

Timeless Value

At a high-end course where golf's traditions are evoked at every turn, a new signature clock now sets the proper, peaceful pace.

By Joe Barks, Editor



The experience of Atunyote Golf Club starts with a 1.7-mile scenic drive to the clubhouse, and includes being able to use authentic London phone booths to call ahead for food and drinks while on the course.

At an exclusive golf club where guests pay from \$225 to \$250 to play a Tom Fazio-designed course, and where only 4,200 rounds are played each year, no one wants, or needs, to be pushy about pace of play. In fact, many of the added touches that can be found throughout the property—including waterfalls, replica gaslights and authentic, working phone booths imported from London—are designed to be part of a setting intentionally created to encourage players to take their time and enjoy the surroundings.

In this atmosphere, one of the last things such a club would seem to need would be a clock. But management of Atunyote Golf Club in Verona, N.Y. (part of the Oneida Indian Nation's Turning Stone Resort & Casino property in central New York state) felt that the look and feel it wanted to create wouldn't be complete until it had installed a proper timepiece in front of its clubhouse.

"Everything that we do here—from the darker, richer colors in our locker rooms, to the bow ties that our attendants wear, to the type of personal service that our caddies and everyone else provides—is all about going back in time," explains Robert "RT" Todd, Director of Golf Services at Atunyote (pronounced uh-DUNE-yote), which opened in 2004 and is one of three championship courses available to Turning Stone guests.

"That experience starts when you come through our huge, copper front gate, and continues as you follow a winding path for almost two miles as you proceed to the clubhouse,"

PHOTOS COURTESY ATUNYOTE GOLF RESORT

“In this kind of setting, we weren’t going to just put up a clock that could only tell time. It had to play an intricate role in conveying the history of the property, and contribute to capturing the feeling of the timeless elegance of golf that we’ve created here.”

Todd continues. “Along the way, you’ll see wildflowers and all kinds of wildlife, along with bridges and waterfalls. It’s almost a ‘Wizard of Oz’ experience, and we just felt a clock would be the right thing to have at the ‘end of the road’—not only so people would have something to look for, but also to make the right statement once they arrived.”

Putting the Proper Face Forward

Of course, not just any clock would do for this setting or purpose. The clock



Director of Golf Services Robert “RT” Todd had a lengthy and precise “watch” list for what Atunyote’s new clock would have to include, and achieve.

The clock that now provides the proper finishing touch at Atunyote stands nearly 17 feet tall and includes ornate metal trim, a black-and-gold color scheme (to match the club’s golf carts), and special, old-fashioned lettering. The most distinctive feature of all is the clock’s backlit, four-sided face with the club’s logo (“atunyote” is the Oneida word for eagle).

“The Oneida Nation has a deep reverence for nature and history,” says Todd. “On each hole, we have plaques identifying the birds that can be seen on the course, and their Oneida names. Our caddies are trained to have a wealth of knowledge they can share with everyone who plays here.”

“In this kind of atmosphere, we weren’t going to just put up a clock that was only there to keep time,” Todd adds. “It had to play an intricate role in helping us to convey the history of the property and of the Oneida Nation, and contribute to capturing the feeling of the timeless elegance of golf that we’ve created here.”

Fittingly, to create such a striking

timepiece that could evoke the proper mood, Atunyote turned to a company with a rich history of its own: The Verdin Company, which, through six generations of family leadership since 1842, has produced not only classic street and tower clocks, but also cast bronze bells, carillons, and other memorials and monuments from its Cincinnati manufacturing base.

Jeannie Porter, Street Clock Product Manager, headed Verdin’s team for the Atunyote project. The degree of customization involved with the club’s requirements was significant, she says—but not an overwhelming challenge for a company that can now draw on 166 years of experience with special requests.

“Certainly, [Atunyote] added things like decorative scrolls and the customized dial that went beyond a ‘normal order,” Porter reports. “But we had fun finding ways to meet their requests, and it turned out to be a gorgeous installation. The important thing was we had enough time for all the customization.”

The timeline for Atunyote’s new clock, in fact, was—not surprisingly—anything but a “rush job.” Todd and his team, which included Superintendent Matt Falvo, began the planning and research nine months before the clock was actually installed at the end of May 2007.

“We tried to think of everything,” Todd says. “We knew it would have to stand up to some pretty tough winters, so we made sure to talk to clubs, including one in Florida that had a similar clock survive two big hurricanes, to find out how it would stand up to bad weather.”

Now Atunyote is the course receiving plenty of calls about its clock, after it got lots of prominent “face time” when the Golf Channel focused on it frequently during the PGA TOUR’s Turning Stone Resort Championship, played at Atunyote this past fall.

“It certainly has become one of the things people now associate with our course,” Todd says. “It’s hard to miss, and hard to forget.”

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