

Reg. U. S. Pat. Off.

Golfdom

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Business Tourist Probes Into Golf Business

By CHARLES WILLIAMSON

I AM a stranger to you and to all except one or two managing officials throughout the golf world, but I have a few things to say which I think will be of interest to your company, the greenkeepers at large and greens-chairmen everywhere.

Having a definite business, which would not interest you or your readers, but one requiring that I call on all the golf clubs, it is sufficient to state that I have practically completed an automobile trip of some 28,000 miles consuming one year and four months time during which I have visited all the metropolitan areas and talked with more than two thousand greenkeepers, superintendents or managers of golf club properties and parks.

First, I wish to compliment you, if I may, on the fact that GOLFDOM seems to reach the hands of every greenkeeper, and park superintendent and is appreciated to the extent that they inquired whether or not I was connected with your organization. Having satisfactorily assured them that I was not, they proceeded to extol the value of your magazine and the ideas they obtain from the articles written by practi-

cal and experienced golf club officials and employes. I should like to go into the details of the many conversations I had with these superintendents, greenkeepers and managers to tell you of their problems but since each seems to have its own peculiarity or diversion of contingency, I am afraid my letter would be too greatly extended to be of interest and I am not sure but that you would prefer to have each individual explain his own particular conditions and difficulties that you might offer a solution or plan whereby he could work his way out to more satisfaction for all concerned.

Tribute to Big City Men

In the metropolitan districts I found in the main among greenkeepers very intelligent and practical students of turf life. These men seemed to have made a study of greenkeeping, the fundamentals of plant life, the uses of fertilizers, fungus destroyers and the like and having in mind the point of perfection where green maintenance will be reduced to a science from the angle of producing a perfect turf at a minimum expense and maintaining both park and golf

We never heard of Charles Williamson, who sent us this letter bearing a southern post-mark, nor can we "tag" his connection with the golf business. He apparently has done some extensive observing and "speaks out in meeting."

He does some able-bodied hammer throwing that does GOLFDOM good in tipping us off to enlist the vigorous co-operation of our readers in getting more advertising. Since he deftly hooks into us for sleeping on the job and we have to accept the impeachment, the smaller town golf club officials and employes he criticizes also might as well try to get some urge toward betterment from his comments.

course to the satisfaction of those men for whom these grounds were intended.

It was with great surprise that I learned even in the Metropolitan Districts that most of these greenkeepers and park superintendents were not banded together in an association where they might exchange ideas on the best methods to attain their ends and while some mentioned a greenkeepers association, very few had made any connections whereby the knowledge of one could be obtained by another without a personal interview. For this reason they complimented your paper on your attempt to assist them after knowing that I was not at all interested in any magazine and was not acquainted with your ideas and ideals.

Asks Small-Town Spur

In the rural districts a decided difference was so perceptible that this fact really prompted my writing in hope that you could devise a plan which would benefit the small town clubs and the municipal parks. The information I wish to give now on so-called greenkeepers and superintendents applies also to the house managers of not only golf clubs and parks but private estates because as a rule I found all the employes of each institution to possess about the same caliber of efficiency or shall I say it is possible to place each group of employes in a particular category or class: where we found an intelligent, educated house manager, we found the same type of green superintendent, park superintendent or general overseer and when I found a mediocre or semi-efficient park superintendent or green chairman, I found the same caliber individual in the management of the property.

Not knowing whether it is a part of your system or plan to employ men to investigate the actual conditions prevailing in parks and golf courses throughout the country I may not be able to throw any light on these conditions beyond the fact of your general knowledge but this second point of my epistle is to explain some of the conditions I found with the hope that you may through your magazine become dearer to the hearts of those men who lack information and are hungry to obtain practical rather than scientific or experimental data which will make their work more pleasant while solving their difficulties.

Want Buying Guides

House managers, chefs and housekeepers were seeking information on a thousand

different subjects: places to buy reputable goods, such as refrigerators, dishes, table doilies, floor surfacing machines, vermin exterminators, drinking cups, liquid soaps, etc., while the grounds employes seemed to be shrouded in ignorance concerning those things of common knowledge to the grounds men in the Metropolitan areas.

Ouch! Is This So?

