

Chicago Golf History

Contributed by Administrator
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Golf arrived in Chicago in 1875. Charles Blair Macdonald, a young American of Scottish descent, returned to the city from undergraduate studies at St. Andrews University in Scotland. In 1893, stimulated by his exposure to British golf, Macdonald led the formation of the Chicago Golf Club, the area's first golf association, and laid out a nine-hole course for the club in suburban Belmont (now Downer's Grove). Moved to Wheaton and doubled in size by 1895, the layout of the Chicago Golf Club was the first eighteen-hole golf course in America. Macdonald's example quickly led to the formation of a number of other Chicago-area clubs by 1900: Onwentsia, Edgewater, Glen View, Exmoor, Midlothian, and Skokie, all private clubs, and the Jackson Park Public Links, the first golf course west of the Alleghenies to be opened to the general public. Chicagoans formed the Western Golf Association in 1899 and the Women's Western Golf Association in 1901. The golf boom continued, and in the 1920s an average of one new golf course a month was being opened in the Chicago area. Suburban Olympia Fields Country Club, the largest in the country upon completion in 1925, stretched over nearly 700 acres and offered 72 holes of golf, a \$1-million clubhouse, a wildlife preserve adjacent to the fairways, and residential cottages on the grounds. With the growth of Chicago golf came an array of books, periodicals, and ephemeral publications describing every facet of life on the fairways. Yearbooks, magazines, club histories, and directories followed the development of the game and the achievements of individual players. They also helped document the important tournaments played in Chicago, including the U.S. men's and women's Open, the men's and women's Amateur, the PGA Championship, the Walker Cup, the World Championship of Golf, and the Western Open.