

Early History of Plantation Country Club, Boise, ID

Established 8-24-1916 as Boise Country Club, Course Opened 7-18-1917

Re-established as Plantation Country Club in 1930

Course Architect: H. Chandler Egan

"If the ambitions of certain public spirited citizens are realized, Boise will soon be able to boast a new club to be known as the Boise Golf and Country Club, located at Pierce Park. Plans for the formation of such an organization are now being discussed and a preliminary meeting of those behind the movement was held at the Boise Commercial Club rooms Friday night." (Idaho Statesman 7-15-1916.)

So began what was to become Boise Country Club in 1916. Fourteen years later, in 1930, following a collapse of a railroad company and its ensuing lawsuit, a new corporation would emerge to re-establish the club as the Plantation Country Club.

But first, some historical perspective: Golf was first introduced to Boise in 1900 by a group of golf enthusiasts who laid out six holes at Fort Boise, a federal army installation also known as Boise Barracks. From all indications this was an unflattering course, probably more akin to what we now know as a pitch and putt course. Nevertheless, it was golf, and by any measure this was a very early appearance of golf in the Northwest, and most likely the first in Idaho. Only a few golf clubs existed at that time in the Northwest states, most notably the Tacoma Golf Club (1894), the Seattle Golf Club (1896), the Country Club of Seattle (1896), and the Spokane Country Club (1898) in Washington State, and the Gearhart Golf Course (c.1892) and Waverly Golf Club (1896) in Oregon.

Lost to history is who and on what date the first golf ball was teed up in Idaho, or for that matter, who decided to lay out those first few holes at Fort Boise. The first newspaper account of golf being played there appears in 1900: "It is getting to be quite the fad to go to the so-called golf links on Sunday. Golf is as yet a dream here, but the young people go in busses, carry their golf sticks and try to make the dream a reality. It is to be hoped Boise will soon boast of real golf links." (Idaho Statesman 6-3-1900)

Mr. Tombler of the War Eagle Consolidated Mining company narrowly escaped a sever accident while playing golf on the Boise barracks links yesterday afternoon. A ball hit by a companion struck him in the eye, reducing his glasses to smithereens and giving him a number of sever gashes. A short while previously another champion hit him on the hand and a heavy seal ring was the only thing that saved him from receiving a fractured finger. Mr. Tombler will not be able to play golf again for some time. He is ordering a bullet proof suit for the next occasion.

Idaho Statesman 8-4-1900

Golf in its early days in the Northwest was confined mostly to the members of high society. Private clubs were usually founded by bankers, lawyers, and other businessmen, and one would as likely find stories about golf in the society pages as the sports pages. In contrast, the first appearance of golf in Boise seems to have attracted the younger set, girls as well as boys: "... something enthused the athletic girls and kindled the flame in the savage youth's breast last week. The links back of the post were much enjoyed during the week." (Idaho Statesman 8-12-1900).

Golf's popularity at Fort Boise continued to grow through the end of 1900 and into 1901. Inexplicably, interest waned, and no golf activities were reported in the local newspapers for the next fourteen years.

Various groups made occasional attempts to organize a club during that time, but to no avail. By 1914, one frustrated proponent lamented that Idaho was the last state in the Union to not have a golf club, though that was not quite true. Hayden Lake Country Club, known as Bozanta Tavern at the time, had built a golf course in northern Idaho for its resort guests in 1912, and the Lewiston Golf Club in Lewiston, Idaho had established itself in 1913.

That all changed in 1915-16, when not one, but two, golf clubs organized in Boise: The Boise Golf Club in 1915 and the Boise Country Club in 1916. Perhaps inspired by dramatic win by amateur Francis Ouimet in the 1913 U. S. Open, interest in golf took a sudden rise in Boise and elsewhere.

In late 1914, Boise resident Charles W. Gill, a Scotsman recently arrived in America, took it upon himself to lay out a rudimentary course near his home in the foothills four miles west of the City. As the word spread, more came out from the City to join Gill in enjoying the ancient pastime.

By May 1915, there was enough interest to organize a club of 35 members and the Boise Golf Club was born. Led by Judge C. H. Lingenfelter, the members improved the course, and invited golf professionals from Oregon to teach the new players the fundamentals of the game. The course, with its sand greens and its hilly terrain with its many ridges and ravines proved to be a difficult one. It would later earn the moniker “the billy goat course.” However, in 1915, enthusiasm was high, and the club continued to grow as they organized tournaments, held social events, and competed with other clubs. The Boise Golf Club would survive until 1929 when it disbanded and the course was turned over to become the American Legion Golf Course.

