

Early History of
Wenatchee Golf and Country Club, East Wenatchee, WA
Established 9-7-1923, Course Opened 8-30-1924, Second Nine Opened: 1958
Course Architect: 1923: William W. Baker 1958: A. Vernon Macan

The Wenatchee Golf and Country Club in East Wenatchee, Washington was founded on September 7, 1923 by a group of local businessmen. Few in Wenatchee knew how to play the game, but many had read newspaper accounts and enthusiasm for establishing a golf club was high.

Following World War I, a golf craze swept across the country and new golf courses were being built daily. East of the Cascades, Spokane had several courses: Spokane Country Club (1898), Downriver Golf Course (1916), and Manito Golf Club (1922). Then there were Walla Walla Golf Club (1898, 1915), and Yakima Country Club (1916). The Wenatchee Valley was due to have one of its own.

Led by Rowland S. Ludington (1869 - 1927), a local attorney, the group, which included W. M. Anderson, John A. Gellatly, Clyde Merchant, N. W. Moggs, and others, held a series of meetings in 1923 culminating in the formation of the Wenatchee Golf and Country Club on September 7, 1923.

The undersigned, being the President, Secretary and
Majority of the Trustees of the Wenatchee Golf and Country Club, do
hereby ^{also} certify: that, pursuant to notice duly served upon each
of the subscribers to said agreement, the first meeting of said
subscribers and incorporators was held in the City of Wenatchee,
Washington, at eight o'clock P. M. on the 7th day of September,
A. D. 1923, and at such meeting the said club was organized by
the election ^{by ballott} of a Chairman and a temporary Secretary, by the
adoption of By-Laws, by the election of a President, a permanent
Secretary, a Treasurer and a Board of six Trustees, being all of
the officers provided in the By-Laws to be elected by said mem-
bers.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, we have hereunto set our hands and
seals, this 12th day of September A. D. 1923.

<u>R. S. Ludington</u>	President & Trustee
<u>Clyde Merchant</u>	Secretary & Trustee
<u>John A. Gellatly</u>	Trustee
<u>R. M. Morand</u>	Trustee
<u>D. A. Limer</u>	Trustee
<u>W. Schuch</u>	Trustee
<u>N. W. Moggs</u>	Trustee

Source: Washington State Digital Archives

The Club next set out to locate a suitable site to build a nine-hole golf course. After a lengthy search of sites from Rock Island and Orondo to Malaga and Monitor, they settled on what was to become the town of East Wenatchee. The property was owned by J. D. Dyer who offered for sale 70 acres for the

price of \$10,000. As one writer described, the land was nothing more than “a bramble of sagebrush and sand dunes.” Sparsely populated, the unincorporated area numbered fewer than 300 inhabitants. The town of East Wenatchee would later incorporate, in 1935, by a vote of 48 to 46.

The property was purchased and surveyed. The Club then set out to search for a golf architect. Curiously, the Club selected, not an architect, but a banker from Walla Walla, Willam W. Baker, to lay out the course. Baker, from a prominent pioneering family in Walla Walla, was the president of the Baker-Boyer National Bank in that City. He also happened to be the chair of the Greens Committee of the Walla Walla Golf Club and had evidently gained some knowledge of golf course design and maintenance in that role. Baker was also an acquaintance of one of the charter members of Wenatchee Golf and Country Club, which may explain his selection.

Baker, assisted by Club member W. M. Anderson, completed the design work. Virtually treeless, the greatest difficulty was in finding a water source and devising an irrigation system to deliver that water. Appearing in the December 12, 1923 issue of the Wenatchee Daily World, Baker’s report read in part:

Each fairway presents attractions different from the others and avoids repetitions or sameness so common to many courses.

The only features lacking are the absence of trees and water hazards. The former may be easily supplied by the planting of the proper variety of trees, while the latter must be overcome by artificial hazards. It is important that these be properly placed as to avoid working too much of a hardship on any one class of players. Too often we find the professionals and better class of players able to avoid all these artificial hazards and the penalty falls altogether upon the average player and new beginners. These latter are the ones you should encourage. The former will always stay with you.

