



The Golf Chronicles

Golf Stories from the Pennsylvania Heartland



In Good Company

Of the approximately 90,000 properties on the National Register of Historic Places, fewer than 100 are golf courses. This includes six in Pennsylvania and two miniature golf courses. Golf courses on the register include:

- Elk Country Club, Ridgeway, Pa.
- Foxburg Country Club and Golf Course, Foxburg, Pa.; opened in 1887, it is the country's oldest golf course in continuous operation
- Hershey Country Club
- Longue View Club and Golf Course, Penn Hills Township, Pa.
- Merion Golf Club, East and West courses, Ardmore, Pa.
- Oakmont Country Club, Oakmont, Pa.
- Augusta National Golf Club, Augusta, Ga.
- Baltusrol Golf Club, Springfield, NJ
- Ridgewood Country Club, Paramus, NJ

RCC has an interesting connection with Ridgewood Country Club. In 1937, RCC hired Ridgewood's assistant as their new head golf professional. Fellow by the name of Byron Nelson.

- Shinnecock Hills Golf Club, Southampton, NY

About 140 structures in Berks County are on the National Register. The following listed properties are in Exeter Township:

- Henry Fisher House, Yellow House
- Daniel Boone Homestead and Bertolet Cabin
- George Boone Homestead, Mill Tract Farm, Stonersville
- Snyder Mill, Limekiln
- Mordecai Lincoln House, Lorraine

Two St. Lawrence Borough properties are listed:

- John F. Lutz property
- Levan Farm



Alexander H. Findlay, in an undated photo. The dog's name is unknown.

Confirmed: RCC's Place in History

Reading Country Club's inclusion in the National Register of Historic Places only confirms what golfers always knew: the venerable Exeter Township golf course is an historic gem. The listing, approved on May 31, recognizes the historic significance of the golf course as a nearly intact **Alexander Findlay** design and the clubhouse for its Norman-style towers.

Findlay is credited with more than 200 golf course designs. As far back as 1922 was considered "the father of American golf" for his efforts in introducing the game into this country starting in the 1880s when he emigrated from Scotland. Findlay had a profound impact in Berks County. His Berks work includes the original nine holes at Galen Hall, Manor Golf Club and the defunct Riverside Golf Club. He also consulted on the design of Berkshire Country Club's current golf course (*Reading Eagle*, April 24, 1942, Bill Reedy column, page 20.)

Reading architect **Harry Maurer** designed the clubhouse. Maurer also designed the 20-room Yuengling mansion in Pottsville, which was listed on the National Register in 1979

The National Park Service administers the National Register program. This is from the NPS web site (<https://www.nps.gov/places/reading-country-club.htm>):

The Reading Country Club golf course is an important example of an Alexander Findlay-designed golf course, and is significant for landscape architecture. Findlay's design at RCC is among the best examples of his work and one of the few Findlay courses that has maintained his design with little change. The period of significance begins in 1922, with the installation of the first nine holes, and extends to 1931, when the existing clubhouse was completed, and the primary portion of the property's landscape took its final form.

Findlay (1865-1942), emigrated from his native Scotland to Omaha, Nebraska, in the mid-1880s. He was an accomplished golfer and is credited with shooting the sport's first score of 72 in competition, this occurring in 1886 at the Royal Montrose Golf Club, Scotland. In 1887, he built a 6-hole golf course west of Omaha, considered the first golf course west of the Mississippi River. From there, he became one of America's pioneers of the game.

Findlay at one time was in charge of designing and building golf courses for the Florida East Coast Railway. In 1897, Findlay was hired by the Wright and Ditson Company, Boston, to design a line of golf clubs. Wright and Ditson, founded in 1871, was acquired by A.G. Spaulding in 1892. In 1900, he brought Harry Vardon, the great British professional, to the United States for a series of exhibition matches, often playing against the Englishman. The matches garnered wide-spread newspaper coverage, which helped popularize golf in America at the turn of the 20th century.

In the early 1920s, when he designed Reading Country Club's golf course, Findlay was associated with the Wanamakers department store in Philadelphia, retiring in 1936 following a 27-year career. Findlay also wrote a column for the now-defunct Philadelphia newspaper, *The Evening Telegraph*. His column was titled "Breezy News About Golf And Golfers; Tales of the Links as Told by an Expert Whose Fame Spreads Over Two Continents".