In the meantime, another group of businessmen led by Robert Davidson, a recent arrival from Tennessee, met on August 24, 1916 to officially organize itself as the Boise Country Club. This was not to be just a golf club: it would offer other activities such as tennis, and even perhaps polo. Davidson was elected president, Judge F. S. Dietrich as vice president, and Lewis W. Ensign as secretary treasurer. The new club would seek to lease the 124 acre Pierce Park property, much closer to the City center than the Boise Golf Club, located on the banks of the Boise River for its new course.



Robert Davidson (1865 – 1936) founder of Boise (later Plantation) Country Club

Robert Davidson was born in New York in 1865 to Charles and Margaret Davidson, immigrants from Aberdeen, Scotland. The family moved to Chattanooga, Tennessee where the elder Davidson set up a grocery business.

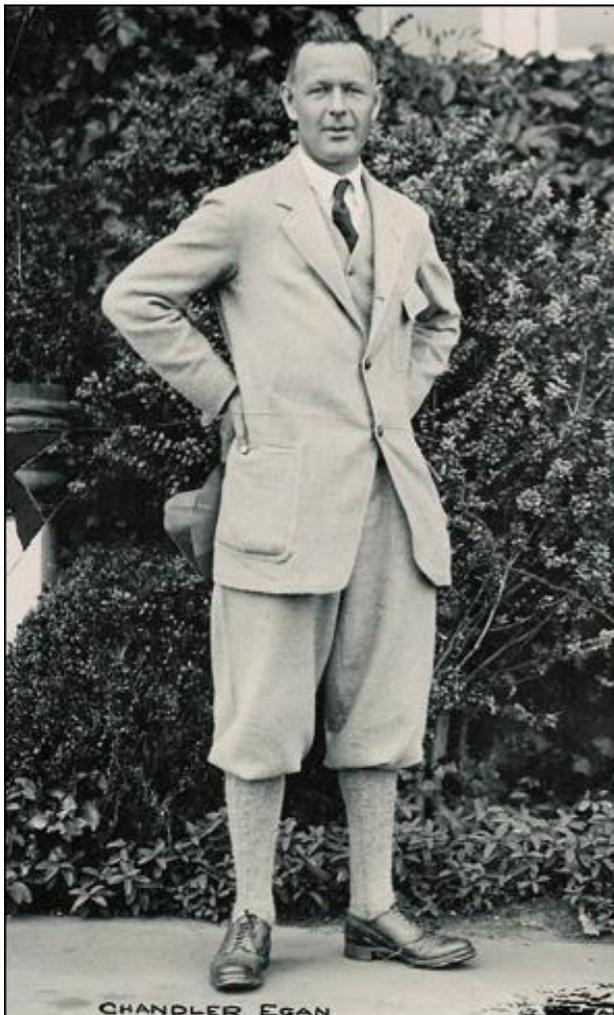
Given his father’s Scottish roots, it is not surprising that the young Davidson learned to play golf, eventually becoming a member of the Chattanooga Golf and Country Club (est. 1896). He became a top player in the club, and would bring his golfing skills to Boise sometime in 1914. Davidson would establish his own wholesale grocery business in Boise.

At the age of 50, he founded the Boise Country Club in 1916, served as its first president and became its first club champion in 1917.

The Boise Country Club filed for incorporation on September 9, 1916 and elected nine directors to the board.

By November 1916, the club's directors had negotiated a lease of the Pierce Park property with the Boise Valley Traction Company, a railroad company which operated the line from Boise to Nampa as well as the interurban line within Boise proper. The two parties agreed to a lease for a period of 10 years, with the club holding the option to buy the property at the end of that period for \$35,000. By the time the lease had been signed, the club counted 140 prospective members who pledged the \$50 initiation fee.

The board of directors also contracted with the famed golfer and architect H. Chandler Egan (1884 – 1936) of Medford, Oregon to lay out an 18-hole course. As reported by a Portland newspaper, "H. Chandler Egan, former National champion and ex-Northwest title holder, arrived in Portland yesterday from Boise, Idaho, where he has been laying out an 18-hole course for the Boise Country Club." (Morning Oregonian 12-11-1916). Egan "... announced that the course could be made into one of the finest and prettiest courses in the United States."



