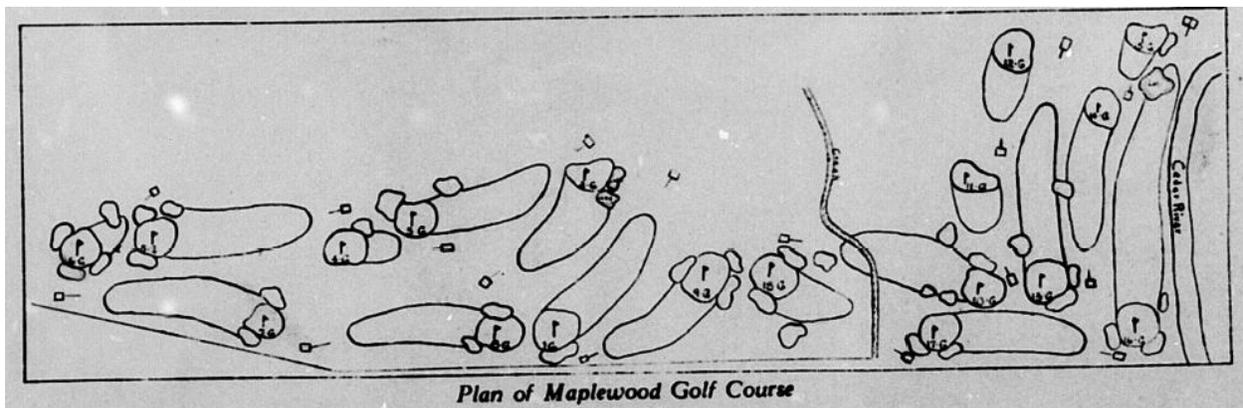


**Early History of
Maplewood Golf Course, Renton, WA**
Established 1927, Course Opened August 27, 1927
Course Architect: 1927 - Al Smith

William J. "Bill" Orton (1881 – 1931) was a prosperous dairyman operating his Maplewood Dairy Farm about a mile outside of Renton, Washington when friends approached him about the idea of building a golf course on his property. Orton was not a golfer, but golf course operation was proving to be a popular, and profitable, business in the 1920s.

Thus in the Spring of 1927, Orton decided to quit the dairy business and build a golf course. Never mind that there were two nearby courses with which he had to compete. First, there was the venerable Earlington Golf Club which had been in operation in Renton since 1908. Then there was Foster Golf Links in Tukwila built by golf pro George Eddy just two years earlier in 1925.

Orton hired Al Smith, a protégé of noted golf architect Francis L. James, to design the 18 hole course. Smith would go onto build a number of courses in the Puget Sound area, most notably the Glendale Country Club in Bellevue. Orton spared no expenses and lured Frank Noble, a highly regarded club pro at Rainier Golf and Country Club, to become the first pro at Maplewood.



Original Layout of Maplewood Golf Course (Northwest Golfer and Country Club magazine, June 1927)

The property was considered ideal for a golf course. The soil was largely sandy loam which had been deposited as silt by the Cedar River. The fairways were ready-made having been turned into a meadowland after years of being used as a dairy yard. Aside from building the greens, it but remained to tear down the barns, sheds, and silos. Orton's ten room house was converted into a clubhouse.

In very short order the course was readied for play and by July, 1927 the first nine holes were opened for play. The course officially opened on August 27, 1927 when the full eighteen holes were completed. The course measured 6449 yards, considerably longer than it is today.

Maplewood Patronage.

This quick development has had its reward. The membership roll yesterday showed 164 names on the list and the books showed a thousand greens fees collected during the first month's operations.

The first nine at Maplewood is over turf where dairy herds grazed for years and through what is probably the finest stand of old maples on this Coast. It reminds one of the golf courses laid out in old English parks.

The Maplewood yardage: No. 1, 440; No. 2, 327; No. 3, 496; No. 4, 225; No. 5, 512; No. 6, 145; No. 7, 443; No. 8, 405; No. 9, 433; total for first nine, 3,421 yards. No. 10, 387; No. 11, 312; No. 12, 190; No. 13, 445; No. 14, 391; No. 15, 125; No. 16, 476; No. 17, 492; No. 18, 210; total second nine, 3,028 yards; grand total yardage of course, 6,449.

Seattle Times - 9-18-1927

Maplewood Golf Club began as a semi-private club. It would cost \$25 to join with \$5 monthly dues. Enthusiasm was high and Orton predicted he would have 500 members signed up by year's end.

foreward!

