

Early History of  
Glen Acres Golf and Country Club, Seattle, WA  
Established 1-16-1923, Course Opened: 6-30-1925  
Course Architect: A. Vernon Macan

At first glance, it may seem odd to find two private golf clubs being conceived and built virtually next to one another in the same McKinley Hill neighborhood of South Seattle at nearly the same time during the years 1919-23. Yet such was the case of the two clubs: Glendale (later Glen Acres) Golf and Country Club, founded in 1923, and Rainier Golf and Country Club, founded in 1919. Both clubs were organized by some of the most prominent businessmen of Seattle. The two also shared a common architect, A. Vernon Macan, a noted golf course designer from British Columbia.

This apparent oddity can be explained when examined in the context of discriminatory practices against racial and religious minorities in the early part of the twentieth century – practices common among golf clubs in Seattle and elsewhere. These practices were usually more covert than overt. It was not that the by-laws of these clubs contained discriminatory clauses per se, however, they existed in practice. One simply did not write it down or talk about them openly. A golfer seeking membership in a private club typically had to complete a two-step process: first, he/she had to be sponsored by a current member, and secondly, his/her application must be approved by the club itself. In some clubs, the objection of just one member was enough to reject the applicant. Effectively excluded from joining any of the established Seattle golf clubs at the time, Seattle's Jewish community decided to form its own club and build its own course.

Ralph Schoenfeld, who grew up playing the course from its beginning, explained in a 1988 interview:

The old club [Glendale G&CC] was primarily a place for people to play golf who wanted to play and who had no opportunity to play except on a public course. They could not join other clubs because there was a bias against them. This is the history of private golf courses throughout the United States where a golf course was formed strictly for Jewish players. This is what happened here, it happened in Portland .... When you are excluded, you make your own club.

A number of Jewish men, some of whom would become the driving force behind the idea of forming their own golf club, were certainly familiar with the game. They had been playing golf at the municipal Jefferson Park Golf Course in Seattle. These men included: Herb Schoenfeld, Joseph Gottstein, Joseph Newberger, Markie Lees, Arthur Cohen, Teddy Nussbaum, Myron "Mike" Aronson, and Sam Friedman.

Conceived in 1921, the idea for a golf course for the Jewish community took shape at a preliminary organizational meeting held on November 14, 1922 at Temple de Hirsch in Seattle.

Initially the club was called the Washington Golf & Country Club, but short while later it was renamed the Glendale Golf & Country Club. The name derived from the King County voting district of Glendale on which the course was located. The course would later become the Glen Acres Golf and Country Club when the original club moved to Bellevue in 1958.

The Seattle Times introduced the club with the following announcement on October 21, 1923:

**M**EET the new member of Seattle's family of golfing organizations, the Washington Golf & Country Club! The tenth member of the family. First thought of about two years ago; then, actively agitated for the first time just one year ago; temporarily organized on January 16, last; incorporated two months later, and finally reaching a state of permanent organization last week, the newest member of this city's golfing colony is going to show a mature growth so promptly as to make one dizzy.

Seattle Daily Times – 10-21-1923

Leo S. Schwabacher was named the president, Albert Schubach, the vice president, and Herbert A. Schoenfeld, secretary. The board of governors included Nathan Eckstein, Victor Staadecker, Arthur Cohen, J.C. Lang, E. Rosenberg, and later Joe Gottstein, the founder of Longacres Race Track. The club began with fifty-three charter members. Interestingly, this lengthy Times article makes no mention that the course was being built by and for the Jewish community.



Leo S. Schwabacher (1871 – 1930) (Courtesy of UW Libraries, Special Collections)

From one of the early prominent and pioneering families of Seattle, Leopold S. Schwabacher was born on December 26, 1871 in Seattle, Washington Territories. When his father Sigmund Schwabacher died in 1900, Leo took over the Schwabacher Hardware Company businesses in Seattle and Walla Walla.

Leo Schwabacher was engaged in numerous civic and charitable enterprises. As president, he saw Glendale G&CC not only as a golf club, but also a center for social activities for the local Jewish community.

