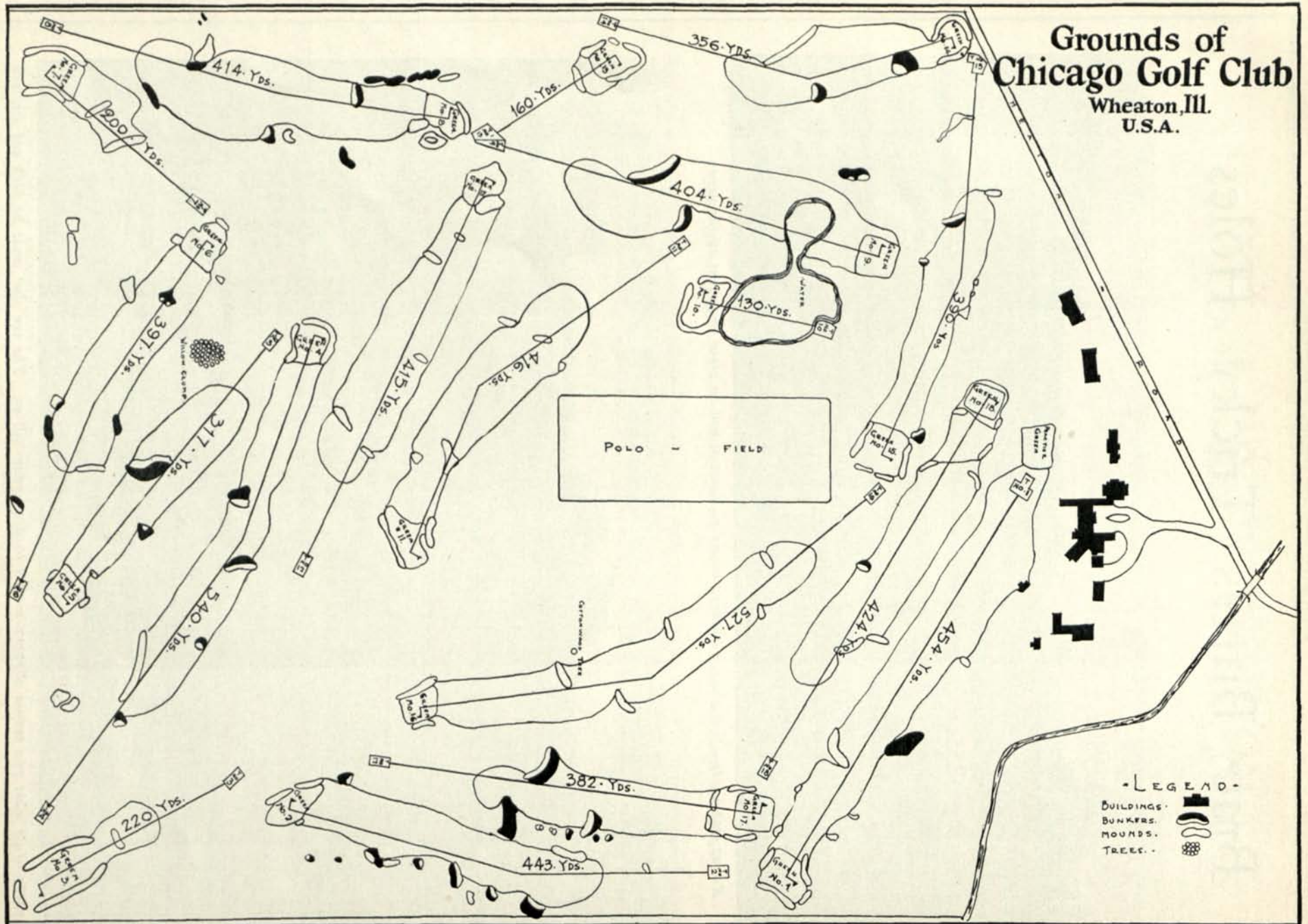


# **Grounds of Chicago Golf Club** Wheaton, Ill. U.S.A.





# Bobby Says 'Twas Perfect

How the Chicago Golf Course looked during the Walker Cup Matches

By ROBERT E. POWER, Editor

WHEN Charles Blair MacDonald rebuilt the Chicago Golf Club in 1923 he made it tough for the greenkeeper, John MacGregor.

The putting greens at Chicago Golf average ten thousand square feet. Some of them are fourteen thousand square feet in area and MacGregor had brown patch to fight all through the months of July and August to get ready for the Walker Cup Matches on August 30 and 31.

