

# Golf Course Construction in Maryland

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With the year 2000 rapidly approaching we will also observe 100 years of golf in Maryland. In the mid-1890s the first two golf courses opened in Maryland: the Chevy Chase Country Club in Montgomery County (1895) and the Elkridge Golf Club in Baltimore County (1896). However, the addition of new clubs was slow in coming—over the next two decades only eight new courses were built.<sup>1</sup>

The first big boom in golf course construction came in the “Roaring Twenties” with 15 new courses (fig. 1). This new interest centered in Baltimore County (5) and Montgomery County (4). Although the rise continued during the early 1930s, the depression and war years sharply curtailed additional construction.

The next boom in construction came in the mid-1950s and lasted 25 years! Seventy-two of Maryland’s golf courses, over half the total number, were built during that quarter century. Through the 1970s the building of new golf courses closely matched those trends noticed on the national level.<sup>2</sup> New golf course construction was flourishing with seemingly no end in sight; however, the 1980s experienced a dramatic decrease in new construction, with only eight new courses opening.

Predicting the future of the next decade is difficult, but there are indications that the 1990s may have the potential to surpass the record of 29 golf courses built in the 1960s. In 1990-1993 the state has seen 14 new golf courses open, almost half the 1960s record. Also, 11 new courses opened in 1991 and 1992, which is more than in any other two-year period in

Maryland’s history. Nationally, Maryland is not in the “top ten” for the number of total or new golf courses.<sup>3</sup> Florida currently leads the nation in the number of golf courses with 1,052 and Michigan opened 29 new courses in 1992. But, with the start of the 1990s it does seem that Maryland has rebounded from the downturn of the last decade.

Six counties in Maryland dominate as to the number of golf courses in the state (fig. 2). They account for 62% of the number of courses in the state, with Montgomery (26) and Baltimore (21) counties having the most.

Since 1895, many architects have been involved in the construction of the state’s golf courses. Nationally known architects such as Donald Ross and Robert Trent Jones have built

quality courses. However, the architect responsible for the greatest number of golf courses is Edward B. Ault (fig. 3).

To say “Mr. Ault has had an influence on Maryland golf,” would be akin to saying, “Jack Nicklaus was a good golfer who won a few tournaments!” Mr. Ault and his associates have designed 31 courses or 22% of Maryland’s present total of 143. Russell Roberts, who has designed eight courses, is second behind Ault & Associates.

According to the National Golf Foundation (NGF), to keep up with demand for play projec-

Fig. 1

## MARYLAND GOLF COURSES TRENDS IN GOLF COURSE CONSTRUCTION

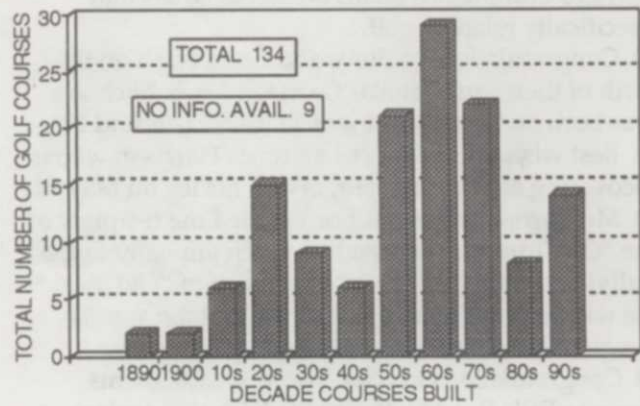


Fig. 2

## COUNTIES WITH THE MOST GOLF COURSES IN MARYLAND

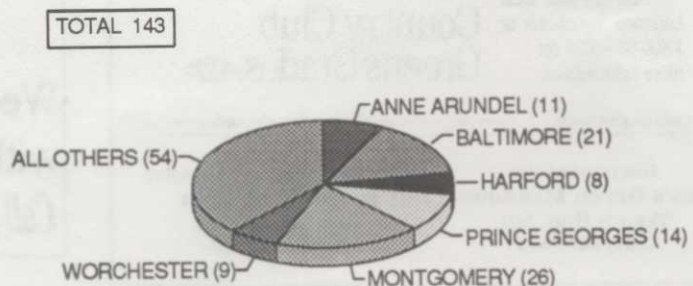


Fig. 3

TOP FIVE ARCHITECTS		
ARCHITECT	NUMBER OF COURSES BUILT	
EDWARD B. AULT	31	
RUSSELL ROBERTS	8	
CHARLES HOOK	5	
LINDSAY ERVIN	5	
DONALD J. ROSS	4	
ALL OTHERS	90	
TOTAL	143	

tions, many more golf courses need to be built. Before 1950 the demand was for private courses, and 78% of Maryland's courses were private. Through the 1960s and 1970s demand was about

equal for private and public facilities; however, since the 1980s demand has switched to the point that 67% of all new courses are public. The NGF feels this trend will continue. National studies of

1992 indicated that 81% of the golf courses opened as public facilities. Nine of the state's 14 courses constructed in the 1990s are open to the public. If this is any sign, then Maryland is trying to meet this future demand. It is to be hoped that this trend will continue through the remainder of the 1990s and beyond.

NOTES

1. Cornish, Geoffrey S.; Whitten, Ronald E. 1981. *The Golf Course*. The Rutledge Press, N.Y.
2. Beard, James B. 1982. *Turf Management for the Golf Course*. Macmillan Publishing Company, N.Y.
3. *Golf Business Today*, April 1993, Vol. 1, No. 2 pp. 13, 19.

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plantings, the club has recently employed a horticulturist.

Lee has been an active member of MAAGCS since he came to the area to work with Dave Canavan at Bolling AFB Recreation Area in Warrenton. He has served on the board for more than 15 years and has risen through the offices twice to serve as president in 1973 and again in 1987. He was editor of the newsletter for six years and initiated the supporters list to provide revenue for professional printing. Lee's pastimes include photography and hunting and fishing. He's also an avid collector of golf history and memorabilia. His collection comprises more than 3,000 books, but his prize possession is the silver putter of Edward F. Riggs (of the banking family).

Lee, his wife Rita and their four boys have been familiar figures at association functions. He believes in supporting the association by both action and participation. He has missed only 10 meetings since he has been a Mid-Atlantic member and has attended all but two GCSAA annual meetings. Walter Montross, Jim Christy, Tom Knoll, and George Hoenig are all former assistants now in charge of area courses. Chris Dieter, who works with Chuck Thomson at the Fords Colony Golf Courses as the superintendent of the Gold Course is also his former employee—and his son. Lee's quite proud of these young men and hopes they took something away with them when as they continue their careers. If their success is any indication, Lee's new assistant, Stephen Marofsky, has a bright future.



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