

## Early History of Longview Country Club, Longview, WA

Established 10-19-1923, Course Opened First Nine: 4-30-1927; Second Nine: 1958  
Course Architect: 1927 - Francis L. James; 1958 - unknown

A year before the City of Longview was incorporated, a group of businessmen met in the summer of 1923 to organize Cowlitz County's first golf club: the Longview Golf and Country Club. By fall of that year, the club had formally organized.

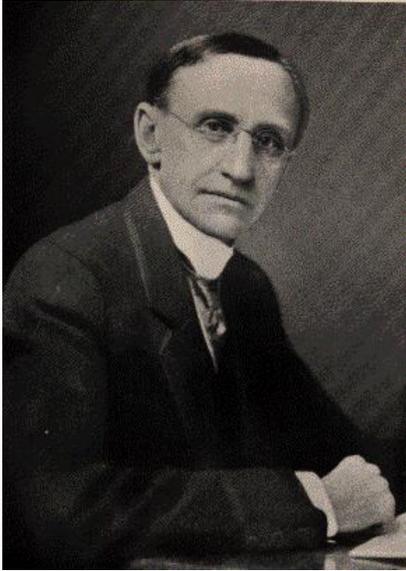
The club laid out its first golf course at the base of Mount Solo, some five miles west of Longview. When those plans proved unsatisfactory, the club decided on another location closer to the soon-to-be City, and a nine-hole course was built on the farm lands just off Ocean Beach Highway and Pacific Way. Two years later, the club would rename itself the Longview Country Club, and again relocate its golf course, this time farther up the hill to its present site. The new course opened for play on April 30, 1927.

The City of Longview has a unique history as a planned city in the early 1920s. At the time, the land was largely rural farmland and virgin forest. The nearest town of Kelso had a population of 2,000. In 1921, Robert Alexander Long (1850 – 1937), a lumber baron, philanthropist, and president of Long-Bell Lumber Company in Kansas City, bought up vast tracts of land in and around the yet to be named Longview to build a lumber mill.

Recognizing that he needed an infrastructure to support the anticipated 10,000 employees, Long planned out a "model" city, and began building. By the end of 1923, Long's company had constructed 357 buildings, including the Hotel Monticello. Remarkably, the rural farmland had been transformed into a modern city in two short years.



Aerial view of Hotel Monticello in the new planned City of Longview. The original golf course is in the upper left part of this photo – 4-30-1924. (Photo courtesy of Longview Public Library)



Robert Alexander Long (1850 – 1934)

Robert Alexander Long was born in Shelbyville, Kentucky in 1850. In 1877, Long partnered with Victor B. Bell to form a lumber company in Columbus, Kansas. Highly successful, the two expanded their operation first in Kansas, then in Louisiana and Washington.

During the 1920s, as golf clubs sprang up across the country, Long recognized that a golf club would attract more people to the new City.

While not a golfer himself, Long's many business associates were and they would form the core of the group which would found Longview Country Club. Long would later donate the clubhouse to the Club and would be its primary benefactor as the Club struggled through the difficult early years.

A number of Long's associates had belonged to golf clubs in Kansas City and felt the need to introduce the game to the new city. Some became members of Waverley Golf Club in Portland, Oregon but found it difficult to travel such a distance on a regular basis. Thus the group decided to organize a golf club themselves. The group elected David Boice, manager of the new Monticello Hotel, as temporary chairman. They initially selected a site at the base of Mount Solo, and laid out an eighteen hole course at that location. However, given the rough roads to travel there, and the lackluster participation, they soon abandoned the site. The group then decided to relocate the course closer to the City, and settled on the property off of Ocean Beach Highway.

On October 19, 1923 the Longview Golf and Country Club was officially organized and H. H. Rock, a banker and a Long associate, was elected the club's first president. W. A. Saunders was elected vice president, F. H. Crites, second vice president, W. A. Taylor, secretary and J. H. Secrest, treasurer.



