

Early History of  
Inglewood Golf Club, Kenmore, WA  
Established 12-12-1919, Course Opened 8-6-1921  
Course Architects: A. Vernon Macan and Robert Johnstone

Inglewood Golf Club was founded in 1919 on the shores of Lake Washington in what is now the City of Kenmore. Golf in the Seattle area, following World War I, found four golf courses: The Seattle Golf Club (1896), Jefferson Park Municipal Golf Course (1915), and the two now-defunct 9-hole University Golf Club (1914) and the 6-hole West Side Golf Club (1915) in West Seattle. There was also the 9-hole Earlington Golf and Country Club (1912), also defunct, in Renton.



Inglewood Golf Club (1<sup>st</sup>, 18<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> holes) c.1923 (photo courtesy of Inglewood Golf Club)

Choices were limited for the Seattle resident seeking to take up this new game that had suddenly become so popular. There was a long waiting list for membership at the Seattle Golf Club; Tacoma Golf Club (1894) and Everett Golf and Country Club (1910) were too far, and Jefferson Park, where some 100,000 rounds per year was being played, too congested.

On March 21, 1919, forty-five men and women attended the first meeting to discuss the formation of a golf club on the north end of Lake Washington. The organization effort was led by James G. Blake, a real estate businessman. On December 12, 1919, the club formally organized under the name Inglewood Country Club. The name of the club derived from the Inglewood Farm on which property the course sat. They elected Blake as their first president. Blake was an avid golfer playing to a ten handicap. At the time he was the club champion at Earlington Golf Club in Renton, and previously a member of Tacoma Golf Club. A membership fee of \$300 was set, and by year's end, the club had received 418 applications, eighteen more than the limit they had established.

In January, 1920, Blake announced that two golf architects, Robert Johnstone, golf professional at the Seattle Golf Club, and A. Vernon Macan, of Victoria, British Columbia, were hired to lay out the course. In addition, Blake announced the purchase of 210 acres of the Inglewood Farm for \$70,000.

Johnstone and Macan Will Lay Out Links for Inglewood on Shores of Lake. Circular notice of progress being made in bringing the Inglewood Country Club into actual existence was given by Ed Brown, secretary, the latter part of the week, in which he said that Robert Johnstone and A. V. Macan had been engaged to lay out the course at the north end of Lake Washington. The Victoria amateur declared 'You have a very beautiful property,' and

the Seattle Golf Club professional added 'It will make an exceptional fine golf course.'  
(Seattle Sunday Times 1-18-1920)



A. Vernon Macan (1882 – 1964)

Arthur Vernon Macan, was born in Dublin, Ireland in 1882. He emigrated to Victoria, British Columbia at the age of 30 in 1912. He was an accomplished golfer, winning the Pacific Northwest Golf Association Amateur title in 1913. He volunteered for service in World War I where he was wounded resulting in the amputation of his lower leg.

His competitive days behind him, Macan turned to golf architecture as a profession. For the next fifty years he designed or renovated a vast number of courses in British Columbia, Washington, and Oregon. His more notable courses include Royal Colwood and Shaughnessy Heights in British Columbia; Inglewood, Rainier, Fircrest, Broadmoor, and Overlake in Washington; Waverly and Columbia Edgewater in Oregon; and the exclusive California Golf Club near San Francisco.



Robert "Bob" Johnstone (1874 – 1937)

Robert Johnstone (1874 – 1937) was a transplanted Scot from North Berwick, Scotland. He emigrated to the United States in 1900, was the golf professional at Presidio Golf Club in San Francisco from 1900 to 1905. While there he redesigned Presidio and the Ingleside Golf Course in Oakland. He was hired as the golf professional at the Seattle Golf Club in 1905 and remained there until his death in 1937. In addition to Presidio and Ingleside, he designed the Seattle Golf Club, Jefferson Park, and in partnership with A. Vernon Macan, the Rainier Golf and Country Club course and the Inglewood Golf Club course. Much beloved and much admired, Johnstone defined golf professionalism and did more to develop golf in the Puget Sound region during its early years than anyone else.

