

How Golf Began in the Northwest

The playing of two USGA Championships in the Pacific Northwest last summer again focussed attention on the lively state of golfing activity in that picturesque and hospitable section of the country.

Golf appears to have discovered the Pacific Northwest within the last two decades, and two Amateur Championships, two Professional Golfers' Association Championships, two Amateur Public Links Championships, one Women's Amateur Championship, one Women's Open Championship and a Ryder Cup Match have been held there since 1933.

Yet the Pacific Northwest discovered golf sixty years ago, and there are now some 140 courses in Washington and Oregon alone. The golf history of the area is just about as lustrous as that of the East, where the game was first adopted in this country sixty-six years ago.

Alexander Baillie, a young Scot from Brechin, Forfarshire, introduced golf into the Pacific Northwest.

When he was 21, the Balfour-Guthrie Company, Ltd., sent him to the new world to open a branch office in Portland, in 1880, and he opened another in Tacoma, in 1888. In his office force at Tacoma were some thirty persons, half of them homesick Scots. Baillie felt he could relieve some of their homesickness if he could establish in Tacoma the game which so many of them had played in Scotland. So in 1894 he obtained a five-year lease on 280 acres just outside the suburban village of Edison and organized the Tacoma Golf Club, the first permanent club in the Northwest.

Also on the West Coast

This was, coincidentally, the year in which golf hit other places on the West Coast. Some golf was played at Portland

in 1894; A. T. Huggins, S. G. Bowley, David Norrie and Joseph Peebles are said to have introduced the game on a vacant lot on Powell Valley Road. However, the Waverley Golf Club, site of the 1952 Women's Amateur Championship, was not organized there until 1896. Golf also reportedly was played at the Erlington Golf Club, in Seattle, in 1894; Erlington passed, however, and the Seattle Golf Club, which was established in 1900 and was the site of the 1952 Amateur Championship, is the oldest permanent club in Seattle.

By 1903, golf was sufficiently established in the Northwest so that the Seattle and Victoria Golf Clubs could institute their home-and-home matches which have continued to this day. This is an American international series apparently exceeded in age only by that between The Country Club, Brookline, Mass., and the Royal Montreal Golf Club, which was started in 1898. Through 1952, Seattle and Victoria played 43 matches, Seattle winning 25 times and Victoria 17 times, with one tie.

The land which the Tacoma Golf Club leased in Edison cost one dollar a year. With this nominal fixed charge, the initiation fee was set at \$2.50 and the dues at 25 cents a month. Baillie became president and held the office for ten years. The other charter members were O. F. Cosper, James Dishart, G. W. Dishart, James Gillison, S. Medlicott, J. S. Merrill, C. S. Milliken, Ralph Stacy, John Arkley, John S. Baker, Dr. H. Allan and Frederick Watson.

Four red-shingled houses, set side by side, formed the first clubhouse. The Eisenbeis family, which owned the property, lived in one of the end cottages, Eisenbeis being employed as a general caretaker and Mrs. Eisenbeis as cook. Another building served as a club room and the other two as locker rooms. There were, of course, no lights or heat.

Baillie and H. J. Bremner laid out the course, and Baillie imported thirty sets of men's and women's clubs, from the Forgan firm in Scotland, and twenty-five dozen gutta-percha balls. The clubs were entered at the Tacoma Customs Office as agricultural implements on the advice of the bewildered Collector.

The first tournament of which there is official report was held on November 29, 1894, and was won by J. B. Maclean. The contestants, however, were largely the charter members, and Baillie had little success at the start in interesting other Tacomans in the game.

