentioning at the first hole--with space at a premium, the features of the course were bunched against each other, and in this case, the shoulder of Montague Drive. A modern dry stone wall of approximately two feet in height provides a visual reminder of what is in and out of bounds at this point. The end of this wall marks the southwestern tip of the property, which is also the location of the second tee, which reverses the direction of play toward the southeast. The second fairway and the ninth fairway form another distinctive, and antique, feature of this course. The mid-points of each fairway actually cross, forming an "X" shaped pattern of play once common in golf courses built prior to 1900. This feature is also an attempt to pack as many holes as possible into a restricted geographical area.

The views from the first and second tees reveal the overarching course design philosophy in relation to the use of naturally occurring ground forms. Both holes are obscured from the tee by jutting "points" of land that the golfer is required to shoot over or around in order to reach the green. The design of the course intentionally incorporated these natural obstacles in the direction of play in order to challenge the player and to exploit the "as found" nature of the lay of the land. The third and fourth holes change the direction of play once again, this time facing the player generally toward the northeast. The short third hole requires the golfer to carry in a single shot a shallow gully and pond (the second naturally spring fed pond on the course) before reaching the green, and the fourth requires an uphill, two shot play. It is interesting to note that the one original "pig trail" is still in use between the second green and the third tee, which is on a hillside above it. The pig trail, quite simply, is a zig-zag path across the face of the slope that leads up to the main house. The path was no doubt originally worn into the hillside by livestock, then adopted for human use when the course was created. A modern pig trail was built between the fifth tee and green during Bob Cupp's restoration efforts in 1994.

Once play reaches the fourth green, the course attains its highest elevation, between 1,900 and 2,000 feet above sea level. An unbroken view of the entire course is visible from the fourth green, with the main house and the modern horse barn visible below. There is a narrow, crushed shale path leading from the fourth green to the fifth tee platform. This path continues down the face of the hill to the northwest, terminating at the base of the hill. This feature was added by

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Bob Cupp to ease the golfer's progress down the steep hillside on the way to the fairway below. Adjacent to the fifth fairway is a white, clapboard I-house that once was part of the Montague property. The property line is demarcated by a wooden post and rail fence.

After driving from the fifth tee, play travels back downhill into the bottom lands adjacent to Dry Creek. Here, three fairways share a fairly narrow piece of ground, with a row of shielding trees between the fairways of the sixth and eighth holes. Play zig zags back and forth in this area, traveling southwest on the sixth, turning back to the northeast on the seventh, and turning again to the southwest on the eighth. After completing the eighth hole, play has returned to the location of the "criss cross" fairways of the second and ninth holes. The ninth hole turns play in a southeasterly direction, returning the golfer to the main house. From the ninth tee, it is necessary to play across the second fairway, across a gravel service road, and up the hill to the house. The house is barely visible among its shading copse of trees.

Guest House

1977

Non-Contributing Building

The guest house is located behind the Montague house continuing up the slope in a southeastern direction. The wood frame and brick veneer one story house was constructed in 1977. The roof is low pitch and has two main gables facing the valley below. The windows consist of a variety of large plate glass picture window combinations and sliding glass doors. A wood deck extends for a large portion of the main elevation.

Supply Shed

1969

Non-Contributing Building

The supply shed is located southeast of the house near a bend in the driveway. The rectangular plan building was constructed in 1969. It has a front gable roof and clapboard siding. There are two narrow doors at the outer edges of the elevation. The left door has two panels that extend the length of the door. The right door has two stacked panels. On each side of the building there is a four lite window with green shutters.

Barn

1968

Non-Contributing Building

The barn is located northeast and below the Montague house. It was originally constructed in 1968 as a horse barn. It is a long narrow wood building with a gable roof. The barn is a single loaded building with horse stalls occupying the back two-thirds of the covered area while the front third is reserved for a covered corridor open at the side and ends. The corridor has metal columns along its length. The back of the barn has open windows for each of the stalls. The roof has three cupola vents with gable roofs.

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Summary Statement of Significance:

Oakhurst Links, a golf course designed and built in 1884, is state and nationally significant under Criterion A for Entertainment/Recreation and under Criterion C for Landscape Architecture. The period of significance spans the years between construction of the course in 1884 and the approximate date play ended and the land reverted to pasture in 1912.

