

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

027

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
REGISTRATION FORM**

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

**1. Name of Property**

historic name **Wing Park Golf Course**

other names/site number N/A

**2. Location**

street & number **1000 Wing Street** \_\_\_\_\_ Not for publication

city or town **Elgin** \_\_\_\_\_ vicinity

state **Illinois** code **IL** county **Kane** code **089** zip code **60123**

**3. State/Federal Agency Certification**

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1986, as amended, I hereby certify that this  nomination \_\_\_\_\_ request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property  meets \_\_\_\_\_ does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant \_\_\_\_\_ nationally \_\_\_\_\_ statewide  locally. ( \_\_\_\_\_ See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

*Richard L. Loh* 15410  
Signature of certifying official

12-15-2008  
Date

Illinois Historic Preservation Agency  
State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property \_\_\_\_\_ meets \_\_\_\_\_ does not meet the National Register criteria. ( \_\_\_\_\_ See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of commenting or other official

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
State or Federal agency and bureau

\_\_\_\_\_  
American Indian Tribe

Name of Property **Wing Park Golf Course**

County and State

**Kane County, IL**

**4. National Park Service Certification**

I, hereby certify that this property is:

Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

entered in the National Register

*Joe*  
*Edson H. Beall*

2.18.09

See continuation sheet.

determined eligible for the National Register

See continuation sheet.

determined not eligible for the National Register

removed from the National Register

other (explain):

**5. Classification**

Ownership of Property

(Check as many boxes as apply)

private

public-local

public-State

public-Federal

Category of Property

(Check only one box)

building(s)

district

site

structure

object

Number of Resources within Property

(Do not include previously listed resources in the count)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
<u>0</u>	<u>2</u> buildings	
<u>1</u>	_____ sites	
<u>0</u>	_____ structures	
<u>0</u>	_____ objects	
<u>1</u>	<u>2</u> Total	

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register **N/A**

Name of related multiple property listing (Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing.)

**N/A**

Name of Property **Wing Park Golf Course**

County and State **Kane County, IL**

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**6. Function or Use**

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Historic Functions (Enter categories from instructions)

**RECREATION AND CULTURE: outdoor recreation**

Current Functions (Enter categories from instructions)

**RECREATION AND CULTURE: outdoor recreation**

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**7. Description**

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Architectural Classification: **N/A**  
(Enter categories from instructions)

Materials (Enter categories from instructions) **N/A**

Foundation

Roof

Walls

other

Narrative Description (Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

**See Continuation Sheets for Section 7**

**8. Statement of Significance**

Applicable National Register Criteria (Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing)

- A** Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- B** Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- C** Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- D** Property has yielded, or is likely to yield information important in prehistory or history.

Criteria Considerations (Mark "X" in all the boxes that apply.)

- A** owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- B** removed from its original location.
- C** a birthplace or a grave.
- D** a cemetery.
- E** a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- F** a commemorative property.
- G** less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

Areas of Significance (Enter categories from instructions)

**Criterion A: Recreational History**

**Criterion C: Landscape Architecture**

Period of Significance: **1908-1958**

Significant Dates: **1908 (date of construction)**

Significant Person (Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

Cultural Affiliation **N/A**

Architect/Builder: **Thomas "Tom" Bendelow**

Narrative Statement of Significance (Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

**See Continuation Sheets for Section 8**

Name of Property **Wing Park Golf Course**

County and State **Kane County, IL**

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### 9. Major Bibliographical References

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(Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)

**See continuation sheets for Section 9**

Previous documentation on file (NPS)

preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested.

previously listed in the National Register

previously determined eligible by the National Register

designated a National Historic Landmark

recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # \_\_\_\_\_

recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # \_\_\_\_\_

Primary Location of Additional Data

State Historic Preservation Office

Other State agency

Federal agency

Local government

University

Other

Name of repositories used: **Elgin's Gail Borden Public Library, Elgin Historical Society, Elgin City Clerk's Office (has City Council Minutes), University of Illinois at Chicago's Daley Library**

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### 10. Geographical Data

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Acreage of Property **52 acres**

UTM References (Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet)

**See Continuation Sheet**

Verbal Boundary Description

(Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

**See Continuation Sheet**

Boundary Justification

(Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.)

**See Continuation Sheet**

Name of Property **Wing Park Golf Course**

County and State

**Kane County, IL**

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**11. Form Prepared By**

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name/title **Jean Guarino Clark**

organization **Historical Consultant**

date **May 27, 2008**

street & number **950 N. Leavitt Street**

telephone **773.252.9734**

city or town **Chicago** state **Illinois**

zip code **60622**

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**Additional Documentation**

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Submit the following items with the completed form:

**Maps**

A USGS map (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.

**Photographs**

Representative digital photographs of the property.

Additional items (Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

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**Property Owner**

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(Complete this item at the request of the SHPO or FPO.)

name **City of Elgin (Contact person: Jennifer Fritz-Williams, Historic Preservation Specialist)**

street & number **150 Dexter Court**

telephone **847-931-6004**

city or town **Elgin** state **Illinois**

zip code **60120**

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**Paperwork Reduction Act Statement:** This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C. 470 et seq.).

**Estimated Burden Statement:** Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 hours per response including the time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P.O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reductions Project (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

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CONTINUATION SHEET**

Section 7 Page 1

Wing Park Golf Course  
Kane County, Illinois

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**NARRATIVE DESCRIPTION**

The Wing Park Golf Course is located in Elgin in Kane County, Illinois and is approximately 40 miles northwest of the City of Chicago. The 52-acre course is situated within the 121.5 acre Wing Park, which was donated to the City of Elgin by William H. Wing following his death in 1902. Wing Park opened to the public in 1903 as the second of Elgin's two large city parks, the other being the 111-acre Lords Park on the east side of the Fox River. The nine-hole Wing Park course was designed by Thomas Bendelow and constructed during the summer of 1908. It has excellent integrity in terms of the configuration and circulation pattern of its tees, fairways and greens, which retain their historic design. The two non-contributing resources—a pump house and maintenance building—were erected after 1958 and relate to the service aspects of the golf course.

Wing Park is located on the west side of the Fox River, about four blocks west of Highway 31, which is a major north-south thoroughfare in the city. The park is bounded by Wing and Goethe Streets to the south and the Chicago and Northwestern Railroad tracks to the north and east. The remainder of its eastern boundary is comprised of the rear property lines of lots with small single family homes along Parkside Drive, Pine Street, and Clark Street to the east. The park's western boundary is comprised of rear property lines of lots with low-rise apartment buildings along Longwood Place and Garden Drive. Tyler Creek runs near the northwestern side of the park. In addition to the golf course, the park features a variety of recreational activities, such as tennis courts, baseball diamonds, a band shell, and an aquatic center, as well as wooded areas and green space.

Wing Park has a main entrance on Wing Street (at Wing Park Boulevard) and a secondary entrance on Goethe Street (at McClure Avenue). The L-shaped nine-hole golf course is situated on 52 acres at the eastern side of Wing Park. It is bounded by baseball diamonds to the north, Wing and Goethe Streets to the south, and park green space to the west. The eastern boundary of the golf course is comprised of the rear property lines of lots with small single family homes along Parkside Drive, Pine Street, and Clark Street to the east. The golf course is accessed from the park near the Wing Park entrance. A six-foot black metal fence was installed ca. 2005 along its Wing Street and western boundaries. The remainder of the golf course's southern boundary along Goethe Street, as well as its eastern and northern boundaries, are defined by chain link fencing.

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The Wing Park Golf Course features natural rolling topography and is interspersed with trees and bushes along its turfed fairways, tees and greens, and at its borders. The trees include various kinds of oak, maple, lindens, honey locust, evergreens, and some ash sumac. The greens are small in size, oval in shape, and planted with creeping bent grass mixed with poi-anna grass. Some greens are slightly elevated. The fairways, rough and tees are planted with Kentucky blue grass. The fairway turf is about one to two inches in height, slightly shorter than the surrounding rough. Various shaped sand bunkers are situated alongside many of the greens. The distance around the nine holes from the center of the greens to the blue tees is 3,131 yards, which is just under two miles. The entire course is comprised of grassy turf and does not include any paved walking or golf cart paths.

The fairways for holes 2, 6, 7 and 8 are parallel to each other and run in a north-south direction. The fairways for holes 3 and 4 are parallel and run in an east-west direction. The south embankment for the park's long-vanished half-mile speedway track still exists along the northern end of the golf course, providing a unique hazard for today's players.

The large man-made retaining pond situated between fairways 6 and 7 is not original, although this low-lying area was always swampy. It was constructed by the 1930s, as shown in aerial photos taken during that decade. The pond was renovated in 2007 to address issues of period flooding. At that time, it was deepened and its banks enlarged and stabilized with steel reinforcing panels. In addition, a separate water retention area was constructed to the northeast of the pond to handle its overflow, creating a new water hazard along Hole 7.

There is some scarring on the course near the first, second and third holes due to the installation of a forced fed sewage sludge line by the City of Elgin's Water Department. These areas are currently being landscaped and have been seeded.

Hole 1, Par 4: 313' to green from farthest tee: direction is east. A sand bunker is situated on the south side of the green. An original ditch just back of the green has been partially filled in.

