

Early History of Foster Golf Links, Tukwila, WA

Established 1925; Course Opened 2-13-1925; Second Nine Opened 6-29-1928
Course Architect: George H. Eddy

Named after the town of Foster, which in turn was named after Joseph Foster, an early Washington pioneer, Foster Golf Links sits on the banks of the Duwamish River in what is now Tukwila, Washington. The golf course began as a dream of one man who sought to own and operate a golf course. His name was George Eddy.



George H. Eddy (1878 - 1941)

Golf professional, golf architect, entrepreneur, and inventor, George Henry Eddy was born in Zennor, Cornwall, England on May 23, 1878. He emigrated to America in 1910 at the age of 32. He first settled in Raleigh, North Carolina where he laid out several courses.

He arrived in Oregon in 1914 and became the golf professional at a number of golf clubs including the Gearhart Golf Links and Illahee Country Club in 1914, Pendleton Country Club from 1916 - 1919, and Baker Country Club in 1920 - 1921. It was during this time, in 1914, that he laid out the second nine at Gearhart Golf Links (Oregonian 9-20-1914).

He moved to Renton, Washington in 1922 to become the golf professional at Earlington Golf Club where he stayed until 1924. Then Eddy took a bold and risky venture: he would build a new golf course in Foster and operate it with his wife, Bessie.

Golf's popularity exploded during the 1920s following World War I and demand for more golf courses was high. In the Puget Sound area, golf clubs were being added at a rapid rate: Rainier opened for play in 1920, Inglewood in 1921, Fircrest in 1923, Glen Acres in 1924, and Broadmoor in 1924. Jefferson Park and Earlington Golf Club were nearby. Even with golf's rapid growth, how could a new, fledgling golf course built and managed by husband and wife survive in competition with all these other clubs?

During a time when most golf courses were private clubs, Eddy planned to build what was then called a "daily fee", or public, course. While Jefferson Park, a municipal course which opened in 1915, had been around for a decade, public courses were still a relatively new business model. But Eddy knew that there was a large populace of players who did not wish, or could not afford, to belong to a country club. After all, Jefferson Park was easily selling over 100,000 rounds a year, an astounding figure by any measure.

In September, 1924, against the advice of others, and mortgaged to the hilt, Eddy purchased a fifty-acre tract of land on the Foster homestead on the banks of the Duwamish River. Soon thereafter Eddy began laying out a nine-hole course.

By February 1925, the course, initially called the Maple Grove Golf Course, was ready for play. Constructed during the winter months, the course was undoubtedly very rough, yet the "who's who" of Puget Sound golfing community turned out in support of George Eddy's creation.

And a Hundred or So Will Enjoy the Hospitality of the George-Eddys at Maple Grove, Friday, February 13.

"HOWDY, George, and you, too, Mrs. George; we wish you luck!"

Which will be the smart and proper thing to say when we all meet George H. Eddy and Mrs. George out at their Maple Grove golf course at the formal opening next Friday. For, besides being Friday, it is also the 13th of the month. So, the Eddys will probably need that luck sign hung on them.

But neither George nor Mrs. George are worried about Friday, the 13th. They signed the papers which gave them their golf course site on a Friday in September and planted the greens on a Friday.

From all accounts there is going to be quite a lot of howdy-doing at Maple Grove next Friday. Everybody is turning out to help the George Eddys put over their original idea—a one-family course, with George in charge outside and Mrs. George in charge inside, at the comfortable old home converted into a clubhouse.

George Abrams, at the Spalding store, is receiving the entries for the opening day's tournament. Bob Johnstone is looking after marshaling the professionals and Abrams the amateurs. The play will start at 10:30 a. m., and will consist of four-ballers, with medal scores counting in a sweepstakes.

George Eddy will do the starting and Mrs. George will pour. That is, there will be no entry fee, the golf being on George, while the sandwiches and coffee will be on Mrs. George.

Bon Stein, Lee Steil and Bob Johnstone, with a fourth man to be selected, will be the "show" four-baller of the day. There are forty-odd already signed up. There'll probably be a hundred by the time Mrs. George puts the coffee pot on.

The Maple Grove golf course is situated at Foster, in Duamish Valley. It is nine miles from the Totem Pole and lies along the Pacific Highway to Tacoma. Road signs tell where it is. It can be reached by automobile, motor bus, interurban or hoof.

