

Early History of
Hood River Golf and Country Club, Hood River, OR
Established 6-26-1922

Course Opened 9-8-1923; Second Nine Opened 1997

Course Architects: First Nine (1923): H. Chandler Egan; Second Nine (1997): David Waller



Tractors lined up to clear the land for Hood River CC in 1922 (photo courtesy of The History Museum of Hood River County)

The Hood River Golf and Country Club, located in the City of Hood River, Oregon, 65 miles east of Portland along the Columbia River, was established in 1922. Designed by the famed H. Chandler Egan, the then nine-hole course opened for play in 1923.

The stirrings of a golf club in Hood River actually began nine years earlier when a group of tennis players sought to expand their club to include the new pastime sweeping across the country. The group went so far as to look for suitable property among the numerous apple and pear orchards that surrounded the city of approximately 3,000 residents at the time.

Little progress was made in the next several years until another group, consisting of local businessmen and headed by Clarence N. Ravlin (1873 – 1955), a real estate and insurance agent, made a more concerted effort to organize. In 1916, they secured a 40-acre property on Paradise Farm acreage to build a nine-hole golf course. Three holes were to parallel the new Columbia River Highway, just under construction, and four holes would have had a view of Mount Hood and Mount Adams.

While the organization efforts were taking shape, there was enough interest in the community that the group laid out, as an interim measure, an improvised golf course on the sand bars of the Columbia River. Starting in 1916 the sand bar course was in use every winter for 7 or 8 years.

Spring days are bringing out additional golf enthusiasts here. A sand bar of several hundred acres north of the city is used as a course. At times the golfers, many of them women, appear from the distance of the city, like fleas on the great bar. The golf enthusiasts are making the most of their improvised course as it will be submerged by water as soon as the Columbia starts rising with the usual spring freshet. (*Hood River Glacier* - 3-10-1921)



Columbia River sand bar near City of Hood River with Mount Hood in background (current photo). In 1916, before Columbia River dams were built, the sand bar would likely have been much larger.

Golf on a sand bar must have been a unique and interesting experience. When the Columbia River receded during the winter months, large areas of hard-packed sand were exposed. The low winter temperatures created a hard, crusty surface on which the balls would roll rather than sink and golf was actually possible.

Meanwhile, Ravlin continued his efforts to organize and recruit members for a golf club. But he needed more than a “score of golf enthusiasts” to make a golf club viable. While he had a core group of proponents, Ravlin struggled to gain a wider support from the general populace. Few understood, much less experienced the game of golf. Soon after, in 1917, America entered the war in Europe, and all efforts to start a golf club stopped.

At war’s conclusion, however, interest in starting a golf club revived. This time A. W. Stone, manager of the Apple Growers Association in Hood River, was the prime mover. In May, 1919, Stone reported that 60 citizens of Hood River had expressed interest in joining. However, like his predecessors before him, Stone’s efforts also seemed to have stalled and little progress was made. Undeterred, golfers continued to venture out to the sandbars of the Columbia River well into 1923.

In January, 1922, Hood River’s “golf enthusiasts” made yet another push to start a golf club. This time they succeeded. Headed by an energetic 34 year old Albert W. Peters (1886 – 1967), a local orchardist, the group met on January 9, 1922 to announce that 50 individuals had each pledged the initial \$100 to finance the new organization. The list of 50 who pledged included one woman.



Albert W. Peters (1886 – 1967) First President of Hood River Country Club

Albert William Peters was born in New York on April 10, 1886 but grew up in Cincinnati, Ohio. He returned to New York to attend Cornell University and graduated in 1910. Later that year, at the age of 24, he moved to Hood River where he would eventually purchase and operate an apple orchard. He married Marguerite Millikin in 1912 with whom he had two daughters.

At Hood River, he became a highly successful orchardist. He was a board member on numerous civic organizations as well as society clubs. He was also a founding board member of the Oregon Golf Association, formed in 1924.

It is not known whether he played golf while growing up in New York or in Cincinnati. At Hood River, he became an accomplished golfer, playing well into his eighties at his home course.

He died in Hood River on December 21, 1967.

