



## 'Old Master' of the golf trade

*Joe Roseman Sr., the inventor of the hollow roller, was one of those pioneers who made maintenance a business.*

By FRANK LITTLER

In celebrating its 40th anniversary GOLFDOM can congratulate one of its oldest advertisers on their 50th. When this magazine was launched, the Roseman Tractor Mower Company—as it then was—had become a sprightly ten-year-old, quick to recognize the value to its products of such a medium as GOLFDOM. The association of the Roseman family with the Graffis brothers who founded GOLFDOM has therefore ranged all the way from Hagen's heyday to Palmer's peak.

It isn't inappropriate to think of this relationship in terms of playing personalities, because Joe Roseman Sr., the founder of the company, was himself a golf professional. (An old photograph, treasured by his sons, shows him in a

group which includes Jackie Burke's father.) His contribution to the history of course maintenance stemmed, in fact, from a talent for the game.

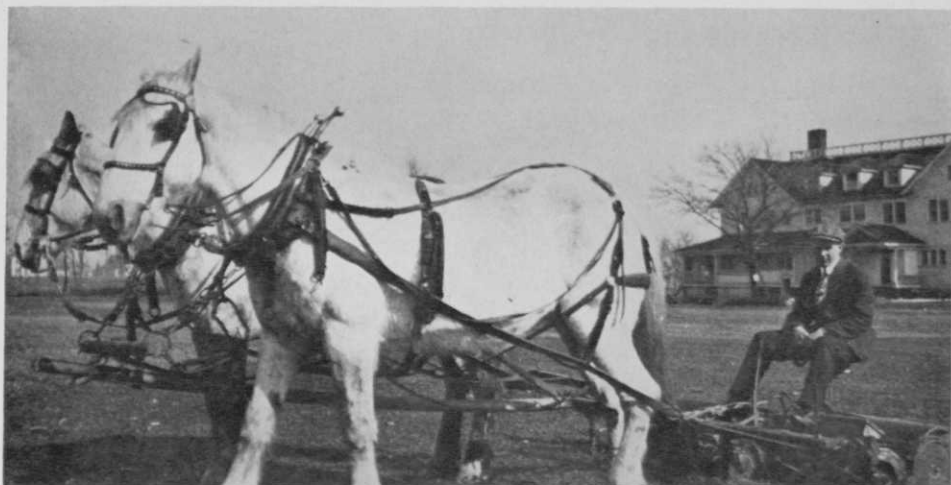
Born in Philadelphia in 1888, he began as a caddie at the Philadelphia CC. After building up a playing reputation in the East he was invited by the Des Moines CC to join them as an instructor-professional. He accepted the offer and moved to Iowa in 1907. It was in Des Moines that he first began to think about greater efficiency and economy in grass-cutting operations. Mowers in those days were horse-drawn, and though automotive traction was still a thing of the future, Roseman made his first break with tradition when he expanded a single-unit mower (a Coldwell model) by developing a hitch for a three-gang unit.

Motorization followed when he substituted for the Fordson—an unwieldy work-horse—an adapted Model T, referred to in the family's yellowed press clipping as a "Henry."

Roseman was also the inventor of the hollow roller, designed to keep to the minimum the weight pressed into the grass as the cylinders rolled over the surface. (There is still the main feature of Roseman mowers today.)

As everyone knows, in the first decade since the days of the horse-drawn mower in 1916, Roseman has been the exclusive maker of the rear hollow roller drive mower.





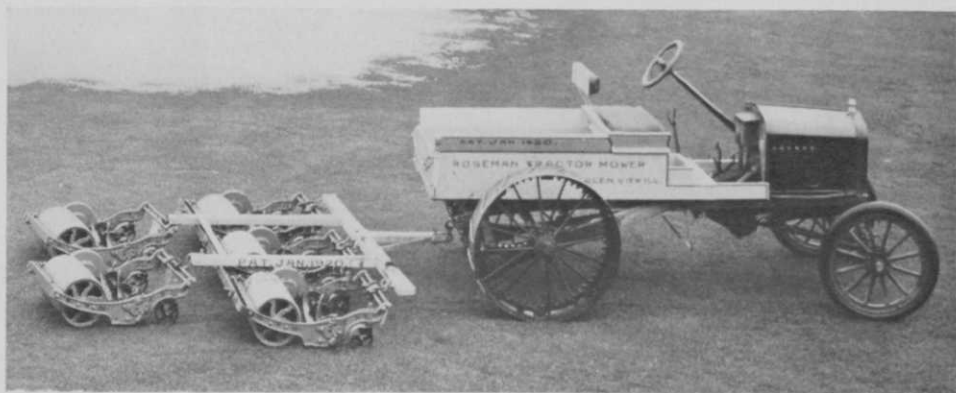
*Joe Roseman, Sr., about 1910 at the Des Moines G & CC, driving a three unit Coldwell mower.*

ades of the twentieth century it wasn't always easy to distinguish between professional, teacher, greenkeeper and architect, and Joe Roseman was one of the unclassifiable pioneers who had something of all these occupations in him. He eventually undertook the layout of several courses in the Chicago area. After a year at Racine he moved, in 1913, to Westmoreland—a club he was to serve in various capacities for the next eleven years. "It was at Westmoreland that I met him for the first time," recalls Herb Graffis. "He was one of the first men in the country to make course maintenance a business.