Word from the Asylum

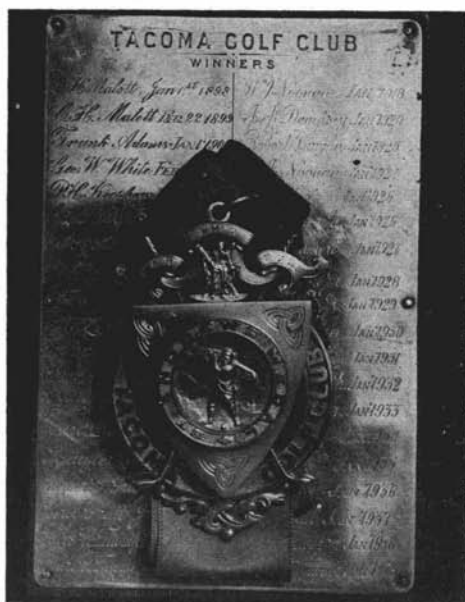
In fact, on the day after that first tournament, a tall, somber individual wearing a black frock coat called upon Baillie and introduced himself as Dr. Redpath, superintendent of the Steilacoom Asylum. It is an interesting commentary on the status of golf in the community that Baillie became apprehensive. Dr. Redpath's mission, however, proved simply to induce Baillie to build a nine-hole course on the Asylum grounds. There were, Dr. Redpath pointed out, sixty harmless inmates who would be available as caddies. As a result of Dr. Redpath's visit, another course was built at the Asylum, and a tournament was held there in 1895. In a day of horses, bicycles or heel and toe, however, the Asylum course was too far from Tacoma to survive.

The Tacoma golfers hardly played golf as we know it today. The course was primitive and filled with gravel and stones. It was open to cattle who roamed the course at will, and Ralph Stacy commented years later that he could still recall the hollow sound of a ball thudding into a cow. Whenever a ball was lost, play stopped. The balls came from Scotland by sailing ships which rounded the Horn, and they would have been precious even in a club not composed almost entirely of Scots.

The activity was sufficient, however, to impress Sir Robert Balfour, of the Bal-

four-Guthrie firm, when he visited Tacoma in 1896. Sir Robert was an ardent golfer, and on his return to Scotland he had a gold St. Andrews medal made for the Tacoma Golf Club. This was placed in competition for the first time on New Year's Day, 1898, and was won by Charles H. Malott, an Edison boy who had learned the game as a Tacoma Golf Club caddie, with 95-2-93. Malott also won the second competition on Washington's birthday, 1899. The medal has remained a treasured possession of the Club ever since, even though it was put away so carefully in 1911 that it could not be found until 1938. Forty-seven winners have had their names inscribed on its container. C. D. Hunter, Jr., has won it six times.

In age in the Northwest, this medal is second only to the Blyth Medal, which went into play at the Waverley Golf Club in the spring of 1897. Its origin was similar to that of the Balfour Medal. Edward



L. D. DaPonte

The gold St. Andrews Medal of the Tacoma Country and Golf Club, Tacoma, Wash. It was donated by Sir Robert Balfour, of Scotland, after a visit to Tacoma in 1896, and is still played for annually.



The course and clubhouse of the Tacoma Country and Golf Club on American Lake

L. Blyth, of North Berwick, Scotland, presented it to encourage that new club after visiting his nephew, Percy Blyth, a Waverley member. It was played for twice a year through 1903, the first winners being R. B. Miller, with 103, and Lt. H. P. McCain, with 98. Competitions then were spasmodic until 1930, when it resumed its status as the Club's most honored trophy. It is awarded now to the winner of the handicap tournament held on the day of the annual meeting each September.

Tacoma did, however, entertain the first Pacific Northwest Golf Association Championships in April, 1899. The PPGA had been organized during the winter of the same year, when the only 18-hole courses in the area were at Tacoma, Portland and Victoria, B. C., yet a hundred visitors came from Oregon and British Columbia for the play. Malott, twice winner of the Balfour Medal, defeated A. H. Goldfinch, of Victoria, in the final of the Amateur, and Mrs. Melbourne Bailey, also of Tacoma, won the Women's Championship. PPGA Championships also were held at Edison again in 1902 and 1906.

The American Lake Site

By 1904, though, a relocation of the Tacoma Golf Club became inevitable. Baillie's campaign to interest Tacomans in the game was belatedly showing symptoms of success, and the owner of the Edison land was anxious to convert that course to house lots to accommodate the expansion of the community.

