

# Picture This

Historic photographs are an excellent source for proper golf

BY GEOFF SHACKELFORD

**T**he key to any relatively headache-free golf course restoration is the ability to refer to historic photographs. Even if you have the architect's blueprints and members with active memories, old photographs provide unquestionable evidence about how the course used to look.

If the photographs are at all sharp and are accompanied by dates, they document what the architect and his team built. They also provide an authoritative rebuttal when the green chairman decides he is A.W. Tillinghast reincarnated, the membership claims the course should not be touched even though the old photos reveal something special that needs to be recaptured, or the supervising architect's theory of restoring and placing Ross-style bunkering in the modern era includes a symbolic Feng Shui-inspired homage.

Restoration projects have often failed or lacked quality results because no one set aside the time to find old photographs, magazine articles, scorecards and aerial shots. Often, they didn't know how and where to look. However, with a little time, patience and research, you

can often discover some great old photos, which could help return your course to its original splendor.

Seeking old photographs and other historical information about your course can be fun — and even a little addictive. If you're a superintendent, it's a good excuse to get away from work while still actually doing your job. So here are some tips on how to approach your investigation

— where and what to look for when looking for old golf course photographs.

## Background check

Before you get on the phone, brush up on the past by reading a club history or talking to local history buffs. Take a drive around the course to notice key points like mountains or old buildings that may not be as prominent today, but which would have stood out before trees took over your course.

Make sure you know any different names your course may have had in the early days. Note the dates of old professional or high-level amateur tournaments the course possibly hosted. Those were often covered by newspapers or had programs printed.

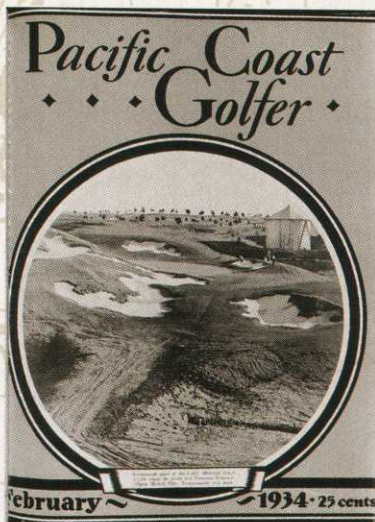
Many defunct newspaper photo collections have been donated to libraries, and you'd be amazed what you can find in those old photo files. But make sure to emphasize finding pre-Depression or pre-World War II information because the many courses which shut down during those tough times reopened and looked significantly different.

If you haven't already, let people at your course know you're looking for leads. You may be amazed at what kind of items members might have. A photo of someone teeing off on No. 6 in 1945 might be useful in showing bunker evolution after the course had been in play for 20 years. Old scorecards can also be useful. So inquire in newsletters, on bulletin boards and in committee meetings to obtain these materials.

## Get on the phone, 'Net


This is the most time consuming and least glamorous aspect of the search, but persistence on the phone or online can also save you a lot of effort.

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Check out old magazines that might contain photographed events from your course.



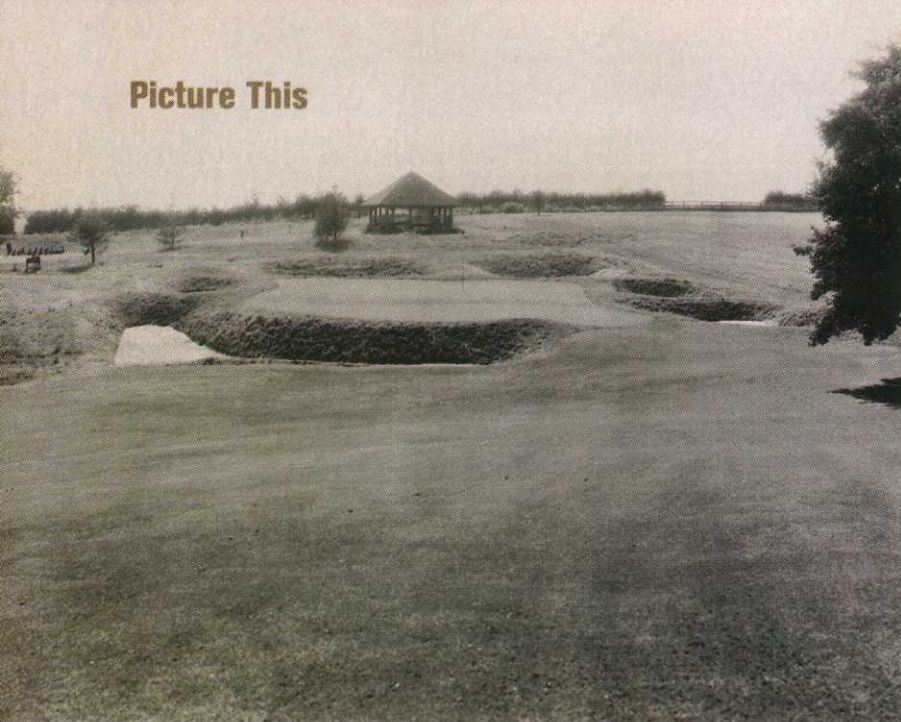
An aerial photograph of a golf course, showing various green fairways, sand traps, and water hazards. Numerous small white markers are scattered across the landscape, indicating specific areas of interest for restoration. A road or path runs along the top edge of the image.