A committee was formed to push the project forward. It consisted of A. W. Peters, E. R. Pooley, B. H. Snow, Truman Butler, A. W. Stone, F. A. Cram, F. S. Kelly, J. W. Crites, C. N. Ravlin, E. O. Blanchard, and Harry T. DeWitt. They brought in golf professional George H. Eddy, who had built golf courses at La Grande, Pendleton, Corvallis, Salem and Gearhart, to advise and encourage the people of Hood River to build a golf course. The committee's main selling point was that with the completion of the Columbia River Highway, Hood River would become a tourist destination for Portlanders and others, and golf would serve as a draw for local businesses.

The committee selected a 52 acre site, owned by Mrs. M. Sue Henderson, just west of the city. The purchase, however, was contingent on cancellation of leases held by Japanese ranchers farming strawberries on the property. Perhaps the membership drive to reach their goal of 80 pledges fell short, or perhaps they were unable to break the lease with the Japanese ranchers, but once again the plans for a golf club stalled.

Two months later, in March, 1922, Mayor George Baker of Portland gave a speech to the Commercial Club of Hood River recounting the benefits of golf courses to cities. Thus energized, the golf committee received the endorsement of the Hood River Commercial Club to purchase a 150 acre orchard owned by Herman Pregge. The purchase was to be financed through the sale of bonds. Pregge's property was located in the Oak Grove district some six miles southwest of the City and valued at \$20,000. Initiation fee for the golf club was set at \$25 and dues at \$3 per month.

By May 1922, the club had raised \$13,000 from local and Portland investors and received an additional \$5,000 donation from Simon Benson, a wealthy businessman and owner of the recently completed Columbia Gorge Hotel. In June, the committee hired H. Chandler Egan to survey the Pregge property. Egan mapped out a plan for a full 18-hole course, but only nine holes would be constructed initially.

On June 26, 1922, the committee met to formally organize the Hood River Country Club. A. W. Peters was elected as the first president, Fielding Kelly as vice-president, and C. N. Ravlin as secretary-treasurer. Elected directors were E. O. Blanchard, Truman Butler, S. L. Banks, and E. R. Pooley. Articles of Incorporation for Hood River Country Club were filed on July 25, 1922.



H. Chandler Egan (1884 – 1936)

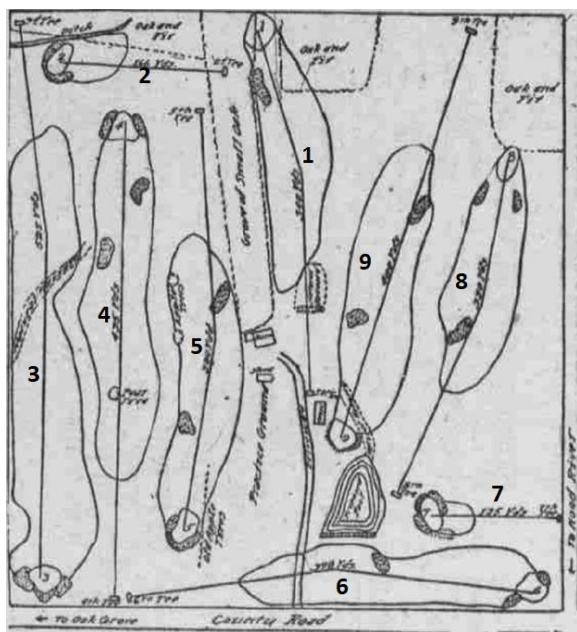
Henry Chandler Egan, architect of Hood River Country Club, was born in Chicago, Illinois in 1884. He learned to play golf at Exmoor Golf Club near Chicago. He attended Harvard University where he was captain of the golf team.

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 competition and gold in the team competition.

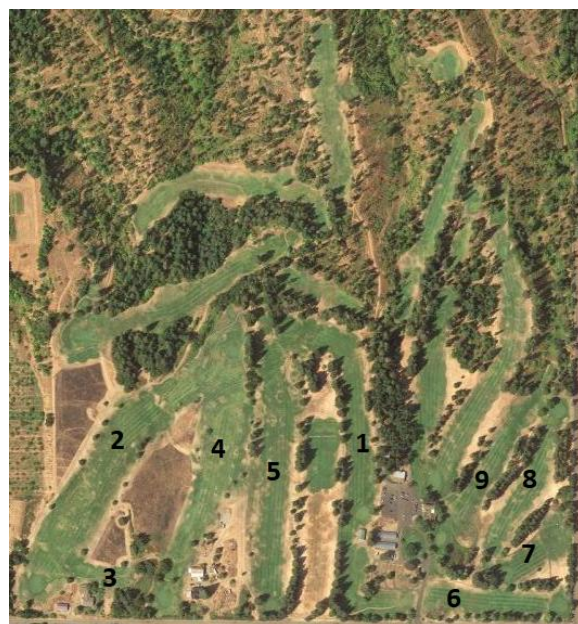
In 1911, Egan left competitive golf behind, and moved to Medford, Oregon where he bought an apple orchard. He returned to competitive golf in 1914 and won numerous championships in the Pacific Northwest. He played in two Walker Cup matches, in 1930 and 1934.

