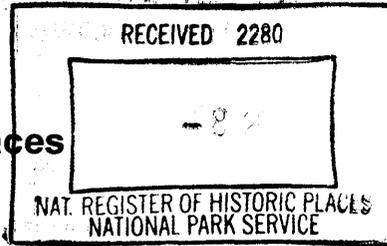


8574

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service



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 an 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 **Kokomo Country Club Golf Course**

other names/site number

2. Location

1801 Country Club Drive

street & number N/A not for publication

city or town **Kokomo** N/A vicinity

state **Indiana** code **IN** county **Howard** code **034** zip code **46904**

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, 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 36CFR 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.)

Signature of certifying official/Title

Date

Indiana Department of Natural Resources

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 certifying official/Title

Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that the property is:

entered in the National Register. 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:)

Signature of the Keeper

Edson H. Beall

Date of Action

9-20-06

5. Classification

Ownership of Property
(Check as many boxes as apply)

Category of Property
(Check only one box)

Number of Resources within Property
(Do not include previously listed resources in the count)

- private
- public-local
- public-State
- public-Federal

- building
- district
- site
- structure
- object

Contributing	Noncontributing	
0	0	buildings
1	0	sites
0	0	structures
0	0	objects
1	0	Total

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

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register

N/A

0

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions
(Enter categories from instructions)

Current Functions
(Enter categories from instructions)

RECREATION/CULTURE: Outdoor Recreation

RECREATION/CULTURE: Outdoor Recreation

7. Description

Architectural Classification
(Enter categories from instructions)

Materials
(Enter categories from instructions)

NO STYLE

foundation EARTH

walls N/A

roof N/A

other

Narrative Description

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

Name of Property

County and State

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.)

- Criteria A, B, C, D with checkboxes and descriptions.

Criteria Considerations

(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply.)

Property is:

- Criteria A-F with checkboxes and descriptions.

Narrative Statement of Significance

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

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions)

ENTERTAINMENT/RECREATION
LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE

Period of Significance

1924-1956

Significant Dates

1924

Significant Person

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

Diddel, William H.

9. Major Bibliographic References

Bibliography

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

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- Criteria for previous documentation on file (NPS).

Primary location of additional data:

- Criteria for primary location of additional data.

Name of repository:

Kokomo Country Club

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property 101 acres

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

1	16	572430	4479690	3	16	572820	4478660
	Zone	Easting	Northing		Zone	Easting	Northing
2	16	572820	4479690	4	16	572450	4478660

See continuation sheet

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

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

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Connie J. Zeigler

organization Weintraut & Associates date 07-07-2006

street & number 33 E. Cedar St. telephone 317/733-9770

city or town Zionsville state IN zip code 46077

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

Continuation Sheets

Maps

- A USGS map (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.
- A Sketch map for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.

Photographs

Representative black and white photographs of the property.

Additional Items

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

Property Owner

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

name Kokomo Country Club

street & number 1801 Country Club Dr telephone 765/453-3278

city or town Kokomo state IN zip code 46904

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 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 Projects (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

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NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
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Section 7 Page 1 Kokomo Country Club, Kokomo, Indiana

Narrative Description

The Kokomo Country Club (KCC) Golf Course is located in Center Township, Kokomo, Indiana, in the state's Central Till Plain region. The land on which it lies, like most of the region, was scraped and scoured nearly featureless by a series of glaciers that crept across the state in prehistoric times, leaving deposits of till behind.¹ A small, natural stream bisects most of the KCC golf course from northwest to south.

Similar to all the land in this region, the landscape at what is now the Kokomo Country Club Golf Course is gently undulating, except along its north and northeastern boundary where it slopes downward somewhat steeply. Along this edge, the country club land meets Highland City Park. A modern clubhouse, pool and maintenance buildings have been cut out of the boundary north of the intersection of Wabash and Boulevard streets.

When the founding members of the Kokomo Country Club went looking for land for a golf course in 1904, they located 50 acres for lease on George Gwinn's farm in Center Township at the edge of town. Along the northeast boundary of the property, the city of Kokomo had laid out City Park in 1892, and, the same year, the local street railway had laid out a trolley park. (The two parks are now combined into Highland Park.)²

The acreage leased by the country club had been cleared by Gwinn for use as pasture or fields. A stream ran south through the property, entering it from the northwest. This stream was probably noteworthy to the country club members for its potential to enhance a golf course, both as an interesting obstacle and as a source of water for the course greens. The lease was signed, and the members laid out a rudimentary course. Apparently happy with this location, in 1909 the Kokomo Country Club paid \$7,000 to purchase the land that had been under lease.³

In December 1923, the members of the Kokomo Country Club bought an additional 40 acres south of Boulevard (the southern boundary of the 9-hole course), so they could expand their course to 18 holes. The following year, they purchased another 10 acres south of Boulevard and hired William H. (Bill) Diddel to design their new course. Diddel's design for the Kokomo Country Club Golf Course continues to inspire its members more than 80 years later.

Because the topography was not endowed with natural features that would create a challenging golf course, it was up to Bill Diddel to craft the challenges at the Kokomo

¹ Marion T. Jackson, *The Natural Heritage of Indiana* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1997), 18, 195.

² "Kokomo," in "Indiana Cities and Towns," clippings files, Indiana State Library, Indianapolis, Indiana.

³ Kokomo Country Club, *100 Years at Kokomo Country Club*, 2004, video, Kokomo Country Club.

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Section 7 Page 2 Kokomo Country Club, Kokomo, Indiana

Country Club Golf Course and to route it carefully in a relatively small space. The total length of the course is 5,092 yards.⁴ The northern section, north of Boulevard, is trapezoidal in overall layout; while the southern section, south of Boulevard, is roughly rectangular. Each hole and the direction of play is briefly described below, with signature Diddel elements discussed in greater depth later in this document. (See Map/Site Plan.) Note that each tee box contains both men's and women's tees. The original tees all remain on the course, though some additional back tees have been added to compensate for today's longer hits. These tees continue to use the original tee boxes.

