

**Early History of
St. John Golf and Country Club, St. John, WA**
Established 1935
Course Architect: club members

Amid the golden wheat fields of Palouse country of eastern Washington, sits the lush green fairways of St. John Golf and Country Club. Located some fifty miles south of Spokane in the town of St. John (population 550), this delightful nine-hole course (par 35, 2770 yards) is a must stop for the traveling golfer.



St. John Golf and Country Club aerial view - 2017

St. John Golf and Country Club was founded in 1935 by a group of mostly farmers as they laid out a 3-hole sand green course. A few no doubt had played the game, perhaps at the Colfax Golf Club (est. 1927), some thirty minutes away. Others were new to the game, but eager to try the craze that swept across America in the 1920s. Even as the nation entered into the great Depression, these men found time to build, and enjoy, a golf course of their own.

Led by Tommy Williams, a proprietor of a local grocery store and meat market, twenty-three shareholders in the golf club purchased what was then a cattle pasture for \$1400 from Melvina and Chester Smith. The men pitched in their own money, time, and heavy equipment (being farmers had their advantages) to lay out three holes consisting of cheatgrass fairways and sand greens. Other prominent men involved from the beginning were Overman Howell, Willard Heglar, and his son Raymond Heglar.

Though it is not clear the exact date the course actually opened, they were certainly active for several years. They held club competitions and sent teams of players to compete in tournaments, including the Inland Empire Golf Championships, as well as the Washington State Sand Greens Championship. Today, a plaque hangs in the clubhouse commemorating Ray Heglar's club championship win in 1940.

Then world events intervened as World War II broke out in Europe and Asia. All attention was directed to supporting the war effort, and the residents of St. John found little time for golf. The course was abandoned for nearly twenty years.



In 1959, some of the same men who organized the club in 1935 took up the cause once again, and they set out to revive their old club. Once again, the men and women of St. John volunteered their time and equipment to build, this time, a six-hole grass green course on the same property.

Work on rebuilding the course commenced in 1960, and by April, 1961, the course was opened for play. The construction of the clubhouse followed in 1963.

Jim Howell, son of original founder Overman Howell, was a top player during this time. He was club champion many times, also winning a golf scholarship to WSU.

In 1994, additional land was acquired from Ray Heglar, Bob Heglar, and Dick Scheuerman, and the course was expanded to nine holes. The nine holes were opened for play in 1995.



Thanks for this article to Paul Heglar, Mike Kirkpatrick, Buck Johnstone, and Carole Scherff who graciously shared their stories of the history of St. John Golf and Country Club to two strangers who stopped by.

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