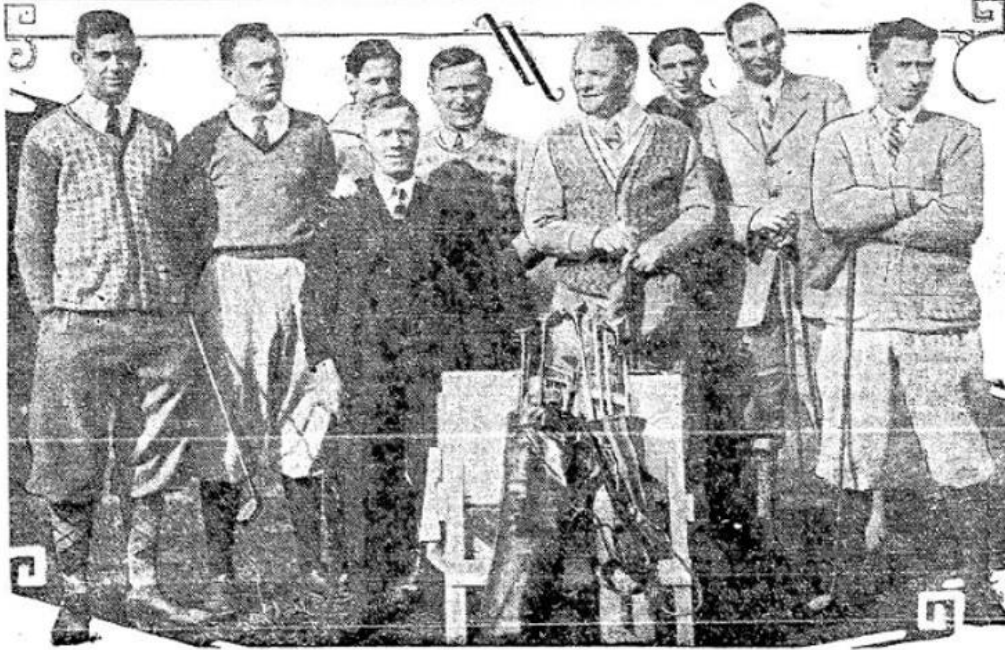
Seattle Times — Feb. 8, 1925

Measuring 3100 yards for nine holes, the course was of standard length for the time. It boasted two of the longest holes on the Pacific coast: the No. 5 hole at 656 yards long, par 6, and the No. 7 hole at 598 yards, also par 6. The holes were each split into two when the course expanded to 18 holes in 1928.

On February 13, 1925, Foster Golf Links officially opened for play with a four-ball tournament. Governor Louis F. Hart launched the first tee shot. In the feature match, Walter Pursey, Inglewood Golf Club pro teamed up with amateur Lee Steil to defeat Robert Johnstone, Seattle Golf Club pro and amateur Bon Stein 1-up. Low score of the day was turned in by Pursey with a 72. Stein was low amateur with a 78.

Golf Stars Play At Opening of New Course

LEADING professionals and amateurs of Seattle and vicinity took part in the inaugural play Friday at George Eddy's new daily fee course at Foster. In this group snapped at the first tee will be recognized Lee Steil, Bon Stein, Frank Noble, George Eddy, Bob Johnstone, Walter Pursey and Dick Cochran.



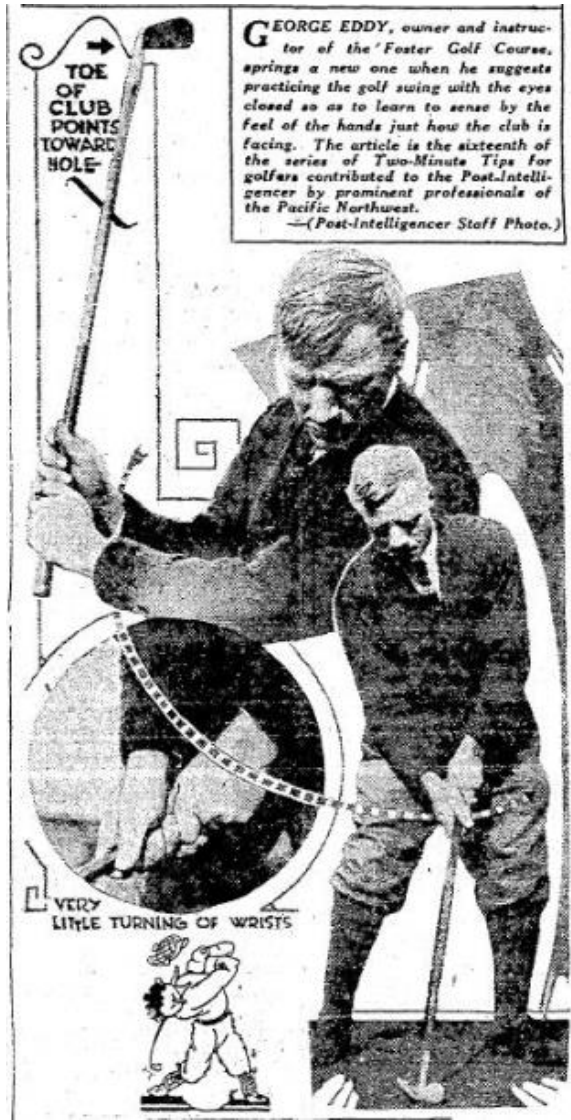
Seattle golfing luminaries on opening day at Foster Golf Links – Seattle Post-Intelligencer 2-15-1925

Green fees were 50 cents for all day. The old Foster farm house was used as the club house. Mrs. Eddy did the cooking, and sold sandwiches. Thus began Eddy's one family business venture.