Play begins at Hole 1, which has a basically straight fairway heading southwest from the tee box to a green with bunkers on either side. Hole 2 tee is to the north of the first green and the fairway of Hole 2, a par 3, is short and straight to the green, which is surrounded by five bunkers. From Hole 2's green, players cross Boulevard to reach Hole 3 tee to the south. Hole 3 is a slight dogleg right to the green with bunkers in the dogleg and one by the green. Hole 4 tee is immediately north of Hole 3's green and the fairway is relatively straight between large trees; there are two bunkers in the fairway and one on the northwestern side of the green. Hole 5, a par 5, is on the north side of Boulevard and is a long and slightly left curving fairway to the new green. Hole 6's fairway runs south from the tee to the green and is a slight dogleg right; the lake is just west of the green. Hole 7 is a narrow fairway due to tree growth and is slightly curved from south to northwest. Hole 8, a par 3, is a relatively short straight fairway to a raised green surrounded by sand traps. It is described in depth below. Hole 9's tee box is at the northeast corner of the course and the fairway is a straight shot south to the green surrounded by multiple bunkers.

Hole 10 has a short, straight fairway running from northwest to southeast with a small green surrounded by bunkers. From the Hole 10 green, players proceed south again across Boulevard to Hole 11, which is a long par 5 facing south from the tee, with a gentle dogleg left about midpoint. It has bunkers on either side of the dogleg and two bunkers around the green. Hole 12 runs along the south perimeter of the course and is a relatively straight shot west with large trees on the northern edge of the fairway. Hole 13's fairway runs northwest from the tee box, crossing the stream to the green, which has sand traps on either side. Hole 14 crosses the stream and takes the player southeast again. Hole 15 is a dogleg left with the stream and large trees creating hazards. Hole 16, another par 3, is a straight, short fairway heading due west to a relatively large green. Hole 17's tee box is just north and slightly west of the Hole 16 green. Hole 17 runs parallel to Boulevard. The Hole 17 fairway is long and curved slightly to the northwest; there are three bunkers around the small green. Hole 18 is north across Boulevard with a dogleg left, bringing the golfer back to the location of the club house.

⁴ Kokomo Country Club, scorecard.

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Section 7 Page 3 Kokomo Country Club, Kokomo, Indiana

Signature elements of Diddle design define the golf course at Kokomo Country Club, including clever routing in small space. In addition, extant landscape elements are small, flattened chipping areas placed at the rear of some greens; raised dirt greens; flat-bottom bunkers, or sand traps, located in front of the green and on some fairways; square tee box mounds; barely perceptible “humps” on the greens that create challenges; offset tee boxes on some holes; and a natural-appearing but carefully crafted landscape.

In the 1920s, earth moving for a golf course was done by hand, or by mule or horse teams pulling pans. On relatively flat landscape, a course designer created raised greens by pushing the earth up into mounds. The difficulties of this task meant that Diddel designed small greens on the Kokomo Country Club Golf Course to limit the amount of earth movement that was required.⁵ One remarkable aspect of the intact nature of this course is that, on some holes, Bill Diddel left the subtle remnants of the depressions created during this earth moving process to add to the landscape and hazard of the course. These depressions are still extant and visible behind many of the raised greens on the course (see Photograph 8). Their texture adds to the natural appearance of the mounds on the course, as if some natural process has pushed up or left behind the mounded contours.

Diddel’s calculated sloping made greens fast and difficult. However, his design did not overly penalize missed shots. He gave the golfer who overshot the green another chance, flattening a small area for chipping to the cup at the back of many of his greens.⁶ Diddel placed flat-bottom bunkers (sand traps) around the greens on many holes (for instance, holes 1, 11, and 17, see Photograph 8) and planted trees and additional bunkers along fairways. The stream that ran through the land was incorporated into this design, becoming a natural hazard on some of the holes (for instance, Hole 14, see Photograph 6).

According to golf course designer, Ron Kern, a number of Diddel signature design elements are easy to discern at the Kokomo Country Club course. Kern pointed out these Diddel hallmarks on a tour of the course in 2005. The characteristic flattened areas at the back of greens that allowed a second chance at the pin for golfers who overshot are extant. Diddel’s greens sloped from front to back and that faintly noticeable slope, which makes it difficult to keep a ball on the green if it has been hit short, remains an important aspect of strategy on this course (for instance, Hole 14, see Photograph 10). Contours of

⁵ The Diddel course at the Martinsville Golf Club, for instance, was constructed c. 1925 on hilly land. There the greens could be placed on natural raised areas, so even the few original Diddel greens left on that course are larger than those at Kokomo, revealing Diddel’s ability to adapt and make the most of the existing topography.

⁶ Ron Kern, site visit interview with Connie Zeigler, Kokomo Country Club, October 19, 2005.

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the greens are subtle, but noticeably “Diddel,” as are small “humps” behind the greens. Barely evident to the unwary, often Diddel skillfully created a variable cross slope on his greens (see Photograph 10).

Diddel created small, dirt greens (in contrast to the larger, sand greens currently in vogue). These small greens are extant and add to this course’s historic ambience. According to Kokomo Country Club Golf Course Superintendent, Brad Emerick, a special mixture of native soil and cinders from a local manufacturing plant, which Diddle used to create the greens, is still discernible on the course.⁷

These small greens, surrounded by sand traps, mark many of the holes. In fact, a signature element of Diddle design is the placement of a sand trap running in front of the green; used in much the same way that modern designers use streams and other water hazards.

On modern courses, sand traps are often rounded upward, but the bunkers at the Kokomo Country Club course retain their original Diddel flat-bottomed design (see Photograph 3). In Diddel’s day, a player bounced the ball to the green, so sand traps were common obstacles. Technological changes have resulted in improved balls and clubs, which allow players to hit farther. Today, a player flies the ball to the green, rather than bouncing it, so some sand traps around greens no longer come into play and are removed from many older courses when they are renovated, but the traps around the greens have been retained at this course.