Egan is noted for his design or renovation of such Northwest courses as Eugene CC, Oswego Lake CC, Waverley GC, Riverside G&CC, Eastmoreland GC, Indian Canyon GC and numerous other courses. 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.

Remarkably, nearly a hundred years later, Egan's design and routing of the holes has remained virtually intact. It appears that when the second nine was put in 1997, Egan's original second hole (par 3) was turned into the eleventh hole and a new par three hole (now hole #3) was put in its place. With those two exceptions, the first nine holes would be recognizable today to those who first teed up in 1923.



Chandler Egan's Proposed Layout - 1922



Current Course Layout - 2021

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

1922		
hole	par	yards
1	4	360
2*	3	166
3	5	525
4	4	435
5	4	380
6	4	398
7	3	125
8	4	333
9	4	400
	35	3192

2021		
hole	par	yards
1	4	360
2	5	569
3**	3	148
4	4	395
5	5	538
6	4	330
7	3	153
8	4	350
9	4	345
	36	3188

**The original hole no. 2 (par 3) is now no. 11. **The current hole no. 3 (par 3) is new.
The routing of the remaining holes are substantially the same as laid out by H. Chandler Egan*

After he had completed his design, Egan offered a hole by hole assessment of his thought process. The following excerpt provides a rare insight into his design philosophy.

“There are two big outstanding features that stand out in my mind regarding the site you all have chosen for the Hood River golf course. First, the gorgeous view afforded from nearly every tee and, second, the adaptability of the natural topography of the place to golfing purposes.

"To most players half the fun of the game is in the enjoyment of being outdoors and nothing can add more to the enjoyment of being outdoors than beauty of landscape. That is why every designer of golf courses today at least tries to be a landscape gardener as well as an expert in placing tees, greens, and hazards. With the tremendous natural advantages you possess in your partially wooded hillside land with the commanding view of Mount Hood and your fertile valley the only work you fellows will have in building your course will be in keeping the beauty that is already yours.

"Looking at your proposed course from a purely golfing standpoint of view ... I see no reason why your first nine holes should not equal anything in the Northwest. As I visualized them while walking over the ground with you I could think of no other nine holes that would be more sporty, more interesting or a fairer test of golf anywhere in this part of the country. Your ninth hole is particularly fine, especially for a finishing hole. The green site on the hill slope by the club house with that natural hazard running diagonally across the course immediately in front of it is going to make the second shot on that hole a splendid opportunity for him who has the nerve and skill to pull it off.

"All the holes in the nine are of good distance with the possible exception of two, numbers 1 and 8, which are each approximately 340 yards long. However, any criticism on the length of these holes should be nullified by the unusual green sites. Each is located in a narrowing ravine so that the second shot is extremely attractive and interesting, particularly when the ease, or otherwise, of the second shot depends so much on these holes, on the proper placing of the tee-shot.

"Your two 1-shot holes are very good. The second [now eleventh], a mid-iron shot, has a splendid green site, and the seventh, a mashie shot, has one almost as good. No topped tee-shot will ever get 'home' on these holes and, while the penalty for misplay is not severe, it will behoove the player not to miss from the tee on either of these holes.

