

Mower Makers Are Behind Scenes Builders of Golf

AS ANOTHER golfing season in the northern and central states is vanishing into its twilight and the turf maintenance department can sit down for a few minutes' contemplation during the autumn rains it is not a bad idea to give some thought to the part the manufacturer plays in course maintenance.

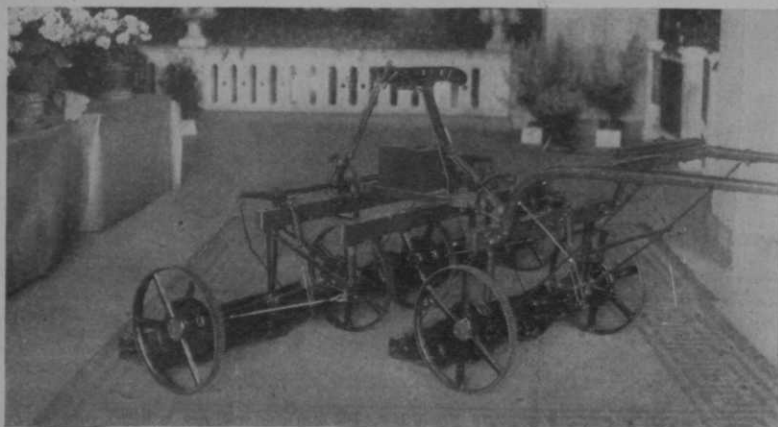
There have been many reasons advanced for the tremendous growth of golf during the last decade, but one factor that undoubtedly has been prominent, has been scarcely mentioned in this connection. What golf scribe has sung the praises of the mower? And where would golf be if it were not for the mower? The entire foundation of present day golf rests on mowing equipment that constitutes the smallest major item of expense at the average golf club. An American industry that has an invested capital of more than \$800,000,000 depends, in the last analysis, on its least expensive item for well-being and growth.

Day after day, and some nights, the mowers speed around the course and by their own excellence and reliability build up a maintenance standard that makes mower work more difficult and exacting. By their performance the leading makes of course mowers have developed a situation that makes angels weep. A mower gets no particular credit even for perfec-

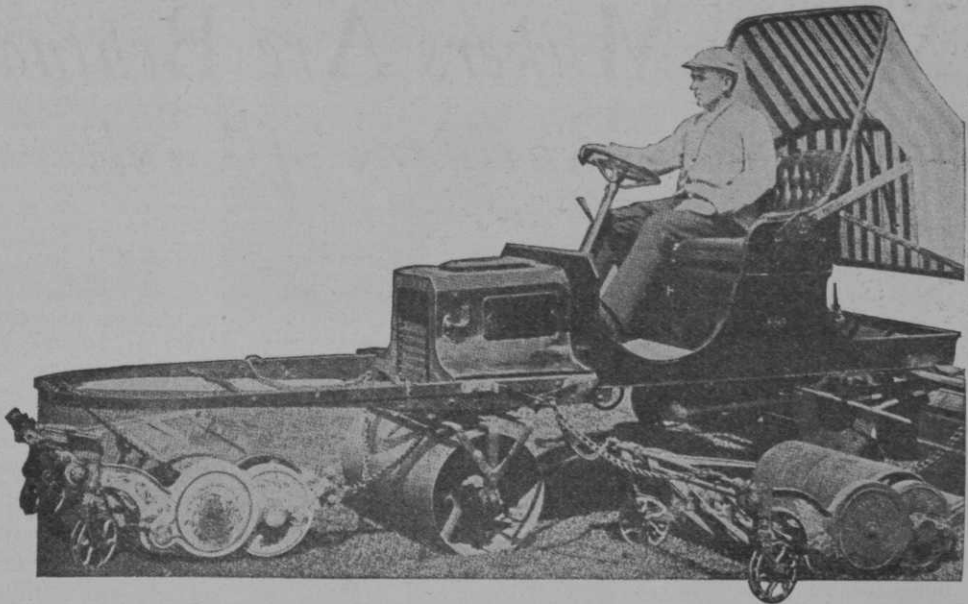
tion. The mower gets a steady diet of work—the heaviest by far of anything around the golf club, not excepting the showers and the stoves in the clubhouse. It performs with starvation rations of maintenance money. Its performance is such that the greenkeeper can devote his time to the many problems of turf culture, landscaping and construction without having to worry about the continuous necessity of harvesting the excess crop of grass on fairways, greens and rough. In its modest way the mower undoubtedly has made the greatest contribution to scientific turf culture's advance by allowing the greenkeeper time to devote to this development.