Few trees have been removed from the course and where removal was unavoidable or caused by natural circumstances, new trees have been planted to retain the original layout and to continue to offer hazards that golfers must strategically avoid. Old, large trees are notable here, adding to the course’s historic feeling (see Photograph 5). Many of the extant maples, oaks and sycamores have been on this course since Diddel’s time. Elms, killed by Dutch Elm disease, have been replaced with new trees.

A brief description of Hole 8 illuminates the skill of Bill Diddel’s craftsmanship. Hole 8 is a par three that runs from the tee east toward the green, with a fairway that just barely curves northward from midpoint. The tee box is placed slightly to the left of center; golfers have to compensate for this in order to reach the green in one shot. The green is small and elevated and is surrounded by six sand traps. The mounds on the green are

⁷ Ron Kern and Brad Emerick, interview with Connie Zeigler, site visit Kokomo Country Club, October 19, 2005.

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Section 7 Page 5 Kokomo Country Club, Kokomo, Indiana

higher than typical, and, in the words of Ron Kern, these require the golfer to “hit the shot or else.”⁸

A solid hit is required to get the ball onto the green of Hole 8 in one shot, so that the golfer has two chances to putt into the cup. KCC’s current golf pro, Cary Hungate, has analyzed scores at tournaments on the course and this par three is consistently one of the most difficult holes on the course.⁹ Like all of Diddel’s holes, this one requires strategy. The hole is especially difficult for women golfers because the first shot has to carry onto the green to avoid the bunkers in front of it. Finally, a shot must be carefully placed to stay on the “postage stamp” green (so named because of its small size), which is not only small, but also sloped from back to front (see Photograph 2).

Unlike modern courses which have rounded tee boxes to allow for the limited flexibility of massive mowing equipment, Diddel’s design on this course had raised square tee boxes. Originally, these tees were hand-mown; once motorized mowers came into use, the original square tees were mowed more easily into round shapes. But the demarcations of the square tees are still visible, and the club has begun returning the tees to their original square shape with hand mowers.

Change is a virtue of continued use on a golf course. However, there have been only three noteworthy changes to this course. These allow it to meet the needs of modern golfers. These changes are in the front nine in the northwest corner of the course. The tee and green on Hole 7 were moved slightly to the west to make space for a practice range on the course in the 1980s. The green for Hole 6 has been moved. It was once in a bowl area. That bowl has been turned into a small lake, and the green was shifted to one side of the lake (see Photograph 14). And the green on Hole 5 was moved to compensate for the slight westward shift of Hole 7 (see Photograph 1).

Historic aerials are unfortunately not sharp enough to draw many conclusions about the course in 1937 (the earliest year for which there are aerial photographs of the property), but they do appear to support the conclusion that these are the only notable changes over time. The relocation of the greens for holes 7 and 5 have slightly enlarged the open area between holes 9 and 7, enough for the club to squeeze in a practice range. But these changes do not represent a significant alteration in the play or historic feeling of the course and do not represent a significant difference in the “look” of the modern course, versus the course in 1937. In fact, the large trees that Diddel planted and/or planned for,

⁸ Ron Kern, site visit interview.

⁹ Cary Hungate, Golf Pro, Kokomo Country Club, telephone interview with Connie Zeigler, January 6, 2006.

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create a much more notable difference in the look of the course since 1937 than do the changes to these holes.¹⁰

Smaller changes at the course have included the replacement and planting of new trees in some locations and the planting of bent grass. Two bunkers on the fairways, those which fell out of play as shots got longer, have been planted in grass, though the markings of these bunkers can still be seen in winter when the grass dies back.

The move of Hole 7 to incorporate a wider area for a practice range and the attendant moves of the greens on holes 5 and 6 are alterations that represent the minor shifts that older golf courses must make to help the course continue to meet the needs of modern golfers. According to Susan E. Smead and Marc C. Wagner in "Assessing Golf Courses as Cultural Resources," change is part of the natural life of a course. "Generally, the natural evolution of a golf course, including slight redesign and the incorporation of new features . . ." does "not lessen significant characteristics of an important course."¹¹ The Kokomo Country Club has altered the design of the course only slightly, and the changes represent a small proportion of modification over the expanse of the entire 18-hole course. The changes affect only three of the course's eighteen holes, while fifteen holes, including the course's signature Hole, 8, retain their original design. Diddel's carefully created landscape remains largely intact at the Kokomo Country Club Golf Course.

Though Bill Diddel was a prolific and master golf course designer, few of his courses retain a significant proportion of their original design. In the 1950s, a new school of design focused on "heroic" holes that required long, long shots rather than strategically placed ones. During this era, many golf courses designed in the "golden age" were renovated to look like new courses with heroic holes.

Members of Kokomo Country Club understood that their course would stand the test of time. As a second-generation member puts it: a "landlocked, small golf course means you must keep good design."¹² Hemmed in by a city park along one side and growing development on the other three, members could not expand their course and create the heroic holes that were becoming popular, so they chose instead to appreciate and retain

¹⁰ 1937 Historic Aerials, Indiana State Archives (Commission on Public Records), Indianapolis, Indiana; Susan E. Smead and Marc C. Wagner, in "Assessing Golf Courses as Cultural Resources," *Cultural Resources Management* (No. 10-2000) describe changes at least as significant as those at the Kokomo Country Club course that were made to the eligible Sewell's Point Golf Course in Norfolk, Virginia where two holes were altered and a third was replaced, the greens were altered and grass was changed to bent grass.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 19.

¹² Joe Klein interview with Connie Zeigler, site visit, Kokomo Country Club, October 19, 2005.

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their good Diddel design. Golf course designer, Ron Kern, understands this choice. In his view, this course demonstrates what a good designer could do “on flat ground with imagination and guts.”