Johnstone and Macan knew each other well. They had crossed paths many times competing in golf tournaments, one as professional and the other a top-notch amateur. When it came to golf course architecture, however, Johnstone was old school, following the style of links design he learned in Scotland. Macan was the innovator, with some definite ideas about how a course should be laid out. While they collaborated well during the design of Inglewood's course, they did not always agree.

One story tells of a disagreement between the two regarding the proper design of the ninth (now eighteenth) green, all the more important as it sat directly in front of the soon to be built clubhouse and would be judged critically. After days of back and forth, they met with the greens superintendent Hans Moon. As told by Johnstone:

"We thought we had arrived at a definite size and shape of the green and its attendant bunkers and so we told Hans Moon to meet us with his crew of scrapers and shovelers on a certain morning. Between the time of ordering Hans out and meeting him, both Macan and I, deeply impressed with the responsibility of this ninth green got to further debating in our respective minds, so that when all of us, Macan, Moon, and I met on the designated morning we two architects discovered we were as far apart as ever on just what should be.

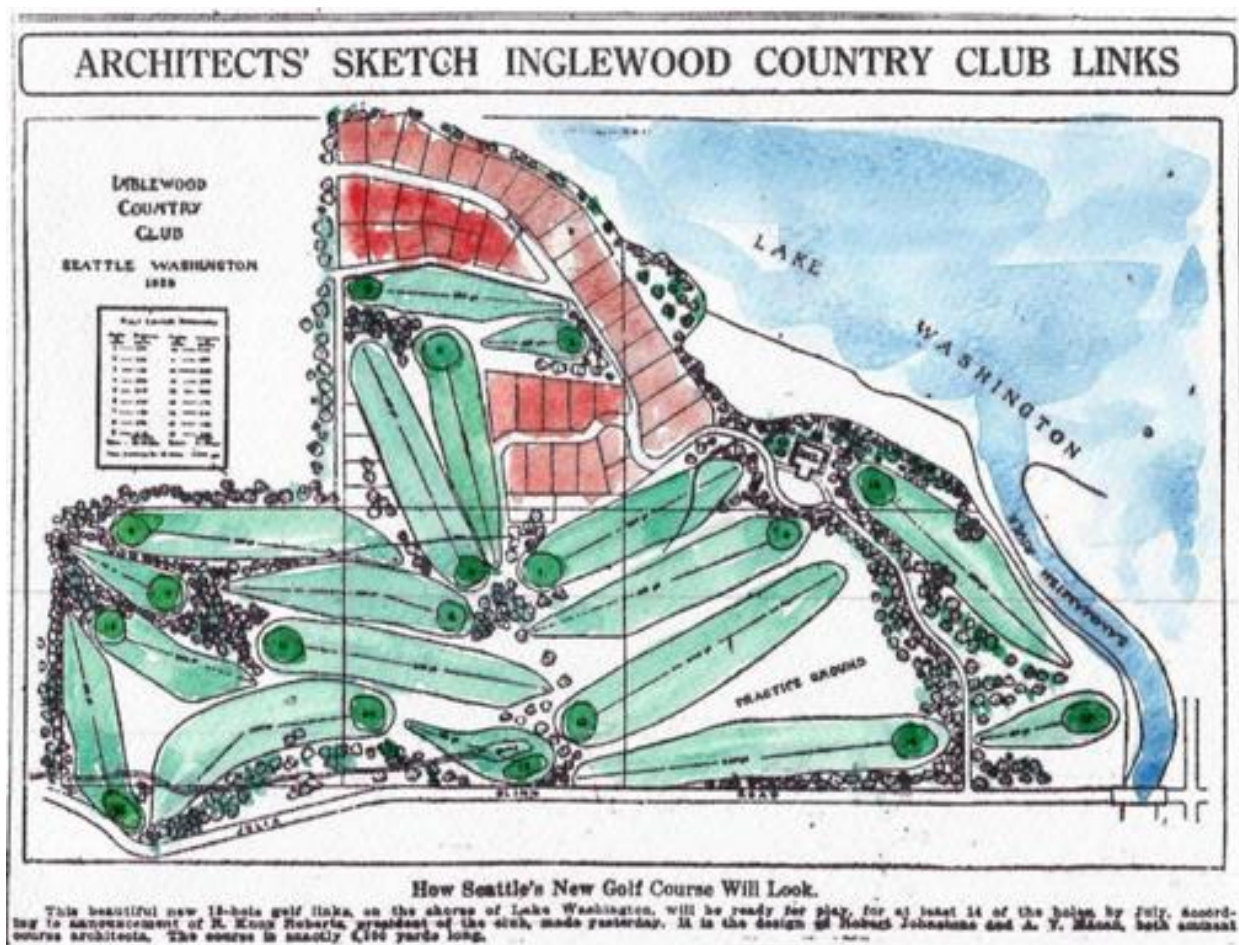
"Hans stood by, on one foot and then the other, while his crew and his horses, hooked to the scrapers, enjoyed a rest. Finally, after spending several hours arguing and getting no nearer a solution, we called it off for the day and told Hans to appear again the next morning.

