

Golfers Today Are Reaping the Benefits of the Green Section

by ARTHUR A. SNYDER

IT IS HARD FOR ME to realize that I have been connected with the game of golf for all but 20 years of its history in this country. The first permanent golf course in this country was built in 1887. I started to caddie in 1907 when I was nine years old. Three years later I was working on the golf course at every opportunity when I was not in school.

I loved all phases of the game. I served ten years as a combination pro-greenkeeper, but golf course maintenance was my choice for a career. Today a young man who makes that choice will attend a school where he will major in turf culture, but in my younger days no such courses were available.

Many changes have taken place in my lifetime, both in playing golf and in course maintenance. The golf ball as we know it today came into existence five years before I began to caddie, yet many gutta percha balls and "silk pneumatic" balls were still in use as practice balls.

MAINTENANCE BUILDINGS and equipment differed greatly from those in use today. A stable to house the horses needed on a course was a necessity. It also was used as the headquarters for the maintenance crew.

Mowing greens was the hardest job on the golf course until power mowers were introduced in the 1930s. The early greens mowers were quite heavy, having two large steel wheels which drove the reel. A strong man could mow only six to nine greens a day.

Fairways were cut with horse-drawn three-gang units. The driver walked alongside all day and was in danger of being struck by a ball every time a player came by.

Topdressing materials were scattered over the greens with a shovel, then raked into the turf by hand. A large crew was needed for this job.

The rough was mowed two to four times a season by a horse-drawn sickle-bar mower. Grass clippings were cleaned up by a horse-drawn hay rake or raked by hand.

Banks and ditches were mowed by men using scythes. Good scythemen were an important part of the grounds crew for there were no rotary mowers of any kind until after World War II.

EARTHWORMS WERE a serious pest of putting greens. They brought huge mounds of moist soil to the surface of the green during the night. It was necessary to whip each green with a bamboo pole before mowing to prevent the smearing of

the worm casts over the surface of the green. But whipping did not completely eliminate the smearing and the surface was often marred by the remains of the cast.

To rid the greens of earthworms, corrosive sublimate (bichloride of mercury) was applied to the surface of the green and washed in with great quantities of water. A swirling mass of worms soon appeared on the surface where they were swept into piles, then shovelled into wheelbarrows and hauled away.

Prior to the start of the USGA Green Section's work at Arlington Experimental Station, fertilizers in most common use were various manures such as sheep, chicken, horse, and cow, also dried blood, tankage, ground bone and cotton seed meal. Early work at Arlington proved that inorganic materials would do as good a job as the organic fertilizers then available and at a much lower cost.

HOWEVER, THE PHYSICAL condition of the inorganics often presented problems. Ammonium sulfate, for example, came in burlap bags with a 200-pound capacity. The condition of the burlap deteriorated rapidly from the action of humidity on the sulfur which created a mild form of sulphuric acid. Unless the material was used quickly, we were

Mixing up chemicals for insect and disease control treatments in 1926.



Miracle of the Green Pastures

by HERB GRAFFIS

WHAT YOU HAVE READ and heard about the Green Section of the United States Golf Association in its 60 years of extraordinary and vast service compares with the publicity about the playing of golf like a needle lost in the grass of the 1,290,000 acres of this nation's golf courses.

Yet the Green Section has had a more positive, beneficial effect on American economic and aesthetic life than any other element of American sports.

THE LITTLE-KNOWN public service role of the Green Section is a magnificent story that reaches beyond golf. For instance:

Who pioneered the roadside grass planting that reduced accidents and made the journey prettier? The Green Section.

left with a mixture of disintegrated burlap and ammonium sulfate. To make matters worse, the fertilizer became rock hard as it dried. The only way to make it fit to use was to dissolve the fertilizer in water, then screen out the burlap and other impurities, then apply it to turf in solution.

If the fertilizer was used before the burlap disintegrated, it was caked in the bag so badly that it could not be applied dry without being broken up and run through a fine screen. The Ford Motor Company put on the market in the mid-1930s the first ammonium sulfate that could be broadcast after being poured directly from the bag into the spreader. It was given the trade name NAGA, which stood for the first national organization of golf course superintendents, The National Association of Greenkeepers of America.

I could go on and on, telling of how we mixed calomel and bichloride of mercury with sand or Milorganite, breaking up the lumps of mercury with the aid of the family rolling pin. The mixture was then applied to the greens with a cyclone seeder for the control of fungus disease. Or how we handled DDT and 2,4-D dust until our faces were coated with the powder. Old-time greenkeepers did many things in a reckless, haphazard way, but it was because no better way was known.

One thing that we did know, though, was that more and more turf research work was needed. The Green Section played the principal role and we were most grateful. With time, the universities and agricultural stations became involved. We fought hard for it and supported it in every way possible. Today golf course superintendents, as well as golfers, are reaping the benefits.

Who gave Americans pride in having lawns more beautiful than those of the stately homes of England? The Green Section.

Who encouraged and helped the wonder-working turfgrass research efforts of state agricultural research stations into one of the most useful showings of turf technology? The Green Section.

Who gave agricultural schools impetus in developing procedures for landscaping and other satellites of the golf course maintenance basic work? The Green Section.

Where did the work start that converted factory areas into parks, beautifying the communities and establishing a more pleasant, productive atmosphere for the workers? The Green Section.

Where did the picture of better grass for the playgrounds and parks to the graveyards really begin? The Green Section.

The pioneer greenkeepers and pro-greenkeepers were artists who loved the land. There are volumes of untold stories about their sensitivity, their devotion to the land, their capacity for working wonders with little money and their foresight as environmentalists.

VETERAN GOLFERS have seen many fairways where sticks signalled bird nests for mowers to avoid. Any sign of danger to the natural life was heeded instantly by those practical pioneers in protecting the eye-pleasing and soul-saving and future of the so-called environment.

Most other sports need only a broom or a tape measure to provide its playground, but golf needs and uses God's greenery and unbounded beauty. And so, maybe, God alone knows the Green Section.

Turfgrass Honor Roll

Leaders in the turfgrass industry who have received graduate level financial support from the USGA Green Section Research and Education Fund include:

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