Foster Golf Links Clubhouse – circa 1930 (Courtesy of MOHAI)

George Eddy was owner, operator, promoter, club professional, greenskeeper, and tournament organizer at Foster. He and his wife performed a myriad of duties that come with running a golf course. Here he gives golf instruction in the Seattle Post-Intelligencer:



George Eddy lesson – Seattle P-I – 3-11-1925

“GEORGE EDDY, owner and instructor of the Foster Golf Course, springs a new one when he suggests practicing the golf swing with the eyes closed so as to learn to sense by the feel of the hands just how the club is feeling.

Do not make the prevalent mistake of deliberately rolling your left wrist over your right on the way back. The natural movement of body and shoulders will turn the club as much as is required”

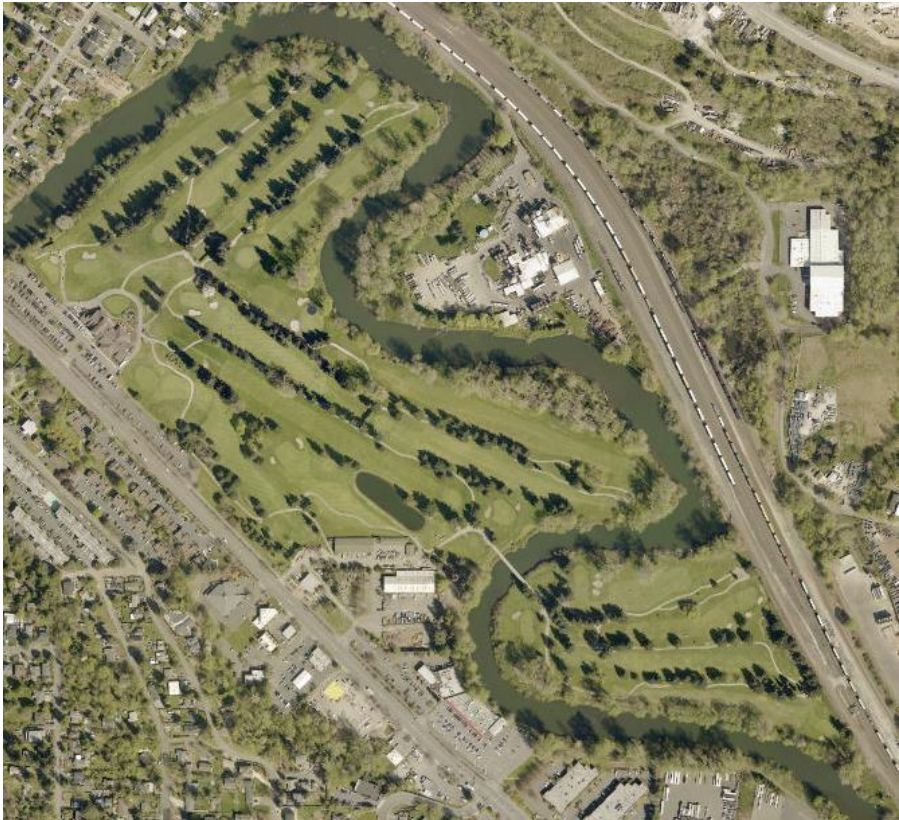


George Eddy Hickory Shafted Mashie-Niblick

With all the work that comes with opening and operating a golf course, George Eddy was not done. In 1927, he purchased an adjoining property to bring the course to a full eighteen holes on 85 acres of land. Eddy believed a 6000-yard course could be laid out, although for most of its existence, the course operated between 5000 – 5500 yards. On June 29, 1928, the completed eighteen holes opened for play.



Foster Golf Links 18 holes – Aerial map 1936



Foster Golf Links 18 holes – Aerial map 2022

During the next several years, Foster Golf Links was highly successful. This success, however, was short-lived as difficult times loomed ahead. In October, 1929 the stock market crashed and America entered the Great Depression.

Through hard work and perseverance, the Eddys somehow kept the course going through the depression years. They even survived a devastating flood which nearly destroyed the golf course when the Duwamish River overran its banks in 1933. "It rained the entire month of December that year, and by Christmas Eve, the flooding Duwamish River had belched unbelievable quantities of debris on the course. Fairways, tees, and greens along its path were strewn with logs, pitted with holes and saturated with water and muck."

Ever resourceful, George Eddy took out patents on several golf innovations, including the following "leaf vacuum machine" that he used on the Foster Golf Links.

"That machine," he said, "has cost me a lot of time and thought and money to build, but it has just about paid for itself already. It does as much work as twenty men."



George Eddy with his "Leaf vacuum machine" - 1934 - Seattle Public Library



George Eddy's "Leaf vacuum machine" - 1934 - Seattle Public Library

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Seattle Times - March 4, 1938 Advertisement



Entrance to Foster Golf Links – c.1945



Foster Golf Links Aerial – c.1945

George Eddy died in 1941 at the age of 63. His son, Robert Eddy, operated the course until 1951 when he sold the golf course to Joe Aliment. Aliment had worked for George Eddy as caddie master and greens keeper since 1925.

In 1978 the City of Tukwila purchased the Foster Golf Links from the Aliment brothers. Ceremony for the transfer of the property took place under the maple tree planted on July 4, 1873 by Joseph Foster, early pioneer. The tree still stands today in a dedicated area next to the parking lot.

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