"Well, the next day was a repetition of what had gone before, much to the disgust of Hans Moon, although neither Macan nor I was disposed to hurry matters. We wanted it 'right'. Again we adjourned and set a meeting three days away.

"On the designated day and hour Macan and I appeared on the scene. Hans Moon and his crew and team were not there. But the ninth green was. Hans Moon had put it there. Even the bunkering had been done. And neither the bunkers nor the green ever were changed. (Seattle Daily Times 9-12-1920)"

The question is often asked: is Inglewood a Macan design or a Johnstone design? This story clearly shows the answer is both, but perhaps one should set aside a small acknowledgement to Moon.

The course laid out by Johnstone and Macan from 1920 shows a routing of holes which, remarkably, remains virtually unchanged a century later.



Course Architects' Plan 1920 (courtesy of Inglewood Golf Club)

Yardages for holes at the time of construction were:

1 – 380, 2 – 350, 3 – 150, 4 – 390, 5 – 410, 6 – 450, 7 – 170, 8 – 400, 9 – 410, Total - 3110  
 10 – 440, 11 – 400, 12 – 300, 13 – 370, 14 – 400, 15 – 170, 16 – 550, 17 – 180, 18 – 380, Total - 3190  
 Total 18 holes: 6300 yards

In 1932, the club reversed the nines. Current yardages from the blue tees are:

10 – 380, 11 – 373, 12 – 153, 13 – 346, 14 – 397, 15 – 440, 16 – 197, 17 – 397, 18 – 496, Total - 3179  
 1 – 460, 2 – 461, 3 – 287, 4 – 368, 5 – 398, 6 – 180, 7 – 544, 8 – 202, 9 – 390, Total - 3290  
 Total 18 holes: 6469 yards

Aerial views of the golf course ninety years apart reveal dramatic differences in the narrowing of fairways with the growth of trees, but the holes would be recognizable today as they were then.





Inglewood Golf Club aerial - c.1930 (photo courtesy of Inglewood Golf Club)



Inglewood Golf Club aerial - 2018

Nearly simultaneously, at the other end of Seattle, the Rainier Golf and Country Club (1919) also formed. They too hired Robert Johnstone, and later A. Vernon Macan, as their golf architects. At one point, organizers of Rainier and Inglewood even talked of merging and sought to find a central location amenable to both parties. However, these plans were soon dropped, and the two clubs began vying for

membership, often by denigrating the other. As a result, a rather rancorous relationship developed between the two clubs.

On August 6, 1921, Inglewood Country Club officially opened:

More than 350 golf enthusiasts attended the opening of the new golf course and 225 played over the course during the afternoon, among them Bob Johnstone, professional at the Seattle Country Club, who tied with Clark Speirs for low medal score of 78. The lawn in front of the clubhouse was an animated scene. (Seattle DailyTimes, August 7, 1921)



Original Clubhouse 1921 (photo courtesy of Inglewood Golf Club)

Al Espinosa, from California, was hired as Inglewood's first golf professional in 1921. While at Inglewood, he won the Washington Open in 1922 and 1923. He resigned after two and a half years to pursue a professional career on the PGA tour.



Al Espinosa (1891 – 1957), Inglewood's first pro

Abel Ruben "Al" Espinosa was born in Monterey, California in 1891. He was of Mexican American descent and was one of the earliest Hispanic golfers on the pro tour. Espinosa served in the U. S. Army during World War I.