Hole 2, Par 4: 380' to green from farthest tee: direction is north. The ground is undulating here and has a natural hazard in the shape of a low spot that is filled with water every time it rains. A sand bunker is situated around the northeast side of the green.



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Wing Park Golf Course  
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Hole 3, Par 4: 295' to green from farthest tee: direction is east. A sand bunker is situated on the north side of the green. Here you turn the corner and the course runs along the line of the south fence, to the point where McClure Avenue enters the park. A drainage ditch on the back of the green has been partially filled in.

Hole 4, Par 4: 350' to green from farthest tee: direction is west. A sand bunker is situated on the southeast side of the green.

Hole 5, Par 3: 175' to green from farthest tee: direction is west. Sand bunkers are situated on the north and south sides of the hidden green, which is uphill and not readily seen from the fairway.

Hole 6, Par 5: 571' to green from farthest tee: direction is south. This is the longest hole of the course and one of the longest in northeastern Illinois. The ground is undulating, and the approach to the green is at a slight curve.

Hole 7, Par 5: 465' to green from farthest tee: direction is north.

Hole 8, Par 4: 433' to green from farthest tee: direction is south. The putting green is on the top of a little hill, so the approach is what is known as a "blind hole," that is, the flag cannot be seen upon the approach.

Hole 9, Par 3: 149' to green from farthest tee: direction is west. This is the shortest drive of the course. The tee is upon the hill where no. 8 green is located, and the green is near the entrance to the park. The drive is down hill nearly all the way. A sand bunker is situated on the north side of the green.

The setting of the Wing Park Golf Course has changed somewhat over the years. The open land and agricultural fields originally situated to the east and south were later replaced by residential subdivisions of modest single family homes that probably date to the 1950s or sixties. The northern end of the golf course originally opened onto a half-mile oval race track used for harness racing until 1915. The park's first baseball diamond was situated within this track. These were removed decades ago and the golf course's northern border is now lined with several baseball fields, along with a 1985 maintenance building that includes public bathrooms. When

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Wing Park Golf Course  
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underground irrigation was supplied to the course in 1984, a small pump house was built along its eastern edge, near the second hole.

A comparison between the original and current sketches of the Wing Park Golf Course shows that the tees, greens and fairways have largely retained their original configuration with very few changes. (See Attachment E.) The modern blue tee mounds are situated near the sites of the original sand-filled tee boxes, which were later covered with topsoil and grass. As a result, today's 3,121 yard distance around the nine holes from the blue tees to the center of the greens is just 106 yards shorter than the original distance of 3,237 yards. The tee mound for the fifth hole was moved to the northeast onto the former site of the park's speedway following its removal in later years. The course now has three tee mounds per hole, with the white and red tees comprising later additions. Greens are essentially the same size as first designed, although they were originally square in shape rather than oval. Through the years, sand bunkers were installed alongside various greens. These continued to be moved to adjust to the way players drive the ball.

Historic photos reveal that the course originally featured knee high grasses that designated the rough from the shorter grasses of the fairways. Today the rough is cut short so that it is now barely distinguishable from the fairway grasses. Over the years, trees throughout the course have been lost to disease or storms and new trees planted, such as evergreens, to define the fairways, provide shade, memorialize people, and add beauty to the course and the park.

#### NON-CONTRIBUTING RESOURCES

**Pump House:** When underground irrigation was supplied to the course in 1984, a small wood-clad pump house was built along its eastern edge, near the second hole.

**Maintenance Building:** This small, frame building was built in 1985 to house public bathrooms and a storage area for maintenance equipment. It is located at the far north end of the golf course, near the blue tee for the fifth hole.

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**NARRATIVE STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE**

**Introduction**

Elgin's Wing Park Golf Course, located in Kane County, is locally significant under Criterion A for its association with the Recreational History of Elgin, and under Criterion C for Landscape Architecture. The period of significance is from 1908, the year the course was completed, until 1958, the fifty-year cut-off for National Register significance.

The century-old Wing Park Golf Course stands as the oldest and best preserved nine-hole municipal course in Illinois, featuring its original configuration of tees, fairways and greens. It is pre-dated only by Chicago's Jackson Park Golf Course, which was built in 1899 as a nine-hole layout that was later redesigned and expanded to 18 holes. Early municipal courses such as the one at Wing Park played a major role in popularizing the game of golf at a time when venues for public play were severely limited.

The course at Wing Park is an excellent example of the early work of Thomas "Tom" Bendelow (1868-1936), the nation's most prolific early golf course designer. During his long career, Bendelow designed at least 600 public and private courses throughout the United States and Canada. Staked out in a day and built in just two months at a low cost of \$1,250, the Wing Park Golf Course exemplified the quick, easy and inexpensive manner in which early golf courses were created by Bendelow and others. As typical of Bendelow courses, it features parallel fairways, small greens, and was designed to incorporate the site's natural vegetation and rolling terrain. A number of other Bendelow-designed courses are extant in the Chicago metropolitan area, but the vast majority were later remodeled, enlarged to 18 holes, or designed much later in his career.

Over the past one hundred years, the Wing Park Golf Course has played an important role in Elgin's recreational history by introducing the game to thousands of beginners at a time when venues for local play were limited to membership in the private Elgin Country Club. Upon its opening in 1908, the course also offered the only recreational activity in Elgin's two large east and west side parks—Lords and Wing—that was open to players of both genders and of a wide range of ages and abilities. It remains a popular destination for new generations of Elgin golfers today.

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**The Emergence of Municipal Golf Courses in America**

The essence of the game we know today as golf—in which a player uses an assortment of clubs to hit a ball into a hole dug into the earth—is generally considered to be a product of Scotland. The focus of Scottish golf was St. Andrews. As early as the 12<sup>th</sup> century there was a course on the stretch of dunes alongside St. Andrews bay, although the Royal and Ancient Club of St. Andrews was not officially inaugurated until 1754. Many of the game's earliest players and promoters in America were transplanted Scotsmen, such as John Reid, who with four of his friends formed the St. Andrews Golf Club in Yonkers, New York, in 1888.<sup>1</sup>

Golf came to America in the 1890s as a product of the private club and was initially considered a leisure activity for the affluent. Within three years after St. Andrews was formed, other clubs were springing up simultaneously and independently in other parts of the country. William K. Vanderbilt and some associates formed Shinnecock Hills in Southampton, New York, after watching the young Scot professional Willie Dunn at the French resort of Biarritz. Florence Boit, a young woman who had learned to play in Pau, in the French Pyrenees, introduced the game to influential Bostonians. Tuxedo Park, New York, and Meadow Brook, on Long Island, had nine-hole courses by 1893. Also during this decade, golf was introduced to Newport, Rhode Island, and clubs were organizing in Philadelphia, Baltimore, and Washington.<sup>2</sup> Each club conducted tournaments and other affairs independently.

The Chicago area became an important golfing center during the 1890s thanks in large part to stockbroker Charles Blair Macdonald, who had learned the game years earlier while a student at St. Andrews University in Scotland. In 1892, Macdonald laid out a tiny seven-hole course on the estate of John B. Farwell in Lake Forest, which was the genesis of the Onwentsia Club. In the same year, he persuaded various friends and colleagues from his downtown hangout, the Chicago Club, to fund a nine-hole course on a former stock farm in Belmont, Illinois. The newly formed Chicago Golf Club was the proud owner of the nation's first 18-hole golf course when Macdonald expanded their Belmont course in 1893.

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<sup>1</sup> As Richard Moss noted in his book *Golf and the American Country Club* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2001), p. 44, the game of golf had been played in various places in America as early as the 1770s, but these courses and clubs quickly faded away.

<sup>2</sup> George Peper (ed). *Golf in America: The First One Hundred Years*. (NY: Harry Abrams Inc. 1988) 24.

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By 1894, the Chicago Golf Club had become so popular that members purchased the 200-acre Patrick Farm in Wheaton for a then-considerable sum of \$28,000 to build an improved 18-hole course. Macdonald was determined to transform the site's lush, rolling meadows into a course that would approach the standard of the finest inland courses of Great Britain. The Chicago Golf Club was widely acknowledged as an outstanding layout, and in the early days of American golf, it was the site of many important championships. By the turn of the twentieth century, the Chicago area boasted twenty-six golf clubs, including Onwentsia, Exmoor, Hinsdale, Riverside, Washington Park, Elmhurst, LaGrange, Homewood, Midlothian, Glen View and Westward Ho.<sup>3</sup>

In fact, by 1900, golf in America had established itself as more than the "silk stocking" sport of the gilded set and there was at least one course in each state. Only twelve years after its introduction in Yonkers, golf had come to be regarded by Americans as an outdoor recreation open to players of both genders and of a wide range of ages and abilities. The game's growing popularity was due in large part to the emergence of public golf courses.

The nation's first municipal golf course was established in New York's Van Cortlandt Park in 1895. Situated in the Bronx, the nine-hole course was hugely popular with the public and quickly became overcrowded. As a result, in 1899 the New York City park commissioners hired noted course designer Tom Bendelow to redesign and enlarge the course to create the first 18-hole municipal golf course in the country.