H. Chandler Egan (1884 – 1936), architect of Boise (later Plantation) Country Club

Henry Chandler Egan was born in Chicago, Illinois in 1884 and learned to play golf at Exmoor Country Club. He attended Harvard University where he was captain of the golf team. He won the U.S. Amateur titles in 1904 and 1905, and was the first U.S. golfer to medal in the Olympic Games in 1904, winning the silver in individual completion and gold in the team competition.

In 1911, Egan left competitive golf behind, and moved to Medford, Oregon where he bought an apple orchard. He returned to competitive golf in 1914 and won numerous championships in the Pacific Northwest. He played in two Walker Cup matches, in 1930 and 1934.

At about the time he laid out Boise Country Club, he turned to golf architecture as a career and became a noted golf course designer. It is not clear if Boise Country Club was his first design, but it was certainly one of the first. Egan is noted for his design or renovation of such Northwest courses as Eugene CC, Oswego Lake CC, Waverley CC, Riverside G&CC, Eastmoreland GC, and Indian Canyon GC. He also partnered with the famed Alister McKenzie to renovate Pebble Beach Golf Course in 1929. In 1936 the golf world mourned the death of this much admired gentleman golfer.

Pierce Park was a forest of cottonwood trees, and the arduous work of cutting the trees and removing stumps took months to complete. Paths of 150 to 175 feet were cut through the forest according to Egan's plans to make the fairways and rough. A common approach in the early days of golf course design, often under the direction of Scottish or English golf professionals, was to clear out all the trees on the property to make the course more links-like, reminiscent of Scotland's courses. In Boise, however, Egan left in place many of the trees to line the fairways, providing shade for the golfers during the hot summer months.

Boise Country Club opened its clubhouse doors with a gala dance party on June 21, 1917:

"The formal opening of the Boise Country club Thursday evening marked another epoch in the recreational history of the city. The club is at what was formerly known as Pierce park, a tract belonging to the Boise Traction company.

The night was perfect for dancing, and the music by Tompkins' orchestra was greatly enjoyed. The grounds are ideal for the purposes of a country club. The charming L-shaped lake presented a beautiful picture as the guests motored out to the grounds." (Idaho Statesman 6-22-1917)

About 200 dancers enjoyed the pavillion Thursday evening. Large American flags were hung from the sides, almost completely screening in the dancing floor. On one side a smoking den had been fitted up with Navajos and rustic chairs. The improvised "powdering room" for the ladies was formed from big flags at the other end. The buffet supper table carried out the patriotic colors in its decorations. Beautiful baskets of red and white roses and blue delphinium formed the decoration. The orchestra was screened by flags also, and Indian baskets filled with red and white roses and bachelor buttons added to the decoration. The punch table was decorated with roses also.

Idaho Statesman 6-22-1917

The course opened for play a month later on July 18, 1917 though only six holes were ready for play.



Boise Country Club - Teeing off Hole #1

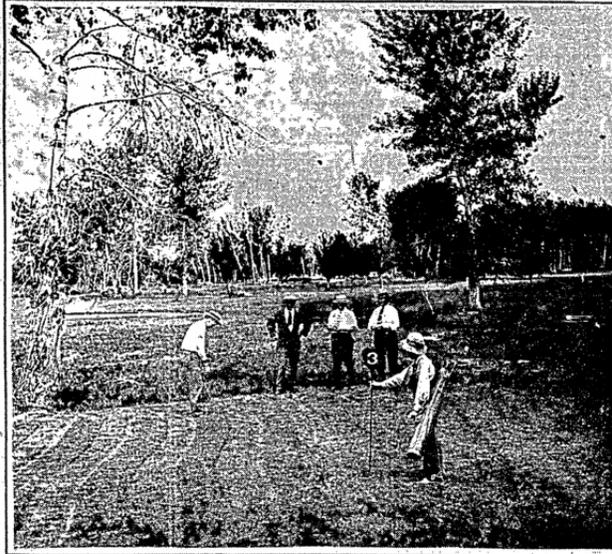
The entire course presents a beautiful picture. Nestling in the valley, with the foothills stretching along in the background, it has natural scenic beauty that few links can offer.

