

# Olympic Club Lake Course and Sam Whiting

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On July 1, 1921, Sam Whiting spent his first day working at the Olympic Club and he would work there as the Golf Professional and Greenkeeper until his retirement in 1954. He was a skilled player that learned the game from 5-time Open Champion J.H. Taylor and worked at Ilkley Golf Club in West Yorkshire, England before coming to the United States. His first position was at Berkeley Country Club (Mira Vista today) as the head pro, but due to some striking workers that delayed the opening of the club, he was allowed to take the head professional position at Olympic Club.

The original Lakeside Golf Club opened in July of 1917 to much fanfare, but it didn't take long to see that the course suffered from too many blind shots into the greens. The club struggled financially right from the start and as Olympic was looking at getting involved in golf they leased the course and took over the maintenance as well. Both Seth Raynor and Herbert Fowler proposed plans for changes to the course, but it wouldn't be until after the club purchased 300+ acres of land that William Watson and Sam Whiting laid out the Lake and Ocean courses in 1922-3.

It is interesting to note that when the courses were built they used bent grass on the greens and had fescue in the fairways. We are coming full circle as the recent work done by Pat Finlen and his staff have returned bent grass to the greens at Olympic Club.

The Lake and Ocean courses opened in May of 1924 and were heralded as the "St. Andrews of America" in the San Francisco Chronicle. In February of 1925, portions of the holes on the West side of Skyline Boulevard would get damaged by heavy rains. Another slide induced rain event in February 1926 and a subsequent geologists report on the slides forced the clubs hand and changes had to be made to both courses.

Sam Whiting, working on his own, drew up plans for what we now consider the Lake Course in 1926. The club would call in Max Behr, a noted architect, who was responsible for the other noted Lakeside Golf Club in Burbank. Behr made a couple of small changes and some recommendations but he felt the plan as drawn up by Whiting was quite good. The Lake course has seen some changes over the years, but it is the Whiting routing that will be put through its 5th US Open!

As an architect, Whiting was involved in a number of golf courses; Harding Park with William Watson, Sonoma Golf Club, Stockton Golf and Country Club, and Del Paso. As a Golf Professional, Whiting was the President of the NCPGA Section from 1922-30.



## Guess the Hole

From the Jan/Feb issue the photo was of the 15th hole at Orinda in 1928.

This issue's photo is a little harder, but only one course from my article matches up.

