

High Country Herald

To the Editor:

It was nice of the Custer Rotary Club to write the City Council about proposing my name for a park. You might be interested in learning how the property was acquired by the city .

While I was on the City Council from 1934 to 1942, we learned that the land comprised of the golf course and lake was for sale. A group of us examined the area and were convinced that it would be ideal for a nine hole golf course.

This matter was discussed informally and we discovered that just one member of the council was not a golfer, Bert Korthous. We explained to him that the land could be used for more than just a golf course; in that there would be land left over that could be used for youngsters. That won Bert over and the vote to buy the land was unanimous.

Later we thought it would be nice to have a small lake there for kids to fish in. We contacted the Department of Game, Fish and Parks about meeting with them and they told us to attend a meeting in Sioux Falls which was held a few days later. Stan Fellows, the mayor of Custer, Dr. Manning and I drove to Sioux Falls. We suggested that it would be nice to have a place for youngsters to fish and that Custer City owns some land West of the City where French Creek runs through it. All that would be required to have a lake there would be to just build a small dam. The commissioners of the Game, Fish and Parks Department were very impressed and agreed to build the dam. They forthwith built the dam at no expense to Custer City and for years the lake was open only to kids under the age of sixteen.

Hobart H. Gates

This letter submitted to the Custer City West Dam Task Force by Janet Serino on September 9, 2015 appears to confirm that the origin of West Dam was a simple berm to form a fishing pond for kids in the late 1930's or early 1940's.

The elevation of the dam was raised sometime thereafter to make the road over the dam. Core drilling for soils investigations of the current embankment indicates that the original berm was not constructed as a dam as the materials were not placed adequately and with inadequate compaction.

Scott Simianer
Planning Administrator