An Unusual Opportunity to acquire desirable GOLF CLUB Membership

For A Limited Time
Initiation Fee
\$25.00
Dues \$5.00 per month
[This offer subject to change without notice.]

Here is an opportunity—an unusual opportunity—to acquire membership in a golf club with nine thoroughly developed holes under play and another nine, equally as good, fast nearing completion. With the completion of the second nine Maplewood will take its place among the most modern and beautiful golf clubs in the Pacific Northwest. In the meantime this membership offer is made although the right is reserved to withdraw it or increase the initiation fee without notice.

If you contemplate a golf club membership drive out to Maplewood, one mile from Renton on the paved Maple Valley Road, play the nine holes now available, see the second nine fast reaching a stage of perfection, note the outstanding advantages of this new course, its sportiness, its interesting holes, its beauty and you will welcome this opportunity to membership.

ONE MILE FROM RENTON ON THE MAPLE VALLEY ROAD—Paved all the way.

MAPLEWOOD GOLF CLUB
W. J. ORTON, President FRANK NOBLE, Professional W. E. NASH, Vice-President

Northwest Golfer Illustrated - August, 1927

Then a shocking thing happened. Six short months after its opening, the Maplewood Golf Course closed its doors.

For reasons yet to be discovered, Bill Orton decided, after less than a year, to get out of the golf business and sold portions of the property to two men, Charles H. Farrell and A. Frank Bird, both in the dairy business, but also avid golfers. This sale set off a curious chain of events which would later result in the return of Maplewood Golf Course to begin its second lease on life.

Using parts of the front nine of the Maplewood Golf Course, the two men, Farrell and Bird, modified the existing holes to build a new nine-hole golf course called the Cedar River Golf Club. They hired Clyde Shoemaker as its first club pro, who was followed later by Jack Highlander, then by Frank Aliment. Green fees were set at 50 cents weekdays and \$1 on weekends.

At the same time, another group led by Henry B. Stapleton, calling themselves the Maplegrove Golf Club, purchased the remaining eleven holes of the Maplewood Golf Club with the intention of building a full eighteen-hole course. The Club hired Jock Wood as its first club pro, and they too set their green fees at 50 cents weekdays and \$1 on weekends.

Thus out of one course, two new ones were born. This created an odd situation where two golf courses, the 9-hole Cedar River Golf Club, and the 18-hole Maplegrove Golf Club, operated side by side on adjoining properties. The two courses opened just weeks apart in the spring of 1928.

Then the stock market crashed in October, 1929 and the onset of the Great Depression changed everything. The two courses continued to operate as separate entities for several years, but predictably, they struggled to maintain their financial footing. Two courses at the same location competing for the same clientele was not a good business model. Something had to be done. In December, 1932, the two clubs decided to join forces and consolidated the two courses into one.

Thus out of two courses, one new one was born, or perhaps one should say, reborn. Their choice for the name of the new course? Why, the Maplewood Golf Club of course. The Club then set out to rebuild the course combining holes from the two existing ones as described in the following article:

The recent consolidation of Maplegrove and Cedar River courses into the Maplewood Golf Club is thus bearing immediate fruit, in that the patrons are about to enjoy all the pleasures and excitement incident to organized golf. For the present an eighteen-hole course is under play, the layout being fashioned out of the consolidated nine-hole Cedar River and the eighteen-hole Maplegrove courses. Seven Cedar River holes are in the scheme, Nos. 5 and 6 being out of it, while the old Nos. 6 and 9 of Maplegrove complete the first nine of the revised course. (Seattle Times 2-12-1933)

It may be possible, perhaps, to follow the trail of how the layout of the original Maplewood Golf Course was torn asunder into two courses, and then to determine how the pieces were reconstituted five years later, and thereby be able determine how much of the original holes remain in their original configuration.

Suffice it to say very little of golf architect Al Smith's original design from 1927 is in place today. All golf courses go through modifications and redesigns, but Maplewood perhaps more so than others.



Aerial View of Maplewood Golf Course - 1936



Aerial View of Maplewood Golf Course - 2013

The new Maplewood Golf Club began its second lease on life in the spring of 1933. In addition to the 18 holes, the Club, for a time, maintained a short nine in addition to the full eighteen, but this was short-lived. A residential home, set well back from the main road, was used as the clubhouse.