course restoration – if you can find them

Old aerial photographs are the most reliable of all information and the key to any restoration project.



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You'd be amazed at the old photos of golf courses you can find at libraries.

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Start by phoning libraries in your area and ask the librarians in the history departments a lot of questions. Their job is to help you, and more often than not you will be surprised what kind of suggestions they come up with for photo collections, old magazines, aerial photographs and other collections to investigate. Also, run an Internet search on your course.

Local colleges and universities are often the best bet for aerial photos. Anyone who has carried out a restoration will tell you that old aerials are the most reliable of all information and the key to any project. Geography departments tend to buy up old aerial collections. If you persist long enough, someone will give you a good lead.

While defunct newspaper collections are usually good for old ground shots, they're often disorganized. If the librarian looks up files for your course and finds nothing, don't stop there. Ask if there are general golf files or files for other nearby courses. Many of the best photographs are in folders for other layouts or are old tournament photos.

Don't forget to ask about old magazines and newspapers that might have covered events at your course or featured photographs of tournaments. These tend to be rare, but at golf libraries like USGA's Golf House, the Tufts Archive at Pinehurst and Southern California's Ralph W. Miller Library, extensive collections exist of *Golf Illustrated*, *The American Golfer*, *The Fairway*, *USGA Green Section Bulletin*, *Pacific Golf and Motor*, *Golfdom* (the old ones) and many more.

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## Great Places to Start

■ **Golf House Library**, Far Hills, N.J. — Most complete collection in the country of periodicals, books and old scorecards. Excellent photo source. Asks you to return the photo reprints they make even after you've paid \$25 a print. Excellent staff, including Patty Moran, Rand Jerris and Maxine Vigliotta. Eases the annoyance of the non-profit USGA's convoluted legalities and costly prints. (800-222-8742)

■ **Ralph W. Miller Golf Library**, Industry Hills, Calif. — Smaller photo collection than Far Hills, but a top-notch periodical, book, old tournament program and scorecard collection. Comfortable setting for research, and helpful librarians Sandra Sheffer and Marge Dewey make research enjoyable. Col-

lection of pre-1940 Golfdoms is excellent. Accompanying hotel makes quick and reasonably priced research trips possible. (626-854-2354, email: golflore@earthlink.net)

■ **World Golf Hall of Fame Collection**, Jacksonville, Fla. — Photos, periodicals and books finally accessible to researchers. Old A.W. Tillinghast 1930s letter collection could greatly help in researching changes to your course. Tillinghast documented his visits to hundreds of courses across the country. Former USGA curator Karen Bednarski heads this collection. (904-940-4000)

■ **Hagley Museum and Library**, Wilmington, Del. — Remarkable source for sharp, high-quality aerial photos of Eastern golf courses. Ask for the Dallin Aerial Survey list of courses to de-

termine if your layout is included. If it is, you've struck gold. If you stop in to see them in person, don't miss the Pine Valley aerial file. (302-658-2400, ext. 277)

■ **Tufts Archives**, Pinehurst, N.C. — Ultimate source for Donald Ross information, photographs and renderings. If you have a Ross design, this is your first, and perhaps only, stop. (910-295-3642).