Not Always Thus.

Ten to fifteen years ago the greenkeeper considered himself fortunate if he was able to get a fairly good growth of grass and keep it cut. He spent no inconsiderable part of his time as a mechanic. The automotive era was completing its conquest and the golf field became an attractive pasture for inventors and manufacturers. In 1916 there were 742 golf clubs in the United States so it will be promptly appreciated that the mower inventor did not have a tremendous market then to reward his endeavors. Nevertheless, the mower men were busy eliminating the



This is the first triple mower that Worthington sold; the forerunner of a new day in big volume grass cutting.



Home-made gang mower, with body and rear of a 1907 Reo runabout mounted on triple-armed frame. A 3-ft. mower was attached in front of the roller and another at the left side. It cut fairways of a Massachusetts club in 6-ft. swaths at a speed of 6 miles an hour. Pennsylvania Lawn Mower works furnishes this illustration by way of contrast with its modern equipment.

horse as an element in golf course maintenance. Henry Ford also had his hand in, in a sort of a remote control fashion, for the Fordson tractor and the adaptations of the Ford car for speedy and fairly heavy hauling were decided influences on the mechanization of golf course maintenance.

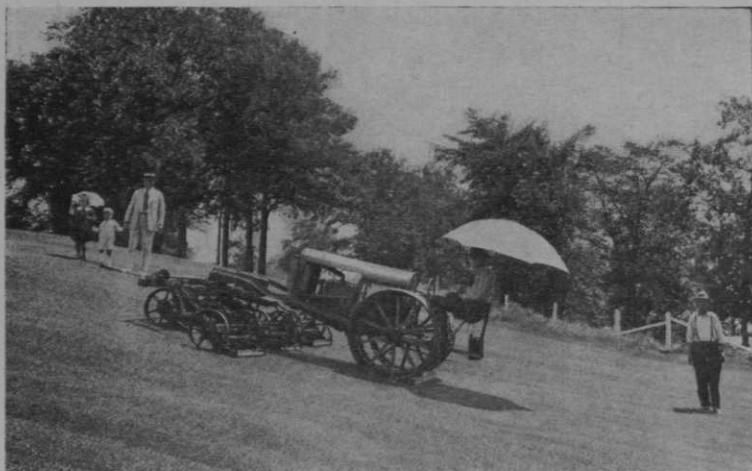
The cutting machine and the power unit gave the manufacturers two problems to contend with. Worthington came out with the triple gang mower and cutting operations that for years has been reconciled to the limitations of a single cutting unit, snapped into this quantity output policy of grass cutting. In 1919, Toro, experienced in the farm tractor business, took out to Charley Erickson, veteran greenkeeper at Minikahda a special golf tractor for trial purposes. Charley and his chairman, the late Senator Brooks, put the contrivance through its paces and without hesitancy voted it into the Minikahda menage.

The accompanying photograph of the grand-daddy of the Toro tractors gives an indication of what this and other makers of mowers and golf course tractors have done in bettering equipment during the last ten years. K. E. Goit, Toro sales man-

ager, calls attention to the open gears, the crude framework and the wooden center section of the front truck on the antique, as contrasted with today's types of tractors which have all gears enclosed and running in oil, steel framework, and many more bearings.

Welcomed New Equipment.

