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Army, Navy and Marine Corps Country Club Course Is Mapped Out From Plane

New Links Offer Variety of Golf

Maj. Newman is Constructor of First Air-Planned Lay-out in U.S.

By Walter R. McCallum

Long before a spade was struck in the ground the complete golf layout of the Army, Navy and Marine Corps Country Club had been survey from the air and the holes had been plotted out in prospect. Sites for the greens and tees had been spotted from the air and Major Richard D. Newman, constructor of the layout, who came to Washington to do the job, knew just what he could do with the land at his disposal.

The first example of golf course construction from an airplane by the air of a topographical map, the course at the Army, Navy and Marine Corps Country Club, which was opened only a few months ago, shows plainly the advantages to be gained by observing the country from the air over which a golf course is to be laid out.

Maj. Newman is a firm believer in the airplane approach method of golf course construction. He holds that with a topographical map of the country and a single aircraft spotting trip over the land he can layout a golf course from the air that will be quite as good as one laid out by laborious waling over rough and undeveloped country to observe all the locations for tees, fairways and putting greens.

Offers Plenty of Variety

Over a stretch of rugged country a stone's throw away from the wireless towers of the Navy high frequency station at Arlington and a short distance from Fort Myer have been laid out 18 fine golf holes, demanding all that is best in golf shot repertoire of any player who would hope to approximate par. Most of the course has been constructed along a broad valley through which meanders a shallow stream which has been cleverly utilized to make the tee shots and approaches of considerable difficulty. Some of land on which the last few holes of the first nine and first three or four holes of the second nine built was swampland and major draining operations were necessary before the course could be constructed. Near the sixth tee when the

course was built, a large bootleg still was in full operation when the course constructors went through the swampland to begin operations and the bottom land on which the still was located yielded up more than a dozen poisonous snakes.

Maj. Newman, who has had a wide and varied golf experience extending over more than three decades, has constructed a golf course which now measures 6,109 yards. Rather short on the yardage side of the equation, but demanding accurate and lengthy tee shots if the player would score low. Most of the holes go down through a valley which lies below the clubhouse, high up on the hilltop overlooking Washington and the Potomac River. A few of them climb the big hill on which the clubhouse is situated, among these are the proposed ninth and the present eighteenth. At the present the ninth hole is a one-shotter, but later will be a long two-shotter to the green within a few yards of the grillroom and porch on the east site of the clubhouse.

The history of the club is interesting. Back in 1863, when a major battle of the Civil War was impending at Gettysburg and Washington was being stripped of its defenders to meet the Southern thrust in Pennsylvania, a scouting force of 6,000 Cavalry, masking a force of 16,000 Infantry, pushed up through the valley where the golf course is now located and were fired upon by Union outposts from the elevated position where the first tee now stands. The Southern troops retreated down the valley.

Later developments proved that only a handful of the 600 Union troops were scattered along the line between the present golf course and Fort Berry over near what is now the Chain Bridge. A strong Southern thrust, Army officers agree, at this point would have put the City of Washington in serious danger of capture by the overwhelming Southern force, for the Capital had been stripped of its defenders to meet the Southern thrust at Gettysburg, where Lee and his forces reach the "high tide of the Confederacy" few later.

The clubhouse now in use was constructed in 1914 for the Knights of Columbus for use as a country club. Later it was razed by the Ku Klux Klan and once was used as a gambling stronghold. Before it was taken over by the present golf organization, it was used as a stable for horses of the colored people living in that vicinity and the land was the rendezvous for automobile thieves operating in Washington to strip the cars they stole.

Once Was Auto Dump

Now the erstwhile automobile dump has been transformed into a picturesque country club which sits high on a hill overlooking the Capital, down into the valley where a dozen or more of the putting greens can be viewed from the hilltop.

Maj. Newman explained that it is not the intention of the club to have a championship golf course. He wants to make a difficult course, but not a course that will be so hard to play that it will be a thing of dread rather than a pleasure for most of the members. The course at the present has not a bunker on it, but there are plenty of trouble of other descriptions in the form ditches, trees and hills to make it a real test of the game. Work on the layout was not really started until the Spring of 1928. But soon as work was begun, it was rushed through in completion and today the service club has an exceptionally fine golf course. Here is the way the holes are built, with their par:

No. 1	285 yards	Par 4;	No. 10	194 yards	Par 3;
No. 2	510 yards	Par 5;	No. 11	325 yards	Par 4;
No. 3	380 yards	Par 4;	No. 12	437 yards	Par 4;
No. 4	525 yards	Par 5;	No. 13	540 yards	Par 5;
No. 5	336 yards	Par 4;	No. 14	335 yards	Par 4;
No. 6	265 yards	Par 4;	No. 15	490 yards	Par 5;
No. 7	177 yards	Par 3;	No. 16	345 yards	Par 4;
No. 8	335 yards	Par 4;	No. 17	185 yards	Par 3;
No. 9	150 yards	Par 3.	No. 18	395 yards	Par 4.

Total yardage 6,109. Par 36 – 35 – 71.

The sixteenth hole, in our judgment, is the best of the two-shotters on the course, although the eighth and twelfth are fine examples of the drive and pitch hole. The tenth is a fine one-shotter.

Historic Fact-Check.

1. The cavalry force that came closest to the ANCC Arlington site prior to the Battle of Gettysburg was that of Jeb Stuart en route to Gettysburg. His route (per Douglas Southhall Freeman's "Lee's Lieutenants" page 567) commenced at Salem (today's Marshall VA) crossed the Occoquan Creek at Wolf Run Shoals (above the village of Occoquan at a site now flooded by the dam), through Fairfax Station and Fairfax Courthouse, to Hunter's Mill and Dranesville, crossing the Potomac at Rowser's Ford (near today's Trump National Golf Club at Lowe's Island). Bottom line is that he came nowhere near Arlington. The only one of the 68 forts that comprised the Civil War defenses of Washington to see action was Fort Stevens (DC) in July 1864). Unfortunately, this erroneous account (which provides no source) was used for a very similar passage in the ANCC "1924-1989 Historical Review".
2. Fort Berry was located at the intersection of the current 16th and Monroe streets in Arlington VA, about one block from the intersection of Walter Reed and Glebe roads (where the historical marker is located). In other words, it was NOT near the Chain

Bridge. The forts erected to guard the Chain Bridge were Fort Ethan Allen and Fort Marcy.

3. "Union outposts from the elevated position where the first tee now stands" would be Fort Richardson.

Others Observations

1. A single flight without the use of aerial photography would have been of little use in laying out a golf course.
2. The course was very crude in 1929, not the "exceptionally fine golf course" noted in the article. When it opened it had temporary greens. The entire Newman course was replaced in the mid-1930s by a course credited to golf course architect Herbert Strong. In other words, when it was opened it was a "temporary course with temporary greens."