■ **British Columbia Golf House Society**, Vancouver, B.C. — Good source for information relating to Pacific Northwest and Western Canadian courses. (604-222-4653)

■ **National Archives and Records Administration**, Cartographic and Architectural Branch, College Park, Md. — Hit or miss source for old aerial

photos. Most are from late 1930s and most are shot from high up. But researchers have had excellent results here when all else failed. Be ready with map coordinates or map photocopies of your course when submitting orders. Prices are reasonable. (301-713-6400)

■ **George Bahto** — If you have a Charles Blair Macdonald, Seth Raynor or Charles Banks design, you probably already know about Bahto. If not, his e-mail is ggb313@aol.com.

■ **tillinghast.net** A fast-growing and wonderful Web site devoted to A.W. Tillinghast. The Wolfe brothers and Bob Trebus are assembling the Tillinghast Society and excellent documentation of all of Tillie's work. A must if you have a Tillinghast design.



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### When you go

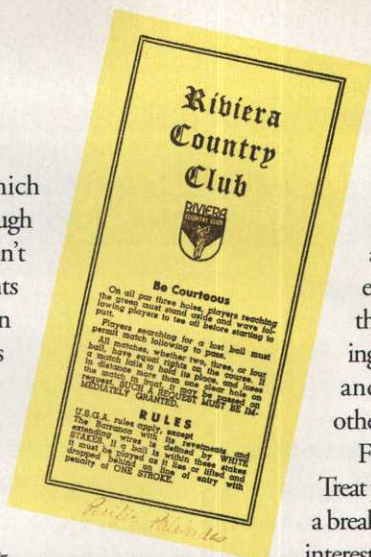
There is plenty to remember when departing on your investigation. Be prepared or else you may have to make return visits:

- Make sure you have plenty of time set aside, preferably a full day if you are checking out multiple sources.
- Go by yourself unless the person you bring along is just as passionate and knowledgeable about your course as you are. Otherwise, you won't get your work done.
- Bring a folder for receipts so you can be reimbursed for expenses.
- Bring your checkbook in case you find some prints that you want copies of (libraries rarely take credit cards).
- Bring some cash and change in case they will let you make photocopies of prints or magazine articles you need. Always ask for copies to be made on the copier's

"photo" setting, which sometimes gives enough detail that you won't need to order reprints of photos. But when feasible, get reprints made. Detail matters in a restoration.

- Bring a note pad and take extensive notes of everything you see regarding your course or other courses of interest. You'll be amazed how much those notes will come in handy.
- Bring a magnifying glass if you are going to be studying aerials.
- Bring along any other photos or books on your course that help you identify photographs while you search.

If you do locate a good aerial collection, be ready to spend some of the club's



If you're patient, you might find an old scorecard.

money. And don't let the club skimp if you do locate aerials because you'll want enlargements made to further aid your efforts in figuring out old green contour lines and the location of various other features.

Finally, have fun with this. Treat yourself to a nice lunch, take a break to check out something of interest to you and take your time.

Your efforts in researching old photographs can make or break a restoration project. Depending on what you dig up, a good collection of old photographs will not only make the process less subjective, but can also significantly impact the future of your classic course. ■

*Geoff Shackelford has researched old photographs for four of his books, including The Golden Age of Golf Design. His e-mail address is geoffshackelford@aol.com.*



### PlanetAir Aerator for 2000

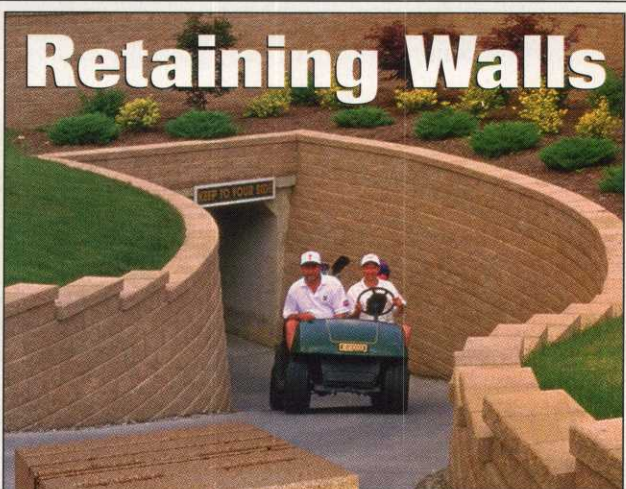
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