

## Highlights of Tom Bendelow's Golf Career

- 1868 Thomas “Tom” Bendelow, the eldest son of John & Mary Ann (Edward) Bendelow, is born in Aberdeen, Scotland, on September 2<sup>nd</sup>. Young Tom learns golf from his father on the old Aberdeen Kings Links, becoming a proficient player and said member of the Victoria Golf Club, traveling to play competitively on links in Scotland and England. His vocational training is that of a typesetter for *the Aberdeen Evening Express* and later as Scotland's first linotype operator for the *Scottish Leader* and the *London Daily News*.
- 1892 Tom Bendelow immigrates to New York City to work for the *New York Herald* newspaper.
- 1893-4 His first attempt at golf course design occurs while convalescing at a resort in Point Pleasant, NJ, where he is asked to lay out a few holes on scrub land at the head of Barnegat Bay, NJ. His first paid golf job is as a golf instructor to the Charles Pratt Family at their estate on Glen Cove, Long Island, where he lays out a six-hole course. [That layout would eventually become part of the Queens County Country Club and thence the Nassau Country Club.]
- 1894-9 Over the next several years, Tom would layout scores of golf courses in the NY & NJ area. He also participates in several “professional” golf competitions in the NYC area.
- 1895-6 In association with A.G. Spalding & Bros, Tom opens America’s 1<sup>st</sup> indoor golf school in the Berkeley Gymnasium of the Carnegie Hall Building, NYC.(classes are open to men and women)
- 1897 Bendelow loses a 36 hole match to Walter Travis on the last hole. That same day, he and Travis design a 9-hole course for the Flushing Athletic Club, on Long Island NY.
- 1899 “Tom Bendelow has laid out 150 golf courses in the past eighteen months.” (*The Fort Wayne (IN) News*). The volume of Bendelow’s work spreading the game now begins to be reported. St. Catherine's Episcopal School, NYC, the 1<sup>st</sup> school to install a class in golf by Bendelow. Bendelow is hired by the NYC Park Dep’t to redesign, expand and operate the Van Cortlandt Park Golf Course in the Bronx, the country’s first 18-hole municipal golf course. Bendelow thus becomes the country’s 1<sup>st</sup> Golf Course Superintendent and is the first to:
- Introduce reserve play times (tee times)
  - Install eight-minute play start time intervals
  - Make use of Marshals on the golf course
  - Require instruction for caddies and regulations for their employment
  - Offer public instruction at the course, open to men and women, and
  - Promote the creation of open player associations to improve play and provide opportunities for open competitions.
- [The success of NYC’s Van Cortlandt Park Golf Course established the worth of public golf and set a standard that would be followed for years by cities and parks agencies across the US and Canada] .
- 1900 Tom Bendelow organizes The Eastern Professional Golfers Assn., with Bendelow as President, George Low as VP and James Laign as Secretary/Treasurer. Bendelow accompanies Harry Vardon on his 1900 American tour and plays with Vardon in several exhibitions. He also caddies for Vardon in the 1900 U.S. Open at Wheaton, IL. A.G.Spalding hires Bendelow as Manager of its Golf Department, to promote golf and assist localities and clubs in establishing new golf courses all across the United States and Canada. Bendelow moves to Spalding’s Headquarters offices in Chicago, IL.
- 1901 Tom opens an indoor golf school in the basement of Spalding’s Chicago offices, offering lessons and golf games for Chicago golfers during the winter months. The *American Golfer* notes that Tom Bendelow has laid out more golf courses than anyone else.
- 1904 Bendelow is appointed a golf competition official at the 1904 Olympics in St. Louis, MO. He also manages the WGA's 1904 Western Golf Open at Exmoor links, NJ..
- 1905 Tom is elected VP of the Jackson Park Golf Club, Chicago (an early public players’ assn.)
- With Robert White and William Yeoman, Tom Bendelow organizes and incorporates the Western

- Professional Golfers Association. Tom serves as Secretary & Treasurer.
- 1907 Tom becomes Editor of the annual *Spalding's Official Golf Guide* and remains so until 1917. Bendelow advocates for lengthening of golf courses to accommodate the new rubber golf ball. He continues to manage many of WGA's amateur and open golf tournaments.
- 1908 While visiting St. Andrews in Scotland, Bendelow and Jimmy Herd defeat the St. Andrews professionals, Gourlay and Greig, by 4 and 2.
- 1909 Officiates at the Western Amateur Golf Championship  
Bendelow now estimates his new course layouts number over five hundred.
- 1912-17 Conducts annual lectures at the University of Illinois on golf course design and construction, the first introduction of golf course design into the university curriculum.  
"Tom Bendelow, The father of public golf courses, has laid out 350 public golf courses to date."  
(*The St. Petersburg Evening Independent*).
- 1915 Tom opens his own office in Chicago to handle renovations and design consulting work.
- 1916 He is now estimated to have laid out over 600 golf courses in the US and Canada.  
Bendelow leaves A.G.Spalding to become the Manager of the Golf Department for Ashland Sporting Goods, Chicago, IL. Ashland is subsequently acquired by Thos. E. Wilson & Company (Chicago) and Bendelow is hired as Wilson's first Golf Department Manager.
- 1917 Tom acquires a US patent for the design for a new, more resistant golf ball.  
Thos. E. Wilson & Co. promotes a line of "*Tom Bendelow*" signature golf clubs.
- 1918 GOLF Magazine ad cites Bendelow as "Oldest Golf Course Architect in America".
- 1920 Bendelow joins the American Park Builders firm as Chief Golf Architect, replacing Wm. Langford. Bendelow is now noted as "The Dean of American Golf Architects".
- 1926 Tom promotes the opening of a public golf school for boys with Chick Evans as Principal.
- 1936 March 24, 1936, Tom Bendelow dies at his daughter's home in River Forest, IL
- 2005 Tom Bendelow is inducted into the Illinois Golf Hall of Fame at the Glen Club, Glenview, IL

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In the 1890s, when Tom Bendelow got into the golf business, the future of the sport was uncertain. Many considered it a passing fad of the rich. Golf needed a mentor, a champion to set its roots and help it grow. With his relentless drive, positive attitude and powers of persuasion Bendelow drew thousands into the game. No one worked harder or longer, traveled farther or had a greater impact on golf's growth in the USA. While credited with more than 600 courses, half of those being public links, his work made golf accessible to all men and women, young and old, wealthy and working class, offering to them the benefits and rewards of golf for the first time. From these roots, legions of players have evolved. It can truly be said that "More people have learned to play golf on a Bendelow designed course than that of any other golf course designer".

And as vast numbers of players were drawn into the game, there evolved a greater demand for even more courses, clubs, balls, equipment and related business opportunities. The desire for more challenging course layouts also emerged as players acquired greater skills and the permanence of the game and competition grew. With interest in golf growing, greater financial resources became available for bigger, longer, more challenging courses with higher construction costs and bigger architect fees, a trend that Tom had written about in the 1890s. The course architects who made their reputations during the "Golden Age of Golf Design" and thereafter owe much to those who laid the solid foundation for the sport in America.

Over four decades, Bendelow worked as a golf instructor, course designer, club superintendent, tournament organizer, competition official, sporting goods manager, university lecturer, municipal golf promoter, and a mentor to such golf notables as Charles "Chick" Evans, William Langford, Peter Jans and Carl Anderson. He actively used his newspaper background to write about the sport, its benefits, its growth, its management and its future. Tom Bendelows efforts were preeminent in the founding and growth of golf as a popular sport among the greater population in America. It is puzzling that the modern era scribes of American golf history have chosen to ignore his contributions.