The Kokomo Country Club Golf Course retains remarkably good integrity for a course designed in the 1920s. Standing on the course today, one is struck by the large, old trees, which help create a sense of history. The course retains its integrity of design with only minor alterations to three holes. The course retains a historic feeling; with a fringe of old and new plantings along its edges, even nearby houses are shielded mostly from intruding on the viewshed of the course. The Kokomo Country Club Golf Course is one of very few that continues to exhibit the handicraft of Bill Diddle, a master designer of golf courses in the “golden age” of golf course design, when strategy played the key role in a good game. Its association with this golden age is a palpable part of the experience of playing this course.

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Section 8 Page 8 Kokomo Country Club, Kokomo, Indiana

Narrative Statement of Significance

The Kokomo Country Club Golf Course is eligible for the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion A for its association with significant movements in entertainment/recreation, particularly the leisure activity of golf from the 1920s through 1956. The history of this golf course represents a significant contribution to the growth of recreation and sports-related leisure activities in Kokomo, Indiana, dating from its construction in 1924. Kokomo Country Club Golf Course is also eligible under Criterion C. The course design by William (Bill) Diddle is a good example of the work of this master in a period considered the “golden era” of golf course design, a period that golf historians say ended in the late 1930s. Diddle’s course at the Kokomo Country Club (KCC) demonstrates the strategic school of golf course design that made this era “golden.” Unlike most Bill Diddle-designed golf courses in Indiana and across the nation (more than 250 courses nationally), the Kokomo Country Club Golf Course retains good integrity of design as well as a historic feeling; it continues to attest to the craftsmanship of this master designer. The period of significance is 1924 to 1956, the end of the historic period.

Social and Design History of Golf Courses

In 1872, the United States government purchased land that would become Yellowstone National Park, the first national park.¹ Following this clarion call to set aside parkland, towns and cities across the United States began to buy and preserve green spaces for their citizens. For many decades, in most cases, these early purchases of land did not result in developed parks. But, by the 1890s in Indiana, many cities and towns were creating parks departments to oversee and develop these lands. Kokomo was one of many towns in this era to begin buying and developing green space as parkland. In 1892, Kokomo purchased 15 acres of land north of present-day Defenbaugh Street from George and Mary Gwinn. This land became City Park.²

Also in 1892, the Kokomo street railway company bought several acres of land south of Defenbaugh Street, bordering City Park, where the company built an open-air pavilion.³ Whichever park a rider chose to visit, the street railway made money on a ticket sale.

According to local lore, an agreeable, traveling huckster named William Loring provided the first impetus for a golf course in Kokomo, Indiana. In 1904, Loring carried his bag of golf clubs onto the streetcar bound for City Park (today part of Highland Park) and rode

¹ Yellowstone the first National Park located at
<http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/gmdhtml/yehtml/yeabout.html>

² Unpublished manuscript located at the Kokomo Parks Department, Kokomo, Indiana..

³ Ibid.

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Section 8 Page 9 Kokomo Country Club, Kokomo, Indiana

to the end of the streetcar line.⁴ He climbed the fence at the park boundary into a cow pasture on the farm of George Gwinn.

The flat pastureland apparently struck Loring as a good spot for a golf course. At the end of his day he rode the streetcar back to town and began a campaign to organize members of a golf club. By August, Loring had convinced 50 local businessmen to join. With their pooled money, they leased the 50 acres from farmer Gwinn and laid out Kokomo's first golf course. By the end of September, the Kokomo Country Club had 75 members, a 50 percent increase in membership in one month. The following year, in 1905, the KCC erected a Swiss chalet-style clubhouse. (This clubhouse is no longer extant; a new clubhouse was erected in the 1960s and has had several additions since that time.)⁵ Five years after leasing the land for their golf course, the KCC members purchased it from George Gwinn for \$7,600 in 1909.

Much was happening in Kokomo during the formative years of the KCC. Signs of the city's progress were everywhere, including the incorporation of the Kokomo Electric Company and the opening of the Apperson automobile manufacturing concern, both in 1904. Before opening their own company, the Apperson brothers had partnered with Elwood Haynes, inventor of one of the first gasoline-powered automobiles, in the Haynes-Apperson Automobile Company (circa 1898).⁶ Their new manufactory signaled the beginning of a boom time in Kokomo. In 1906, Elwood Haynes invented a metal alloy called Stellite and began to manufacture it; Haynes also continued to produce automobiles. Industrial growth resulted in incredible population growth in Kokomo. By 1905, Kokomo had gained enough population to move it from town to city status.⁷ Between 1900 and 1910, the newly designated city experienced a 67 percent increase in population.⁸

Nationally, this was also an era of prosperity. In the second decade of the twentieth century, a decrease in the workweek fed an already rising interest in recreation and leisure activities. Following the tenets of the Progressive Era Playground Movement, Americans extolled the benefits of outdoor recreation. Like parks across the nation in

⁴James M. Hall edited, "Kokomo Country Club History" (2004), video located at Kokomo Country Club, Kokomo, Indiana; Unpublished manuscript on file at the Kokomo Parks Department.

⁵Hall, "Kokomo Country Club," Video.

⁶"Kokomo Electric Company" incorporation information, *Ibid.*; Automobile Heritage Museum website located at <http://www.automotiveheritagemuseum.org/history.htm>

⁷City of Kokomo website located at <http://www.cityofkokomo.org/egov/docs/1116621983188.htm>

⁸Clifton J. Phillips, *Indiana in Transition: The Emergence of an Industrial Commonwealth, 1880-1920*. (Indianapolis: Indiana Historical Bureau and Indiana Historical Society, 1968), 366.

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Section 8 Page 10 Kokomo Country Club, Kokomo, Indiana

these years, Kokomo's City Park, motivated by the philosophies of the Playground Movement, added a playground to its facilities in 1910.⁹

Expanding the possibilities of leisure activities was the automobile, which became affordable and popular beginning in the 1910s. Few places had a greater appreciation for the automobile than Kokomo, whose native son, Elwood Haynes, was the inventor of one of the first horseless carriages. The city also continued to boast a number of companies that produced automobiles or automobile-related products.

