

THE BEGINNING OF GOLF IN CHICAGO

The following has been submitted by C. E. (Scotty) Stewart and is an excerpt from History of Golf by Joseph A. Davis.

In the late eighties Robert W. Chandler, a Liverpool Englishman, and one or two friends essayed to play golf in Washington Park but were quickly ordered off by a policeman. The real start of golf in the Chicago area came in 1893, the year of the World's Fair in Chicago. Sir Henry Truman Wood, British Commissioner to the Fair, was a golfer and anxious to play. He knew James B. Forgan, a Chicago banker, J. C. Sterling of the Illinois Steel Co., a Scotchman by birth, J. Marshall Weir, A Belfast Irishman, Herbert J. Tweedy formerly of Liverpool and Charles Blair McDonald who learned to play golf when in school in Scotland.

A. Hadow Smith, a Lanarkshire golfer, who had located in Chicago in 1890, heard these men proposed forming a golf club and laid out a nine hole course on 60 acres of land he owned at Belmont near the C.B. & Q. R.R. A hired man with a shovel, rake and wheel-barrow were his chief assistants and as no regulation cups were obtainable, tin cans were used. He invited these men mentioned to play over his course and a little later the Chicago Golf Club was organized in Mr. Smith's home on the course, the officers being J. C. Sterling, president; J. Marshall Weir, secretary; and James Forgan, treasurer. Charles B. McDonald was the club captain and among the early members were Judge Murray F. Tuley, James Deering, Joseph Leiter and J. A. Ryerson.

Finances for the first year to operate the course were raised by Mr. Charles McDonald who solicited \$10.00 apiece from 30 members. Prior to World War I, when the club house burned down and a tent was used for a while, the Chicago Golf Club moved to its present site in Wheaton and the original course was purchased by a private individual who operated it under the name of the Belmont C.C. until it was sold in 1968 to the Downers Grove Park District for \$750,000.00 and renamed Downers Grove Golf Club.

Editor's Note: The following information on early golf in the Chicago area was furnished by **Donald Gerber**, superintendent at Chicago Golf Club.

(In 1967 the late Charles Bartlett, who was the Golf Editor of the Chicago Tribune, was commissioned to write a history of the Chicago Golf Club. His account of the early days of Golf in Chicago follow:)

At sometime before 1892 Mr. Charles Blair Macdonald, starved for the game he had learned to love as a teenager at Old St. Andrews in Scotland, prevailed on Mr. H. C. Chatfield-Taylor to permit him to lay out a tiny seven-hole golf course on the Lake Forest Lawn of Senator John Farwell, Chatfield-Taylor's father-in-law. Most of those holes were less than 100 yards; none exceeded 250 yards. But it was, after its fashion, a golf course.

And evangelist Macdonald continued to preach the gospel of golf. Visiting apostles from Briton, led by England's World's Fair Commissioner Sir Henry Wood arrived in 1892, and gave Charlie the impetus he needed to convince his friends that baseball and tennis and the infant sport of football needed a fourth.

In the spring of 1892 Macdonald sold thirty of his downtown chums in the Chicago Club on putting up \$10 each to lay out a nine hole course at Belmont,

near Downers Grove, Illinois, on a stock farm of A. Haddon Smith. Fate smiled on this progress, for Mr. Smith hailed from Musselburgh, Scotland, where golf was first played in 1774. Thus was born the Chicago Golf Club.

Macdonald completed his architectural and building chores in the spring of 1892. He was one of the first three golfers to (almost) play this nine-hole course. A thunderstorm drove Charlie, Harry Wilmerding and Edward S. Warthington into a big barn which they had improved as a clubhouse.

The incorporation of the Chicago Golf Club was mentioned in the Chicago Tribune of July 19, 1893, along with that of the Chicago Suspender Co.; the Student's Fund Society, to assist University of Chicago students; and the Original Ninth Infantry Battalion, for military and social purpose. The news account was rather brief:

"Chicago Golf Club, without capital stock, for pleasure; incorporators, J. Carolus Sterling, C. B. Macdonald, Urban H. Broughton, and H. C. Chatfield-Taylor."

The Tribune's skimpy notice on the club's official incorporation called for a celebration dinner at the Chicago Club, certainly the most proper place for it. Foremost of the quests were the four original incorporators—plus Arthur Ryerson and Robert Todd Lincoln. Mr. Ryerson later was to accompany Charlie Macdonald to the historic Manhattan meeting of December 22, 1894, wherein Chicago Golf Club became one of the five founding members of the United States Golf Associations. (The other clubs were the St. Andrews Golf Club of Yonkers-on-the-Hudson, N. Y.; the Shinnecock Hills Golf Club of Southampton, N.Y.; The Country Club of Brookline, Mass.; and the Newport Golf Club of Newport, R.I.) Mr. Lincoln, the President's son, was to serve as Chicago Golf Club's ninth president for the years 1905 and 1906.

By now Macdonald had so inoculated his Chicago disciples with the golf virus that they felt they needed a new and larger course, and a proper clubhouse for its home. Forthwith, the original incorporators plus fellow-signers James B. Forgan, J. G. Watson, W. R. Farquhar and George A. Scott asked Macdonald to find a location that would accommodate the first 18-hole golf course in this country.

Macdonald asked for it; Macdonald got it. "It" was a 200 acre farm at Wheaton belonging to John Patrick, which the golf hungry men of Belmont secured for the sum of \$28,000. The club members bought the subscription bonds for \$200 each (certainly a lofty figure for golf in those times), with annual club dues of \$50.

Ed. Note: This is how it all started in Chicago.

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