National and state level significance under Criterion A is established by the fact that Oakhurst Links is one of the earliest documented and best preserved pre-1900 golf clubs in the United States and the site of the first recorded tournament play in 1888. As the club's meeting place, the Montague house gains its significance under Criterion A as a prototype of the golf club facilities that would follow in other locales. Shortly after the establishment of the course, golf would begin a gradual ascension as the recreation of choice for America's growing urban and suburban middle and upper classes.¹ Ironically, at the time Oakhurst began growing tall with pasture grasses, the neighboring Greenbrier resort would open its own golf course, beginning a connection between golf and resort-style vacationing that continues to this day.

The course is also significant at the national and state level under Criterion C due to its intact and unaltered representation of the first American attempt to create a golf course based on naturalistic design precepts developed in Scotland and England. Long before the term "golf course architect" existed in America, Russell Montague and his friends laid out the first example of a defensive, or "penal" golf course that would dominate course design through the 1930s. Although Oakhurst was primarily a private enterprise with a limited impact beyond its immediate hinterland, it remains the only pre-1900 golf course to maintain its original length, setting, and design characteristics. Most early courses over time were lengthened or altered to keep up with advances in ball and club technology, but Oakhurst, by virtue of its low-impact use as an isolated horse pasture between 1912 and 1994, has retained its approximate form and key viewshed elements.

A careful restoration effort in 1994 based on soil analysis, written accounts, historic photographs, and precise measurements led renowned golf course architect Robert Cupp to the approximate locations of the original tees and greens. Based on relict landforms and soil analysis, Cupp had the original bunkers dug and re-contoured by hand, leaving only the sinking of new cups and mowing and re-seeding to complete the restoration. Due to thorough research and low-impact restoration techniques, it is safe to say that the original features and play characteristics

¹Susan Smead and Marc Wagner, "Assessing Golf Courses as Historic Resources," CRM 23 (2000).

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present in the 1880s were not eliminated.

Oakhurst Links: 1884 to 1912

The Oakhurst Links property began as the farm of Russell Wortly Montague, a native of Dedham, Massachusetts who moved to Greenbrier County, West Virginia in 1876. The available histories of Oakhurst Links state that Russell Montague went away to study law at Harvard, where he graduated with an A.B. in 1872. It is also commonly known that he traveled to London, England between 1874 and 1875 to continue his education, where he acquainted himself with the game of golf. While living abroad, he played golf in both England and Scotland, where he reportedly played at St. Andrews.² In sources dating to 1913 and 1914, his place of residence was reported as Boston, Massachusetts, and in a source dating to 1936, his residence was reported to be Richmond, Virginia. In each source, Oakhurst was described as his summer residence, and not a place of permanent occupation by Mr. Montague and his wife, Harriet.³

This emphasis on the recreational use of the Montague farm forms a natural segue into the story behind the creation of the golf course in 1884. As related from the earliest printed source in 1913, Russell W. Montague had befriended several of his neighbors, also gentleman farmers and businessmen, who happened to be of Scottish origin. One of them, George Grant, approached Montague when he learned his cousin, one Lionel Torrin, would be visiting him on a vacation from his tea plantation in Ceylon, India (now Sri Lanka). Grant conveyed his wish to Montague that they prepare an impromptu golf course for the entertainment of his cousin, who was a golfer of some merit. Included among the early projectors of the course were two other Scottish neighbors, Alexander and Roderick McIntosh McLeod. Thus was laid the foundation of the Oakhurst golf club and their course, Oakhurst Links, on the pasture property of Russell W. Montague.

Reportedly, the course originally sported six holes, which may have been a temporary measure until a more permanent layout could be constructed. Most likely, the course evolved over the first four or five years of its existence, as the five original club members shaped it to their preferences. Eventually, a sixth and final member, one George M. Donaldson, a local

²"Oakhurst Links," *Golfiana*, Vol. 6, No. 4.

³The standard sources for the beginnings of golf at Oakhurst Links are found in the August, 1913 issue of *Golf*, and a similar article in the June 28, 1914 edition of the *New York Times*. The *Rail Magazine* listed Richmond as the permanent Montague home.