Younger greenkeepers and chairmen who take today's power mowing equipment as a matter of course can not appreciate the revolution this equipment has effected in course maintenance. W. L. Austin, Ideal's sales manager, tells of the warm welcome power equipment received at the alert and foresighted clubs in sending GOLFDOM the accompanying illustration of an Ideal 30" roller type power mower used at the Toledo (O.) C. C. It will be noted that the mower was used for cutting fairways, even though the capacity of the machine was not suited for such duty. Mr. Austin states that Ideal used to sell quite a few of these machines to smaller clubs, especially, and cites this as an indication of how anxious golf clubs were to secure power driven equipment. The sales were made in spite of the fact the company made no effort to sell this sort of equip-



Charley Erickson at the right and the late Senator Brooks at the left look over the first Toro tractor at Minikahda.

ment for golf work, Mr. Austin relates in giving further evidence of the recognized need for power equipment.

Some curious jobs marked the early days of power mowing equipment in the United States. California, where the influence of the west's big power farming operations was felt at golf courses, yielded two classics for the early chapters of the archives. W. W. Beaver, supt., Virginia C. C., Long Beach, Calif., made a five cutting unit job, which was pushed by a stationary engine chain-belted to the drive. Al Schoenbeck of the California G. C., San Francisco, 18 years ago used a wide single cutting unit pushed power mower. The device was cumbersome and heavy, but gave an attractive demonstration of the possibilities of power mowing, to one who had a sympathetic and lively imagination.

The ingenuity of the manufacturers and greenkeepers was producing many ideas that since have become established factors in greenkeeping. One of the historical items referred to by Mr. Austin is an early power mower to which the greenkeeper had added a frame of his own design and construction for pushing three cutting units. This happened in 1918 or 1919.

Joe Roseman in his greenkeeping work came to the conclusion that the higher speed of tractor operation of mowers fitted in with the construction of the hollow roller type mower and had the hunch that the day was coming when fairways would be given the care that greens alone were getting in the earlier period of American golf course maintenance, so Mr. Roseman built some experimental machines that worked out with such success that he was

An early adaptation of the Ideal power mower in use at Rumsen (N. J.) C. C. The club got the Ideal machine and made its own three-unit application around 1918.





A pioneer team in power maintenance. The first Toro and the first spiked roller for fairway use. The latter built by Charley Erickson, veteran greenkeeper at Minikahda.

encouraged to establish the manufacturing business that now bears his name.

Other manufacturers and other greenkeepers exercised their ingenuity and patiently devoted their resources to the development of grass cutting equipment for golf courses, with the result that power mowing may safely be credited with being the basis of today's golf development.

A Pace-Making Industry.

Mr. Charles C. Worthington, designer of the first commercial gang mower, has in his office at Stroudsburg, Pa., an exceedingly interesting and valuable collection of illustrations and other data on grass cutting devices. As the head of an internationally noted manufacturing organization for years before he became interested in the golf maintenance equipment business, Mr. Worthington is qualified to make some significant comment on what golf maintenance equipment manufacturers have done in the rather brief period they have had allotted to them for service to the golfing public and those responsible for course maintenance.

Mr. Worthington says:

"There is a great deal to be said on what has been accomplished by modern grass cutting equipment. The immense value of those improvements, to the golfing world and the country at large, has been practically disregarded thus far by writers either through ignorance of what the improvements really accomplish today or of the conditions that existed at the time the triple made its appearance. Practically no estimate of the dollars and cents saving that has been brought about by these new designs has ever been given publicity. It amounts to millions a year in the cost of labor alone and to vast economies in the saving of time.

"Simple as it may appear to the casual observer, the work imposed by the present day demands of the golf course has presented engineering problems to the designer and manufacturer as difficult to solve perhaps as those encountered in almost any other line of machine construction. This will become apparent to anyone taking the time to investigate."

W. W. Beaver's unique home-made veteran, assembled from almost anything that was lying around loose.