By 1923, there were over 61 different companies in Kokomo producing automotive components that were shipped worldwide. Automobiles built in Kokomo included those from the Maxwell Automobile Company, which eventually became Chrysler Corporation, and Crosley, which became Delco Electronics, a division of General Motors.¹¹ These Indiana automobile companies helped make cars affordable and the resulting popularity of the family automobile prompted a better roads movement.

The powerful combination of inexpensive autos and paved roads urged Americans to explore beyond their own backyards and allowed them to travel relatively easily beyond the dedicated routes of streetcars. It also made it easier to reach the designated areas for leisure activities such as golf, since golf courses were often placed at the edges of the city and the game required equipment that was cumbersome to carry onto the streetcar. According to one author, the automobile brought golf courses "within practical reach."¹²

In this new leisure environment, golf became a popular activity, and country clubs became an important venue for the game. In 1916, there were only 743 golf courses in the United States. By 1930, a decade after Bobby Jones won the grand slam in golf and brought the game into the national consciousness, that number had increased to 5,856, more than seven times as many.¹³ More money was spent on golf, in the years following World War I, than on any other sport.¹⁴

⁹ Unpublished manuscript at Kokomo Parks Department.

¹¹ City of Kokomo website located at <http://209.43.125.210/departments/division.asp?fDD=13-76>; Automotive Heritage Museum website located at <http://www.automotiveheritagemuseum.org/history.htm>.

¹² Foster Rhea Dulles, *A History of Recreation*, (NY: Appleton-Century-Crofts, 1965), 319.

¹³ Dulles, *History of Recreation*, 345; Foster Rhea Dulles, *America Learns to Play* (NY & London: D. Appleton-Century Company, 1940), 357.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 358.

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Social reformers of the day wrote that the “‘great problem’ is to create a civilization that does not degenerate under leisure.” Though they worried about “misuses of leisure,” these reformers saw golf as a “constructive use” of leisure time.¹⁵

The game of golf, however, played a unique role in leisure activity. Playing golf and, even more importantly, belonging to a country club was as important a statement of social status as it was a leisure-time activity. The 1920s gave birth to many country clubs around the country. In Indiana’s capital city of Indianapolis, Broadmoor, Meridian Hills and Avalon Hills (later Hillcrest) all organized in the early 1920s.¹⁶ Municipal courses were also built in these years.¹⁷

Golf was a game with “unique status.” It became an extension of the office for businessmen. The leaders of the fast-growing city of Kokomo and the executives and managers of its burgeoning industries undoubtedly made deals and worked out compromises on the links at KCC.

In a city that had experienced a 57 percent population increase between 1910 and 1920, the members of Kokomo Country Club decided the time was right to expand its golf course.¹⁸ In 1923, the club nearly doubled its size with a purchase of 40 acres south of Boulevard, a street they extended between what would become the front and back nines of the golf course.¹⁹ In 1924, the KCC purchased an additional 10 acres of land. Like golf clubs across the nation in this period, the Kokomo Country Club wanted to bring their old 9-hole course into modern times with a unified comprehensive plan that created a new 18-hole course. In 1924, the KCC hired William (Bill) Diddle to create this plan by redesigning their original 9-hole course and adding a “back” 9 south of Boulevard.²⁰

By the following year, 1925, the movers and shakers of Kokomo needed the diversion of their new Kokomo Country Club Golf Course more than ever. After years of industry-created boom times, the city lost two major employers in one year. Both the Haynes and the Apperson automobile factories closed in 1925, displacing between 1,000 and 1,200 workers.²¹ But the canny business leaders of the Kokomo Chamber of Commerce, many

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 67-69.

¹⁶ Council of Social Agencies, *The Leisure of a People: Report of a Recreation Study of Indianapolis*, (1929), 442.

¹⁷ “Country Clubs,” in David J. Bodenhamer and Robert Barrows edited, *Encyclopedia of Indianapolis*.

¹⁸ Phillips, *Indiana in Transition*, 366.

¹⁹ Brad Emmerick, telephone interview with Connie Zeigler, January 6, 2006.

²⁰ Hall, “Kokomo Country Club” video.

²¹ “Kokomo Draws New Industries and Seeks More,” *Indianapolis Star*, 13 July 1927, in “Kokomo” clipping file located at the Indiana State Library.

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of whom were also members of the Kokomo Country Club, stepped up with a plan to keep the city from suffering for long. By 1927, the Chamber of Commerce had loaned almost \$300,000 to existing industries and the Chamber's Industrial Committee had recruited six new industries.²¹

Kokomo began to thrive again and continued to do so throughout the remainder of the 1920s. So did the Kokomo Country Club, and so did the game of golf. Although the Kokomo Country Club was expanding its recreation resources in these years, adding a tennis court and swimming pool, the Bill Diddle golf course remained the club's star attraction. Golf was a star across the nation. In fact, by 1929, \$850,000,000 had been invested in golf courses in the United States, and golfers were paying \$200,000,000 annually to play the game.²² In a study of leisure activities conducted in Indianapolis in 1929, golf was listed more often than any other activity as a hobby of local residents.²³

Women, were newly participating in sports in this era. Golf provided an opportunity for recreation outside the home for homemakers of the day as well as for some single women. Before the 1920s, women did not engage in many sporting activities, but the period between 1920 and the end of the 1930s saw a marked increase in women's participation on the golf links, where they could now play "without reproof."²⁴ Although women may have joined their husbands for golf games in the early years of the course, by 1937, the Kokomo Country Club counted 15 women listed as members under their own names.²⁵

The 1930s plunged the country into the Great Depression, but Kokomo industry managed to survive the depression in relatively good standing. An article in the *Indianapolis News* noted that Kokomo had set a record for industrial expansion in 1937, adding 2,500 jobs to the local workforce. The Chrysler transmission plant and four other industries had either been established or enlarged in the last year. Housing in the city was overtaxed and construction was increasing.