H. H. Rock (1882–1941), Longview Country Club's first President

Harold Hughes Rock was born in Vinton, Iowa in 1882. He moved to Louisiana, where Long-Bell Lumber Company operated a lumber mill, and worked as a cashier at a local bank. When he learned of R. A. Long's plan to build a city in Longview, he moved west to start up Longview's first bank, the Lumbermen's Bank and Trust Company. He was elected to Longview's first City Council in 1924.

It is not known when and where Rock was introduced to golf. Normally a club elects as its first president the one most responsible for the formation of the club, and one must assume he had the most significant role in that capacity.

On April 14, 1924, Longview Golf and Country Club's "lower" course off Ocean Beach Highway opened for play. Built on farm land at the base of Cascade Hills, the nine-hole course was short, simple, and rough. The club used the old Huntington residence as a temporary clubhouse. Ralph Sackway, mentioned as the "former golf champion of Missouri," shot 34 for the nine holes.



Longview's "lower" golf course. Hotel Monticello is in the background – 3-17-1925. (Photo courtesy of Longview Public Library)

By the summer of 1924, the club was in full swing. Membership totaled nearly 100. The club hired Allen Longstaff (1897 – 1977) as its pro. Longstaff had most recently been at Rose City Golf Club in Portland and previously at Eugene and Pasadena. President Rock announced that a new clubhouse would soon open. He also reported that women were now taking up the game.

The club held its first outside match against Centralia Golf and Country Club (now defunct) with the Centralia team winning 17-10. A year later, as their numbers grew and their skills improved, Longview golfers returned the favor by defeating Centralia 31-12.

On October 19, 1924, Longview Golf and Country Club held its first annual meeting and elected new officers: President - Kenneth F. Park, 1<sup>st</sup> Vice President – F. H. Crites, 2<sup>nd</sup> Vice President – T. M. Foster, Secretary – Ray June, Treasurer – S. B. Gresham. The board voted to give Fred H. Crites lifetime membership for preparing the links.



Longview's "lower" course. W. A. Taylor farm house and Huntington Rock 3-17-1925. (Photo courtesy of Longview Public Library)



Longview's "lower" golf course. Women were active in the club. - 3-17-1925. (Photo courtesy of Longview Public Library)

In early 1925, the new president Kenneth Park announced plans to build a new course. What precipitated the move is not entirely clear. Likely, it was related to Long-Bell Lumber Company's intention to build a company railway through the golf course property, which it did in 1926. Even as trains crossed the course, golf continued to be played. Members later recalled that if one cleared the railroad tracks from off the first tee, it was considered a good drive.

The club wasted no time in selecting a new site. Financing assured, it acquired 160 acres of heavily forested land, a short distance up the hill from the original course. Ordinarily, a club, daunted by the prospect of clearing thousands of trees, may have looked elsewhere, but to a club with many members in the lumber business, it proved to be a boon. The club hired Francis L. James to design the new nine-hole layout. Work began in June, 1925 to clear the tract.



Francis "Frank" L. James (1878 – 1952)

Francis L. "Frank" James was a prolific and well respected golf course designer and builder in the Pacific Northwest.

Born on May 8, 1878 in Birmingham, England, he moved to Philadelphia in 1910 and worked as a greenskeeper at Aronimink Golf Club in Pennsylvania. He learned golf course design under William H. Tucker, a noted golf architect in New York, and became Tucker's field representative in the Northwest before forming his own company.

