Golf course equipment: A history of progress, initiative

A retired director of publications at GCSAA, Clay Loyd is an active member of GCSAA's Historical Preservation Committee and has written a book about the association's history.

A historical perspective of the golf course greenkeeper

By MEL LUCAS

As we enter into a new century where vast new horizons await all professions, we too must be prepared to advance with new technology and research. The last 25 years have pushed our industry into the most robust time a golf course superintendent has ever experienced.

Every segment of our earning power has been dramatically influenced by mowing equipment, irrigation technology, hybridization of turfgrass cultivars, bio-stimulants, putting green construction, fertilizer and chemical specificity toward fine-turf management, educational opportunities through journals, conferences geared toward turf care and the strong promotional activities of the Golf Course Superintendents Association of America (GCSAA).

We must take note that in no small way, the environmental movement has helped us a great deal.

How did we get to this point? We should reflect on our humble beginning. Oftentimes superintendents refer to ourselves as a bit of art and a bit of science. This is, of course, preying the choir. Let us trust that the choir is well informed as to where we are and from where we came.

Many people judge us on an individual basis, be it private or public golf course. As much as GCSAA makes people aware of an honorable profession, there have been times that we have been cast as a true artisan of turf grooming; times we have been vilified via TV coverage; and times regarded as journeymen, as perceived by a judge during a case involving geese killed on a New York golf course many years ago.

The very first mention of a person responsible for the golfing grounds was in 1774. The tons of antique iron at Penn State are such pieces as Mascaro's prototype aerifier; a croosoted, wooden irrigation pipe from a golf course; an early Greensair turf aerator by Ryan; a Rayne Golf shaper; and a Worthington tractor.

Payne was a turfgrass scientist and educator. Mascaro, an entrepreneur as well as an inventor, is remembered for his "vertical" mower to remove thatch from greens as well as for his aerifier.

One of the best places to see modern and new golf course management equipment is at the huge GCSAA Golf Course Conference and Show held annually in a major Sun Belt city.

A COMMENTARY

Collections of antiques on view at MSU, Penn

Probably the two best collections of vintage golf course management equipment in the world are the Dr. Kenyon T. Payne Collection at Michigan State University and at Mascaro/Steiniger Turfgrass Equipment Museum at Pennsylvania State University.

During his life, Payne gathered more than 120 pieces of antique equipment under one roof. Along with other groups and individuals, the Golf Course Superintendents Association of America (GCSAA) has added to the collection.

Among the many artifacts at Michigan State are a Turferator (an early aerifier), an Ideal greensmower, a Caldwell de-turfing brush, a Thomson wheelbarrow seeder, a Shawnee Worthington greensmower, steel horse hoof plates and a Paddleson leather horse boot.

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The very first mention of a person responsible for the golfing grounds was in 1774. The records from The Royal Burgess Golfing Society of Edinburgh mention that a "boy was engaged to convey messages to and from members, to serve as waiter at dinner, carry the Captain's clubs and to alter and mend golf holes on the links." Later in their records of 1774 the titles he was given were "our lady — our officer — our greenkeeper."

The terms "greenkeeper," "Keeper of the green" and "custodian of the links" have been used throughout the