Times looked good for the city and for the Kokomo Country Club. It boasted 210 members by 1937.²⁶ By the end of the decade, a local information compiler wrote about

²¹ Ibid.

²² Foster Rhea Dulles, *America Learns to Play*, 358.

²³ Council of Social Agencies, *The Leisure of a People: Report of a Recreation Study of Indianapolis*, (1929), 59 – 61.

²⁴ Reynold Edgar Carlson, Theodore R. Deppe, Janet R. MacLean, *Recreation in American Life*, (Belmont, Calif.: Wadsworth Publishing Company, Inc., 1972), 49.

²⁵ Membership Statistics, files located at the Kokomo Country Club.

²⁶ Ibid.

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the golf course in 1939, “although a private one, the Kokomo Country Club golf course is one of the finest in the state.”²⁸ The club was continuing to attract the city’s business leaders to its links. The president of the KCC in 1939, E. B. Seward, also happened to be the treasurer of the Kokomo Chamber of Commerce that year.²⁹

If, as Herbert Hoover, then Secretary of Commerce, asserted in the 1920s, “this civilization is not going to depend upon what we do when we work, so much as what we do in our time off,” then Kokomo Country Club provided the perfect venue for Kokomo’s rainmakers, who wished to make “constructive use of leisure.”³⁰ That “constructive use” probably included more than a few business agreements sealed by the time the players reached Bill Diddel’s eighteenth hole.

The golf course at the Kokomo Country Club stands at the intersection of several important trends in American history. It symbolizes the rise of the recreation movement in America; it was dependent on transportation innovations, first of the electric streetcar and later of the automobile; it was the playground of business elites of Kokomo, who undoubtedly used the site as a locale for business and social engagements. The site, which was once a cow pasture, also provided a venue for modern-day exercise in a carefully crafted, but natural appearing environment that represents one of the most significant movements in golf course design.

William (Bill) Diddel

Bill Diddel was a golf course designer in an era of player/architects. In the 1920s, when Diddel began his career, there were no degrees awarded at colleges or universities in golf course architecture. Designers of Diddel’s time used their understanding of how to play the game, and hands-on experience, to create workable course designs. Despite, or perhaps because of, their lack of academic training, their designs were so challenging, that the period from the 1920s through 1937 has become known as the “golden age” of golf course design.

Diddel learned how to lay out, or “route” golf courses by playing on them, and he was a champion player. He won his first tournament when he was a senior at Manual High School in Indianapolis, Indiana. An accomplished athlete at Wabash College in Crawfordsville, Indiana, Diddle lettered in four sports: basketball, baseball, football and

²⁸ Claude Costlow Hutson, *The Howard County Book*, located at the Indiana State Library, Indianapolis. (1939), n.p.

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Council of Social Agencies, *The Leisure of a People: Report of a Recreation Study of Indianapolis*, (1929), 66-67.

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track. Wabash College did not have a golf team, but in his spare time, Diddel managed to win the Indiana Amateur golf championship three years running while he was in college and went on to win twice more, becoming the event's only five-time winner.³¹ After college, Diddel worked at a variety of jobs. His first opportunity at course design came when, as a member of Highland Country Club in Indianapolis, Indiana, he finished designing the course that Willie Parks Jr. had "routed," or laid out.

Diddel's professional work as a course designer began in 1923, when he created the golf course at Ulen Country Club in Lebanon, Indiana. Only a year later, in 1924, he redesigned the Kokomo Country Club course. Diddle created a new 18-hole course at the edge of that growing town. In the same year, he also designed the course for the Avalon Country Club (now Hillcrest Country Club) in Indianapolis. (The Hillcrest Country Club was listed in the National Register of Historic Places in 2004.)

Eventually, Diddel designed over 250 golf courses, most of them in Indiana, including the Meridian Hills Country Club course and one at Fort Benjamin Harrison, both in Indianapolis. In 1928, Diddel purchased 168 acres at the edge of Carmel, Indiana, and, a few years later, after the Great Depression, constructed his own golf course, Woodland. Diddel's "bunkerless" design at Woodland merits mention in golf course history books.³² All of these courses have been extensively redesigned, however, even Diddel's home course at Woodland.

Diddel was a founding member of the American Society of Golf Course Architects and was inducted into its hall of fame. Diddel was president of the society in 1950 and again in 1965.³³ In 1964, Diddel was inducted into the Golf Hall of Fame; fittingly, Kokomo Country Club member, Robert Riesner, was also inducted that year.

Golf course designers express admiration for Diddel's work. Indiana course designer Ron Kern appreciates Diddel's work so much he keeps some Diddel green designs in his archives as reference material for designing his own courses.³⁴ Kern has said that Diddel was a master at using natural terrain and at creative and difficult, yet fair, green designs.

Diddel's designs are also appreciated outside his home state. An internet search for "William Diddel golf course" turns up over 10,200 "hits."³⁵ The website of Schreiner

³¹ "Golf is Bill Diddel's Life—and Livelihood," *Indianapolis News*, June 29, 1964.

³² Geoff Shackelford, *Grounds for Golf* (New York: Thomas Dunne Books, St. Martins Press, 2003), 281.

³³ "William Diddel, Course Designer," *Indianapolis News*, February 25, 1983.

³⁴ Ron Kern, Golf Course Architect, ASGCA, Golf Design Group, Inc., at www.ronkerngolfarch.com/index.html

³⁵ Google Internet search conducted on January 6, 2006.