Three of the longest holes, 4, 5 and 6, stretch along the edge of the Boise river for a total of 1145 yards. Others skirt the lagoon and it is necessary to drive across this body of water to play holes 1 and 3.

At the present time holes 1, 2, 3, 4, 17 and 18 are open. The next four to be opened will be numbers 5, 14, 15 and 16. When the full 18-hole course is completed, it will have a total of 6329 yards from holes 1 to 18, divided as follows:

Hole.	Yds.	Hole.	Yds.	Hole.	Yds.
1.....	334	7.....	350	13.....	600
2.....	220	8.....	370	14.....	150
3.....	90	9.....	390	15.....	366
4.....	365	10.....	190	16.....	490
5.....	410	11.....	509	17.....	425
6.....	370	12.....	300	18.....	400
Total.....		6329 yards.			

Idaho Statesman 7-22-1917



Boise Country Club – Hole #3 green – 1917



Boise Country Club – Unknown golfer - 1917

Slicin' 'em Near the Boise River.

THE Old Timer reached for his coat and took a few crumpled envelopes from one of the pockets. He consulted some jumbled notes written on the backs of these, and continued:

"I'll give y'an ideer as to how y'play the first nine holes and you can use your imagination on the final nine. Y'tee your ball and make the initial drive for the number one acrost the lagoon. There are many young row boats and one power boat on the lagoon to pick up the balls that fail to complete the journey. It is 334 yards to hole number one, which is right near the water, and she's some pretty!

"For number two you finish the stretch along the water, for 220 yards, and for number three you walk around the edge of the lake and drive back across the water for a short 90 yards. Then y'start playin' along the Boise River. Three holes, 4, 5 and 6, net you 365, 410 and 370 yards, respectively. Number 7 takes you down to the end of the course for 350 yards, and 8 and 9 bring y'back to the club house for 370 and 390 yards each.

"Y'then start on the final lap, and the last nine holes take y'through the cottonwoods for a total of 3,440 yards, making 6,337 yards for the 18 hole course. On the home stretch y'have two dandy long drives, 509 yards for hole 11 and 600 yards for hole 13. That's goin' some!"

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Idaho Statesman 7-4- 1917



Jack Renner Putter, Boise (later Plantation) Country Club's first golf professional

The club hired Jack Renner (1886-1965) as its first golf professional in 1917. John William "Jack" Renner was born in Newbiggin by the Sea, England in 1886 and emigrated to the U.S. in 1913. He settled for a time in Tacoma, Washington where he secured a position with the now defunct Lochburn Golf Club. Renner would stay only a year at Boise Country Club before moving on to become the golf professional at Walla Walla Golf Club and subsequently at the Lewiston Country Club.

Boise Country Club hired George Carney from California as its next golf professional in 1918. He was soon followed by James "Jimmie" Simpson from Coronado Golf Club in 1919. Simpson's tenure would also be short, leaving after just two years.

On October 11, 1917, the club met to elect new officers and to report on the progress of the golf course and the clubhouse. The treasurer reported the club to be in fine financial condition, having collected \$6158 for the year in dues and fees, against expenditures of \$5400. The course now had 10 holes which would be ready for play by spring. Work was continuing on improving the clubhouse.

The club met again in March, 1918 to prepare for the new season. They raised the initiation fee to \$75 and monthly dues to \$2.50. They also set a rate 50 cents a day as the guest fee for out of town visitors.

The club held a tombstone tournament on June 1-2, 1918. Each member carried with them a miniature tombstone which they must plant on the course when they've reached their handicapped score. Each player was required to write his own epitaph on the tombstone.

As each man finished the required number of strokes scheduled on his stone, he planted his tombstone, adding a brief obituary, as follows:

"The boast of heraldy,
The pomp of power,
The reasons I lie here,
There wasn't enough power."
Died in the presence of Skillern and Court."
J. A. FENNEL.

"I am dead. Bring flowers."
L. H. COX.

"My name is Ben,
"This is the end."
BEN EASTMAN.

"As a 'Champion Golf'
I can never make runs,
If poor shooting brought death,
There would be no more Huns."
J. E. GAASCH.

"Drowned, pleasant death."
J. MATTESON.

"Died on the home stretch."
WETMORE.