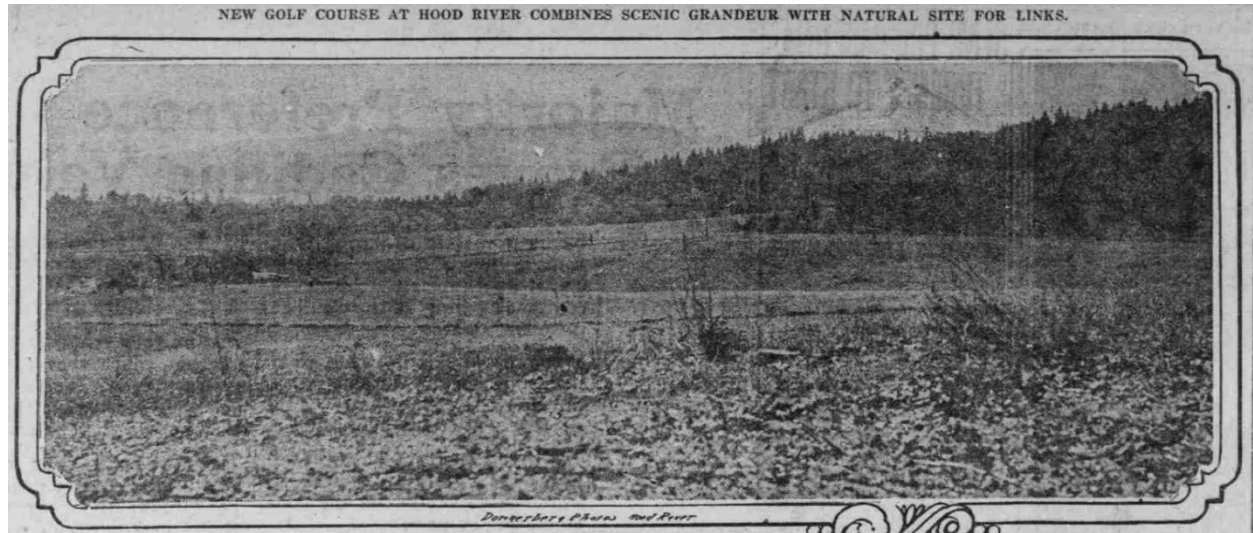
"To play your long hole, No. 3 [now no. 2], properly, which is well over 500 yards long, one will have to set his head for every shot on account of the three natural hazards, two of which run diagonally across the course, while the other lies in wait for the unwary player just short and to the right of the green. When they play from this tee it will behoove the long and short players to select different sides of the fairway in order to avoid trouble and get the best results.

"The fourth, fifth, and sixth holes are not spectacular unless one would call the sixth so with its double dip and with the fairway swinging by the proposed swimming pond. These are all fine two-shot holes, although the fourth is perhaps a little more than two shots for all but the very long player. I know that if I were playing a match on your course and were one down I should look forward to playing these three holes because I would feel that if my opponent made the smallest mistake on any one of them it would be difficult for him to get a four and opportunity would knock at my door.

"I think you will find every one of your nine holes a fine test of good golf, the kind of a test that allows the short player an opportunity of playing the holes free from trouble and getting the best score that his distance permits and yet which also gives the superior player

a distinct advantage provided he can properly place his shots.” (*Hood River Glacier* – 9-7-1922)

On September 21, 1922 club president W. A. Peters, in a ground-breaking ceremony, turned the first shovelful on the new course as some 50 member volunteers gathered to clear the land. Local orchardists and farmers donated the use of tractors, teams of horses, and other farm equipment to help Hood River’s newest club.



Hood River Country Club prior to clearing. Mount Hood in the distance. (*Sunday Oregonian* 9-7-1922)

In the spring of 1923, Hugh Junor of Portland’s famed Junor family of golf professionals was hired as greenskeeper. Junor oversaw the construction of the course which was completed by James Perry Williams, a Hood River resident. “The club has installed the most unique irrigation system used of any golf course in the country. Seven thousand feet of six and eight-inch concrete pipe and 3000 feet of iron pipe carry the water to all parts of the course.” Williams would later construct the first nine of the Walla Walla Country Club course in 1925.

By late summer, the course was ready for play. The fairways and greens were described as “rich and velvety” in nature. “The greens of the Hood River course are unusually large and will delight visiting golfers, as the grass is in fine condition. The fairways are in excellent shape, with a good springy turf throughout.” (*Sunday Oregonian* - 9-2-1923)

The golf course was formally dedicated on Sept. 8, 1923. Dr. O. F. Willing of Portland, a top amateur golfer in Oregon, was given the honor of hitting the first tee shot. Willing partnered with William Hanley, Waverley professional, in an exhibition foursome match against Rudolph Wilhelm and John Junor, professional of Portland Golf Club.