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Golf, Inc. is one of those that pays a high compliment to the work of Bill Diddel. Hired to renovate an altered Diddel-designed course at the Edgewood Valley Country Club in Illinois, Craig Schreiner writes that Diddel “crafted a unique layout” at this course, much of which has been lost to alterations over the years. According to the site, Schreiner’s firm has been hired to renovate the course and return it to the “original [Diddel] concepts that made the ‘classic golden era’ so successful.”³⁶

Bill Diddel loved the game of golf. He continued to work into his 80s and played into his 90s. He achieved fame for continuing to score below his age up to the time he could no longer play. Diddel died at age 101 in 1983. Unfortunately, few of his courses survived him intact and even fewer remain so today. Fortunately, Diddel’s classic “golden age” design is still extant at the Kokomo County Club golf course.

Bill Diddle Golf Course Design

The period between 1920 and 1937 was the “golden age” of golf course design. Earlier golf courses had been designed to penalize golfers who could not hit a long, straight shot every time. Unlike this “penal school,” which required absolutely straight shots to reach the hole and placed hazards so as to severely penalize stray shots, designs in the golden age era presented players with alternate routes to the pin. Golf course designers in the 1920s and 1930s allowed for more variation and oftentimes rewarded the golfer who deciphered the course’s code, correctly gauging where to hit a first shot so that the ball fell in the optimum location for a successful second shot. This type of course design was known as the “strategic school.”

By the 1920s, most golf course architects were influenced by the strategic school of design. To achieve the lowest score, a golfer playing a strategic course had to take risks; those who took “safe” shots ended with high scores. In strategic courses, such as the one Bill Diddel designed at the Kokomo Country Club, the “avenue . . . that leads to a lower scoring possibility should be more dangerous than the longer, safer route.”³⁷

Strategic golf course design reflected America’s growing appreciation for its natural environment and a particular interest in physical culture. At a time when the United States was instituting a national park system to preserve and showcase nature’s wonders

³⁶ Schreiner Golf Inc. website located at http://www.csrgolf.com/currentnews_edgewood.html.

³⁷ Geoff Shackelford, *Grounds for Golf*, 11.

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and constructing playgrounds to “guide” productive play, strategic golf course design emphasized a park-like atmosphere for structured recreation.³⁸

In an era of America’s love affair with its ingenuity, perhaps best reflected in the new profession of industrial design and the popularization of the automobile, strategic golf course designers required ingenuity from the player to outsmart the course and arrive at the hole in the fewest strokes.

The strategic school reached its zenith between 1920 and 1937. Soon after that, the cumulative effects of the Great Depression effectively halted golf course construction until after the end of World War II.³⁹ When golf course architects began designing courses again after World War II, their designs compensated for new equipment that allowed even average golfers to hit longer shots. These new architects created “freeway” style courses with long, straight fairways and “heroic holes” that placed significant obstacles in the path to the ball. These designs signaled the end of the strategic school.

Bill Diddel, a master practitioner of the strategic school, designed the Kokomo Country Club golf course in 1924. In a 1972 interview in *Indianapolis* magazine, Diddel said, “every hole should present a challenge to a golfer.”⁴⁰ That is a goal he achieved at Kokomo Country Club where his course remains challenging today. Golf pro Cary Hungate says non-members often think they will “beat” the course, because of its short yardage, but they leave it respecting the course’s challenges.⁴¹

A comparison of two Diddel courses created early in his career is illustrative of his mastery of strategic school golf course design. Although Diddel’s courses reveal certain “signature” elements, each was designed to work in its unique landscape and boundary shape. Hallmarks of his design are found on both the Kokomo Country Club Golf Course and the Hillcrest Country Club Golf Course. These include small, fast greens that are hard to hit; clever routing that made use of natural features, such as the stream on the Kokomo course and the naturally rolling terrain at Hillcrest. Significant sloping on his greens and the creation of cross-sloping on some greens are also Diddel trademarks found at both courses. Both courses reveal Diddel’s strategic school design tenets that required a golfer to hit a well-placed first shot in order to achieve the green in the fewest possible strokes, but did not overly penalize less-skilled golfers.

³⁸ Ibid., 281.

³⁹ Ibid., 39.

⁴⁰ Norm Shortridge, “Golf,” *Indianapolis Magazine*, June 1972, 20.

⁴¹ Cary Hungate, telephone interview with Connie Zeigler, January 6, 2006.

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Comparing the routing and the look of these two Diddel courses with rare good integrity, reveals his genius at arriving at clever unique designs suited to the natural landscape at each course. The two courses, for instance, make good use of bunkering, but feature different bunker types. On the rolling landscape at Hillcrest, Diddel used rounded bunkers with raised sides. This type of bunker would have been noticeably “unnatural” on the flat land at Kokomo. So, at the Kokomo Country Club Golf Course, Diddel used flat-bottomed bunkers. His design at Hillcrest is more compressed on the back nine than on the front nine, fitting into the hills and dales that naturally occurred on the landscape. The Kokomo course appears tighter and more compact, working within the confines of a more geometric space. Diddel did not produce cookie-cutter golf courses. His designs at these two golf courses feature signature Diddel elements, but the courses have unique designs that make the most of their specific conditions.

Although golf historians and course designers express an appreciation for the design longevity of strategic courses, few courses of this period remain in pristine condition in the United States. As better golf clubs and high-soaring balls came into use, these courses sometimes lost their ability to challenge; or they simply fell out of fashion. Many of the most famous golf courses from this period, including one of the most famous strategic courses ever designed, Augusta National, have been nearly obliterated by redesigns that stretched out the fairways or added difficult bunkering or large water features.⁴²

Bill Diddel designed golf courses in many states. In Indianapolis, his designs included Hillcrest Country Club (NR 2004), Speedway Golf Course, and Woodland Golf course (originally, a rare example of a bunkerless course). Of these courses, only the Hillcrest course and the Kokomo Country Club course remain largely intact. The others have been completely redesigned.

Kokomo County Club Golf Course retains nearly all of its significant Diddel-design features. Fast, true greens with significant slopes, clever routing that made the most of a small space, judicious contouring, and design that requires the golfer’s thoughtful placement of his or her first shot in order to achieve the green in the fewest strokes are signatures of Diddel’s and reflect the strategic school he championed.