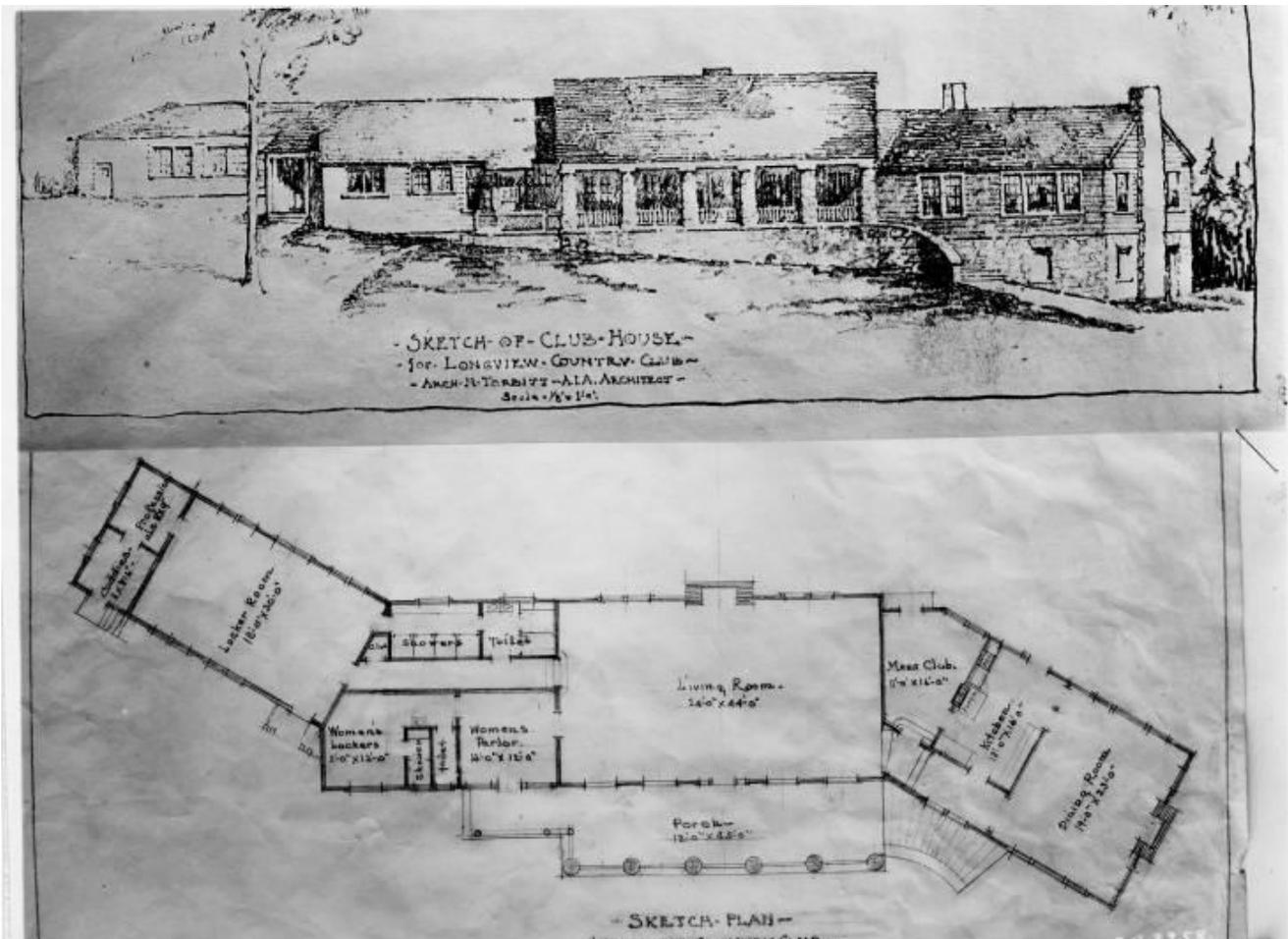
James's Northwest golf courses include Kitsap CC (1924), Linden G&CC (1926), Sand Point CC (1927), Peace Portal GC (1928), Jackson Park GC (1930), Vashon Island GC (1932), University of Idaho GC (1937), Walla Walla Country Club (current front nine) (1947), Veteran's Memorial GC in Walla Walla (1948), and many others.



Longview CC's new course under construction. Horse team in center- 5-25-1926 (courtesy of Longview Public Library).