The first meeting of founders of the Tacoma Country and Golf Club was held in the Union Club on October 13, 1904, and in subsequent meetings a decision was reached to purchase the R. B. Lehman place and surrounding land to a total of 280 acres on the eastern shore of American Lake. Baillie was elected president of the new organization, which was joined by a group of young Tacoma businessmen, and conducted the successful negotiations for the new land. On January 21, 1905, the new club was christened and new officers were elected. Charles Hyde became president and Baillie vice-president.

Construction of a clubhouse was completed in June, 1905, practically on the

site of the present clubhouse. In June, also, thirty-six members participated in a drawing for lots for cottages and tent sites, to be used as summer accommodations on the club grounds. A spur line of the Tacoma Railroad and Power Company was constructed into the club grounds in 1906, and this, with the advent of automobiles, stimulated interest among Tacomans.

Yet the new course grew slowly over prairie grass, stones and gravel. Available money had been used to build the clubhouse, and a proper water system for the clubhouse and course had to be financed as soon as possible. There were many years between 1905 and 1923 when only one hole could be added or improved, and the Edison course remained in play through 1906.

On the evening of June 22, 1909, the new club received a hard blow. While many of the members were attending John Drew's opening in "Jack Straws" at the Tacoma Theater, the new clubhouse burned to the ground. An assessment and a bond issue were required to complete another clubhouse, but the 213 members proved equal to the task and the formal opening took place on October 8, 1910. The exterior of the colonial building, with its broad veranda overlooking the lake, has not been perceptibly changed since that day. The following week the PPGA Championships were held for the first time on the American Lake course of the Tacoma Country and Golf Club.

The first Junior Week was held in August, 1911, and appears to have been one of the earliest programs of its kind. At the Junior Week dinner, in 1929, D. J. Young, then president, commented: "Junior Week is a unique innovation in this club and has proved its value by being adopted by many other clubs."

In 1911 Jim Barnes came to the club as professional, followed later by Mortie Dutra and Chuck Congdon, and in 1913 Harry Vardon and Ted Ray played their memorable exhibition at Tacoma before a gallery of 1,000, indicating the keen interest that had developed in the game.

Charles Evans, Jr., Robert A. Gardner and some other crack amateurs of the day played a series of exhibitions all over the Northwest in 1912 at the invitation of A. S. Kerry, of Seattle, popularly known as "the father of golf" in the area and later a member of the USGA Executive Committee. These did more to stimulate the game there, and so did the advent of H. Chandler Egan, a multiple winner of the Amateur and Western Amateur Championships, who left Chicago and purchased an apple orchard in Medford, Ore.

In 1924, Dr. O. F. Willing represented the Northwest on the Walker Cup Team, and he was followed by Don Moe, Jack Westland, Chandler Egan, Scotty Campbell, Harry Givan and Bud Ward.

By 1926 golf made such strides in the Northwest that Mr. Kerry was able to gather a team of eight Pacific Northwest amateurs which beat, 8 to 0, a team chosen from all other entrants in the Western Amateur at the White Bear Yacht Club, in St. Paul. The final of that Western was all-Northwest, too, Frank Dolp, of Portland, defeating Bon Stein, of Seattle. C. D. Hunter, Jr., was a member of that team and became the Tacoma club's best known player.

At the annual meeting of the Tacoma Club in 1923, funds were solicited to initiate various improvements in the course. Scott Z. Henderson, president at the time, conceived the notion of inviting substantial subscriptions from certain affluent members for the remodeling of a specific holes and in return permitting the donor to name the hole he improved.

One of those approached was the same Mr. Kerry, a non-resident member. In a period of intense civic rivalry between Seattle and Tacoma over Mount Rainier, he provided funds to remodel the eighth hole with the proviso that it be named "Mount Rainier." Kerry's Seattle friends roared with laughter at this sly coup, until Henderson restored Tacoma's equilibrium by accepting with the remark that he considered no name more appropriate for a hole in the ground than "Mount Rainier."