He played on the professional circuit and won nine tournaments from 1924 to 1935. He lost to Bobby Jones in a playoff in the 1929 U.S. Open. He was also on the first three Ryder Cup teams in 1927, 1929, and 1931 compiling a 2-1-1 record.



Walter Pursey followed as Inglewood's next pro. Born in England, Pursey came to the U.S. in 1924 and somehow found his way to Kenmore, Washington where he secured the job as head professional at Inglewood.

"Walter Pursey, who for the next few months at least, will act as pro at Inglewood, played his first game of golf in America yesterday afternoon over the Lake Shore links when, accompanied by James G. Blake, he nonchalantly strolled over that hilly 18 holes in a cool 74 – 1 over par. Quite a gallery followed the new pro and the club captain around the links and it was the consensus of opinion, following the match, that Walter Pursey will "do." He is, aye verily, a sweet golfer." (Seattle Daily Times, May 16, 1924)

Pursey remained at Inglewood until 1940 when, ironically, he took the head pro's job at Inglewood's rival club Rainier Golf and Country Club.



Walter Pursey (1893 - 1956), Inglewood's 2<sup>nd</sup> pro (photo courtesy of Inglewood Golf Club)



Espinosa and Pursey Hickory Shafted Irons

The golf club thrived during the roaring twenties. Inglewood hosted its first interclub match (now more commonly known as "home and away") against the Rainier Golf and Country Club on September 24, 1922. These interclub matches were a popular form of competition at the time. With nearly full membership in both clubs, Inglewood and Rainier could forget about their past differences. In their inaugural match, the two clubs lined up 43 players a side, and a strong Inglewood team came away with the cup by the score of 82 to 39.

Jack Westland was Inglewood's first club champion in 1923. Westland would go on to finish runner-up to Francis Ouimet in the 1931 U.S. Amateur, then won the U.S. Amateur title himself in 1952 at the age of 47. Westland was the first of many outstanding Northwest amateur golfers who would become Inglewood's club champions, including Harold Niemeyer, Chuck Hunter, Forest Watson, Ed Greenway, and Harry Givan.

Inglewood hosted its first major tournament in 1926 when the Washington State Open and Amateur championships were held there. Inglewood's resident club pro Walter Pursey won the Open title shooting 73-71-73-75=292. Seattle Golf Club members Bon Stein defeated Lee Steil in the 36 hole match play finals to capture the Men's Amateur title. Inglewood member Katherine Cary took her second WSGA Women's Amateur title that year.

While the Washington State Golf Association had been in existence since 1922 when it held its first Open and Amateur Championships at Yakima Country Club, the years following saw an organization plagued by mismanagement and poor leadership. That all changed in 1926 when D. H. Traphagen, Inglewood's Club President, appointed Dr. Charles B. Ford, a fellow Inglewood member, as interim president of the WSGA. Ford took charge of matters and reorganized the WSGA. He drew up the constitution and by-laws and instituted a dues structure for member clubs and revived the WSGA from near extinction.

Inglewood's next significant tournament was held in 1929 when it hosted the Northwest Open and the Pacific Northwest Amateur Championship. Yakima pro Neil Christian of Waverly Golf Club took the Open title with a score of 290 and another Portlander Frank Dolp won the Amateur title. Canadian Vera Hutchings won the Women's Amateur title.

While the club thrived during the 1920s, troubles were ahead. When the temporary clubhouse burned down in 1925, Inglewood set out to build a magnificent clubhouse which ended up costing of over \$172,000, a princely sum for the period and far exceeding the initial budget of \$80,000. The debt incurred to pay for the clubhouse began a period of financial troubles which plagued the club for many years ahead. Unpaid bills began to mount, and creditors were demanding payment. By the time Great Depression hit three years later, the club was already in arrears.



Inglewood Clubhouse – 1929 (photo courtesy of Inglewood Golf Club)



Starting in 1929, membership steadily dropped from 500 to 48 over the next five years and the club was forced to declare bankruptcy in 1934. The club reorganized and operated for some time before declaring its second bankruptcy in 1940. This time the club was forced to close its course. The beautiful clubhouse was rented out to the U.S. Coast Guard for war-time use, and the course became a grazing ground for sheep.