As a course designer for the A.G. Spalding & Bros. sporting goods company, Bendelow went on to become the nation's foremost designer and promoter of public golf courses at a time when outlets for public play were severely limited. He had a keen understanding that venues for public play needed to be made available if the sport was to flourish, or even to survive. Elgin's Wing Park Golf Course is among the scores of public courses that Bendelow designed while working for Spalding. He took great satisfaction in seeing the growth of public golf courses and felt that this was golf as it was meant to be, as it was in his native Scotland. As Stuart Bendelow, Tom's grandson, noted:

"When Bendelow joined A.G. Spalding & Bros. his (and A.G.'s) objective was to promote the game of golf (and golf equipment sales) by increasing the number of courses. They were not seeking to design and build championship courses or courses to

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<sup>3</sup> Herbert Warren Wind. *The Story of American Golf: Vol. 1: 1888-1941*. (NY: Callaway Editions, 2000) 43.

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test the honed skills of the best players, but rather courses that new players could enjoy, that would increase players' proficiency, and that would promote participation, and could be maintained at reasonable expense. He felt that municipal or public golf courses should be like public ball fields, open to all players at little or no cost."<sup>4</sup>

By 1898, a course in Boston was built at public expense and one in Brooklyn was underway. Although Chicago had a golf course in Washington Park on the south side, in order to play there one had to become a member of the Washington Park Club. Starting in 1898, the *Chicago Tribune* advocated for the city's first public course:

"Up to the present time in order to play the game at all, it has been necessary to belong to an organized club. And since clubs have had to buy ground or lay out their courses at great cost the burden has fallen upon the members of these clubs, with the result that golf has been an expensive game which can only be enjoyed by the few.

"But should public courses be laid out in some of our great parks the conditions under which the game is played might change considerably, for then the only expense connected with golf would consist of the cost of balls and clubs. There is no real reason why such a project should not be carried out. Many of the parks in Chicago have large stretches of beautiful turf which could be utilized for the purposes of the game without any great outlay and without in any way interfering with the beauty of the landscape."<sup>5</sup>

In its campaign for a public golf course, many of the *Chicago Tribune's* articles emphasized the game's democratic roots in Great Britain:

"Both in Scotland and England there have existed for years courses on public grounds and commons where golfers of limited means have been able to enjoy their favorite sport. At Blackheath, a suburb of London, public golf has been played for over 200 years. In many other places the golfer can play at almost nominal cost, and there is no doubt that cheaper facilities in Chicago would permit a number enjoying the game who at present are debarred by the dues demanded by the local clubs."<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Stuart W. Bendelow. *Thomas 'Tom' Bendelow: The Johnny Appleseed of American Golf*. (Savannah, GA: Williams & Co., Publishers, 2006) 167.

<sup>5</sup> "Public Golf Courses: Important Development In The Game This Year," *Chicago Tribune*, April 9, 1898.

<sup>6</sup> "To Secure Public Links," *Chicago Tribune*, March 15, 1899.

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In May 1899, Chicago opened Jackson Park golf course on the south side of the city, which was an immediate success. On the first day it was open to the public, the nine-hole course—which was later expanded to an 18-hole layout by Tom Bendelow—was played by nearly 100 persons and boasted hundreds of spectators. Public golf spread rapidly throughout the country and by 1900, the list of cities that had built courses in public parks included Baltimore, St. Louis, Buffalo, Pittsburg, Cincinnati, San Francisco, Richmond and New Orleans, Toledo and Rochester.<sup>7</sup> The great popularity of Chicago's Jackson Park course almost immediately led to calls for another public course in the city, and in 1907 the West Park Commissioners opened a Tom Bendelow-designed course in Garfield Park.

Public courses continued to fuel the popularity of the game. President Taft, an avid golfer himself, urged the creation of more public courses in 1913. In a letter printed in the *New York Times*, he claimed that “golf is not a mere play thing of faddists, as some suppose, nor is it a rich man's game. It is the game of all classes.”<sup>8</sup> The public course also became an important factor in the growth of country clubs. Tom Bendelow stated in 1916 that the public courses were excellent for teaching Americans to love the game. More and more players could try the game at one of the growing number of public courses, and if they caught the golf bug, they could seek a place at a private club. Once hooked by golf and successful “in their business affairs,” they would move on to private clubs.<sup>9</sup>

Public golf courses were very popular during the 1920s, no doubt because, unlike many other activities, they were self-sustaining and often produced a profit that could support other public athletic facilities. Municipal golf courses increased from 184 in 1925 to 576 in 1936.<sup>10</sup> Although the private golf and country club had dominated the world of American golf through the 1920s, they were later surpassed by public and private daily-fee courses which sought to make a profit. The proceeds from municipal golf courses were used to fund other recreational facilities that did not produce an income, such as baseball diamonds. Exactly when the total number of public and daily fee courses began to outnumber private clubs is hard to estimate, but it was probably in the 1950s.

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<sup>7</sup> James Shields Murphy, “Public Golf Courses,” *Chicago Tribune*, Feb. 25, 1900. “New Public Golf Links,” *Chicago Tribune*, March 25, 1900.

<sup>8</sup> Moss, 93.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid, 140.

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**Early Golf Course Design in America: 1890s-1910**

The earliest type of golf course in the United States—represented by the course at Wing Park—were built inexpensively and often somewhat rudimentary in design, yet they played a major role in popularizing the game with the general public. In the late 1890s and early 1900s nearly all golf courses in America were “staked out” by the designers of the period, most of whom were of Scottish extraction, such as Tom Bendelow, brothers Tom and Willie Dunn Jr., Donald J. Ross and Willie Park Jr. These men created courses on inland landscapes quite different from the true links back home—a belt of sandy soil along the coast of the British Isles overlooking the ocean.

In America, the best sites for golf's earliest courses featured gently rolling linksland of sandy soils that had established grasses and few trees or obstacles. Designers of the Victorian period walked the designated property, selected the best green sites of naturally occurring short grasses, picked teeing grounds to play to these greens, and finally cleared away tall vegetation to allow native grasses to flourish and serve as fairways.<sup>11</sup> The designer could simply put in stakes to designate the greens, tees and cross bunkers, or use a hand-drawn map indicating the starting and ending points, with a line connecting them to designate the proposed line of play. This method of “staking out” a course was typical of the era and was all that club members or municipalities expected. It typically took a day or two of work and the courses could be laid out quickly and built inexpensively using just a few workmen and hand tools.

Construction usually consisted of removing fences, clearing away surface stones and mowing the grass. Some early layouts had holes crossing one another. Nearly all greens were indistinguishable from fairways, and most natural obstructions were considered legitimate hazards.<sup>12</sup>

Tom Bendelow incorporated the natural features of a site, such as a stream or a grove of trees, into his course designs. Where topographic maps existed, he used them to enhance his layouts. Bendelow's early fairways were usually straight, relatively narrow, often parallel or in pairs. Tee boxes were slightly elevated, as were the greens. His greens were often small, round, square or oval, with bunkers that framed the green but were situated in a manner that allowed a pitch and run approach to the green.<sup>13</sup> Many of Bendelow's early courses had cross bunkers but these

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<sup>11</sup> Dr. Michael J. Hurdzan. *Golf Course Architecture*. (Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 2006) 3.

<sup>12</sup> Geoffrey S. Cornish and Ronald E. Whitten. *The Golf Course*. (NY: The Rutledge Press, 1981) 49.

<sup>13</sup> Bendelow, 170.



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were soon replaced by lateral bunkers and traps and some strategically placed fairway hazards, such as earthen berms. In an era that pre-dated powerful earthmoving equipment, clearing the fairways of stones, timber and debris was a considerable task. As a result, Bendelow and other designers often piled stones into sod-covered mounds called "chocolate drops" that were popular as obstructions.

George Ade enlisted the service of Tom Bendelow when he planned to build his course at Brook, Indiana. Ade described the Bendelow process:

"Bendelow came to town early in the morning by appointment. He inspected the ground selected, and complimented the town officials, or the interested parties, on the character of the terrain. Then he proceeded to get busy. Tom's system was unique, but quite satisfactory. First, he would pick out an appropriate spot for the first tee and put down a stake, then he would pace off 100 yards and stake out a cross bunker and plant another stake. Stepping off another 100 yards or so he would put down his third stake, which marked the location of a pit or a cop bunker or a mound which was built in the shape of a chocolate drop, these drops being arranged in groups.

"Another stake located the green, which could be built round or square, according to one's taste. The same process was used for all the holes, although some were made very short. On each unit of nine holes there was always one long hole and two very short ones. Few clubs found it necessary to keep Bendelow longer than one day, as this was supposed to be all the time required, and besides the charge was \$25."<sup>14</sup>

The 1908 Wing Park golf course in Elgin is a perfect example of Tom Bendelow's method of design. The course was staked out in a day and built over a period of two months at a cost of \$1,250. This quick, easy and inexpensive manner of design and execution enabled Bendelow to design hundreds of courses while working for the sporting goods firm of A.G. Spalding & Bros. as a "design consultant." Early designers such as Bendelow would typically leave instructions with the club or municipality on how to properly build and maintain the course and continue on their way. Designers of this era did not typically oversee the construction of their designs. This task was left to the person(s) hired to supervise the construction crew. Grooming the native grasses into golf course turf took years of cutting, topdressing, and other general greens keeping practices of that period.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> H.B. Martin. *Fifty Years of American Golf*. (Argosy-Antiquarian Ltd., 1966) 333-334.

