

Off The Fringe

NEWS WITH A HOOK

Business briefs

Rounds up for first half of '04

The National Golf Foundation (NGF) reports in its Quarterly Rounds Played Report that rounds were up 2.5 percent for the first six months of 2004 when compared to the same time last year.

Rounds increased .9 percent in the second quarter and 6.9 percent in the first quarter. April was the strongest month nationwide with an increase of 4.9 percent, while May and June were slightly down. The nearly 1 percent gain for the quarter compares to a nearly 3 percent loss in 2003 from 2002.

This report marks the third consecutive quarter that rounds have increased over the previous year. NGF estimates that about one-third of rounds in the United States occur in each of the second and third quarters, so the next quarter will have a significant impact on whether the six-month gains will continue.

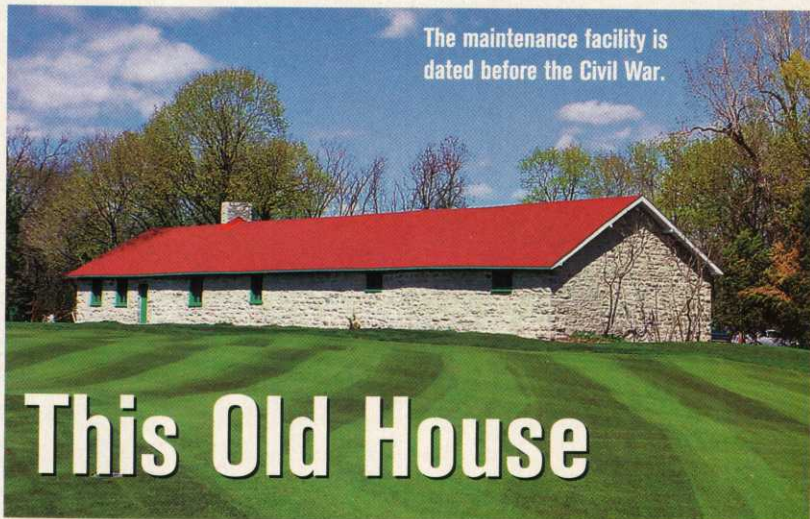
How did Hudson Hills ever get built?

It takes a special occasion to upstage a former president, but that was the case when the Mark Mungeam-designed Hudson Hills Golf Course, in Newcastle, N.Y., celebrated its grand opening in late May.

Bill Clinton, a resident of neighboring Chappaqua, was on hand to cut the ribbon, but the layout itself — a daily-fee design on 150 acres of rolling terrain — was definitely the star attraction. The last time a public course debuted here in tony Westchester County, Franklin Delano Roosevelt was midway through his second term.

Westchester has always been a golf mecca — for the privileged. There are 59 private clubs there. How exactly were 150 acres in the heart of America's most lucrative real estate market made available for the county's first public golf course in 66 years?

Briefs continue on page 18



The maintenance facility is dated before the Civil War.

PHOTOS COURTESY OF CLUB DE GOLF BEACONSFIELD

QUEBEC CLUB STAKES ITS CLAIM TO HAVING OLDEST MAINTENANCE FACILITY IN NORTH AMERICA. ANY CHALLENGERS?

By Curt Harler

The oldest golf course maintenance facility in North America might just be the one at Club de Golf Beaconsfield in Pointe-Claire, Quebec.

The facility for the private, 18-hole course dates before the Klondike Gold Rush, before the Canadian-Pacific Railway linked the country and way before Canada's confederation as a sovereign nation in 1867.

In U.S. terms, the maintenance facility goes back well before the Civil War. It likely dates to the presidency of Franklin Pierce, before Minnesota or Kansas became states.

Doug Meyer, certified superintendent at Beaconsfield, is staking his claim to the title of having the oldest maintenance facility on the continent. While the building was not

always used for golf, we are willing to say the crown is Beaconsfield's until someone can prove his or her maintenance facility is older.

In the mid 1800s, a bridge was needed to span the St. Lawrence River. The task of laying foundations for the Victoria Bridge began in 1854, Meyer relates. In its commission to build the bridge, the Grand Trunk Railway determined that the Pointe-Claire Quarry was the ideal source for the huge limestone blocks required for the job.

"The stone-cutting site was the limestone plateau that now forms the base for the 12th tee, the field bar, the 11th tee, the practice putting green, the 1st tee and the backdrop for the 15th hole," Meyer says.

The company built a rail line running from the site to Lac St. Louis,

Continued on page 16

Off The Fringe



Although a new maintenance facility was built in 1984, "The Barn" is still used as a storage facility for turf equipment.

Continued from page 15

where barges were loaded with 100 tons of quarry stone and sent down the river directly to the bridge site.

"The quarry operators built two buildings at the time — one to house horses used in the hauling operations and the other to house the stone workers who lived out of the district," Meyer explains.

The stable, which fell into disrepair, was finally removed from the 14th fairway in 1977. The other building, which members today refer to as "The Barn," still stands alongside the 16th fairway. It's an integral part of the hole.

"It has been in continuous use since its construction ... first as a bunkhouse, then as a storage building for dynamite and blasting powder," Meyer says.

When the newly formed Beaconsfield Golf Club purchased the land, the north end of the building became the first clubhouse while horses were stabled in the south end. Later, the building was put to use as the golf course maintenance building for the club.

In 1984, a new, modern facility was constructed for the turf maintenance department. Today the barn is still used as a storage facility for turf equipment as well as a paint room. The stalls for the horses that were used in the early days for maintaining the course are still in place.

In 2003, major restoration was done on the building, including repairs to the roof, windows and stonework. Plans include restoration of parts of the interior for use as meeting rooms for the greens committee and for staff rooms.

"The 30-inch-thick stone walls of the barn are still in good condition, and I fully expect the building to stand for many more years," Meyer says. "It's not listed on any historical registers, and I do not expect it to be so." (That is because it continues to be a working building, not merely a museum.) Meyer adds, "Its role at Beaconsfield will no doubt continue to evolve."

Quotable

"Disband greens committees. More damage has been done to golf courses by country club green committees than all the floods, hurricanes, gophers, pestilence, fungi and other natural disasters combined."

— Joe Logan of the *Philadelphia Inquirer* on the committees that many superintendents love to hate.

"Well, the great thing is I don't have to play. I choose to play whatever tournaments I want to play in."

— Tiger "What a Great Life" Woods on his profession (*The Wire*).

"I've found that talking agronomics to superintendents is better than talking products to them. My style is to get up there and talk agronomics and not beat on them so much about products."

— Superintendent-turned-salesman Gary Grigg of Grigg Brothers on his selling strategy.

The Willie Park-designed course is the oldest Montreal golf club on its original site, having been formed in June 1902. The course was built on the former site of the Pointe-Claire Quarry and the Charlebois farm.

Meyer has a history at the course, too.

"Working at Beaconsfield has special meaning for me," he says. "My great-grandfather came to Canada to work as an engineer on the Victoria Bridge, and it's quite possible he visited the quarry site to inspect the ongoing work."

"What a change he would find if he could see it now."

Harler is managing editor for Golfdom's TurfGrass Trends.