The fact that he had his course in what Bobby Jones said was, "the finest condition of any course that the Walker Cup Matches were ever played on," speaks volumes for John's ability as a greenkeeper. Bobby made this statement publicly at the presentation of the Walker cup as the shadows were lengthening across the first tee at Wheaton late Friday afternoon. Considering that previous matches have been played over historic St. Andrews in Scotland and the almost equally famous National and Garden City courses on Long Island, one may well pause and lift his hat to the president of the Mid-West Green-

## A BIT OF HISTORY

*Charles Blair MacDonald, now president of the National Golf Links of America, at Southampton, Long Island organized the Chicago Golf Club and built its first 9-hole course at Belmont in 1892. The following year this was increased to 18-holes. As the representative of the Chicago Golf Club, Mr. MacDonald won the first U. S. G. A. National Amateur Championship at Newport in 1895. He came back to his home town in 1923 and built the present 18-hole Championship course at Wheaton.*

keepers Association and third ranking officer of the National Association of Greenkeepers of America.

It was my pleasure to be present at Chicago in company with Fred A. Burkhardt, greenkeeper of the Westwood Country Club, Cleveland, dur-

ing the Walker Cup Matches. Having attended all the big tournaments for many years I saw nothing particularly new in the shots of the amateur stars. In fact the scores did not interest me but what hap-

pened to the ball between the teeing ground and the cup gave me plenty of mental and physical exercise. That's why golf clubs spend about twenty-five thousand dollars a year on maintenance and that's why the greenkeeper is in our opinion the most important employee of the golf club organization.

## Bobby Was Right

BOBBY JONES was right—as he most always is with his golf shots as well as his public statements. I have never seen St. Andrews, but I played over both the National and Garden City layouts. Bobby's statement gave the Britons an awful jolt because



JOHN MACGREGOR, GREENKEEPER, AND ERNEST P. WAUD, VICE-PRESIDENT AND CHAIRMAN OF GREEN COMMITTEE, CHICAGO GOLF CLUB





JOHN MACGREGOR (at Left) AND FRED BURKHARDT (at Right)  
With a group of greenkeepers at the Chicago Golf Club

St. Andrews is their paradise, but they did not offer a word of dissent and joined in praise of the Chicago course.

The fairways were broad green ribbons of velvety turf soft to walk on and ideal for all kinds of wood and iron shots. Much of this is due to the black gumbo soil which has the moisture retaining properties of humus. Every two hundred feet there is a two-inch outlet for sprinkling in dry weather and it was evident these had been used together with the necessary amount of fertilizer.

To see fairways in the middle west on August 30 green and growing just like early June gave me a distinct thrill. I can now see some of the dreams of our golf club officials come true as they pray for relief from the droughts and burning suns of midsummer. There is no question about it in my mind after tramping about Chicago Golf Club for two days. Given a good natural soil, proper seeding, intelligent care and water and you can have marvelous soft green fairways throughout the playing season.

#### *Fairways Were Outstanding Feature*

**I** STRESS this point because in my mind the fairways were the Chicago Golf Club's outstanding feature. True the greens were unusually fine, but I know of other courses with good greens but I know of none with fairways so perfect for golf shots in late August. I did

not see a single bad lie nor hear of one. They were cut every night with a pair of Worthington tractors and 5-gang units equipped with front and rear searchlights—that's one for the book! I talked with the tractor men and they said they liked it better than daytime mowing; it was cool and there was no interference from players. Certainly the quality of the work was 100%. And I am not sugar coating what I actually saw the least bit.

If night mowing is practical as it apparently is, many of the greenkeeper's problems will be solved. I know of many city clubs where morning play begins as early as seven-thirty, mostly women and juniors, and they are fussy about tractors. Counting the time lost and gas burned waiting for players to make their shots, night mowing would more than pay for extra wages if necessary. I hope to hear of other greenkeepers trying it out and letting us know just how it compares with day mowing in cost and quality of work.