The strategic design course by Bill Diddel at Kokomo County Club was built at a time that is considered the “golden age” of golf course design. The Kokomo Country Club Golf Course is the work of a master designer whose courses once dotted Indiana’s landscape, as well as those of Ohio, Florida, Montana and other states. Most of the

⁴² See Geoff Shackelford, *Grounds for Golf*.

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courses that Diddel designed in Indiana have been altered significantly, bearing little resemblance to the strategic Diddel originals. Fortunately the members of KCC have appreciated their Diddel course, keeping its original design with few alterations. The Kokomo Country Club Golf Course retains integrity and displays the clever craftsmanship of William Diddel still today, more than 80 years after he designed it.

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Verbal Boundary Description

The Legal Tax Parcel Number of the Kokomo Country Club property is 34-09-01-351-001-000-002. The boundaries are shown on the attached map/site plan and correspond to the golf course, excluding the area on which the clubhouse, swimming pool, pro shop, maintenance buildings and parking areas are located. The property is approximately 101 acres.

The section of the property that is excluded is irregular in shape, beginning roughly 1.8 tenths of a mile north of Boulevard Street, the excluded section starts from a curb cut at the end of Wabash Street, where it meets the Kokomo Country Club parking lot. Beginning at this fixed point, west to a point 164 feet west of the curb cut, then north 205 feet, then west 22 feet, then north 56 feet, 8 inches, then roughly east northeast 291 feet, 8 inches, then 629 feet south, back to the starting point.

Boundary Justification

The boundary described corresponds approximately to the property on which the golf course lies. The boundary is approximately that for which the legal tax parcel number is assigned. However, the verbal boundary description excludes the portion of the property on which lie the Kokomo Country Club clubhouse, maintenance buildings, pro shop, swimming pool and parking areas. These buildings and structures are not included within the boundaries of the historic golf course.

Kokomo Country Club 1937 Aerial



Kokomo Country Club

Map generated 2006

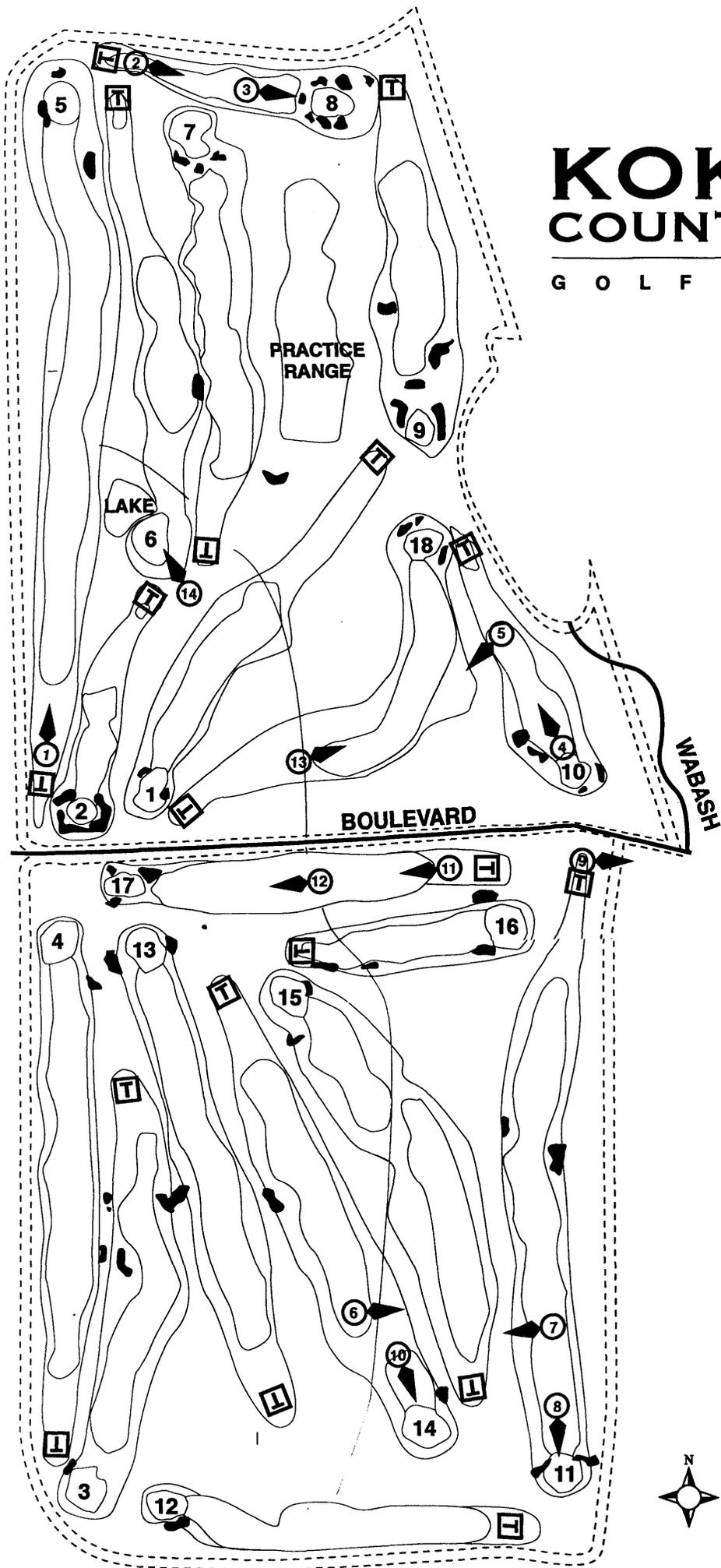


0 0.1 0.2 0.4 Miles



KOKOMO COUNTRY CLUB

G O L F C O U R S E



KEY:

	PHOTOGRAPHIC MARKER
	SAND TRAPS
	TEES
	GREENS
	BOUNDARY
	STREAM
	ROAD



SCALE: 1" = 200'