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lumber merchant and native of Scotland, joined the Oakhurst golf club. This group of enthusiasts proceeded to use the course on an informal and routine basis for the next decade. At some point, however, they began competing in match play, resulting in the casting of a medal, dated 1888 and impressed with the motto "Far and Sure." This is the earliest, and most defensible, record of match play in the United States. The original medal still exists in the care of Lewis Keller, current owner of the course. Played for perhaps six seasons, the "Oakhurst Links Challenge Medal," as it is stated on the obverse of the medal, was vied for during the no doubt cold and blustery conditions of Christmas day. By the early 1890s, Torrin, Grant, and the McLeods had all returned to England or Scotland, leaving Montague and Donaldson as the only remaining club members to play the course through the 1890s to about 1912, when the Charles Blair MacDonald designed "Old White" course at the Greenbrier resort pulled them away.

Oakhurst Links: 1912 to 1995

Although this time period exists outside the period of significance, it is important to relate the modern history of the course when evaluating its integrity under Criterion C for Landscape Architecture. Following the end of routine play at the course around 1912, the land continued under the ownership of the Montague family. After Russell Montague's death at age 92 in 1945, the land passed to his son Cary and daughter Margaret. The Montague children used the land as it had during the years preceding, and during, the property's life as a golf course: they grazed livestock. During their ownership, the land was never tilled or re-arranged on a massive scale, leaving the features of the course to erode gently over several decades.

This was the condition of the course when the current owner, Lewis Keller, saw the property in 1959. He was led there by his friend, champion golfer Sam Snead, who had learned that Cary, then in his eighties, was searching for a buyer for the land. Upon meeting Cary, Mr. Keller was taken to the site of the old first tee, with the location of the fairway and first hole pointed out by his elderly host. Mr. Keller was smitten by the story of the place, and being a golfer himself, decided to secure the property before it was placed on the market and no doubt sold for development.⁴

Mr. Keller used the property lightly over the next thirty-five years, using the old Montague home and clubhouse as the family summer residence, and using the pasture to raise horses. Finally, in 1994 he was introduced to golf course architect Bob Cupp, who was familiar

⁴Martha Asbury, "1884 Oakhurst Links: A Romance with Golf," Wonderful West Virginia, January 1998.

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with the Oakhurst story, and the restoration of the course began. Using Cupp's site visit notes, it is possible to recount the scope of the work and philosophy behind it.⁵ Two magazine articles, one published in 1936 and one in 1938, when Russell Montague was still alive, stated that the course was between 2,000 and 2,700 yards in length.⁶ Additionally, the general route of play was described in the article "A Challenge to St. Andrews," published in the September, 1929 issue of The American Golfer magazine. From this knowledge, Cupp could use the location of the known holes and begin his reconstruction. Using the known characteristics of 1880s golf equipment, it was possible to estimate just how long each fairway would be, guessing that most holes only required from one to three shots to travel from tee to green, based on the amount of acreage available. Multiple walkovers of areas in the line of suspected ball travel were necessary to locate features suspected to be remnants of bunkers, revetments, tees, and greens. Shovel test pits were used to dig beneath one-hundred and ten years of turf buildup to find evidence of sandy soil or other clues that could reveal the contours of a lost feature. As potential features were identified, they were marked with stakes to record their position and size.

As revealed by Cupp's hole by hole notes, it is critical to understand that some element of guesswork was involved in the restoration work. In some cases, the original features were simply unclear, unidentified, or changed slightly to accommodate the modern use of the course. None of the changes, which are too detailed to recount here, were of a scale major enough to destroy the sense of place or historical accuracy at the course.

In 1995, after the restoration work was completed, it was possible for visitors to play through the course completely for the first time in decades. The Keller family has opened the course to those willing to pay a greens fee, with the only requirement being the use of hickory shafted clubs and the use of gutta percha balls.

Conclusions:

In light of the significance of the course under Criterion A for Entertainment/Recreation and Criterion C for Landscape Architecture, it is important to consider the history recounted above on two points. First, at the state level of significance, the course is clearly very important. There were, quite simply, no comparable organizations or facilities anywhere within the state

⁵A manuscript copy of Cupp's field notes are held by the WV SHPO.

⁶In 1936, The Rail Magazine stated the course was 2,700 yards long, in its November, 1938 issue, the C&O Magazine stated that the course was between 2,000 and 2,500 yards in length.