While he was only an occasional golfer, he was involved extensively in other club activities. He died in Seattle on April 6, 1930 at the age of 59.

By the end of 1923, seventy-eight members had pledged over \$65,000 toward the purchase of the land and other expenses. The Club's intent, as was common at the time, was to begin with a nine-hole course, and then expand to eighteen at a later date. The board examined twenty-five prospective sites in the area, looking as far away as Issaquah, before settling on the current location. Eighty acres were purchased from the South Seattle Land Company with options for additional acreage.

The selected site was described thus: "Situated on the commanding McKinley Hill, a fine view of the Duwamish Valley, the Cascade Mountains and the city of Seattle opens up from the course of play. The site is removed from strong winds and strong air currents, while it is outside the fog belt." (Seattle Daily Times 10-21-1923). The board hired noted golf architect from British Columbia, A. Vernon Macan.



Golf Architect A. Vernon Macan (1882 – 1964)

Arthur Vernon Macan , born in Ireland in 1882, emigrated to Victoria, British Columbia, Canada in 1912. He was an accomplished golfer winning the Pacific Northwest Amateur Championship in 1913. He volunteered for service in World War I with the Canadian Expeditionary Force. He was wounded in France resulting in an amputation of his left leg.

He returned to British Columbia to begin his career in golf architecture. His designs included Rainier, Inglewood, Broadmoor, Fircrest, Columbia Edgewater, and many others in British Columbia, Washington, Oregon, and California.

Upon his hire, Macan gave the new course a strong endorsement: "A course that shall be the last word in modern features of scientific construction, but at the same time one that shall not be too difficult; a course that is going to give lots of interesting golf for all classes from the expert to the duffer. In a word, a course that will be a grand addition to the golfing areas of the Pacific Northwest." (Seattle Daily Times 10-21-1923)

Construction of the golf course began in January, 1924. By November the work had been completed, and only needed time for the grass to grow. The course officially opened on June 30, 1925 to much acclaim. "The Gem of Golf Courses" was how one described it. Another said, "More shots on nine holes than is offered on any eighteen-hole course in Seattle." Surveying the hole from the tee box on the 185 yard second [now gone], leading amateur golfer Bon Stein said simply, "The best-looking one-shot hole I have ever seen."

Ralph Schoenfeld remembered that Macan "...was there every day supervising that course when it was being built. He was there for years afterwards as he enjoyed playing golf and just watched the golf course for years after to see that it was maintained. He wasn't being paid to do. Just to see that it was kept up right."



Hole #8 Green under construction – 1924 (Possibly A. V. Macan surveying his work)



Hole #9 under construction – 1924 (Above photos courtesy of Glen Acres G&CC)

“The layout is a typical piece of Macan design. From the heart of the wilderness there have been hacked nine holes that afford every conceivable lie in golf and call for every conceivable shot. The fairways are boldly contoured, every advantage taken of the natural slopes and counter-slopes of a decidedly undulating terrain. Simply being down the middle is not in every case enough to get the best result from the tee shot. It is frequently desirable to be to the right or the left as the case may be to secure the best chance for the green.” (Seattle P-I – 7-1-1925)

Sadly, Macan’s original routing of the holes changed considerably when three holes (the then holes 2, 3, 4) were lost with the sale of the north end of the property to the Seattle school district in later years. However, a before and after aerial photos of the course shows that current holes 1, 3, 4, 7 and 9 are substantially the same.

