

The Golf Chronicles

The story of golf at Reading Country Club and in Berks County

Byron Nelson
RCC Pro
1937-39



Reading Eagle, August 13, 1927

MARKLE LOWERS COURSE RECORD AT READING COUNTRY CLUB

Harry Markle, assistant pro at the Berkshire Country Club, broke the course record at the Reading Country Club, negotiating the 18 holes in 70 strokes, which is one below par. The previous record, that of 73, was held by Al Herron, pro at the Berkshire.

Markle went out in 35, which is par, and came home in 35. He scored a birdie three on the 10th and a birdie two on the 13th, but he was one over par on the 15th, and completed the final three holes in par.

Markle's record-breaking round was made after Markle and Paul O. Keppelman defeated Herron and H. J. Carr in a best-ball foursome.

Markle's card, compared with par, follows:

Par—Out	...	435	353	255	—35
Markle—Out	...	435	353	255	—35
Par—In	...	444	354	444	—36—71
Markle—In	...	344	255	444	—35—70

Cards of the best-ball foursome were:

Herron and Carr—	
Out	... 574 454 444—41
In	... 445 453 343—35—76

Markle and Keppelman—	
Out	... 535 354 544—38
In	... 344 254 444—33—71

Reading Eagle, April 26, 1931

The members 100 years have wanted a new club house and locker room, and in the Spring of 1930 they authorized the directors to erect the building and locate same on a site in the center of the course, selected at the time the course was first laid out.

This site is a prominent point among the rocks and trees, closely adjoining the present No. 10, No. 15 and No. 17 greens, all of which are in view of the club house. The new location necessitates the rearranging of the tees and greens, as No. 10 green will be No. 9 green and No. 17 green will be No. 18 green, and on leaving the club the members will tee off at the present No. 18 tee, which will be No. 1 tee. The present No. 11 tee will be No. 10 tee. Both the latter tees are within easy access from the professional stop.

New Road Constructed.

A new road was constructed from the pike, winding through the center of the grounds, so that now the club house is 1,000 feet from the public road, and has a commanding outlook to all parts of the course.

Markel's New Mark

But how did he play the course?

Harry Markle set the Reading Country Club course record with a one-under par 70 on August 12, 1927. His feat was reported in the *Reading Eagle* on August 13. The article appears to the left.

The report is helpful for establishing the course routing at RCC in the early years. The front 9 par reported in the article, however, is incorrect; it repeats Markle's scores. The back 9 pars are puzzling, especially with the 13th hole playing as a par 3 and 14 as a par 5.

A *Reading Eagle* article of October 22, 1922, provides **Alex Findlay's** hole-by-hole description, which matches the course as played today. The description of the 1927 match isn't close to Findlay's layout.

What gives?

A document from **Tom Morgan**, RCC's director of golf, provides the answer. Tom got the document from **Lee Agsten**, a former RCC member who spent many hours at the card table with **Charlie Faber**, who is **Leroy Oudinot's** father-in-law. Charlie was runner-up to **Mike Heller** in the 1981 club championship. Leroy caddied at RCC in the late 1940s and still works part-time driving the shag ball picker on the practice range. He was club champion in 1968.

Markle's course. The course described in Lee's document matches the back 9 that Harry Markle played in 1927. The front 9 then falls into place. Markle had birdies on 2 (today's 11th hole), 4 (now the 13th) and 7 (today's 6th), a bogey on 3 (12th) and a double-bogey on 9 (now the 8th) for an even par 35. On the back 9, Markle birdied 10 (today's 9th hole) and 13 (now the 4th hole). He bogeyed 15 (today's 16th hole). Here's is Markle's correct card:

Par out 4 - 4 - 4 - 4 - 5 - 3 - 3 - 5 - 3 - 35

Markle out 4 - 3 - 5 - 3 - 5 - 3 - 2 - 5 - 5 - 35

Par in 4 - 4 - 4 - 3 - 5 - 4 - 4 - 4 - 4 - 36 - 71

Markle in 3 - 4 - 4 - 2 - 5 - 5 - 4 - 4 - 4 - 35 - 70

Makes sense. The course routing in 1927, based on Lee Agsten's document, is on the following page. This layout appears odd today but made sense at that time because the clubhouse was in the stone building where the club drive intersects with Perkiomen Avenue. Golfers had a short walk from the clubhouse to the first tee, now number 2, and a short walk from the 18th green, now number 1, to the clubhouse.

Further evidence is found in the April 26, 1931, article that provides a partial description of how the course routing changed when the new clubhouse opened.

Make no sense. The best-ball score for the Markle and Keppelman team is reported and added incorrectly. The front 9 score should be no higher than Markle's 35 and the total no more than 70. Markle made a 4 on the first hole, but the team score is 5. His birdie 2 on 7 is shown as a 5. His 5-5 front nine finish is reported as 4-4; perhaps Keppelman picked him up. What's more, their back 9 scores total 34, not 33. The Herron and Carr best-ball scores are added correctly.

