

40 YEARS AGO



## A forty-year romance with golf

*The game and industry have  
come a long way since  
GOLFDOM made its bow.*

By HERB GRAFFIS

In this, GOLFDOM'S 40th year, we are going to look again at the accomplishments of brilliant pioneers and their significant achievements that built U. S. golf into a business with an investment exceeding \$1 billion.

This review, in GOLFDOM articles throughout 1966, is not going to merely cover the entertaining recollections of men who made American golf business great. The members of this group, happily, are of such mental and physical vigor that they look at the past mainly for lessons they can apply and share with others in continuing solid and rapid progress in every phase of the game and business.

Golf has had more effect than any other sport on the social, economic and political life of Americans. Its influence on suburban development in the U. S. became strong in the '90s. Today's numerous subdivision promotions built around golf courses are a replay of the boom of the '90s and later and bigger booms between the end of World War I and the market crash of 1929.

The influence of golf on American fashions over the years has been revolutionary. Politically, golf has figured in another revolution. During Franklin D. Roosevelt's first Presidential campaign the "country club set" was a sneering term used with vote-getting effect. Later, government endorsement of loans for golf club construction has—more than any other one factor—figured in the building of new clubs.

Yet the history of golf as an American business has been told only by the spoken reminiscences of colorful men who made and lived this history.

Although more than half the Class A membership of the PGA is comprised of men older than 50 and the superintendents and managers are amazingly durable, the roster of golf business pioneers is rapidly thinning.

In recent years professionals whose testimony is essential to recording the story of American golf business have gone to the Green Pastures. Bertie Way, Jack Jolly, Isaac Mackie, Carroll MacMaster, Willie Whalen, John Watson, George Sargent, Chuck Congdon and other kindly, modest souls in pro golf have gone out of bounds from this planet in the past few years.

Golf course superintendents, formerly known as course foremen or greenkeepers, in GOLFDOM's time have paved the way to the modern era of golf scoring. They haven't had many lines of sports section space for the history they made in golf. Far more than any other men in sports business they have contributed to the beautification of the nation's real estate. GOLFDOM worked closely with them in organizing their national association, in setting up their educational program and in suggesting and getting their occupational identification changed to golf course superintendents as better identification from public relations and economic viewpoints.

The late Fred Burkhardt, when greenkeeper at the Westwood C. C., Cleveland and an official in the association, and GOLFDOM's Joe Graffis and this writer worked out the basis for the greenkeepers' annual show as the foundation of the association's financing.

Burkhardt, John Morley, Howard Far-  
rant, John MacGregor, Joe Roseman,  
Fred Krueger, John Anderson, Frank  
Maples, Joe Mayo and such versatile  
pro-greenkeepers as "Dutch" Loeffler,  
Joe Mayo, Jack Pirie and George Knox  
have taken their stories with them.

Departed or in musing retirement are  
the old managers who came young to  
country clubs when the clubhouses were  
not much more than new, and often  
garish, roadhouses and who developed  
standards of cuisine and service that  
contented members of prestige country  
clubs with house deficits that were gi-  
gantic then—and too often merely nor-  
mal now.

Gone, too, and with their chronicles  
dimming into mists of legend, are the  
pioneer manufacturers whose faith, hope  
and the charity of their cash invest-  
ments brought American golf business  
into being.

Long gone is the charming Julian  
Curtiss of Spalding whose conviviality in  
Scotland was recalled when an im-  
mense shipment (for those days) of golf  
clubs arrived in New York. As a magni-  
ficent gentleman who never could imag-  
ine going back on his word (even while  
in the gloom of an historic hangover)  
the late and always great Uncle Julian  
sold the clubs and gave golf business  
one of its earliest and biggest boosts.

The tale of the Worthington Ball  
Company goes back to the revolution-  
ary Haskell ball. The MacGregor and  
Burke golf club businesses had their  
beginnings in the manufacture of wood-  
en forms on which shoes were made by  
machinery that could be adapted to the  
manufacture of wood clubheads.

The "Big Name" merchandising in  
golf and in other sports began as a flash  
in the brilliant mind of L. B. Icely of  
Wilson. Sarazen and Snead were two of  
his early proteges. The star system in  
selling golf goods wasn't doing much  
good in replacing the selling power of  
the home club's name on clubs until  
Icely figured out how both classes of  
pros could make money. Every pro who  
gets royalties for his name on golf mer-  
chandise today should bless Icely's mem-  
ory as a royalty check is cashed. L. B.  
Icely has been dead for years and the

story of how he put fortunes into pro  
pockets never will be told except in  
bits and secondhand from veterans.

The golf course maintenance equip-  
ment and supply business has had ef-  
fects on American outdoor beauty, on  
home and park lawns, on highway and  
airport construction and maintenance,  
far beyond the imagination and knowl-  
edge of even most veterans in golf  
course management.

The channels through which the con-  
tributions of mechanics, science and  
merchandising first were made to golf  
are almost forgotten now. How Toro, for  
instance, got into golf from the farm  
tractor business; how a maker of bee-  
hives got into making golf ball washers;  
how fertilizer and agricultural chemicals  
got into golf as a show window for gen-  
eral turf business, are case histories that  
are growing into legends now.

GOLFDOM, as the magazine of golf  
business that has healthily spanned the  
transition of golf business from an es-  
sential sideline of fun to a huge success,  
believes that there is inspiration and a  
great deal of practical value in the  
tales of the pioneers.

So, from time to time, GOLFDOM  
will run recollections of the men who  
made golf business great.

We invite your suggestions and con-  
tributions. You don't have to worry  
about fancy literary touches. The facts  
and pictures concerning golf history in  
which you have figured will be ade-  
quate. And we will see that your pic-  
tures are returned.

To begin a series that we are con-  
fident will be intensely interesting and  
stimulating, we present on page 28  
some notes from the late Edmund Ross-  
iter (Ross) Sawtelle, of Sawtelle Broth-  
ers Inc., Danvers, Mass., golf course  
equipment and supply dealers. Mr. Saw-  
telle was a founder of the Turf Equip-  
ment Distributors Association. He was  
born at Bromley, Kent, England, Oct.  
5, 1905. He died suddenly during that  
association's banquet at Las Vegas in  
October, 1964. His brother, Chester,  
who had established a turf equipment  
and supply business in Boston, and who  
was joined by Ross in 1948, continues  
the business. ●