<sup>15</sup> Hurdzan, 4.

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In their book, *The Golf Course*, Geoffrey S. Cornish and Ronald E. Whitten note the importance of golf's earliest designers:

“Little credit has been given to the first group, the functional designers; yet the world of golf owes them a great debt. These are the planners—men like Tom Dunn of Britain and Tom Bendelow of America, who provided scores of courses that enabled legions of newcomers to play the game. They did what their times and locales required of them, building “sand-lot” layouts for communities that could afford nothing more. Occasionally one of their layouts developed into a well regarded course, but for the most part the functional designers dealt in quantity and economy rather than quality. Functional designers had a profound effect on the game of golf itself, but not upon the practice of architecture.”<sup>16</sup>

Although many of the layouts by Bendelow and others are now considered simple in design, they provided adequate training grounds for thousands of beginning golfers. Few communities sought very challenging courses when establishing their initial golf courses. They were more interested in providing grounds that offered a good playing experience and encouraged further interest.

As players' abilities matured, a demand arose for more challenging courses on which to play their beloved game. It was this impetus that led to the advancement of course architecture in America in the early years of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, epitomized by the 18-hole National Golf Links in Southampton, New York. Designed by Charles Blair Macdonald and completed in 1911, the National received instant acclaim from both American and foreign players as one of the great courses of the world. Unlike the early courses that were designed in a day or two, Macdonald had traveled abroad several times to survey and study the best links holes, created detailed plans, and employed a civil engineer to assist him in creating the course, which took two years to build. The combination of high quality courses like the National and a postwar economic boom led to new and more sophisticated phase of golf course design during the twenties, which is considered the “Golden Age” of golf course architecture.

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<sup>16</sup> Cornish and Whitten. *The Golf Course*, 49.

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**Thomas "Tom" Bendelow (1868-1936)**

Tom Bendelow—designer of Elgin's Wing Park golf course—is recognized by modern historians as the most prolific golf course builder of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, having personally designed at least 600 public and private courses throughout the United States and Canada. In an era when golf was mainly a product of private clubs, Bendelow was the nation's leading advocate for public golf and used every occasion to promote public course construction and public play as he had experienced it in Scotland. During his long career, Bendelow also taught course design at the college level, organized tournaments, and wrote numerous articles and manuals on the game, its history, and techniques of play.

Bendelow was born in Aberdeen, Scotland, where he learned golf in his early years. He emigrated to the United States in 1892 at the age of twenty-four and initially worked as a typesetter for the New York *Herald* newspaper. In the mid-1890s he was introduced to A.G. Spalding, the sporting goods manufacturer, and began a career of course design and instruction in the New York and New Jersey area. Most of his early courses were nine-hole layouts created for newly established golf clubs. Their designs drew heavily upon his experience on Scottish and English courses and the methods and writings of British golf course designers of the day, such as Old Tom Morris, Tom Dunn, his brother Willie Dunn Jr. and Willie Park Jr.<sup>17</sup> Bendelow's methods of course layout—walking and staking the site—were the accepted practice of the time. In 1895, he opened the first indoor school for golf instruction in the Berkeley gymnasium of the Carnegie Hall building in New York City.

Due to Bendelow's growing reputation as a golf course designer, in 1899 the New York City Park Commissioners hired him to manage the Van Corlandt Park Golf Course. He remodeled the nine-hole course and added a second nine to create the nation's first 18-hole municipal course. During his two-year tenure at Van Corlandt Park, Bendelow introduced such far-reaching innovations as the use of reserve play (tee) times, course marshals, public player associations, public golf instruction, and training for caddies. As other cities recognized the growing popularity of golf, they sought Bendelow's services in regard to design of courses, grounds management, facility operation, organization of tournaments, player instruction and use of caddies.

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<sup>17</sup>

Bendelow, 58.

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In 1901, A.G. Spalding & Bros. moved Bendelow to Chicago where the company was headquartered in the Loop at 28 S. Wabash Street. Bendelow immediately opened an indoor golf school and training facility in the basement of the company's office building. As the company's director of golf course development, Bendelow traveled the country from coast to coast and into Canada over the next sixteen years, laying out or remodeling hundreds of courses for clubs and municipalities. The result was an explosion in the number of golfers, golf clubs and courses across North America. According to golf historians Geoffrey S. Cornish and Ronald E. Whitten: "(Bendelow) was, without doubt, the most prolific course builder in America in the early years of the century."<sup>18</sup>

In 1904, Bendelow served as Vice President of the Jackson Park Golf Club in Chicago, a newly formed players' organization on Chicago's public links, whose objective was the promotion of public golf and of tournaments on the public course. He served as tournament organizer for the Western Golf Association and as a starter and referee at the 1909 Western Open. From 1909-16, Bendelow served as editor of Spalding's annual *Official Golf Guide*, part of the Spalding "Red Cover" series of athletic handbooks. This publication was the most reliable and complete source of information on golfing activity published during the period.<sup>19</sup> Between 1911 and 1913 Bendelow began an association with the University of Illinois and conducted an annual series of lectures on golf course design, construction and management. He also conducted workshops with students where he critiqued their designs.

A 1912 article in the *Chicago Tribune* recognized Bendelow's accomplishments:

"There is no more familiar figure on the golf courses of North America than Tom Bendelow, the apostle of public golf on this continent. Built on heroic lines and the personification of robust health, he is eminently fitted for preaching the gospel that sane bodies make sane minds. The study Scotchman has laid out 587 golf courses in Canada and the United States, giving him the world's championship in this line of activity."<sup>20</sup>

In 1917, Bendelow accepted the position of Golf Department Manager with the Thomas Wilson sporting goods company. Wilson had acquired the Ashland Company, a golf club manufacturing firm in Chicago. The Wilson Company, counting on Bendelow's reputation as a course designer

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<sup>18</sup> Geoffrey S. Cornish and Ronald E. Whitten. *The Architects of Golf*. (NY: Harper Collins, 1993) 43.

<sup>19</sup> Bendelow, 124.

<sup>20</sup> J.G. Davis, "Tom Bendelow, Maker of Golf Links," *Chicago Tribune*, March 17, 1912.

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as well as a promoter and teacher of the game, selected him to jumpstart its golf business. While working for Wilson, Bendelow introduced a variety of items to increase the public's knowledge about golf and enhance the golfer's game. One such item was his "Caddie Manuel" a book of instructions that was distributed free along with Wilson's catalogue to any club or golfer requesting it. Also during his time with Wilson, Bendelow helped design and market several lines of golf clubs, including a series of "Tom Bendelow" signature golf clubs, both woods and irons.<sup>21</sup>

In 1920 Bendelow joined Chicago's American Park Builders company as chief golf course designer. At APB, he had for the first time a staff of technicians, architects and engineers to support his work. He could now spend more time on individual hole layouts, incorporating various strategies in keeping with the advances in golf equipment. Many of his courses during this period were part of residential developments or subdivisions that included a golf course or country club within it.<sup>22</sup>

It's worth noting that over time, Bendelow's layouts grew in length and difficulty, mirroring the evolving skill level of American players. The 1920s was a period when Bendelow was thought to have done some of his best work, designing courses that included Olympia Fields Country Club in Illinois, which is listed on the National Register. Other notable courses that Bendelow designed later in his career include Medinah Country Club in Illinois, Big Foot Country Club in Wisconsin; Tripoli Country Club in Wisconsin; Moundbuilders Country Club in Ohio, Birmingham Country Club in Michigan; Dubsdread Golf Club in Florida; and Quit-Qui-Oc Golf Club in Wisconsin.<sup>23</sup> The American Park Builders dissolved during the early 1930s due to the Depression which temporarily halted American golf course construction.

Today, there are scores of Bendelow designed courses throughout the country that continue to provide a challenging and pleasurable experience to the modern golfer. Although most of his designs have been remodeled or enlarged, some remain largely unchanged, such as the Wing Park Golf Course in Elgin, Illinois. On October 21, 2005, Tom Bendelow was installed into the Illinois Golf Hall of Fame at the Glen Club in Glenview, belatedly providing him some recognition for his extensive and varied contributions to golf.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> Bendelow, 142.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid, 151.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid, 152.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid, 163.

