

# FINDLAY S. DOUGLAS - A RECORD IN SERVICE

by

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**T**HERE are various ways of making a contribution to golf. Many contribute by the excellence of their play. Some contribute by the exemplary quality of their sportsmanship. A few contribute by administrative service, unselfishly providing the stage on which the great players and sportsmen enact their roles.

In the year when Cdr. Albert K. Murray's handsome portrait of Findlay S. Douglas was hung in the clubhouse of the National Golf Links of America, Southampton, N.Y., to honor his contributions to that Club, it is timely to recall what he has contributed in all three phases, but particularly in administrative service.

We know of no one whose career spans a broader range.

## *Oldest Living Amateur Champion*

It is fairly common knowledge that Findlay Douglas, who will be 83 next November, is the oldest living Amateur Champion, having won in 1898. In the five years from 1897 through 1901, as a matter of impressive fact, he was Champion once, runner-up twice and semi-finalist twice. He also won the Metropolitan New York Amateur in 1901 and 1903. In his only appearance in the Open Championship, in 1903, he tied for eighth and won the amateur's gold medal.

Even now he looks the part of a golfer—tall, erect, with the twinkle in his eye which bespeaks his enjoyment of the sociability of golf and with the burr in his speech which reveals his Scottish birth.

It was no coincidence that, when friends asked him to pose for the portrait, he insisted that it be "a picture of an old-time golfer" and that he be shown wearing his blue Royal and Ancient Golf Club jacket and holding his hickory-shafted driving iron. He continues to play regularly at the Blind Brook Club, in Port Chester, N. Y., with hickory-shafted clubs.

Yet he takes his greatest pride in what he has been able to contribute. Findlay Douglas was willing to give not just money, which sometimes is not difficult, but also time, thought and effort, which invariably constitute a more generous gift.

## *Former USGA President*

One of the two Amateur Champions who have risen to the presidency of the United States Golf Association (the late William C. Fownes, Jr., was the other), he came up through the Metropolitan Golf Association to that office in 1929 and 1930 in time to present to that other great amateur golfer, Robert T. Jones, Jr., the Open and Amateur trophies which formed a part of the immortal "Grand Slam" of 1930.

This would have been a fitting climax to ten years of service with the Metropolitan Golf Association and five years of service with the United States Golf Association, but it was not the end.

When he passed into the ranks of the seniors, he pursued the Championship of the United States Seniors' Golf Association until he won it with a record score of 74-74—148 in 1932. The record, four strokes lower than any previous score in the tournament, came in spite of 7s on the long tenth hole in both rounds and it endured for eleven years.

As a senior, also, Findlay Douglas started again up the administrative ladder and became president of the United States Seniors' Golf Association from 1937 to 1941, as long a tenure as any president has had.

There was, of course, more—much more. It is unlikely that any man can match this record of giving of oneself:

President, University Golf Club, St. Andrews, Scotland, 1896.

Captain, St. Andrews University golf team, 1896.

Green Committee, Nassau Country Club, Glen Cove, N. Y.

Captain, New York Lesley Cup Team, 1905 et seq.

Original Founder, Director and Chairman Tournament Committee, National Golf Links of America, Southampton, N. Y., 1909 et seq.

Original Founder and Chairman Green Committee, Blind Brook Club, Port Chester, N. Y. 1916 et seq.

Executive Committee, Metropolitan Golf Association, 1910-1914, 1925-1926.

President, Metropolitan Golf Association, 1922-1924.

Chairman, Nominating Committee, Metropolitan Golf Association, 1927.

President, Robert Burns Society, 1927.

Board of Managers, St. Andrews Society, 1928-1931.

Vice-President, United States Golf Association, 1926-1928.

President, United States Golf Association, 1929-1930.

Chairman, Nominating Committee, United States Golf Association, 1941:

President, United States Seniors' Golf Association, 1937-1941.

Chairman, Nominating Committee, United States Seniors' Golf Association, 1945.

President, Twenty Club, National Golf Links of America, Southampton, N. Y., 1918 to date.