"Joe Roseman was an excellent player when another Philadelphia ex-caddie Johnny McDermott was making history as the first American-born golfer to win the U. S. National Open. McDermott, winner of the 1911 and 1912 National Opens, was a Philadelphia lad who acquired his golf from the same pros who were models for Roseman, Frank Sproggell, Jack Burke, Sr. and others of the area who weren't enchanted by the glory of competitive golf, but preferred golf as an attractive, rewarding business.

"Joe's operations as a mower designer and manufacturer were by no means his only expression of business brains that

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*Model T Conversion with enough power to handle a 5-gang—one of earliest course tractors.*

## OLD MASTER

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considered the picture to come in golf. He and Robert Cunningham and, I believe, Albert Pick the hotel equipment manufacturer, were in the Golfmoor Land Co. which owned the Wilmette GC, now Northwestern University's course; Pickwick, which was acquired by the Navy as the Glenview NAS course; Elmgate, which was bought by the Glenview Park district, and several other items of golf acreage. Due to elements that over-ruled Roseman's judgment, properties that now are valued at many millions were sold," says Herb Graffis.

Chick Evans, veteran ex-Open and Amateur Champion, confirms that Roseman was a born maintenance man. "I remember him," says Chick, "as a man who always talked to the point. He was quick-stepping, and he played fast too. He was a good golfer, but I always thought his heart was really in maintenance and design."

An extract from an old article by Roseman, on the subject of course creation, makes nostalgic reading today. "Property lying within 12 miles of the center of a large city," he wrote, "should not be purchased for more than \$1,500 per acre."

In 1916 he was ready to found his own company. The original plant was located at Evanston, and patents were taken out in the United States, Britain, Canada, and France. The company stayed at Evanston until November 1962, when it moved to Glenview, a short distance away, and here it operates in a single-story building with about 65 regular employees on its payroll. Even within the specialized world of grass-cutting the Roseman Mower Corporation has not diversified. Power-mowing, for example, the Roseman family regards as a separate industry.

Joe Roseman died in 1944, leaving three sons (of whom Warren J. Roseman is Vice-President of the corporation); a daughter is married to Jim Hoffman, the President. "My father," says Warren Roseman, "laid out the old Pickwick course, which now belongs to the Glenview Naval Station, and Wilmette, which is now Northwestern Uni-

versity's course. He designed Fort Lauderdale in Florida, and was club manager. The company started with three- and five-gang mowers, and then increased to seven and nine. Until 1937 each unit was cutting a width of 26"—then we expanded to 30. The rear wheel drive was another of my father's inventions."

Two of today's features of golf business, fairway watering and the lighted short courses, were pioneered by Joe Roseman. Joe Graffis recalls that in 1932 Roseman designed and built a nine-hole par-3 course west of the Wilmette CC course. Lights were mounted on steel towers that were usually used for lighting railroad switch yards. Holes varied in length from 90 to 150 yards. Greens and bunkers were of standard type of design for short holes. Lighting was remarkably good and players did not complain of being bothered by shadows.

In 1933, at this Wilmette lighted short course, during the Century of Progress exposition at Chicago, Roseman staged a tournament that assembled a star pro field. Harry Cooper won the event. A general depression and inability to solve the bug problem that came when the lights were turned on, brought the end of Roseman's lighted short course venture.

"At Illinois Golf Club, which now is Green Acres, Joe Roseman put in the first complete fairway watering installation in the central states; possibly the most complete watering job east of California," Joe Graffis also relates. "Roseman and John McElhatton were together in the Illinois enterprise. There was ample capacity in the piping that bordered the fairway. Outlets, as I remember, were staggered on sides of the fairways and ingenious sprinkler heads were used on these side outlets. There were not available sprinkler heads that made practical lines in the center of fairways. The installation worked so well and the course looked so green and fresh in the summer that a great deal of interest in fairway watering was stirred up in the Chicago district."

Robert Duguid, Roseman sales manager, is the son of an old pal of Joe Roseman. Duguid's father, of a family long prominent in Scotland's golf, was

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greenkeeper at the Evanston (Ill.) GC when he and Roseman met and formed a friendship that had much to do with speeding progress in Chicago area golf course maintenance.

The number of units to a gang-mower, while theoretically limitless, naturally depends on the power of the tractor. One of the Roseman customers, who has nurseries throughout the country, is currently using a 13-gang mower in Goshen, New York.

The half-century, in fact, has seen progress not only along the fairways and through the rough, but in numerous non-golfing settings, including grass airfields and industrial acreage. It is a progress which, fifty years ago, could only have been initiated by a man who had the welfare of all golfers uppermost in his mind. •

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