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According to Geoffrey S. Cornish and Ronald E. Whitten in *The Architects of Golf*, Tom Bendelow was involved in the design of over sixty private and public golf and country club courses in Illinois.<sup>25</sup> This number is actually higher, as several known Bendelow-designed courses were not included in Cornish and Whitten's list. Courses laid out by Bendelow in the Chicago metropolitan area known to be existing, although they may be remodeled, include:

Private Clubs:

- Aurora Country Club, Aurora (Kane County), 1914
- Elgin Country Club, Elgin (Kane County), 1901 (remodeled to 18 hole layout in 1929 by William Shatz)
- Glen Oak County Club, Glen Ellyn (DuPage County), remodeling
- Joliet Country Club, Joliet (Will County), nine holes, 1905
- Lake Shore Country Club, Glencoe (Cook County), 1908 (remodeled later by Killian and Nugent)
- Lincolnshire Country Club, Crete (Will County), Courses no. 1 and no. 2, 1929 (remodeled later by Killian and Nugent)
- Medinah Country Club, Medinah (DuPage County)
  - Course no. 1, 1924 (remodeled 1969 by E.L. Packard)
  - Course no. 2, 1926
  - Course no. 3, 1928 (remodeled and new holes added in 1932 by Harry Collis, and in 1986 by Roger Parkard and Bob Lohmann)
- Naperville Country Club, Naperville (DuPage County), ca. 1921 (remodeling of three holes by David Gill, and remodeling by E.L. and Roger Packard)
- Olympia Field Country Club, Olympia Fields (Cook County)
  - South Course (A.K.A. course no. 1), 1916 (original holes 5 and 6 removed when property sold off, added two holes from Course no. 2)
  - Course no. 2
- Skokie Country Club, Glencoe (Cook County), 1898—nine holes, 1904—nine more holes (remodeled to 18 hole layout by Donald Ross in 1925 and further remodelings in 1938, 1973, and 1984)
- St. Charles Country Club, St. Charles (Kane County), 1924 (remodeled ca. 1980 by Robert Trent Jones and David Gill)

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<sup>25</sup> Cornish and Whitten. *The Architects of Golf*, 206.

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**Public Courses:**

Chevy Chase Country Club (now Wheeling Park District), Wheeling (Cook County) 1925  
Columbus Park Golf Club, Chicago (Cook County), nine holes, 1921  
Jackson Park Golf Course, Chicago (Cook County), 18 holes, 1898  
Marquette Park Golf Course, Chicago (Cook County), nine holes, unknown date  
South Shore Country Club (formerly private, now Chicago Park District), Chicago (Cook County), nine holes, 1906  
Villa Olivia Country Club, Bartlett (DuPage County), 1926  
Wing Park Golf Course, Elgin (Kane County), nine holes, 1908  
Woodstock Country Club, Woodstock (McHenry County), nine holes, 1916<sup>26</sup>

**Early Elgin History and Recreational Activities**

The City of Elgin is located on the Fox River in northeastern Illinois, about 35 miles northwest of the City of Chicago. Early settlers, such as brothers Hezekiah and James Gifford and Samuel Kimball, arrived in Elgin in the mid-1830s following the Black Hawk War. The original town plat of Elgin was recorded by James Gifford in August 1842 and situated on the east side of the river. The Galena & Chicago Union Railroad reached Elgin in 1850, stimulating the town's development as a regional processing and distribution center for dairy products. By 1852 Elgin was transporting a train of milk a day to Chicago. In 1865 Gail Borden opened a condensed milk plant in Elgin, which by the late 1880s had expanded to become one of the largest milk condensing plants in the world. Elgin dominated the dairy industry in the late nineteenth century with the Elgin Board of Trade (founded in 1872), establishing the national price of butter.

The Elgin National Watch Company transformed Elgin into a factory town. From its small beginnings in 1865 it eventually became for a time the world's largest watch-manufacturing complex, spreading the name of Elgin across much of the industrialized world. During the 1880s, the David C. Cook Publishing Company was the city's second-largest industrial employer, with a workforce of 350.<sup>27</sup> Other Elgin industries included a large shoe factory and a number of grain mills. The population of Elgin grew from 5,441 in 1870 to 17,823 in 1890,

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<sup>26</sup> List taken from Cornish and Whitten, *The Architects of Golf*, p. 206, and the Chicago Park District website. Information regarding remodeling dates and designers taken from the Olympia Fields Country Club National Register nomination by Victoria Granacki, 2004.

<sup>27</sup> E.C. Alft. *Elgin: An American History, 1835-1985*. (Elgin: Crossroads Communications, 1984) 82.

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when the city was divided into seven wards. In 1872 it attracted a major state institution, the Northern Illinois Hospital for the Insane, which initially accommodated 300 patients.

Although long days at the factories did not leave much time for recreation, Elginites participated in the popular recreational activities of the late 19<sup>th</sup>-century, including sleigh rides, ice skating, roller skating, baseball, harness racing, and bicycling. Baseball came to Elgin soon after the Civil War, and quickly gained popularity. The Bluff City Baseball Club charged admissions, played with teams from other towns, and claimed the state amateur championship in 1875 after defeating Bloomington in a game played in Chicago.<sup>28</sup>

Organized harness racing began in 1870 with the opening of a track on the 42-acre fairgrounds of the Elgin Agricultural Society. The standard distance for racing events was one mile. The Elgin Driving Park Association sponsored meets on dates other than the annual agricultural fair. After the fairgrounds were abandoned in 1881, the Association opened a new half-mile track in the south end of the city in 1885. The meets attracted entries from a wide circuit with purses ranging from 300 dollars up to \$1,000.<sup>29</sup> The Driving Park Association dissolved in 1893. Horsemen found a new site at Wing Park in 1907, when a Gentlemen's Driving Club was organized and built a speedway near the north end of the golf course. Meets were held annually, usually on the Fourth of July, through 1915.

The popularity of the bicycle in Elgin did not become widespread until the "safety," with both wheels the same size, was introduced locally in 1888, and interest increased with the arrival in town of the first pneumatic tires three years later.<sup>30</sup> Riding clubs organized races and tours. Several Elgin firms produced bicycles in the late 19<sup>th</sup>-century, such as the C.H. Woodruff Company, which made and sold more than 200 in the summer of 1895.<sup>31</sup>

The game of golf was officially introduced to Elgin in 1901 with the opening of the private membership Elgin Country Club, which leased an 80-acre tract of former farm land west of the city. Tom Bendelow designed the nine-hole course. The club regularly hosted matches with other country clubs in the region.

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<sup>28</sup> Ibid, 120.

<sup>29</sup> E. C. Alft. *Elgin: Days Gone By*. (Carpentersville, IL: Crossroads Communication, 1992) 114.

<sup>30</sup> E.C. Alft. *Elgin: An American History*, 120.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid, 121.



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In the early 1900s, many local employers began to cut the work day to eight hours, creating a bit more free time for recreation. During this time, Elginites enjoyed the amenities offered by the city's large east and west side parks, both of which were created through land donations from wealthy benefactors. The land for the 111-acre Lords Park was donated to the city by philanthropists George P. and Mary Lord. In 1892, they purchased 50 acres on the east side of town and gave it to the city. George Lord added two more parcels of land in the next six years and personally supervised construction of the park in conjunction with a newly formed three-member Board of Park Commissioners. John Blair, a Canadian who had laid out parts of Chicago's Lincoln Park, was hired to plan the landscape.<sup>32</sup>

Dedicated in 1898, Lords Park was designed as large-scale "pastoral" landscape of picturesque drives, curvilinear lagoons, meandering walkways, encircling woodlands, an island band stand, and a pavilion. It quickly became a destination for Elginites for picnicking and summer concerts. Relatively passive recreational activities, such as strolling, horseback riding, and boating were typical ways of experiencing the park. The most popular attraction was the zoo, which began with construction of a den in 1895 to house two donated black bears. By 1905, it was augmented by other animals including bison, elk and deer, which had their own enclosures in the surrounding woods. Lords Park also boasted a large 1898 pavilion with a porch that surrounded the building, and an elaborate cupola. It was used to host special events while the basement was used as a children's playroom and a warming place for skaters.

The west side Wing Park is named for William H. Wing, the oldest son of pioneers Washington and Adeline Wing, who moved to the Elgin area in 1846 and eventually established a farm on the northwest side of town. Wing Street now bisects their acreage. William Wing was an attorney with a thriving local practice, to which he later added lending and real estate interests. In 1861 he married Abby C. Saunders, who became one of the city's most respected educators. When Wing died on October 31, 1902, a childless widower, he bequeathed 121.5 acres of his estate north of Wing Street to the City of Elgin for use as a public park. At that time, the property was situated just outside the city limits and was surrounded by large estates, as illustrated in the 1892 *Atlas of Kane County*. (See Attachment D.)

An ordinance accepting Wing's gift of land and annexing it to the City of Elgin was passed by the City Council on June 30, 1903.<sup>33</sup> The north half of the parcel was partially wooded and

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<sup>32</sup> E.C. Alft. *Elgin Parks: A Community History*. (Elgin: City of Elgin, 2005) 4.

<sup>33</sup> *Proceedings of the City Council of the City of Elgin, Illinois*, June 30, 1903, p. 194.