#### Course Yardage in 1925

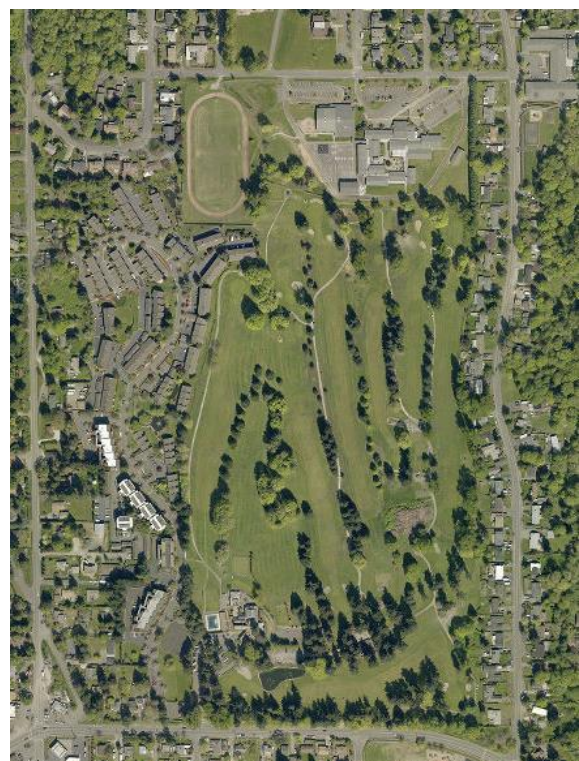
Hole	Yards	Par
1	460	5
2	185	3
3	380	4
4	340	4
5	135	3
6	435	4
7	545	5
8	440	5
9	385	4
	3305	37

#### Course Yardage in 2015

Hole	Yards	Par
1	437	4
2	120	3
3	375	4
4	541	5
5	328	4
6	317	4
7	457	5
8	165	3
9	320	4
	3060	36



Glendale (Glen Acres) G&CC in 1936



Glen Acres G&CC in 2015



In early 1925, the Club hired their first golf professional in 24 year-old Perry Gail.



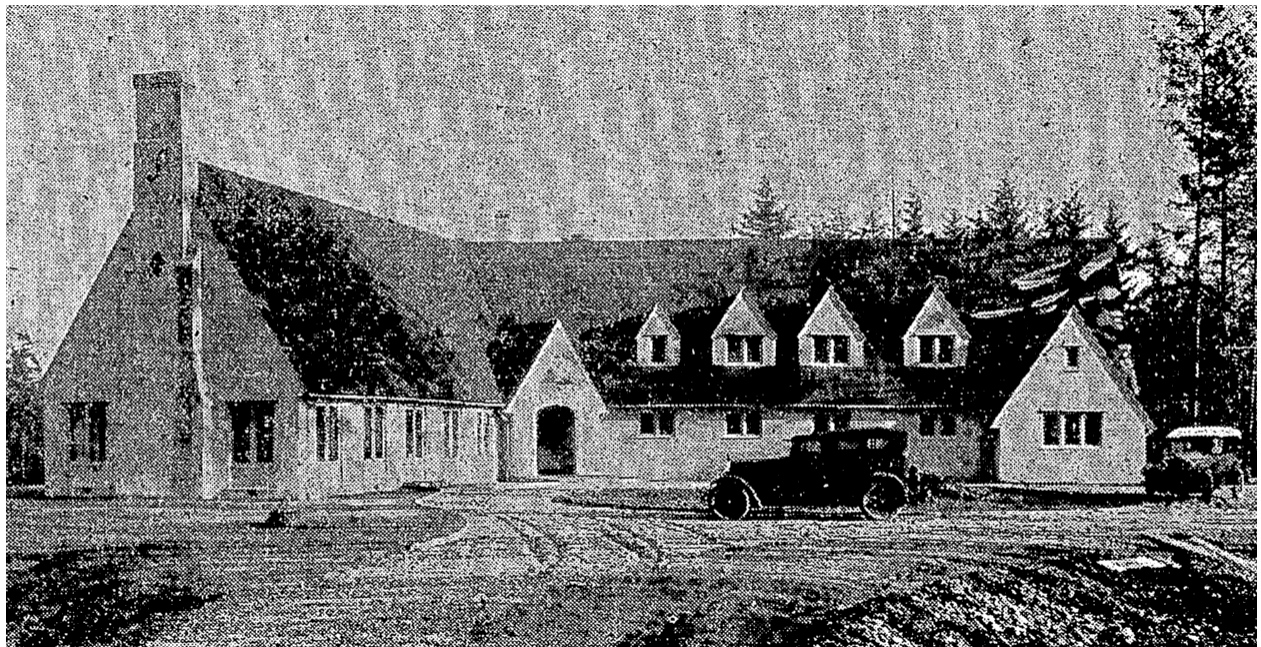
Perry Gail (1901-1948), Glendale's first golf professional

Born in Nebraska in 1901, Perry Gail moved to California in his childhood. He was at Kern River Country Club in Bakersfield, California when he was lured away to Seattle.