#### *Native of St. Andrews*

Born in St. Andrews, Scotland on No-



ember 17, 1874, Findlay Douglas was of course a player first. As a student of Madras College there, he won the medal for boys under 14 and subsequently the medal for boys 14 and over, playing the Old Course with the gutty ball. When he went on to St. Andrews University, which he attended from 1892 to 1896, he was a member of the University golf team.

This led to his first administrative service in golf, the presidency of the University Golf Club and the captancy of the University team in 1896, but his responsibilities by no means dulled his game. While holding office, he won the Gold Medal put up by the Royal and Ancient Golf Club for competition among members of local clubs, and the runner-up was Laurie Auchterlonie, at the time an amateur, but only six years later the United States Open Champion.

Having established himself as a golfer of promise in the homeland of the game, he decided, upon graduation, to visit his oldest brother, Robert, who had emigrated to the United States. On March 20, 1897 he landed in New York, a set of clubs grasped hopefully under one arm.

#### *Early Contacts in America*

Although the game had been established here ten years earlier, the average citizen of Manhattan had little information about it, and it was not easy for a young Scot to find out where he could play. Eventually,



Findlay S. Douglas in his hey-day. He learnt to play at St. Andrews, Scotland, in the pre-Vardon days—notice the two-handed grip. There is nothing old-fashioned, however, about his position at impact which incorporates all the modern edicts.

this particular Scot found his way to the A. G. Spalding & Bros. store in Nassau Street, one of the few places where golf equipment was sold, and struck an acquaintance with Charles S. Cox, the manager. In the course of the conversation, it is possible that the young Douglas may have put his best foot forward in describing his game. If so, it was good for American golf that he did. Cox's curiosity was aroused to the extent that he invited him to play on the public course which had been opened three years before in Van Cortlandt Park with H. L. Fitzpatrick of the New York Sun and Chappie Mayhew of the New York Herald, two of the first golf writers. It was Findlay Douglas' first game in this country and the day was in April, 1897.

Naturally, he passed the test and in a short time found other courses and other golfing friends. Through two of them, Julian W. and Ed B. Curtiss, he joined the Fairfield County Golf Club, in Greenwich, Conn. (now the Greenwich Country Club). The dues, incidentally, were \$25.

A popular form of competition in that day was the team match, and talented young Scots were eagerly sought. As a member of the Fairfield County team he played regularly that first summer in week-end matches against Knollwood, Ardsley, St. Andrews, Brooklawn, the Island Golf Club (later the Garden City Golf Club), Dyker Meadow, Tuxedo and other early clubs in Metropolitan New York. And his success was such that, when autumn rolled around, he took a whirl in the Amateur Championship. He qualified with 182 at the Chicago Golf Club but in the semi-finals lost to H. J. Whigham, who was on his way to a second successive championship.

Despite his quick success in golf, Findlay Douglas was anything but a career golfer. The only time he could give to golf in his early years here was on week-ends and during the two-week vacations which he saved for championships. Yet on that regimen he won the Amateur in 1898, defeating Walter J. Travis in the semi-final. The following year, 1899, he again defeated Travis in the semi-final but lost to Herbert M. Harriman in the final. In 1900 he gained the final for the third year in



*Photo by Courtesy of the  
Grand Central Art Galleries*

**Commander Albert K. Murray's striking portrait of Findlay S. Douglas which now hangs in the clubhouse of the National Golf Links of America, Southampton, N.Y.**

succession, but this time Travis took his measure.

Those were the glory days of early American golf, and Findlay Douglas had a key role in nearly all the golfing activities around New York. He was, for example, captain of a series of New York teams in the annual Lesley Cup matches against Boston and Philadelphia, and the membership of his first team in 1905 makes particularly interesting reading. Other members were: Archie Graham, Charles B. Macdonald, Ralph T. Peters, Percy R. Pyne, II, Charles B. Seely, Jerome D. Travers, Walter J. Travis, John M. Ward and Harold Wilcox.

#### *His Horizon Widens*

They were days of fine old clubs, too, and Mr. Douglas was associated with several. In 1900 he joined the Nassau Country Club, on Long Island, where Alex Smith was the professional and where Jerry Travers played most of his golf. And in 1901 he joined the Apawamis Club, in Westchester County, after winning the Metropolitan Amateur there.