Maplewood Golf Course Clubhouse c.1935 (photo courtesy of Renton Historical Museum)

The Club retained Frank Aliment (1908 – 1976), who had been the club pro at Cedar River Golf Club since 1929, as their club professional. Aliment had learned his golf caddying at the nearby Earlington Golf Club and had developed into an accomplished player. The Aliments were a prominent family in the Renton area, and Frank’s brother, Joe Aliment, owned and operated the nearby Foster Golf Links for many years.

The Maplewood Golf Club once again began as a semi-private a club. Numerous tournaments were held, mostly catering to local golfers. One of the many duties of the club pro at the time was to oversee the assignment of handicaps to members. It was a thankless job, and as is now, rife with controversy and disgruntlement. But Aliment’s sense of humor is revealed in how he handled the task:

“If when you read the list, see your name and your handicap,” says Aliment, “have mercy on the committee for giving you such a low handicap. The members realize that you haven’t shot that good for years, if ever, but they figured on what you have done in the way of scoring in match play and also the scores made at other times.”

The Renton Chronicle – 8-8-1929

Frank Aliment would remain in his job for the next 31 years until 1960 when he was elected Mayor of Renton. Much of the golf course operations and pro duties were turned over to his son Bob, who in turn managed the golf course for the next 25 years. The history of Maplewood Golf Course is largely defined by these two men who operated it for nearly sixty years.

(This is one of a Sunday series of articles on Seattle-area golf pros.)

By BILL PROCHNAU

Meet the next mayor of Renton.

He's Frank Aliment. He's a golf pro. He'll become the mayor of Renton June 6. But he has been the "mayor" of Maplewood for nigh onto 32 years.

At Maplewood, Aliment has tried to give public-course golfers some private-course tests.

A Little of Everything

"We're trying to give the golfer a course with a little of everything he'll meet anyplace he plays," Frank says.

For example, Maplewood is one of the area's few public courses that is well-trapped. Seventeen traps—two or three more will be added in the next few years—protect Maplewood greens from rambunctious approaches.

"Traps make golf a bet-



FRANK ALIMENT **BOB ALIMENT**

ter game," says Aliment. "Sure, they slow down play some, but we've got a short course (5,600 yards)."

Changes Continually

The Maplewood course is changing continually. In the past 15 years, nine new or remodeled greens have been installed, as have most of the traps. An automatic sprinkler system was added several years ago.

When Aliment assumes the mayor's duties in June, he'll turn over most of the pro's work to his son, Bob.

Bob has been in the Maplewood pro shop for the past five years. He has been giving lessons for the past four.

For Frank, it will be a turning point in a long golf career. In 1919, when he was 11 years old, he started caddying at Earlington after he visited the course to pick up some stray golf balls.

Brother's Still at Foster

In 1926, Frank and his brother went to work at Foster, when that South End course was getting its initiation. His brother, Joe, still is there. But, in 1928, Frank headed for a lifetime at Maplewood.

But Frank isn't finished with Maplewood. When Bob takes over as head pro, Frank will become senior pro.

"That means," says Frank, a twinkle in his eye, "I still can drop around to give Bob some trouble now and then."

Seattle Times - 4-10-1960

Maplewood Golf Club survived the depression years, thanks in part to revenues generated by the use of slot machines in the clubhouse, not an uncommon practice among private clubs at the time.

The Second World War had a significant impact on the golf course as well. Nearby, the Pacific Car and Foundry Company (later to become Paccar) switched from making trucks and rail-cars to making Sherman tanks. "Tanks clanked through city streets out to today's Maplewood Golf Course, where they were run up and down Cemetery Hill for field tests." (Seattle Times 1-10-2003). Also nearby was the Longacres Race Track, a horse racing track built in 1933, where anti-aircraft guns were placed and black-out periods were the norm.

With the growth of the war industries in the area, developers made a bid to buy the Maplewood Golf Course property in 1942. A sale of the course was actually made that year, and the closure of the course

seemed imminent. While construction was going on one part of the course, Maplewood remained opened for play as a nine-hole course. However, a shortage of building materials stalled the construction project, offering a reprieve to local golfers. Ten individuals, led by Frank Aliment, chipped in \$5,000 each to repurchase the property in 1945. The Maplewood Golf Course had survived once again.

The group eventually sold the course to the City of Renton in 1985 for \$3.9 million.

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