I assure you that it has been a pleasure to have been able to render assistance in designing this course and an honor to have been called upon to do so. W. W. Baker

Baker offered his services *gratis* and if history is to judge, he has done admirable work. Except for some modifications, the front nine has changed little from its original conception. It has withstood not only the test of time, but the test of many fine golfers over the years. The Club offered Baker an honorary lifetime membership, but there is no record that he ever availed himself of that privilege.

To educate the citizens of Wenatchee on the finer points of the game, President Ludington wrote a series of four articles in the Wenatchee Daily World in 1923, describing golf’s history, rules and etiquette. Ludington had learned the game some twenty-five years earlier as a member of the Westward Ho Golf Club near Chicago. Though not an accomplished golfer, Ludington’s articles reveal a deep appreciation of the game. Sadly, Ludington would survive the opening of the course by only three years.

In the meantime, the Club started a membership drive with a goal of reaching 100 members at \$150 each. This proved to be far easier than anyone anticipated and soon a new goal of 200 was established. By January 1, 1924, 164 members had signed up.

The Greens Committee took charge of the construction of the course, which began in earnest in April, 1924. Shortly thereafter, the Club hired its first golf professional, Jock Wood, to oversee the

construction as well as to give instruction. The 33 year old Wood, born in Newburgh, Aberdeenshire, Scotland, had joined the influx of Scottish golf professionals who made their way to America during the early twentieth century. The opening of so many new courses offered opportunities not readily available in their homeland. Nearly all head golf professional positions in Washington State at this time were held by Scotsmen or Englishmen.

For reasons unknown, Wood's stay at Wenatchee was short-lived as he left the following year and moved to Yakima where he laid out the Riverside Golf Club (now the Yakima Elks Golf Club) in Selah. Wood would later relocate across the Cascades to become the pro at Fort Lewis Golf Club and Redmond Golf Club.

Walter Guthrie, another Scotsman, took over Wood's duties in 1925 and remained the head professional and greenskeeper until his death in 1946.

On August 30, 1924, the course opened for play. Only six of the nine holes were ready, but the anticipation was too great to await the completion of the final three holes.

Wenatchee Links Opened.
WENATCHEE, Saturday, Aug. 30.—
The Wenatchee Golf and Country Club's course in East Wenatchee was opened today to members and thirty-five players have signified their intention to enter the initial tournament, which will be started at 10 a. m. Monday. A good many more entries are expected by Capt. Edward Schultz. To break in the course and to get themselves used to it, many of the players will all but camp on the fairways from the time the course is opened at noon today until the tournament play begins.

Seattle Daily Times – 8-30-1924

Two days later, on September 1, 1924, the Wenatchee Golf and Country Club held its first golf tournament. Nearly all the entrants were novices, but a few, including some visitors from out of town, had some experience. Going around three times on the six hole course, Club Captain Edward Schultz came home in 91 to win by 24 shots over the next player. Ludington, who many had expected to make a strong showing, shot a disappointing 137. High score was 172 for the 18 holes.

The following year, in 1925, the Club held its first tournament of the year, on June 20th. Somehow, although the last three holes should have been completed by now, the course inexplicably lost a hole, and the tournament was held as a 15 hole event, three times around the five hole course.

Handicapping players also proved to be a challenge and the Handicap Chair issued this good-natured admonishment: "Members who think the committee have given them too low a [handicap] know what the committee thinks they can do and should feel complimented and try to live up to it." (Wenatchee Daily World – 6-19-1925)

By early 1926, the club had its nine holes. With the exception of current hole no. 2 which was added later when the old no. 9, par 3 finishing hole, was removed, the routing of the holes remains remarkably the same as it was 90 years ago.

In the following aerial photo from circa 1940, many of the holes are recognizable today. The current no. 2 hole is missing, but one can discern the green for the finishing hole next to the clubhouse where the practice green is currently located. The green for the 8th hole (now the 9th) was moved at some point as were the tee boxes for some of the interior holes. These changes were likely done when the driving range was put in.