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featured some meadows as well as a number of springs near Tyler Creek, which ran through its northwestern edge. The south half of the parcel was in agricultural use and sown with rye and oats and later with timothy and clover, as specified in an 1899 lease between Wing and tenant farmer Henry A. Schoonhoven.<sup>34</sup> The city continued Wing's arrangement with Schoonhoven until 1907, specifying that the \$200 annual rents in accrued be set apart as a special fund for the improvement of Wing Park.<sup>35</sup>

Wing Park formally opened on August 2, 1903, prior to its improvement for recreational purposes. City officials hired O.C. Simonds & Co. of Chicago as landscape planner for the site, which they described following a 1903 visit:

“The tract of land which has been given for Wing Park is divided into two parts, one at present used for farming purposes and the other covered with native woods more or less open, so that the land has been a pasture. The trees include oaks of various kinds, elms, lindens, ash trees, thorn and crab apples, wild cherries and there are also quantities of prickly ash, viburnums and other shrubs. Across the north end runs a picturesque valley through which flows Tyler Creek, near the border of which there are a number of springs.”<sup>36</sup>

The Elgin Park Commissioners intended Wing Park to be used for sporting activities such as golf, swimming, ball playing, and supervised play, as opposed to Lords Park, which featured passive recreational activities. However, with the exception of a few walkways, drives and iron benches, the area remained unimproved and crowds were limited until 1907 when the Elgin-Belvidere interurban streetcar extended its State Street line four blocks west along Wing Street to the park's main entrance. With transportation for carrying passengers to and from the park assured, during the winter of 1907-8, Mayor Arwin Price lobbied the city council to appropriate money for sporting activities at Wing Park. Plans included a pavilion for summer concerts, a nine-hole golf course, a half-mile oval speedway for harness racing, and a baseball diamond at the south end of the park. Damming Tyler Creek to create a swimming pool with sandy beach

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<sup>34</sup> Lease between W.H. Wing and Henry A. Schoonhoven (tenant farmer on his property), dated December 11, 1899.

<sup>35</sup> *Proceedings of the City Council of the City of Elgin, Illinois*, Dec. 9, 1902, p. 117. Lease between City of Elgin and Henry Schoonhoven (tenant farmer on Wing Park site), dated July 29, 1903.

<sup>36</sup> “About Wing Park: Landscape Gardeners O.C. Simonds & Co. Express Favorable Views,” *Elgin Daily Courier*, Sept. 12, 1903.

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and bait casting pools at the north end of the park was also proposed. All of these improvements were completed by the fall of 1908 and attracted thousands to the park each year.

By the 1920s, Wing Park had added tennis courts, softball grounds, and a playground to its list of amenities, although the speedway had closed down by that time. In later years, the park underwent numerous changes in regard to its athletic facilities and landscape. The original walkways and drives were removed or altered, a modern aquatic center and band shell were added, as were additional baseball fields. However, the park's century old nine-hole course remains in its original configuration to serve new generations of Elgin golfers.

### **Wing Park Golf Course**

Elgin's Wing Park Golf Course, completed in 1908, is one of the oldest continually operating public golf courses in Illinois. Situated on the south end of Wing Park, it played an important role in introducing the game to scores of beginning golfers at a time when the venues for local play were limited to membership in the private Elgin Country Club. Designed by Tom Bendelow, the nation's most prolific early designer and promoter of public golf courses, the nine-hole course was staked out in a day and built over a period of two months at a cost of \$1,250. This quick, easy and inexpensive manner of design and execution was indicative of the way that most early courses were created. The hundred-year-old course has maintained its integrity, and its fairways, tees and greens are virtually unchanged from their original configuration.

The *Elgin Daily News* advocated for a public course at Wing Park as early as March 1903, several months before its official opening as a public park:

"A nine hole course could easily be laid out at the new park....the expense of the individual would be trivial. Clubs and balls are the only necessary implements of play. The site for the proposed links could not be better in regard to the situation. The land is in the country and at the same time is within easy access to the city. The North Side street cars now run to within four blocks of what would be the entrance of the park; the tracks would no doubt be extended to the park if traffic warranted such action."<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> Public Golf Links In High Favor: Sulphur Springs Park Regarded as An Ideal Place," *Elgin Daily News*, March 31, 1903.

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Some of the earliest proponents of a public course at Wing Park were members of the Elgin Country Club, such as their Secretary, Frank S. Lombard, who lobbied the City Council to appropriate funds for its construction. He later noted that,

“The idea of public golf came to me when the property now called Wing Park was left by Mr. Wing to the City for park purposes. The following spring, Mr. James Blackburn (then Park Commissioner), Mr. James Melville, golf professional, and myself visited the park to look the land over. I carried a mid iron and golf ball and drove the first ball at Wing Park.”<sup>38</sup>

Mayor Arwin Price took up the cause of the golf course in his January 6, 1908 message to the City Council, noting that: “I would recommend to this Honorable Council they insert an item of at least \$500 for the laying out and building of golf links at Wing Park, so that the public at large may enjoy the innocent sport at their pleasure without the consent of ‘Elgin’s select one hundred.’”<sup>39</sup>

Noted golf designer Tom Bendelow, who was working for A.G. Spalding & Bros. at the time, was selected to lay out the course. His work was well-known to Elginites as he had designed the nine-hole Elgin Country Club course in 1901, as well as scores of other courses throughout Illinois and the nation. On May 2, 1908, Bendelow—accompanied by the Park Commissioners, the city engineer, and Dr. F.S. Lombard—arrived at Wing Park and staked out a nine-hole course, stating that it could be ready for an opening within two months. He also drew a map which proved useful when shortly thereafter some people pulled out the stakes.

An approximately 50-acre site comprised of farmland at the south of the Wing Park was selected as an ideal location for a golf course since it would be easy to convert into a rolling green. Bendelow praised the natural advantages of the site of the future course:

“Wing Park is admirably suited for the course. The turf is in such a condition that the links will not have to be made as is customary in most cases. The ground just needs improving to make it one of the prettiest, and nicest nine-hole courses in the country.

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<sup>38</sup> *Wing Park Golf Club*. Elgin: The Courier Publishing Co., 1912.

<sup>39</sup> *Proceedings of the City Council of the City of Elgin, Illinois*, January 6, 1908, p. 284.

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Wing Park Golf Course  
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“The public course will be a great thing for Elgin. It will advertise the city for its enterprise. It will be a great chance for people who have neither the inclination or where withal to join a private club, to learn to enjoy golf—the greatest game on earth.”<sup>40</sup>

Immediately after Bendelow’s visit, the Park Commissioners appointed a local citizens committee to provide assistance to park custodian Charles Michael regarding the construction and maintenance of the course.<sup>41</sup> Dr. F.S. Lombard, Alderman A.C. Barclay and attorney Frank W. Jeslyn—all enthusiastic golfers—agreed to serve on this committee for at least a year. The site’s rolling topography ensured an interesting course without the need for earth moving. Construction on the course started in July, and workmen spent the next two months rolling out the bumps in the course with a steam roller, mowing the tall grasses, seeding the areas designated for fairways and greens, and creating tee boxes. The putting greens were sodded to get them ready for immediate use. As typical of Bendelow courses, it featured parallel fairways, small greens, and was designed to incorporate the site’s natural terrain and vegetation.

The Wing Park Golf Course was created for a total cost of \$1,250,<sup>42</sup> which was a very low figure even in 1908. A contemporary writer marveled at the low cost for the course, noting that, “One of the putting greens on one of the well known courses near Chicago cost \$1,200, practically as much as has been spent upon the entire course at Wing Park.”<sup>43</sup> The park commissioners attributed their ability to obtain wonderful results with so little expenditure to the site’s terrain, noting that:

“The soil is a natural grass-growing soil. It was sown to timothy and clover; and while the land was rough, the use of the city’s ten-ton roller has put, in excellent condition. With the sowing of other grass seed, a good natural turf will be the result. The only trouble so far, has been in getting the putting greens in condition, and could an extra man’s services have been secured for a few weeks, the greens would show great improvement.”<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>40</sup> “Expert Golfer’s Praise of Elgin: Thomas Bendelow Says Wing Park Course Will be Ready July 1. *Elgin Daily News*, May 2, 1908.

<sup>41</sup> Charles Michael was hired as park custodian the previous year, on May 14, 1907, according to the *Proceedings of the City Council* for that date (p. 202).

<sup>42</sup> The City Council appropriated \$500 in 1908 and \$750 in 1909.

<sup>43</sup> “Golf Grounds At Wing Park,” *Elgin Daily News*, June 11, 1908.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*

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Wing Park Golf Course  
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The July 1908 issue of *The Golfers' Magazine* noted that "Elgin has the distinction of being the smallest city in the country having public golf links," and published Bendelow's hand-drawn map of the course.<sup>45</sup> On September 5, 1908, T.W. Campbell, a prominent member of the Elgin County club, installed the holes, put up the necessary flags, and the Wing Park Golf Course was ready for play. The completed nine-hole course comprised 3,237 yards. In the early days of golf, all holes on its courses were named. At Wing Park, the titles were: 1—The Lark, 320 yards; 2—Purgatory, 410 yards; 3—East View, 320 yards; 4—Hoot Mon, 405 yards; 5—Speedway, 237 yards; 6—Boulevard, 530 yards; 7—Dress Parade, 465 yards; 8—Highlands, 450 yards; 9—A Wee Drop, 150 yards.<sup>46</sup>

After the Wing Park Golf Course opened in September 1908, a group of Elgin officials and residents traveled to Chicago's Jackson Park to examine its public golf course. They returned "more firmly convinced than ever that Elgin has started something in the Wing Park public links that is destined to become the best feature of Elgin's beautiful park system."<sup>47</sup>

Although located on the outskirts of Elgin at the time, the course could be reached by the Belvidere Electric streetcar and was open to the public free of charge. One contemporary writer and early player at the Wing Park course observed the low cost required to play the game: "Clubs can be bought for from 75 cents to a dollar, which will be good enough for any beginner. Four clubs are all a novice will want at the start. Half a dozen balls, which can be bought for from 30 to 50 cents each, if taken care of will last a long time."<sup>48</sup>

The first full season of play at the new Wing Park course was cut short in 1909 when the City of Elgin hosted the Illinois National Guard's annual encampment from July 10-24.<sup>49</sup> For this event, Wing Park was home to 5,000 soldiers and temporarily named Camp Deneen after Governor Charles S. Deneen.<sup>50</sup> Large crowds were drawn to the two-week event, during which the militia staged maneuvers and sham battles. The Elgin Country Club came to the relief of golf enthusiasts by opening their course to the public during the encampment.