"I can't tell a lie,
So here I die."
W. N. NORTHPROP.

"Another coffin planted here"
CRAIG COFFIN.

"Here lies a 'perfect 56' "
A. L. TUCKER.

"Here lies old Brooks,
He's an amateur for right,
I know I ought to get the hooks,
For I am shooting out of sight."
BROOKS.

"Here lies an amateur,
And lie he will,
Although he's out,
He's lying still."
JACK SKILLERN.

"The last tree I hit and died."
LLOYD.

"Tombstones may be lucky for some,
But here's hoping they'll al-
ways be unlucky for me."
Requiescat in pace."

L. W. ENSIGN.
"Honest count, rotten fair-
ways, bum lies."
TUCKER

Boise Country Club hosted its first major golf tournament in August, 1918 by organizing the Southern Idaho Golf Championship. In a field of 25, Robert Davidson's 87 led the field by 7 shots over the next match play qualifier. Davidson would go on to win with a final score of 6 and 4 over Sam Lane.

Another popular golf tournament held at the Boise Country Club was the Beefsteak Tournament in which members were divided into two teams. The format was total score of the two teams, and the losing team treated the winners to a steak dinner. In their first match in October, 1919, the "Professionals" team led by Jimmy Simpson defeated the "Amateurs" team led by Robert Davidson by a score of 1885 to 1920. In their return match a month later, amazingly, the two teams tied 1483 to 1483.

The beefsteak golf tourney played at the Boise country club Saturday afternoon was a highly exciting event. Two sides of 15 men each were chosen at the club house from the entrants, just before the match, by Jimmie Simpson and Robert Davidson. The first side, called the "professionals," won the contest with a margin of 35, or an average of two strokes per pair, and were guests of the Davidson crew at the steak dinner that followed.

Mr. Davidson has challenged the victors for a return match, and a repetition of the event is expected. The play Saturday brought out no end of friendly rivalry and individual competition. Mr. Simpson, the one professional player, being club instructor, gave Mr. Davidson a handicap of nine strokes, but the latter did not need it, nosing Simpson out by one.

The individual scores of the match were:

COMPLETE SCORES.		
SIMPSONS.		
Herbert Lemp	61-45	106
Will Davidson	42-50	92
L. W. Ensign	50-46	96
Jim Simpson	38-39	77
Ed S. Chadwick	50-48	98
Jock Skillern	48-56	104
E. W. Tucker	49-56	105
O. W. Allen	49-51	100
Howard Putnam	52-50	102
Henry Streeter	58-53	111
Will McReynolds	77-56	133
L. H. Cox	61-51	112
C. H. Coffin	50-51	101
Will Northrop	57-48	105
Dr. W. F. Smith	53-54	117
Frank Ensign	68-68	136
M. P. Meholin	50-47	97
Will Scully	45-45	90
Total		1876
Handicap		9
Total		1885
DAVIDSONS.		
Dr. A. A. Jessup	55-55	110
C. W. Dirks	43-48	91
Sam Lane	42-42	84
Robert Davidson	39-37	76
Jim Fennell	46-44	90
Monte Gwinn	59-54	113
H. E. Van Ness	50-48	98
C. A. Barton	57-50	107
W. R. Putnam	54-66	120
F. S. Dietrich	50-58	108
Dr. Ed E. Maxey	59-62	121
R. B. Bliss	50-54	104
C. J. Northrop	50-53	103
Leo F. Falk	63-52	115
J. L. McClear	62-55	117
H. J. Syms	62-70	132
Ben Wood	61-58	119
Mowbray Davidson	55-49	102
Total		1920

Evening Capital News (10-27-1919)

GOLF CONTEST ENDS IN REMARKABLE TIE

Two golf teams of 14 players each played to a tie Saturday at the Boise Country club, each scoring a total of 1483. This remarkable outcome was announced at the end of a blind bogey contest for beefsteak dinner.

Dinner was eaten, though, despite the draw. And afterward the turkeys played for the week previous were drawn. William Sculley, Lou Ensign, W. R. Putnam and H. E. Van Ness, being the lucky ones. Mr. Van Ness, having already won a bird, gave his to the greens committee, and it was promptly raffled, bringing \$15 into the fund.