Aerial view of Wenatchee Golf and Country Club – circa 1940 (Photo courtesy of Wenatchee Valley & Cultural Center, accession #001-6-27)

Pars and yardages then and now are shown in the following chart:

1930			2015		
hole	par	yards	hole	par	yards
1	5	446	1	5	524
2	4	410	3	4	392
3	4	285	4	4	331
4	4	347	5	4	356
5	3	190	6	3	195
6	5	561	7	5	552
7	4	400	8	4	335
8	4	385	9	4	342
9	3	142			
			2	3	149
	36	3166		36	3176

The original no. 9 hole no longer exists; its green is now the chipping green.

The current no. 2 hole is new; it replaced the old no. 9 hole.

For several years the club had no clubhouse, and a small frame building near what is now the no. 8 tee was used. Originally, the current 8th hole was used as the starting hole. One assumes that was a temporary arrangement as the property on which the clubhouse and parking space now sit was purchased in 1929 and soon after a new clubhouse was constructed. At that point, the starting hole was moved to the current hole no. 1.

In June, 1928, a group of Seattle players, led by Western Amateur champion Bon Stein, traveled to Wenatchee to play the four-year old course. Crossing the Cascades in a Cadillac and a La Salle, the group traversed the treacherous Snoqualmie Pass which was described as little more than a "cow trail." Stein shot a 71 in the five-ball match, breaking the then course record by three shots.

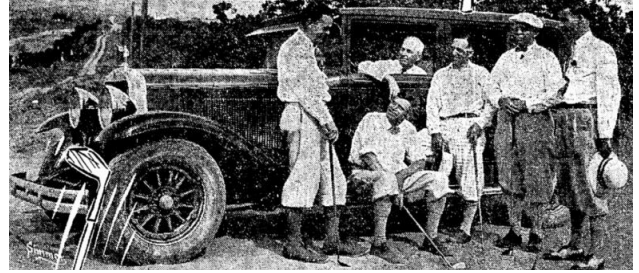
In a June 10, 1928 Seattle Daily Times article, John Dreher, golf columnist, gave this impression of the course:

The Wenatchee Golf & Country Club is something different from anything we have on the Coast. And most thoroughly delightful. Situated on the east side of the Columbia River, directly across the stream from the business center of the town—five minutes by automobile—this nine-hole course is laid out on what feels and looks like sand but which in reality is volcanic ash. With no adobe content, nor a cobble over the entire surface nor one for several miles under the surface, presumably.

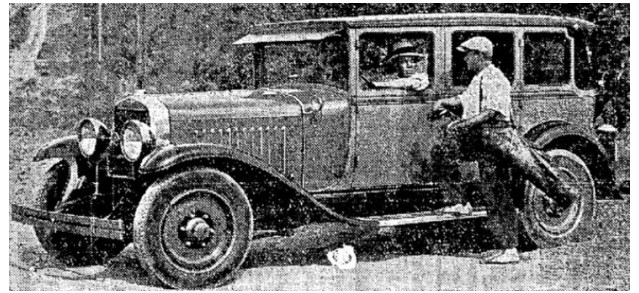
Built on pure sand, and yet no fairways or greens on the best-groomed Coast course possess greener or more satisfactory turf. Irrigation is the answer. The sprinklers run twenty-four hours daily on the fairways and all night on the greens. It costs \$600 a year for irrigation.

These Wenatchee golfers have done another smart thing. They make their nine holes look like eighteen, not merely a twice-around. There are but nine greens but there are eighteen tees. That's how. The following yardage card shows what is meant by these alternate tees:

No. 1—400, No. 10—378; No. 2—385, No. 11—445; No. 3—142, No. 12—88; No. 4—446, No. 13—410; No. 5—410, No. 14—370; No. 6—285, No. 15—300; No. 7—347, No. 16—305; No. 8—190, No. 17—219; No. 9—561, No. 18—486. Yardage, first nine, 3,126; second nine, 3,017. Par of each nine is 36; total, 72.