On opening day on June 30, 1925, Perry Gail was paired with Jack Hueston, the reigning Northwest Open Champion, in a four-ball match against Bon Stein and Lee Steil, two top amateur players. The match ended all-square. The Seattle P-I reported that "The most impressive golf displayed by any of the quartet was however that shot by Gail. The new professional, making his first public appearance played flawless golf ...."

Gail would only stay for two years, returning to California in 1927 to become the club professional at Hacienda Golf Club outside of Los Angeles. He died in 1948 at the age of 47.

Work on the construction of \$50,000 clubhouse soon commenced. Described as "Modern English" in design, it sat on a knoll with a sweeping view of the golf course and the Seattle skyline beyond. The clubhouse officially opened on New Year's Day, 1926.



Glendale (Glen Acres) Golf & Country Club clubhouse (Seattle Daily Times – 12-13-1925)

In 1927, the club purchased forty additional acres with plans for expanding the course to eighteen holes. These plans never materialized as the course has remained a nine-hole layout to this day.

Historically speaking, Glen Acres has always been considered a tough test of golf with its tight fairways and elevated, sloping greens. The best players of the day in 1926 learned this lesson for themselves in the first real test of the golf course:

The score card of Glendale (Glen Acres) Golf and Country Club indicates that perfect play should bring a 72. Try and get it. Forty young men, prominent among the professional and amateur divisions of the city, tried yesterday and not one broke 80 .... When such really excellent professional players as Johnny Jones, Frank Noble, Walter Pursey, and Curley Hueston ... can't produce a single man capable of getting closer than eight strokes to the par of a course, it must be the course and not the man. It wasn't the tees, which are all turf; nor the fairways, which offer better than ordinary lies, nor the greens, which are without superiors and, probably, without equals in the whole Pacific Northwest. It was – or is – the course ensemble. The towering trees which border the fairways bring golfing lanes that stagger the golfing mentality. That's the answer, the explanation. Glendale is a mental course far superior as such as any we know of hereabouts. The long hitter considers his tee shot or his long approach with a sinking sensation in his stomach and a nervous mental twitching all over. He knows that failure to place his shot means ruin. (Seattle Daily Times – 5-11-1926)

The top member player in the early days of Glendale was Kermit Rosen. Long-hitting Rosen, a highly rated amateur and a student at the University of Washington, captured the Seattle City Amateur in 1930. Mrs. Myron (Ruby) Aronson and Mrs. Max Block were the top women player, both having won numerous club championships.

A popular form of competition in the 1920s were interclub matches, now commonly known as home and away matches. The results of these matches would invariably be reported in the local newspapers. However, virtually no account of matches involving Glendale could be found. Was this a manifestation of discrimination on the part of other clubs? One club against whom Glendale did regularly play their matches was Tualatin Golf Club (est. 1914), the other Jewish golf club, located in Portland, Oregon.

In 1955, faced with the inevitable encroachment of new homes and businesses in its adjoining properties, the membership sought to relocate the club. In 1958, the club moved to its new 18-hole course in Bellevue and retained the name Glendale Country Club.

The old property was initially offered to the City of Seattle's Park Board for the sum of \$250,000 but was declined by the City. It was subsequently purchased for \$200,000 by Northwest developer Kinney Leonard who intended to turn the course into a housing development. However, golfers persuaded Leonard, a golfer himself, to preserve the golf course. A new club, the Glen Acres Golf and Country Club, was formed on December 1, 1958.