

Cinnabar Hills & golf history

President Eisenhower's green jacket from Augusta National, golf balls that were used a hundred years ago and full size replicas of all four major championship trophies – they're all part of a unique golf collection open to the public in Northern California.

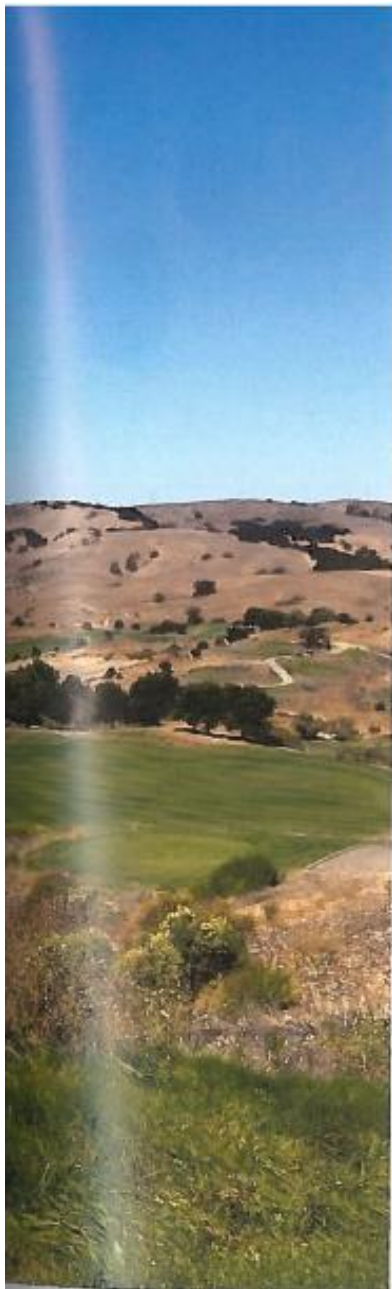
WORDS: PETER WILLIAMS

1
Cinnabar Hills Golf Club, San Jose. 27 holes, a combination of 6 different 18's. The best golf in the Silicon Valley.

It's a part of the world with many famous golf courses and the home area to some of the game's best players. Pebble Beach and San Francisco's Olympic Club and Harding Park are nearby. Johnny Miller and Ken Venturi were both born and raised in the area.

But just south of San Jose, tucked away in a quiet countryside setting not far from the venerable old Route 101 is Cinnabar Hills Golf Club, a 27 hole public facility developed and owned by local property investor Lee Brandenburg.

Now 86 years old, Lee Brandenburg has been a golfer since he was in high school. For much of that 70-year involvement with the game, he's also been a golf collector.



So when he opened Cinnabar just under 20 years ago, a key part of the clubhouse planning was room to house what had become a quite remarkable and extensive collection.

"As you get older, you just get more and more stuff from more and more people" he says.

The Brandenburg Historical Golf Museum is displayed in cabinets in two large rooms in the Cinnabar dining and bar area. It means an after round drink and meal like no other because of the distraction of the memorabilia, artefacts and publications which any golfing buff will just become engrossed in.

Among the most recognisable items in the collection is the Augusta National member's green

jacket once owned by former US President Dwight Eisenhower.

Considering that the jackets are not to be worn anywhere but at the club or even leave the Georgia property at any time, it's extraordinary that such a garment, and one owned by such a famous Augusta member, has made its way across the United States.

Apparently sometime in the 1950s, during Eisenhower's presidency, Augusta National replaced many of the members' jackets. Most of the old ones were destroyed. Some were not and this one's provenance is authenticated by the individualised embroidering on the inside pocket. Lee Brandenburg, who spent time in the military and met Eisenhower, acquired it from a collector more than forty years ago.

(For an idea of value, another Augusta green jacket was recently sold on an internet auction for more than \$US135,000).

Eisenhower's green jacket is mounted as the centrepiece of an area in the museum dedicated to the Masters. Among other items are an original programme from the first ever tournament in 1934 – then known as just the Annual Invitation Tournament at Augusta National – and a souvenir mounted wall clock from the same year.

The museum's replica trophies from the four major championships are just stunning. How such detailed copies of the most famous trophies in golf came to be made, let alone all finish up in the same collection, is a story way too complicated to tell. Suffice to say, it's very hard to spot the difference between the real thing and what you see at Cinnabar Hills.

The museum also plays tribute to the Ryder Cup. There's a replica of the cup itself plus displays of team clothing and gear, including jackets worn by Walter Hagen and Tony Jacklin during their time as team captains. →

Considering that the jackets are not to be worn anywhere but at the club, or even leave the Georgia property at any time, it's extraordinary that such a garment, and one owned by such a famous Augusta member, has made its way across the United States.



Former US President Dwight Eisenhower, Augusta National green jacket.



Jacklin has long been a friend of Lee Brandenburg. But it's not well known that the former British and US Open champion is an accomplished artist too, and some examples of his work are on display at Cinnabar.

As well as the major championship and Ryder Cup replicas, there's also one of the US Amateur Championship trophy and an intriguing new addition to the collection – the Harry Vardon Cup.

Not to be confused with the Vardon Trophies awarded by both the US and European PGA Tours for the year's best player, the Harry Vardon Cup is from the South Herts Golf Club in London where the six time Open Champion Vardon was the professional for 35 years up till his death in 1937.

Bobby Locke, later to win the Open Championship himself four times, is engraved as the winner of this Harry Vardon Cup in 1936. The South African must have been a teenage amateur at the time, probably on his first foray out of South Africa and was most likely presented this cup by Vardon himself.

As Lee Brandenburg likes to say "history never gets old." The course

and museum owner is a history buff, and believes in the importance of telling stories from the past to understand where we are today.

So the Cinnabar Hills Museum has a display of golf equipment going back to the 1700s. The evolution of clubs, bags and especially balls – from the days of the feathery to the Pro V1 – is an education in itself.

There are cabinets paying tribute to a host of golfing legends like Sam Snead, Byron Nelson, Gene Sarazen, the local star Ken Venturi and Lee Brandenburg's friend and US Open winner Billy Casper. There is space dedicated to Arnold Palmer, Jack Nicklaus, Gary Player and Tom Watson, who went to college at nearby Stanford.

One of the more hilarious - and certainly unique - pieces is a picture of Palmer and Nicklaus at a tournament party, probably in the early 1970s. Nicklaus has a blonde wig on and the two superstars are dancing with each other!

My experience at the Brandenburg Museum was sadly way too short. After playing at Cinnabar, we had lunch, a drink and a wander around the displays for an hour or so. But it's a place where you need a way



The Brandenburg Historical Golf Museum opened in conjunction with Cinnabar Hills Golf Club in August 1998.

more time than that.

If you're playing, give yourself a full day for golf and the museum experience. Even if you're only going for the museum, anyone with an interest in golf history will be well absorbed for three hours or more.

There's a strong Kiwi connection too. Cinnabar's Director of Golf Adam Schiro is a regular visitor to this country every January and his father John, who has also been here often, is the part time curator of the museum.

Golfing holidays usually consist of playing as many courses as you can in the allotted time. But a golfing holiday to Northern California can be a lot more than that.

You can play Pebble Beach, Harding Park or nearby Cordevalle Resort. But if you're in the great San Francisco – Silicon Valley area, then time at Cinnabar Hills is worth a serious consideration.

The course itself is challenging and good fun.

But combine your round with a visit to the Brandenburg Museum and you'll considerably enhance your appreciation of golf, where it came from and the people and places that made it. ■