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<sup>45</sup> "Short Putts," *The Golfers Magazine*, July 1908.

<sup>46</sup> *Wing Park Golf Club*. Elgin: The Courier Publishing Co., 1912.

<sup>47</sup> "Public Golf Course Officials Declare Will Be Big Feature," *Elgin Daily Courier*, Sept. 16, 1908.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid.

<sup>49</sup> The City of Elgin hosted a second encampment of the Illinois National Guard in 1911 at Wing Park.

<sup>50</sup> The City Council passed a \$350 appropriation to extend permanent water lines to Wing Park for the encampment. *Proceedings of the City Council of the City of Elgin, Illinois*, June 28, 1909, p. 485.

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Golf at Wing Park offered a popular respite for Elgin's factory and office workers. The Elgin National Watch Company was an important supporter of Elgin's first public golf course. It provided several sets of golf clubs, free of charge, to members of the "Ladies' National Athletic Association." The clubs were in constant use and the Watch Factory developed the reputation of furnishing some of the most expert players on the Wing Course.

The establishment of the Wing Park Golf Club on September 14, 1912 signified that golf had really arrived in Elgin. Eighty-eight charter members subscribed for a share of stock in the private club, which purchased property directly across from the park entrance on Wing Street and built a club house the following year.<sup>51</sup> The club immediately sold the 200 memberships that were available at a cost of \$25 each. Its one-and-a-half story Craftsman style bungalow with a broad veranda facing the links offered members a place to relax, socialize, and lockers to rent.<sup>52</sup> The *Elgin Daily Courier* noted the growing popularity of golf in the community:

"Completion of the Wing Park club house within the next three weeks will mark one of the greatest strides in the growing popularity of the Scotch sport among Elginites. The erection of this club house is the direct outcome of the golfing spirit which seized Elgin sportsmen about five years ago, when the links at Wing Park were laid out."<sup>53</sup>

Members of the Wing Park Golf Club worked to promote the game of golf in Elgin and hosted tournaments on the public course. The Elgin City Championship Tournament was played on the course from 1910 to 1961. A 1916 display ad for the Aurora, Elgin & Chicago Railroad highlighted the Wing Park Golf Course as one of several amenities for travelers along their line to enjoy.<sup>54</sup> In fact, the course became so popular with out-of-towners that by 1921, it became necessary to restrict play to Elgin residents on the weekends. The enthusiasm of golfers at Wing Park was noted in the May 12, 1924 issue of the *Elgin Daily News*:

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<sup>51</sup> "Wing Park Club Buys Property," *Elgin Daily News*, Sept. 26, 1912. "New Club House Gives Boost to Golf Popularity," *Elgin Daily Courier*, Oct. 3, 1913.

<sup>52</sup> The Wing Park Golf Club's club house was completely gutted by a fire on Oct 2, 1924. The organization disbanded after the fire and sold the club house property. The club house was subsequently re-built as a private residence. "Early Morning Blaze Destroys Two Buildings," *Elgin Daily Courier*, Oct. 2, 1924. "To Decide On Golf Club Disposition," *Elgin Daily News*, Feb. 17, 1925.

<sup>53</sup> "New Club House Gives Boost to Golf Popularity," *Elgin Daily Courier*, Oct. 3, 1913.

<sup>54</sup> "An Electric Railway Journey Will Pay Your Pleasure Dividends," *Chicago Tribune*, September 2, 1916. (Display ad)

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“Golfers, scores of them, yes hundreds and perhaps a thousand took advantage of the weather and Elgin’s public links at Wing Park yesterday for that first game of the season and although they were forced to play on temporary greens placed along the fairways, enjoyed the sport which threatens to rival baseball in the U.S. for popularity.”<sup>55</sup>

Despite the weekend restrictions, non-resident players remained so numerous that in the mid-1920s the Park Commissioners introduced a fee system of fifty cents for residents and a dollar for non-residents. In 1924, some Elginites seemingly wanted to make the public course more exclusive by adopting rules and regulations making it compulsory for each player to carry a bag and a specific number of clubs. These wishes were opposed by Park Commissioner Frank M. Lasher who stated that: “The course at Wing Park is for the public. It was not built for the use of a certain few. It is there for the kiddies as well as for the grownups.”<sup>56</sup>

In 1926 Commissioner Lasher proposed that the city purchase additional land across Wing Street to enable the expansion of the golf course to an 18-hole layout.<sup>57</sup> The Depression put a halt to these ambitious plans and today the Wing Park Golf Course stands as the oldest and best preserved nine-hole municipal course in Illinois.<sup>58</sup> The 1908 Wing Park course has maintained its original configuration of tees, fairways and greens. It is pre-dated only by Chicago’s Jackson Park Golf Course, which was built in 1899 as a nine-hole layout but it was later redesigned and expanded to 18 holes. Early municipal courses such as the one at Wing Park played a major role in popularizing the game of golf, which was initially limited to individuals who belonged to private clubs.

The course at Wing Park is also an excellent example of the early work of Tom Bendelow, the nation’s most prolific early golf course designer. Staked out in a day and built in just two months at a low cost of \$1,250, it is indicative of the quick, easy and inexpensive manner of design and execution that enabled him to design hundred of courses throughout the country. A number of other Bendelow-designed courses are extant in the Chicago metropolitan area, but the vast majority were later remodeled, enlarged to 18 holes, or designed much later in his career. One example is the 1901 Elgin Country Club course which was remodeled and enlarged from nine to eighteen holes in 1929.

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<sup>55</sup> “Wing Park Golf Course Crowded By Sunday Fans,” *Elgin Daily News*, May 12, 1924.

<sup>56</sup> “Regulate Golf at City Park, By Fee System, Is Plan,” *Elgin Daily News*, Jan. 29, 1924.

<sup>57</sup> Ed Clifford, “Gun Shots,” *Elgin Daily Courier News*, July 6, 1938.

<sup>58</sup> The South Shore Country Club course was designed by Bendelow in 1906 for a private club, although it is currently owned by the Chicago Park District.



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Wing Park Golf Course  
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Over the past one hundred years, the 52-acre Wing Park Golf Course has played an important role in Elgin's recreational history by introducing the game of golf to thousands of beginners while providing a challenging enough layout for more experienced golfers. It remains a popular destination for Elginites today.

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**UTM REFERENCES**

Zone 16

Point A  
E=392.240  
N=4856.480

Point B  
E=392.740  
N=4856.280

Point C  
E=392.380  
N=4856.280

Point D  
E=392.360  
N=4855.780

Point E  
E=392.020  
N=4855.860

**VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION**

The L-shaped nine-hole Wing Park Golf Course is situated at the southeastern end of Wing Park, the address of which is 1000 Wing Street in Elgin. The 52-acre course is bounded by baseball diamonds to the north, Wing and Goethe Streets to the south, and green space to the west. The eastern boundary of the golf course is comprised of the rear property lines of lots with small single family homes along Parkside Drive, Pine Street, and Clark Street to the east.

**Legal Description of Wing Park Golf Course:**

Beginning at the point of the intersection of the northern right-of-way line of Wing Street and the westerly section line of Section 11, thence extending 442 feet in an easterly direction to the point of intersection of said north right-of-way line and the southwest corner of County Clerk's Subdivision - lot 131, thence extending in a northerly direction, a distance of 1,815.1 feet to the point of intersection of the north section line of Section 11 and the westerly subdivision line of West Park Addition, thence extending an easterly direction, a distance of 834 feet, to the point of intersection of the northern section line of Section 11 and the westerly lot line of Lot 2 of the West Park Addition, thence extending in a northerly direction, in an arc following the western right-of-way line of McClure Avenue, extended, a distance of 305 feet, along the west right of

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way line of said McClure Avenue, thence extending in a northwesterly direction, a distance of 115 feet, thence extending in a westerly direction, a distance of 617 feet, thence extending in a northwesterly direction, a distance of 732 feet, along the existing fence line separating the Wing Park Golf Course, and the Wing Park Baseball Fields, thence extending in a southwesterly and eventually a southerly direction, a distance of 2,400 feet, to the point on the northern right-of-way line of Wing Street and the westerly section line of Section 11, thence extending easterly along said north right-of-way line of said Wing Street, a distance of 628 feet to the point of beginning, all located within the east half of the southwest quarter of Section 11, Township 41 North, Range 8 East of the Third Principal Meridian.

**BOUNDARY JUSTIFICATION**

The boundaries described encompass the Wing Park Golf Course, which is owned by the City of Elgin. These boundaries have remained unchanged since the course was completed in 1908.