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boundaries until many years after 1884. Although an exhaustive state level search has not been conducted, every source consulted confirms the 1912 “Old White” course at the Greenbrier was the second golf course constructed in the state. It is important to note that the “Old White,” while representative of early course design, is a full generation removed from the architecture and equipment used at Oakhurst Links. By 1912 the rubber-cored “Haskell Ball” had revolutionized the game, forcing the lengthening of fairways in order to accommodate the ball’s greater travel.⁷ It is also important to note that the Old White course has been lengthened and altered beyond MacDonald’s original design, a change radical enough to merit its non-contributing status in the Greenbrier resort’s 1982 NHL nomination. The only other golf related property that has been identified for its architectural significance in the state is the Opequon Golf Club building, which was listed in the National Register in 1995. The Opequon nomination is only for the club house, excluding consideration of the course landscape entirely. Built in 1922, the Opequon golf course, even if eligible, is two generations removed from the events at Oakhurst Links, and therefore not an equal comparison.

The conclusion to be drawn from this evaluation of historic golf resources at the state level is this: Oakhurst Links represents both a unique and significant episode in the development of leisure time recreation within the state, and as an important milestone in the development of landscape architecture as it relates to golf course design and construction.

The second point to consider is the importance of Oakhurst Links on a national scale of significance. After a summary examination of other golf club founding dates conducted on the Internet, it is evident that many other courses may claim roots at least as deep as those at Oakhurst, with a few holding claims of even older founding dates.⁸ According to information compiled by the United States Golf Association and published on golfonline.com, eleven clubs may claim founding dates before 1884. Of those eleven, many can be discounted due to scanty information or direct knowledge that they no longer play on the same course, or that the course and its surroundings have been radically altered since their founding date. Although this may be the case, without a careful, scholarly examination of these and other clubs and courses, it is difficult to place the relative, national importance of Oakhurst Links in the proper perspective.

For the purposes of the National Register of Historic Places, the existing documentation

⁷Grimsley, *Golf: Its History, People & Events*, 247.

⁸A list of web sites visited may be found in the bibliography.

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and present condition of the course are enough to establish Oakhurst as one of the best preserved pre-1900 golf courses in the nation. For purposes related to the course's National Historic Landmark status, however, further contextual research beyond the capabilities of the WV SHPO will be necessary to produce a definitive answer.

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Numerous impromptu interviews with Lewis Keller, Vikki Keller, and Martha Asbury were conducted between 9/2000 and 7/2001.

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www.golfonline.com/history/features/first100.html

news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/english/static/sport/golf/ryder_cup_map/