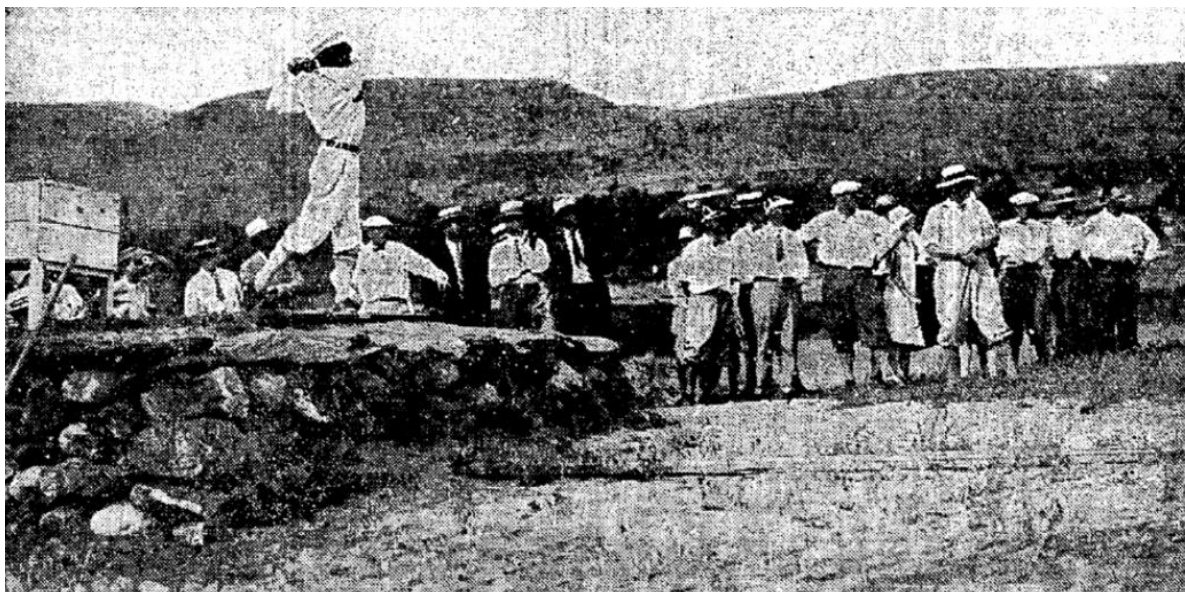
Seven-passenger Cadillac ridden by Seattle players



Five-passenger LaSalle carried the golf bags and luggage



Seattle vs. Wenatchee players five-ball match



Wenatchee G&CC star Edward Schultz driving off in fine form off the starting hole (current hole no. 8) in 1928

In 1938, Wenatchee Golf and Country Club hosted its first major golf tournament with the Washington State Open followed by the Washington State Amateur Championship. Amateur Marvin "Bud" Ward, a Walker Cup star, bested a strong field of professionals and amateurs to shoot 6 under 282 to win by two shots. Ward would go on to win the Washington State Amateur title as well a few days later.

In 1952 the club purchased the adjoining property to expand to 18 holes. In 1956, they hired A. Vernon Macan, the famed golf course architect from British Columbia, to lay out the second nine. The back nine opened for play in 1958. The clubhouse would suffer a devastating fire in 1963 resulting in loss of documents and memorabilia of its early history.



Wenatchee Golf and Country Club Clubhouse – circa 1956 (Photo courtesy of Wenatchee Valley & Cultural Center, accession #86-24-875)



Teeing off on no. 10, circa 1970 (Photo courtesy of Wenatchee Valley & Cultural Center, accession #86-24-883)

Over the years the Wenatchee Golf and Country Club has hosted many major golf championships. With its fast, sloping greens and tight fairways, the course remains one of the finest conditioned and challenging courses in the Northwest.

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