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**Photographic Documentation – Photo List**

1. Wing Park Golf Course
2. Kane County, Illinois
3. Jean Guarino Clark
4. May, 2008
5. Jean Guarino Clark, Consultant

Golf Course Landscape

IL_Kane Co_Wing Park Golf Course 001	Looking southeast, hole 1
IL_Kane Co_Wing Park Golf Course 002	Looking southwest, fairway 2
IL_Kane Co_Wing Park Golf Course 003	Looking northeast, hole 3
IL_Kane Co_Wing Park Golf Course 004	Looking northwest, hole 3
IL_Kane Co_Wing Park Golf Course 005	Looking west, fairway 3
IL_Kane Co_Wing Park Golf Course 006	Looking north, hole 4
IL_Kane Co_Wing Park Golf Course 007	Looking west, hole 5
IL_Kane Co_Wing Park Golf Course 008	Looking southeast, retaining pond
IL_Kane Co_Wing Park Golf Course 009	Looking south, hole 6
IL_Kane Co_Wing Park Golf Course 010	Looking north, fairway 7
IL_Kane Co_Wing Park Golf Course 011	Looking south, fairway 8
IL_Kane Co_Wing Park Golf Course 012	Looking south, hole 9



Wing Park Golf Course – Elgin, Cook County, IL

ATTACHMENT A



USGS Map – Elgin Quadrangle, Illinois  
7.5-Minute Series (Topographic)

Wing Park Golf Course – Elgin, Cook County, IL

ATTACHMENT B

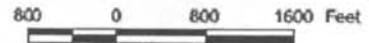


Location Map

1000 Wing St



City of Elgin  
Department of Community Development



Wing Park Golf Course – Elgin, Cook County, IL

ATTACHMENT C



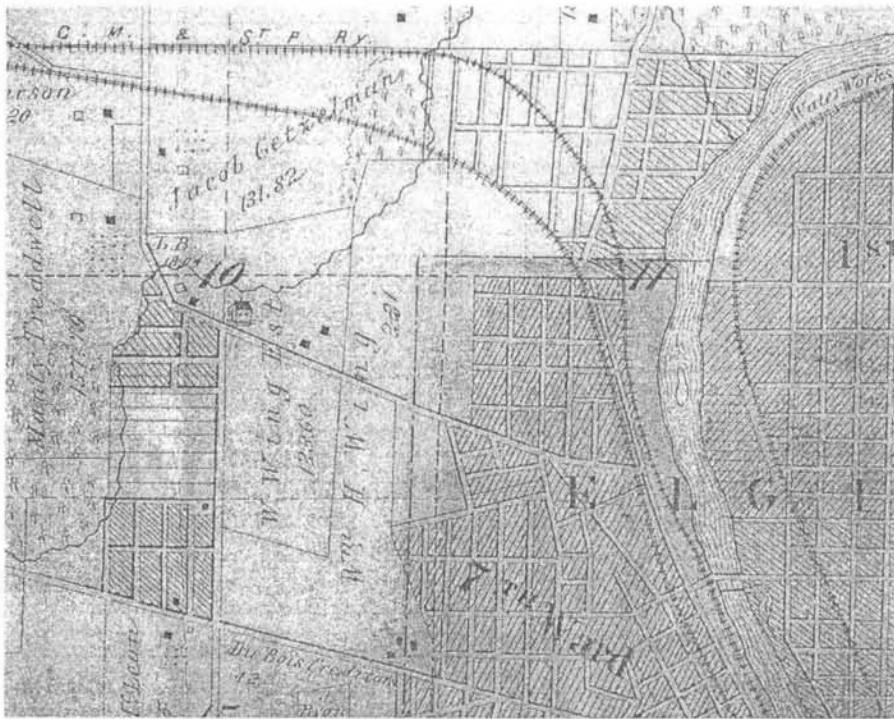
William H. Wing



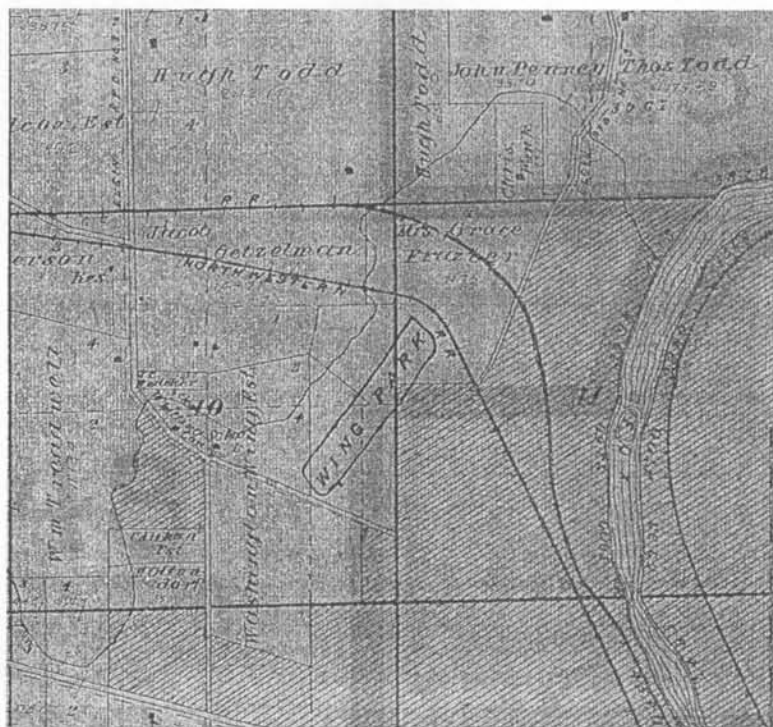
Thomas Bendelow

Wing Park Golf Course – Elgin, Cook County, IL

ATTACHMENT D



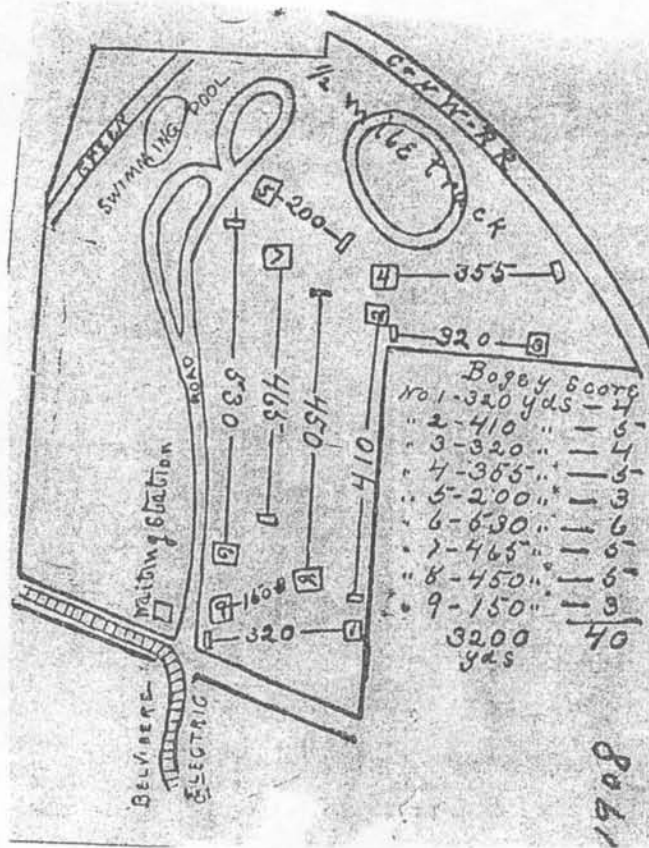
Atlas of Kane County, IL. Chicago: D.W. Ensign & Co., 1892.



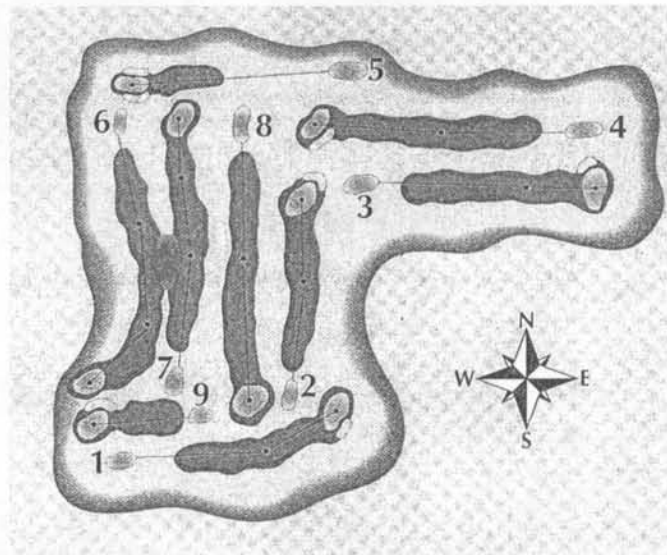
Atlas of Kane County, IL. Chicago: Middle-West Publishing Co., 1904.

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ATTACHMENT E



Tom Bendelow drawing of Wing Park Golf Course  
 Source: *Elgin Daily Courier*, May 4, 1908.



Current drawing of Wing Park Golf Course

# Wing Park Golf Course – Elgin, Cook County IL

## ATTACHMENT F

