sports.yahoo.com/pga/golfcourses/newyork/jericho/10388.html

www.golfcourse.com/search/coursetl_ga.cfm?source+GA&courseid=15632

sports.yahoo.com/pga/golfcourses/newyork/cedarhurst/14673.html

www.golfcourse.com/search/coursetl_ga.cfm?source=GA&courseid=2262

courseguide.golfweb.com/ocdata.cgi/detail?gwid=7334

www.foxburggolf.com/history.htm

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Verbal Boundary Description

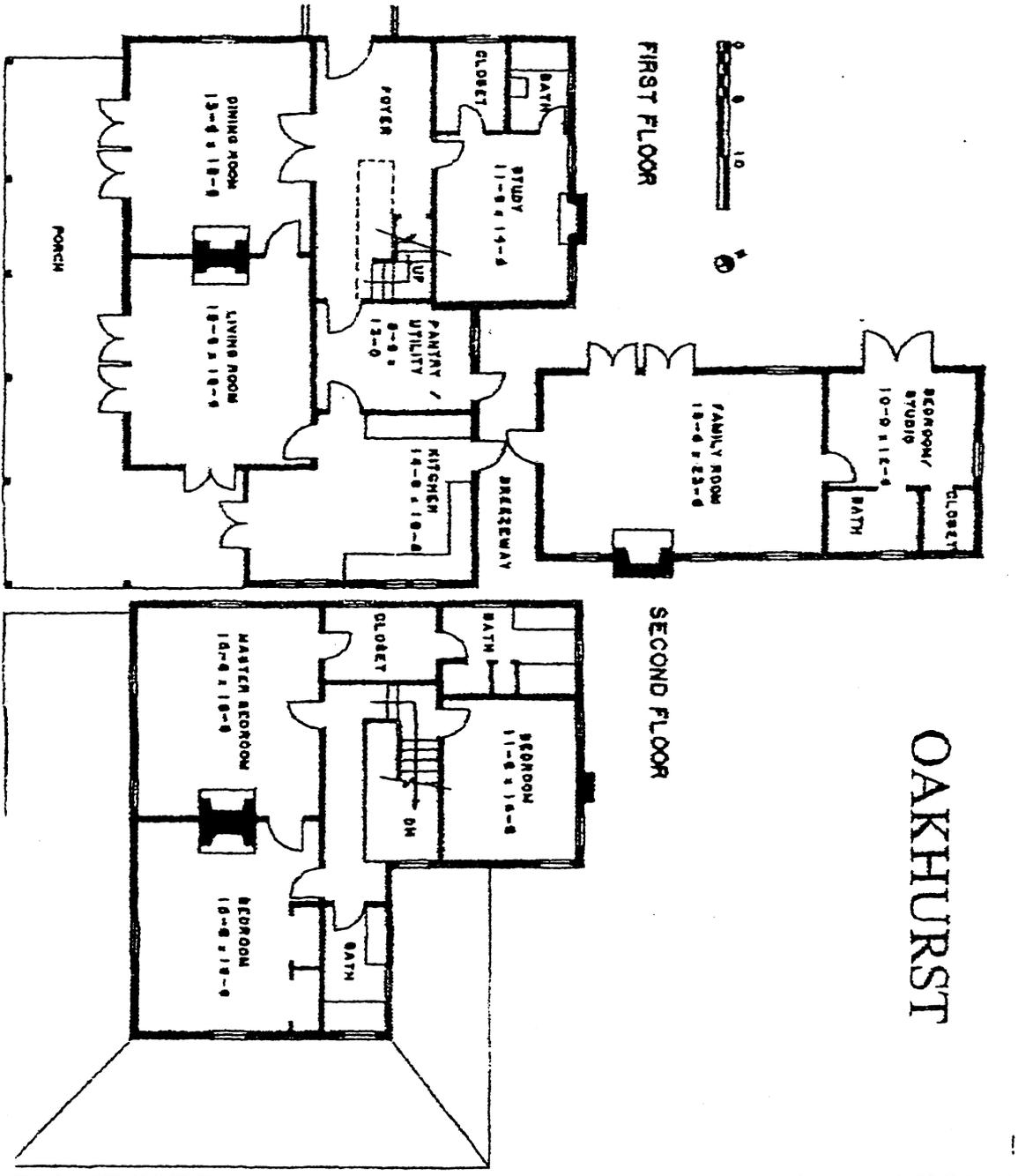
Beginning at a point at the centerline of Big Draft Road, thence following a line southeast to a point. Thence turning southwest to a point, and turning again to the northwest to the edge of Big Draft Run. Thence following the course of Big Draft Run until it meets the point of beginning. Quoted as interpreted from the survey of March 30, 1994 by the N.E. Kelley Surveying Company.

Boundary Justification

This is the boundary historically associated with the Oakhurst Links golf course.

FLOOR PLAN
 OAKHURST LINKS
 WHITE SULPHUR SPRINGS
 GREENBRIER CO., WV

N →



1884 Oakhurst Links

PHOTO MAP
OAKHURST LINKS
WHITE SULPHUR SPRINGS
GREENBRIER CO., WV



Robert E. Cupp Design, Inc.