Following are the scores of the players and teams which made so phenomenal a total last Saturday:

PROFESSIONALS.	
William Sculley	87
Dr. W. O. King	112
H. J. Streeter	117
Craig Coffin	102
E. S. Chadwick	97
Dr. L. P. McCalla	98
C. E. Rose	127
Frank Ensign	123
M. P. Meholin	105
Lou Ensign	95
William Davidson	88
O. W. Allen	96
Ray Moore	122
W. N. Northrop	114
Total	1483
AMATEURS.	
Robert Davidson	86
Bird Bliss	101
M. E. Gwinn	112
C. J. Northrop	108
Jim Fennell	98
H. Sumption	97
Dr. A. A. Jessup	99
S. H. Haney	149
H. E. Van Ness	99
Mr. Cook	103
Carl Dirks	97
Tom Hoskot	102
A. E. Bowerman	120
C. A. Barton	112
Total	1483

Evening Capital News (11-25-1919)

While there's been little mention of women players on the course thus far, the opening day of the 1920 season found 11 women and 43 men on the course. Participation among the women was slow at first, and in April, 1922, the club took the unusual step of adding two women to the tournament committee: Mrs. J. F. (Neva) Springer and Mrs. Charles L. (Grace) Joy. "It is the intention [of the committee] to induce the ladies to take a more active part in the sport than they are accustomed to, hence the representation." Neva Springer was the most accomplished among the women golfers in the club, winning several tournaments in the early days of Boise Country Club.

The 1920s are considered by many to be the golden age of golf in America, however, interest in golf lagged in Boise when it should have been soaring. By 1922, membership level at the club stood at 110, down somewhat from the previous year.

Membership drives were undertaken: initiation fee, now at \$100, was waived for a period of time, and yet the club struggled to grow. It did not help that the course had suffered though flooding of the Boise River for two consecutive years, when parts of the course became unplayable.

Their counterpart club in the hills, the Boise Golf Club (by then renamed to Mountain View Golf Club) was also facing the same declining membership. The two clubs considered merging, abandoning their two courses and building a new one. They went so far as to hire H. Chandler Egan to search for a suitable site for a new course. Ultimately the plans were dropped, and the clubs continued to operate as they had been.



Boise Country Club Championship Trophy - 1922

In the meantime, another group of individuals began to discuss the idea of a third country club in Boise, and in August, 1925 the Idaho Country Club was incorporated. Located two miles south of the City and designed by George Otten, Idaho Country Club would open its course on June 30, 1927. The timing was bad, as the nation would fall into the Great Depression two years later, and golf clubs everywhere struggled to maintain their memberships.

Also in 1925, new developments would dramatically alter the future of Boise Country Club. In that year, the Boise Valley Traction Company, the lease-holder of the Boise Country Club property, faced grim financial difficulties. They were \$2 million dollars in debt, and the ensuing lawsuit placed all their assets, including the golf course, into receivership. One may assume that the Boise Country Club still retained its option to buy the property for \$35,000 called for in the contract signed nine years earlier. However, there is no indication that the option was exercised.

While the suit against the Boise Valley Traction Company wound through the courts, golf continued to be played at Boise Country Club through the remainder of the 1920s, albeit on a limited basis. Then in 1930 a new corporation emerged to purchase the property. Three Boise residents, an attorney and two businessmen, formed a corporation called the Plantation Corporation to purchase the club's property.

As reported in an Ogden newspaper: "Plans for giving Boise a new golf course were made public today with the announcement from the office of the secretary of state that incorporation papers had been filed known as the Plantation corporation, with a view to developing a sports club west of Boise on the site of one which some time since was partially abandoned. The company was incorporated for \$25,000 with William A. Ruth, J. F. Martin and E. L. McElvain, all of Boise, as original stockholders." (The Ogden Standard Examiner 2-27-1930). Boise Country Club would now be known as the Plantation Country Club.

Golf's landscape had suddenly changed in Boise. By 1929, Boise Golf Club would be no more, turning into a daily fee course called the American Legion Golf Course. A year later, Boise Country Club would become the present day Plantation Country Club. In 1935, Idaho Country Club would assume the name Boise Country Club, only to change it once again in 1940 to become the Hillcrest Country Club, which it remains today.

Plantation Country Club would survive the depression years, host the Idaho State Open in 1935, and today remains a Chandler Egan jewel, or as Egan himself said, "one of the finest and prettiest courses" in the Northwest.

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