In addition to the golf course, Hood River Country Club added tennis courts as well as a swimming pond for members and their families. The Club was also quite progressive for its time in promoting golf for women. It announced “... that a nursery will be established next year. A competent nurse will be placed in charge and mothers will who wish to play golf or tennis may leave their children at the nursery and be free to participate.” (*Hood River Glacier* – 9-21-1922)



L to R. Mrs. Routledge (wife of pro Jack Routledge), "Pansy" DeWitt, Mrs. Hamilton, Mr. Cedarwall, Mr. Green - ca.1925 (photo courtesy of The History Museum of Hood River County)



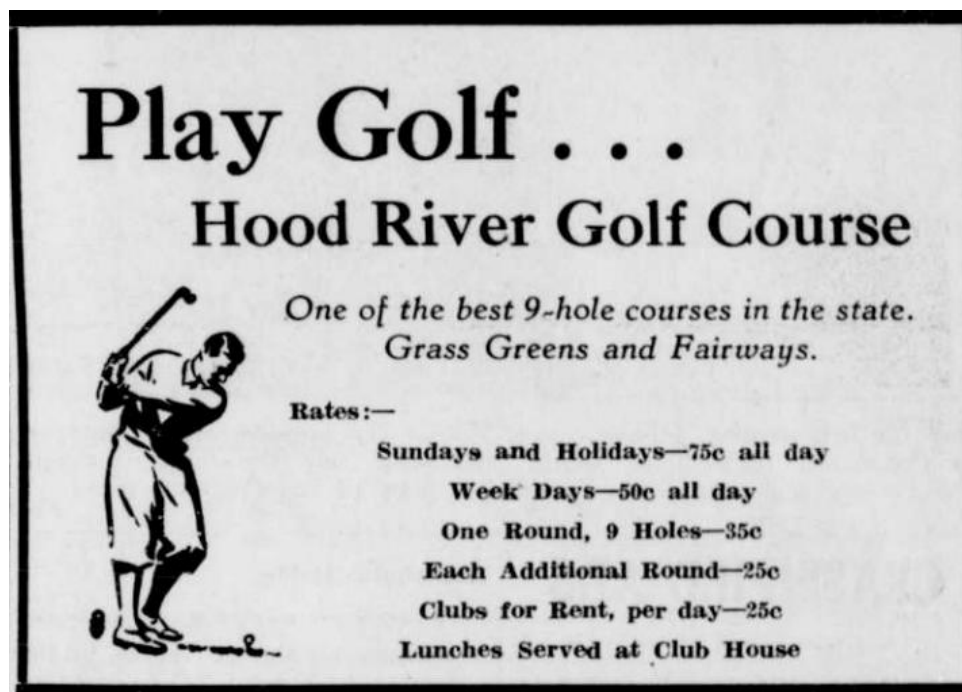
"Pansy" DeWitt - ca.1925 (photo courtesy of The History Museum of Hood River County)



Hood River CC Ladies hosts The Dalles Country Club Ladies at Hood River CC - 1931 (photo courtesy of The History Museum of Hood River County)

Hood River Country Club's first golf professional was 23 year-old Jack Routledge (1901 – 1973) hired in 1924. Prior to coming to Hood River, he served a short time as golf professional at what is now Coos Golf Club, also designed by Chandler Egan, in Coos Bay, Oregon.

Routledge had grown up in Portland, Oregon and at a young age worked as an instructor and promoter of all types of sports including baseball, football, basketball, swimming, boxing, wrestling, and golf. In the 1930 census, he described himself as a "wrestling promoter" but he would stay involved in the golf business for years thereafter. For a time he hosted a radio program in Portland called "Golf Talks". His stay at Hood River was relatively brief, lasting only two years. While at Hood River he laid out the Goldendale Golf Club course in Goldendale, Washington and the Heppner Golf Club course in Heppner, Oregon.



Play Golf . . .
Hood River Golf Course

*One of the best 9-hole courses in the state.
Grass Greens and Fairways.*

Rates:—
Sundays and Holidays—75c all day
Week Days—50c all day
One Round, 9 Holes—35c
Each Additional Round—25c
Clubs for Rent, per day—25c
Lunches Served at Club House

Hood River Golf Course newspaper ad from 1938

The second nine, designed by resident pro Dave Waller, was constructed from 1996-97. Built on a steep hillside, so steep as to require a golf cart, the second nine provides quite a contrast to the front side. Those seeking to walk the course would do well to circle the front side twice around. For followers of Chandler Egan courses, this gem of a course along the Mighty Columbia is a must stop.

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