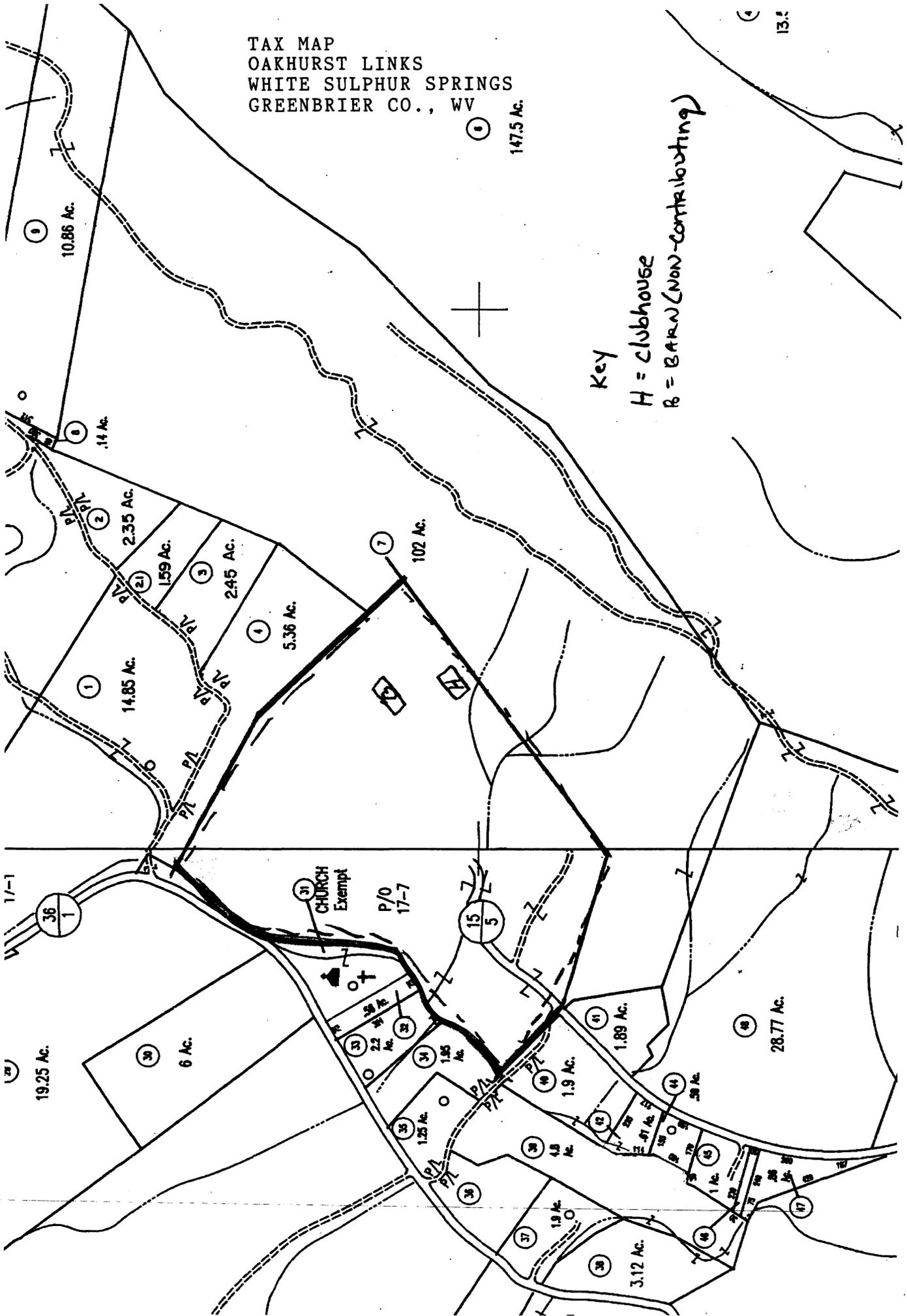
TAX MAP
OAKHURST LINKS
WHITE SULPHUR SPRINGS
GREENBRIER CO., WV

147.5 Ac.

Key

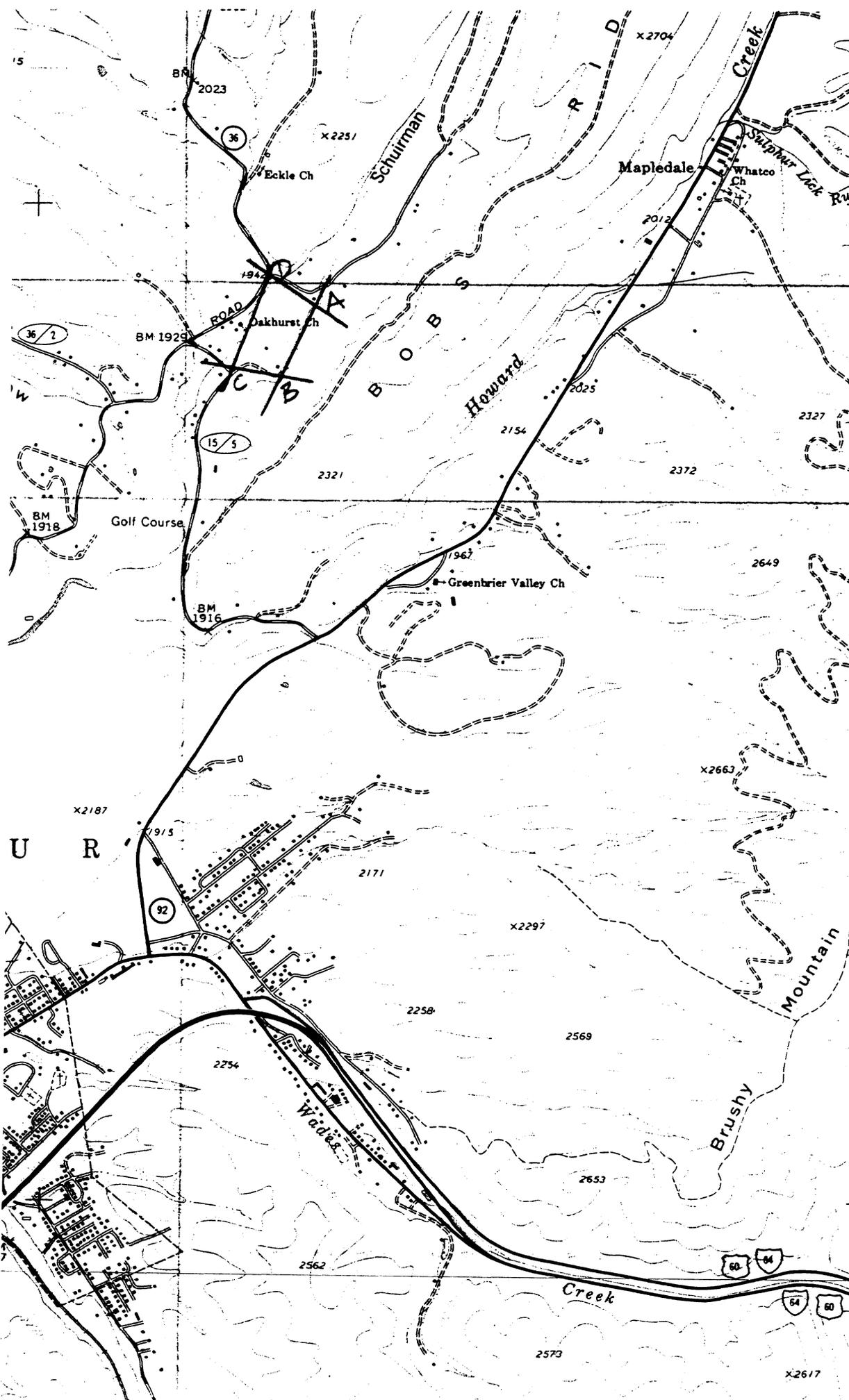
H = Clubhouse

R = BARN (NON-CONTRIBUTING)



1N

13.5



4188
50'
4187
4186
4184
4183
47'30"

(JERRY'S RUN)
GHAN VA. 11 MI.
GTON VA. 17 MI.

OAKHURST
LINKS
WHITE SULPHUR
SPRINGS,
GREENBRIER
CO., W. VA.
UTM:
A: 17/563565/
4186900
B: 17/563413/
4186560
C: 17/563200/
4186610
D: 17/563362/
4187012

U R

ROAD

Golf Course

Mapledale

4184

4183

47'30"

60

64

64

B

Mountain

Brushy

Creek

Wade's

Howard

B O B S

Schurman

R I D

Creek

Sulphur Lick Run

Whateo Ch

Greenbrier Valley Ch

Eckle Ch

Oakhurst Ch

2023

x2251

x2704

4188

50'

4187

4186

4184

4183

47'30"

60

64

64

B

BM 1929

BM 1918

BM 1916

x2187

1915

92

2171

x2297

2258

2569

2254

x2663

2649

2327

2372

2154

2025

2321

BM 1916

1915

92

2171

x2297

2258

2569

2254

x2663

2649

2327

2372

2154

2025

2321

BM 1916

1915

92

2171

x2297

2258

2569

2254

x2663

2649

2327

2372

2154

2025

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BM 1916

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BM 1916

1915

92

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2254

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2649

2327

2372

2154

2025

2321

BM 1916

1915

92

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2254

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BM 1916

1915

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2258

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BM 1916

1915

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