

# IMAGES

## ...THEN AND NOW

From the Indian Hill Historical Society



Buckingham Lodge  
1861

## Pickleball in Indian Hill

Thought to be the fastest growing sport in the US, pickleball is fun to play and a challenging endeavor. A paddle sport, it combines tennis, badminton, and table tennis, and can be played indoors or outside. It is easy for players of all ages and abilities, provides a cardiovascular workout, and combines camaraderie and competition. In 2025 estimates were that 19 million people in the nation play pickleball.

Created in summer 1965 on Bainbridge Island, WA by Joel Prichard, Bill Bell, and Barney McCallum as family entertainment, the game was first played with ping pong rackets and a Wiffle ball. Over time the founders established the game's rules, refined its procedures, and spread the word amongst friends. There is uncertainty about how pickleball got its name. Some say the name came from Prichard's cocker spaniel, Pickles, while others believe it refers to the rowing term "pickle boat," meaning a crew of mixed players. Gradually the sport spread through Washington state, and in 1972 the corporation Pickle Ball Inc. was formed. By 1990 it was played in all 50 states and internationally. There are leagues, clubs, clinics, and tournaments throughout the US. The International Pickleball Federation was created in 2010, and by 2025 there was a Unified World Pickleball Federation based in Switzerland.



The game is played on a smooth hard surface. The court is 20 feet wide and 44 feet long. The net is 36 inches high. Paddles are made of durable material and balls have 26-40 holes. Usually, balls with smaller holes are used outdoors. Pickleball does not require the time of a golf game or the athletic skills of tennis. It is low impact. "There is competition, but not too much," according to one devotee. There are many manufacturers of equipment, which can be purchased reasonably. The game can be played year-round. It must bounce once per side before anyone volleys. Part of the court is a non-volley zone, which encourages longer rallies.

Pickleball has its own language referring to types of shots, parts of the court, and positions. For example, the no volley zone is the *kitchen*, and the area outside the court is the *pantry*. A *dink* is a return shot hit softly into the no volley zone; and an *erne* is a volley by a player outside the court. *Lemon drop* and *cough drop* are other shots. A *bagel* is a shut-out game of 11-0. One strategy is *shake and bake*, and a player who hits a shot between his legs is a *tweener*. A fan of the sport is a *picklehead* or *pickler*.

Some people are not enamored of the game. The loud thwack-popping noise of the ball can be irritating. This has caused conflict with property owners living near courts. Florida laws prohibit pickleball courts from state parks. Tennis players and basketball teammates complain that their courts have been swallowed up by pickleball court installations. Some athletes say that it is not a real sport - just an activity, not true exercise. But the resistance has not diminished the game's appeal.

In 2024 because of residents' requests and Village Council interest, Indian Hill installed two pickleball courts at Stephan Field, repurposing existing basketball courts. Shubert Tennis did the design, layout, and court surfacing. J.K. Meurer was the contractor, and the courts were constructed in about one month. They are blacktop with resurfaced coats and acrylic color coats on top. The courts opened in November 2024 and have been used on a regular basis since then. All patrons bring their own equipment. Onsite signage posts rules, directions for reservations, and schedules. One court is "open play," and the other can be reserved online in one-hour increments. Reservations are available on a weekly basis from March – October, and Village residents get preference. Most players are adults, but with youth summer camps and increased interest by local students, play by younger groups has increased. The Indian Hill Parks/Public Works Department maintains the courts by checking the nets, fencing, and playing surface and controlling litter and leaf debris.



Courts at Stephan Field

Currently there are pickleball magazines, podcasts, and apps, not to mention merchandise (including clothing, accessories, artwork, etc.) for fans of the game. Often participants gather after playing for pickleball parties. Friendship and fun are part of pickleball. Indian Hill's courts provide a place where people can gather for outdoor recreation and healthy enjoyment.

Thanks to Sarah Fink and Ken Smith for assistance with this article.