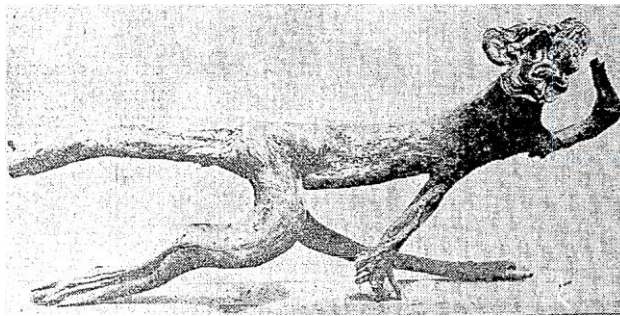
Following World War II, the club reopened in 1946 under new ownership, led by Joel P. Barron. Barron hired Ed "Porky" Oliver, a flamboyant and popular pro who helped draw many of golfing greats to Inglewood. Like Espinosa before him, Oliver played on three Ryder Cup teams (in 1947, 1951, and 1955) and finished second in a U.S. Open (1952). Inglewood therefore has the distinction of having two pros who played in the Ryder Cup. With the improving post-war economy, membership again began to grow. In a matter of a few short years, Inglewood returned to become one of the top championship courses in the Northwest.

The Inglewood Country Club was a PGA Tour stop during the 1960s when it hosted the Seattle Open, and then the Senior PGA Tour during the 1980s and the 1990s. Today, it is considered one of the most demanding championship courses in the Northwest.

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Postscript:

Inglewood 's history is full of lore. One popular and enduring story involves a tree root found on the property during the clearing of the land in 1920.



Inglewood Hound (1920 – 1925)

Dubbed the "Inglewood Hound," and adopted as the unofficial mascot, the piece occupied a prominent place in the clubhouse. Alas, when the original clubhouse burned down to the ground, the "hound" too was reduced to ashes. Many members considered the loss of the hound as more of a tragedy than the loss of the clubhouse. After all, they now had reason to build a magnificent new clubhouse, but the hound could not be replaced.

A golf writer, Craig Smith, for the Seattle Times recounts some of Inglewood's other memorable stories:

If another category - **most colorful history** - were compiled, Inglewood would be on that list too. Although every private club can produce stories of eccentric members and strange events, Inglewood's lore is so rich it gets retold at other clubs as well. After all, this is the golf club where:

A member who was playing alone **bled to death** on the ninth hole in the 1950s when his club broke and imbedded itself in his leg. It was the wrong hole for such an accident. **Peacocks** were kept on the adjoining property and their screech usually sounded like the word help. "The peacocks would scream and screech," said Ivan Lottsfledt, 79 a member from 1946. Even if he had yelled for help, the theory is people may have heard something but wouldn't have

paid attention to it thinking it was just the peacocks." A doctor who was on the course played past the dying man thinking he was just taking a nap

When most of the course was shut down during World War II, **sheep grazed** to keep the grass from getting too long. The clubhouse and some of the property were used as a rest and relaxation site by the **Coast Guard**.

In 1954 a **light plane** made an emergency landing on the 18th fairway, then had to be dismantled for removal.

In 1973 an arrest for prostitution was made at a home bordering the 10th fairway. Clientele for the house of ill repute came from throughout the Seattle area (the place even had membership cards) and sometimes golf carts were parked in front of the establishment. Some members said they didn't realize it was going on until the police arrest. "I was so naive that it never occurred to me why all those women were in the house," said one member.

A Deputy Sheriff was shot and killed and two other deputies were wounded in 1952 when the club's dishwasher mistook them for safecrackers returning to the scene of a crime. An hour earlier, the dishwasher and two watchmen had been tied up by four safecrackers who had escaped with \$6,800 from the safe and 25 then-legal slot machines. ("The club was a gambler's paradise in those days," recalls one member who joined in the early 1950s). An offshoot of the robbery was the conviction of the Chief of King County Detectives for taking a bribe from the robbers.

During a Memorial Day in the early 1950s, the competing golfers and gallery reached the top of the 4th hole during the morning round and looked down to find the pin placement. Instead, they saw a man and a woman entwined on the green doing something other than putting. The story goes that the club pro at the time, Charlie Mortimer, turned to the gallery and ordered, "move back, back, back, especially you ladies." Since then, some members have called the 4th hole "Lovers Lane"