#### *Chicago Course Almost Flawless*

**A** STORY of a golf course seems flat without criticism. I would rather find fault with a course than praise it. But honestly the Chicago Golf Club Course was almost flawless from a greenkeeping standpoint. There were three greens which had been badly hit with scald or brown patch or whatever you want to call it. The scars were there but MacGregor had skill-



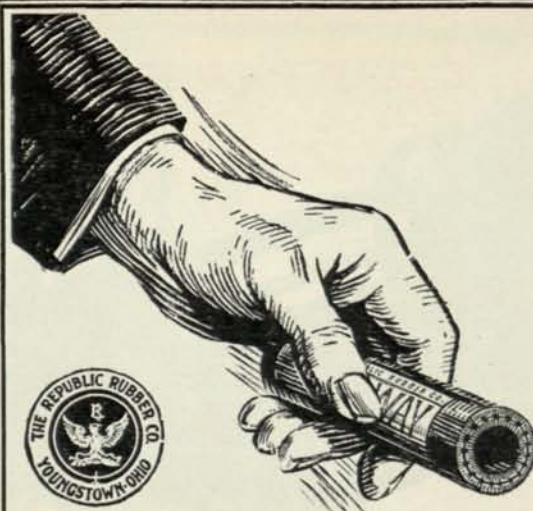
fully plugged the bad places and they responded well to the putting efforts of the players. I saw only one putt go astray and that was a short one of MacKenzie's on the 17th green. Evidently it was deflected by the remnant of a worm cast and these pests certainly kept the greenkeeper crew busy all week.

On Thursday morning after the heavy rain of the previous afternoon, the greens were streaked with black soil where the worm casts had been brushed off by the mowers. Naturally, the greens seemed a little slow and heavy after Wednesday's rain. They are seeded bent of the old time variety with patches of light



**HARRISON JOHNSTON OF ST. PAUL**  
*Playing from the edge of the green in the Walker Cup Matches in Chicago*

and dark strains but very uniform as to texture. The seed bed like the fairways holds moisture well and they were soft and smooth. On Friday they were a bit faster but nothing like many courses where championships have been played. The players (and I talked to many of them), liked them very much. They could hit their putts firmly up to the cup without danger of sliding off the line or running too far beyond to get back. And with the pins in the corners behind bunkers it was safest on the long second shots to go for the opening rather than the pin. This meant that fifty and sixty-foot approach putts were quite the rule rather than



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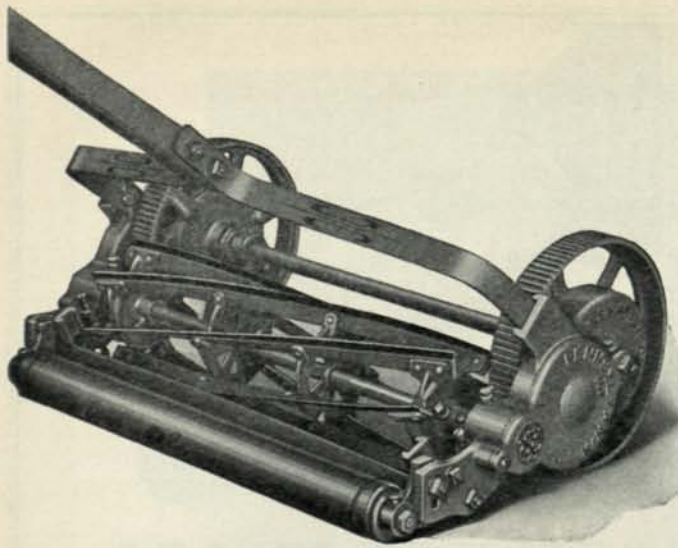
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the exception. As a result there were not as many birdies as one usually sees in major championships and no one broke 70.

Bobby Jones equalled it in his morning round Friday against Thomas P. Perkins the British Amateur Champion, but he was on one of his scoring sprees that have made him the golfing marvel of all time. O. B. Keeler of the Atlanta Journal, his amanuensis, told me that Bobby's last ten 18-hole medal scores beginning at Asheville on his way north and including four Chicago courses averaged thirty-five under fours. He played his best golf against Perkins and just equalled 70—so you know how hard the Chicago Golf course can be made when MacGregor fixes the pins.

Just picture a 6700 yard course with one hundred and eight bunkers as big in proportion as the putting greens and all groomed to perfection. I was told that three hundred yards of new sand had been spread in them for the tournament. Certainly they looked fine and a force of men kept them raked in the furrow style so generally used now on all championship courses. However, the Chicago Golf bunkers were not furrowed as wide or deep as on some other courses. Even so I didn't see any mashies or putters used to get the ball out of the sand.