Findlay Douglas' long association with the National Golf Links of America started about 1908 when Charles B. Macdonald formally organized a group of 70 Founders,

## USGA FILM LIBRARY

Latest addition to the USGA Film Library is a 17½ minute, full color 16 mm. presentation entitled "Golf's Longest Hour." Filmed at the Oak Hill Country Club, Rochester, N. Y., during the 1956 Open Championship, it covers the closing stages when Cary Middlecoff had to wait it out while Ben Hogan, Julius Boros and Ted Kroll were striving in vain to beat his score.

Other films in the Library are:

"Play Them As They Lie," a 16 mm. color production, running for 16½ entertaining minutes in which Johnny Farrell, the Open Champion of 1928, acts as intermediary between Wilbur Mulligan, a beginner of unimpeachable integrity, and Joshua P. Slye, a past master in the art of breaking the Rules. The film was made at the Baltusrol Golf Club, Springfield, N. J., where Farrell is professional.

"Inside Golf House" gives the viewer an opportunity to see the many interesting exhibits in "Golf House," USGA headquarters in New York, and to re-live golf triumphs of the past with many of the game's immortals. The film is a 16 mm. black and white production and runs 28 minutes.

"The Rules of Golf—Etiquette" also has proved popular. The film stresses the importance of etiquette by portrayal of various violations of the code in the course of a family four-ball match. Ben Hogan appears in several scenes, and Robert T. Jones, Jr., makes the introductory statement. A 16 mm. color production, the film has a running time of 17½ minutes.

The distribution of all four prints is handled by National Educational Films, Inc., 165 West 46th Street, New York 36, N. Y., which produced the films in cooperation with the USGA. The rental is \$20 per film; \$35 for two; \$50 for three, or \$60 for four, in combination at the same time, including the cost of shipping prints to the renter.

each of whom contributed \$1,000 to construct a classic American course which would compare with the best in Great Britain. Findlay Douglas was one of the original Founders and, incidentally, of the 70 only he and Stephen C. Clark remain alive.

The first rounds were played at the National in 1909, and the wonderful links overlooking Peconic Bay, near the tip of Long Island, became his favorite week-end retreat for years thereafter. The custom of National members in those days was to gather in New York, ride down to Southampton together in a Pullman for a week-

end of golf and bridge and return to the city in the same sociable Pullman. As a regular at the Club, Findlay Douglas became, of course, active in its management as Chairman of the Tournament Committee and later as a member of its Board of Directors and its Executive Committee. He is still a member of both the Board and the Executive Committee.

Incidentally, the National never held a club championship until 1934, and when it did, Findlay Douglas was 60 years old. Nevertheless, he won it, with an 81 in a high wind. He won again later with a 74, which was more like it as a score.

### *A Hand in Architecture*

A few years after the organization of the National, three older members of the Apawamis Club came to the weary but reluctant conclusion that they needed a course which would be easier to walk. The three were E. C. Converse, W. Hamblen Childs and Frederick S. Wheeler. They assembled a group of 160 Founders, of which Findlay Douglas was one, and organized the Blind Brook Club, in nearby Port Chester, in 1916. Although this was to be unashamedly an easy-walking course for older men, it was to be designed and built by Charles B. Macdonald and his assistant Seth Raynor. However, Macdonald and Raynor lost interest in building a course in that conception, so Findlay Douglas, as Chairman-designate of the Green Committee, built it with the assistance of George Low, the professional at the Baltusrol Golf Club and an architect of parts.

With the advance in his own years, and Blind Brook's greater convenience, it has become more and more Findlay Douglas' favorite retreat for a single day of golf. He seldom gets down to the National for the golfing week-ends anymore, except for the outings of the Twenty Club, which twenty National members organized in the waning days of World War I and of which he has been the first and only president. But he does travel out to Blind Brook about every week in season and plays nine holes, without, he insists, the aid of an electric cart.

"I would play eighteen," he adds happily, "but the old fellows I play with can't go more than nine."