It is my understanding that there are over four thousand golf clubs and some three thousand municipal parks in the United States and with very few exceptions these grounds, outside of the Metropolitan areas, are being cared for by men whose knowledge of turf life, plant life and green maintenance is comparable to that of the average fifteen year old boy if asked questions on the same subject. Farmer boys who know how to hitch a horse or plant corn or run a tractor were greenkeepers or park superintendents or overseers of golf grounds and city parks.

The only knowledge they had of their work was the meager experience they had gained in the past year or two, and, while they are anxious to learn they are not in a position to obtain this knowledge because they do not know where to get it.

Green chairmen seemed unable to help these greenkeepers and so many small towns have golf clubs or golf courses which are in reality nothing more nor less than cow pastures slightly improved by several cuttings. In these towns the members boast of having a golf course but in no place was I brave enough to tell them what their golf course looked like as compared with real Metropolitan golf courses. It would seem then that the education should start with the president of the club or the green chairman that they may know what you really meant when mentioning a golf course and there should be some way of bringing their employes, house managers, greenkeepers and park superintendents for an inspection trip to city parks, city golf clubs and expensive institutions that these men might return home to manage or remodel or improve their own institutions so they might legitimately be classified as golf courses, city parks or private estates.

In hundreds of cases I found men attempting to mow golf courses and parks with horse- or mule-power, antiquated hay mowers, or small gang hand mowers. It is hard to believe, but in twelve or fifteen

instances men were cutting grass with the old-fashioned scythe. In some towns the golf courses and the city parks are mowed every ten days or two weeks because it takes that amount of time to completely cover the property with the equipment they were using. In as many places I found the clubhouse employes carrying water for kitchen use from a well located from fifty to one hundred feet from the kitchen. In another case I found the drinking water delivered by tank wagons to the house. In hundreds of cases there was no watering system on the property so they must depend upon rainfall. I remember one place in particular when last summer at the height of the golf season the so-called pro had a stock of goods consisting of eighteen golf balls and two drivers, all of which evidently had been purchased some five or six years ago. I met up with perhaps five hundred or more clubs who did not have a pro and the greenkeeper was doing the best he could to learn the fundamentals of the game from magazine articles that he might some day control that position.

We're Trying Our Darndest.

Is there not some way that your magazine, which as I stated, has the intense interest of these men, can help give them the true and unbiased information they so strongly desire?

Would it not be good business on your part that you offer to these inexperienced, all the information you can gather on their problems and in turn solicit their co-operation by asking that these men limit their purchases to the advertisers in your magazine since the advertisers as I understand are really making it possible for you to give to these men the information required for them to produce the results desired by the golfing public.

"Permanent Improvement Committee" Idea Grows

"PERMANENT Improvement Committee," now working successfully for quite a few clubs, promises to add many more converts to the idea this year. The Minneapolis Golf club is to consider the establishment of such a committee at its next general meeting.

A bulletin announcing the meeting says:

"The meeting will also be asked to consider a provision for a committee to be known as the Permanent Improvement Committee. This would be a hold-over committee which would endeavor to maintain a more or less definite and consistent policy of improvements and give the incoming chairmen the benefit of the experience and mistakes of the previous administration. This idea is partly the result of the recent policy of the members of the board in declining to run for re-election causing a much more rapid turn-over in the personnel of the board than ever before."

Chicago District Probing Course Costs

CHICAGO District Golf Association's Green Section of which Guy M. Peters of Olympia Fields is chairman, is circulating among Chicago District clubs a cost distribution sheet as the start of its study of Chicago District green costs.

The sheet, which has vertical columnar rulings for each month of the year, provides for expenses as show in the accompanying reproduction.

Mr. Peters, in circulating the sheets with the request that as many clubs as find it practicable keep their books on the basis outlined by the sheet, further says:

"The purpose is to secure for comparison purposes a standardized system of cost accounting among the clubs of the Chicago District. Heretofore there has been no uniformity of cost accounting and it has been impossible to obtain data for comparison purposes.

"This sheet is based on a cost accounting system worked out by several clubs in this District who have kept detailed cost of their operation. We believe it is not so detailed but what any greenkeeper with a little thought and practically no additional expense can keep his costs substantially as outlined on this sheet.

"From time to time a questionnaire will be sent out by our association and the data furnished will be correlated and analyzed and the results furnished to all clubs co-operating in the proposed cost accounting system. It is believed that the information thus obtained will be very helpful to the member clubs in organizing their work on the most economical basis."