In July, 1925, the club incorporated under the new name Longview Country Club. The existing board members of the Longview Golf and Country Club were listed as the incorporators. At its annual meeting later that year, Luke Goodrich, president of the First National Bank, was elected club president.

The cost of constructing the nine-hole course was \$40,000. To finance the project, a goal of 100 members was set and \$250 to join. After the initial membership drive, 72 had signed up. Short of their goal, the club nevertheless decided to proceed with the construction by borrowing \$25,000 from Long-Bell. In addition, R. A. Long personally agreed to donate \$7,000 and a loan for an additional \$10,000 toward a new clubhouse. When the club later encountered financial difficulties, Long would forgive the loan.



Longview CC clubhouse sketch - 6-4-1926 (courtesy of Longview Public Library)

The club next hired John "Jolly Jack" Rogers, an English golf professional, who had immigrated to America in 1918. Hired at \$125 a month, Rogers would oversee the construction of the new course while instructing members on the finer points of the game. Rogers would stay with the club until 1929 when he was succeeded by Rube Arneson.

Arneson stayed for several years at Longview, only to surface some years later in, of all places, Iceland. Writing to a friend back in the Northwest, he described the state of golf in Iceland in 1939: "We have 132 members in the golf here on a fairly nice nine-hole course in Reykjavik and up in Akureyri, which is very close to the Arctic Circle, there is a small golf club with forty-two members and a six-hole course. Shortly I will go to Westmann Islands to begin work on the construction of a three-hole course for fourteen interested people." (*Seattle Post-Intelligencer* - 3-7-1939). What began as Arneson's three-hole course, third oldest in Iceland, has evolved into the 18-hole [Golfklubber Vestmannaeyja](#) championship class layout.



Longview CC Members. L to R: unknown caddie, Jack Rogers, club pro, George Hays, unknown, Homer Stone, George Downey. 5-17-1927 (courtesy of Longview Public Library)

While the new course was being constructed, members continued to play on the lower course. In 1926, George Sainsbury, a Kelso merchant, proved to be Longview's best golfer, defeating Ralph Sackway for the club championship.

The new 3200 yard, par 36 course officially opened for play on April 30, 1927. In October of that year, William A. "Bert" Taylor (1884 – 1960) beat George Sainsbury for the club championship. Taylor, a local insurance businessman was considered the strongest player during the early years of Longview Country Club, shooting a course record 64 in 1930.



Longview Country Club's new course par 4 - 5<sup>th</sup> hole – 3-2-1927 (courtesy of Longview Public Library).



Longview Country Club par 3 - 7<sup>th</sup> hole – 3-2-1927 (courtesy of Longview Public Library).



Longview Country Club par 4 - 8<sup>th</sup> hole – 3-2-1927 (courtesy of Longview Public Library).



Longview Country Club par 4 - 9<sup>th</sup> hole – 3-2-1927 (courtesy of Longview Public Library).

While membership had grown to 130 by 1928, the club's treasurer reported that only half were making regular payments and the club's bank account was overdrawn by \$1,300. Interest payments, primarily to Long-Bell, were not being made. In 1928, another membership drive was undertaken, this time at a greatly reduced initiation fee of \$50. When the drive only brought in eleven new members, club president Goodrich, a banker himself, wrote to R. A. Long in despair:

Personally I have worked just as hard for the country club as I have for the bank in the past year and, while I have never in my life wshed on a personal obligation, it now appears that I am to be put in the position of facing the possibility of the country club, of which I am the president, being compelled to default on its obligation. (*R. A. Long's Planned City, The Story of Longview*, by John M. McClelland, 1998)

Then things got worse. In October, 1929 the stock market crashed, and the country was in the throes of the Great Depression. Yet, somehow, the club survived. Golf continued to be played through the Depression years, though on a very limited basis. At one point, it had only two employees: a caretaker and his wife.

The club began to recover post-World War II and by 1958, it was financially stable enough to add a second nine to its course. Today, with its fast, sloping greens and tree-lined fairways, Longview Country Club provides a stern test for even the best golfers.

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