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The Way it Was

The course map from the 1949 Reading Open program book shows the 10th, 12th and 17th holes as played at that time. The course routing matches today's course.

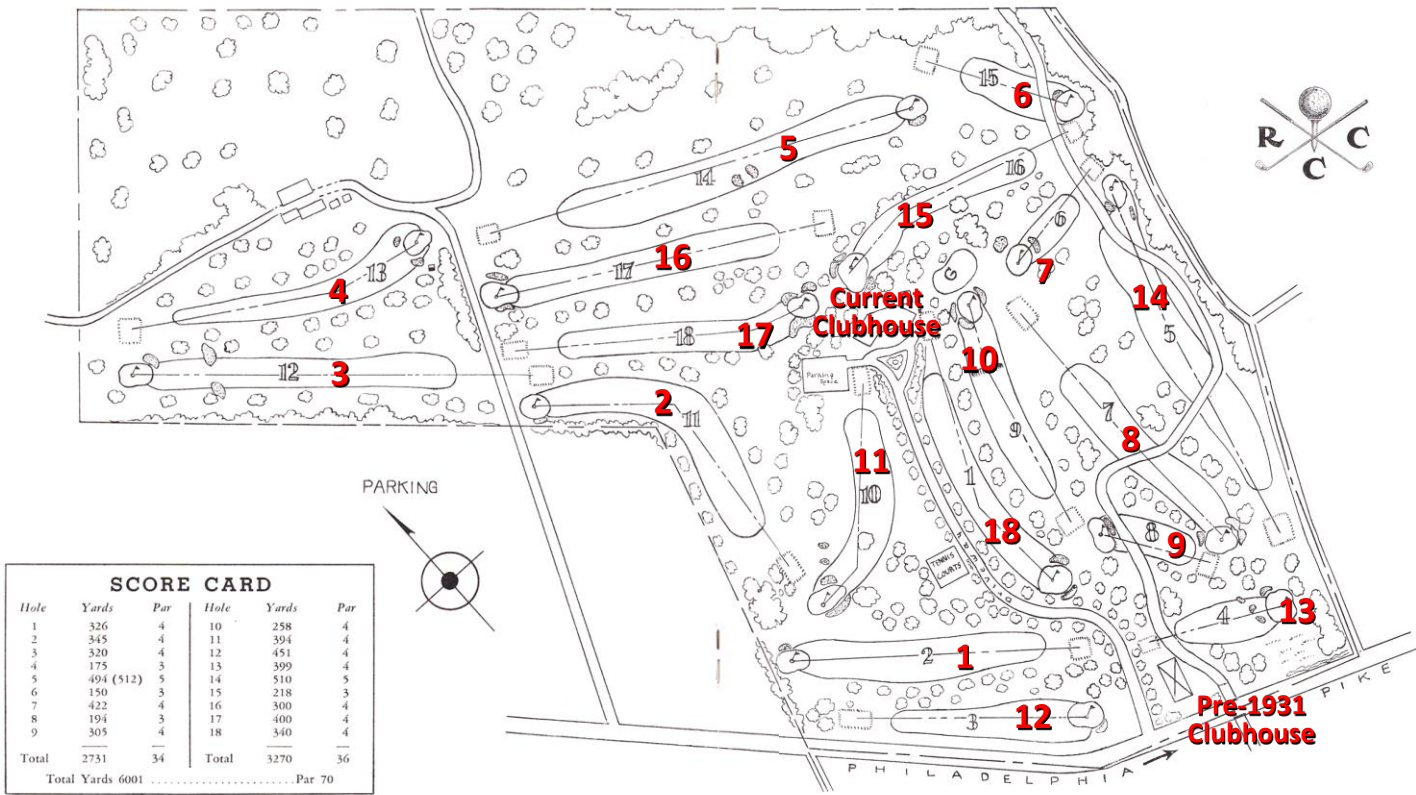
The red numbers show the course routing before the current clubhouse was opened in May 1931. This is the course **Harry Markle** played when he set the course record in 1927.

In the mid-1950s, the back 9 followed this order (holes correspond to today's course):

1950s back 9 — 10 — 11 — 18 — 17 — 12 — 13 — 14 — 15 — 16
Par 4 4 4 4 4 4 5 3 4 — 36

This course routing was printed in the program book for the 1953 Ryder Cup Challenge Matches and was reported in newspaper accounts of the 1956 Pennsylvania Women's Amateur Golf Championship, both contested at RCC. No explanation has been found for why the back 9 routing was changed or why it was returned to Findlay's layout.

Reading Country Club



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