### *Bunkers Are Beautifully Constructed*

THE faces and tops of the bunkers were evenly scythed to a length of about four inches and they not only looked fine but the play seemed very fair. Credit should be given the architect and constructor for the beautiful manner in which the cops of the bunkers were streamlined gently out into the fairways. This sort of work means labor and care but the difference between the Chicago Golf bunkers and those on most courses is like a custom-built and a square-cornered stock automobile. Nowadays too many golf courses are slapped up in any old way to get them done and right away they lay claim to greatness. While they may equal Chicago Golf and others I might mention in casual appearance and design, the man who knows how golf courses should be built and recognizes quality sees the difference at once.

*Say you saw the ad in The National Greenkeeper*



At Chicago Golf the fairway mowers run right up the back slope of the bunkers almost to the top just leaving a fringe of rough visible from the back side. The appearance is very pleasing and again the player who clears the bunker by a narrow margin is well out on the fairway where he should be instead of being snagged by a stretch of tall grass beyond the recognized hazard.

### *Greens Are Enormous in Size*

**A**PPARENTLY a lot of time and thought was spent on the design and construction of the putting greens. I should have mentioned money but with ninety-nine millionaires in the



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*Two of these pulling convertible quintuplex mowers mowed the fairways every night in seven hours.*

club by actual count why waste time. The greens are enormous in size—probably the largest in America, but don't think for a minute they are easy. If you have seen closely trapped greens just double what you saw and you can partially visualize Chicago Golf. In other words there is a lot of area to play to but after you have made your shot you will need either a putter

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or a niblick. There is no such thing as missing the green by a couple of yards or so and chipping up to the pin for your par because the narrowest strip of fairway separates the putting surface from the steep slopes of the bunkers.

We see so many golf courses where they mow a little patch on a knoll or in a hollow and then leave several yards of fairway all about for the slightly wild shooter to come to rest. It's called economy and perhaps so but it isn't golf as the Scots intended it to be played. Do you wonder Bobby Jones praised the Chicago Golf Club? He knows what a golf course is and he doesn't see one every day or even every month.

The last thing I want to mention about the course at Wheaton is its outstanding fairness. There are no tricky greens, no blind shots, no unseen hazards such as mar the National at Southampton for instance. It's typically Chicago and the great Middle West where the slogan is: "here we are, plenty tough, but all the cards on the table."

### *Splendid Spirit of Fellowship*

**F**INALLY I cannot close without mentioning the unseen but obvious spirit of fellowship and harmony that prevailed at Chicago between the members, the greenkeeper and his assistants. I saw nothing but keen happy faces all hopping to their jobs from the president shaking hands down to the laborer raking sand. Even the professional who really has nothing whatever to do at a National tournament, (the United States Golf Association officials handle all pairings, starting and scoring) was hustling

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around in old clothes helping John MacGregor. Even neighboring greenkeepers from a dozen to twenty in number showed up every day and helped handle the galleries taking their allotted stations and staying there throughout the day instead of following the matches which everybody wanted to do.

If you fellows who read this story and have golf club responsibilities will add up the salient points of Chicago Golf, its course and its organization you will throw back your shoulders and take a new grip on life. It certainly inspired me and I hope I have passed some of it onto you.

### *Experts Talk at Philadelphia*

By E. T. YOUNG

The regular monthly meeting of Philadelphia Association of Golf Course Supts., was held at the Philmont Country Club on Monday, August 6, 1928.

Dinner was served at 6 o'clock P.M., during the course of which Mr. Slotter, Chairman of the Green Committee of this particular club, made a very excellent speech.

The meeting was next called to order at 7:20 P.M., with President Evans in the chair. The first speaker of the evening was Dr. Monteith, who gave one of his usual interesting and instructive talks.

The next speaker was Mr. O. J. Noer, who had no specially prepared speech, and simply told us of the conditions at various golf courses he had visited in different sections of the country.

### *Tournament Schedule*

October 8-13—Women's Detroit District Championship, Detroit Golf Club.

November 6-9—Autumn Tournament, Pinehurst Country Club.

November 13-14—Mid-South Open, Pinehurst Country Club.

December 22-23—Championship of Champions, Miami Biltmore.

December 26-31—Midwinter Tournament, Pinehurst Country Club.

1929

January 1—Pro-Amateur Tournament, Miami Country Club.

January 10—Pro-Amateur, La Gorce Course, Miami Beach.

January 14-18—Mid-Winter Amateur, Miami Country Club.

February 17—Golf Vase Tournament, Pebble Beach.