THE WISCONSIN GOLF COURSE SUPERINTENDENTS ASSOCIATIONS: The First Ten Years 1930 - 1939

By Monroe S. Miller

Our professional forefathers in Wisconsin banded together in March of 1930 and formed the Wisconsin Greenkeepers Association. The formal organizational meeting was held at Blue Mound Country Club in Wauwatosa and Paul Brockhausen, Greenkeeper at Blue Mound, was elected the first President.

Charles L. Bingham of the Municipal Golf Course in Beloit was elected Secretary/Treasurer. Mr. Bingham reported on that organizational meeting:

"Our association is the spontaneous outgrowth of the first short course for greenkeepers held at the University of Wisconsin, in February, 1930. Its active membership is confined to greenkeepers on golf courses in the State of Wisconsin. Assistant greenkeepers and members of green committees are admitted as associate members. Others who wish to encourage the movement join as contributing members." Mr. Bingham continued: "The purpose of our association is educational. It largely centers around the short course for greenkeepers at the State University. The program for these short courses is varied and practical. They bring the greenkeepers in personal contact with those at the experiment station whose training and everyday work are along lines allied with the problems the greenkeeper must meet and solve to the satisfaction of the multitude of golf players."

May 12, 1930 was an important day in the history of our Association. It was on that day that the first by-laws were adopted. It was also decided then that anyone in the state of Wisconsin involved in golf course maintenance who joined the newly formed organization before June 30, 1930 would be considered a charter member.

There were thirty-nine members who joined before that date. Those men, the charter members of our Association, are listed below:

Kenosha CC

Hartford CC

Blackhawk CC

Blue Mound CC

Beloit Municipal CC

Waterford Woods CC

Nakoma Golf Club

Barrows, Bert Bingham, C. L. Bone, John S. Brandt, Frank B. Brockhausen, Paul Caley, Garfield Clemons, Harold Daniels, C. E. Dietz, V. S. Erdman, A. B. Erickson, Alfred Farmer, R. E. Foeger, Joseph Fox, E. A. Glaster, James Hanson, Harry Johns, F. L. Lietzinger, E. A. Littlefield, L. L. Liverseed, Robert Ludwigen, Alfred McCann, C. B. Merrifield, Wesley Michaels, R. B. Miller, Verland Mitchell, S. S. Nielson, W. C. Peter, Fred Ream, C. L. Reitz, G. A. Rolfs, Raymond Schendel, Archie

Schoel, Otto Snavely, C. C. Sieber, Peter White, H. H. World, O. M. Yost, R. D. Zwerg, Robert **River Dale Golf Club** Beloit CC Whiting CC Mount Horeb CC Brynwood CC Ozaukee CC **Racine CC** Lake Lawn CC Maple Bluff CC Platteville CC Lake Ripley CC Delbrook Golf Club Sheboygan Golf Club Chenequa CC Hillcrest Golf Club St. Johns Golf Club Oconomowoc CC **Tuckaway CC** Lawsonia CC Tripoli CC Waukesha CC Onieda Golf and **Riding Club** Kish-wau-kee-toc Golf Club North Hills CC Westmoor CC Wausau CC Milwaukee CC Winneshiek Golf and CC Hilmoor Golf Club Burr Oak Golf Club

Beloit Municipal CC Madison Municipal Golf Course

The Wisconsin Greenkeepers Association held three other meetings in addition to the Blue Mound meeting. They met at Blackhawk Country Club in Madison in May and were addressed by A. S. Dahl of the USGA Green Section. Mr. Dahl treated the subject of snowmold for those in attendance. The Association gathered again in July of 1930 at Hillmoor Country Club in Lake Geneva. The speakers at the meeting were Wesley Merrifield and Messrs. Harrison and Reams, staff members of the "United States Golf Association Green Section's Mid-West turf garden." The educational format of that meeting was guestion and answer. The tradition of our annual tournament meeting began in September of that year. The tournament was held at Lawsonia Country Club in Green Lake.

Bingham wrote that the average attendance of the 1930 meetings was 41. The normal practice at the seasonal meetings was "to take visitors on an inspection of the golf course at which they were guests." They would look at interesting work being done and seasonal problems. Lunch was served after the inspection, and the afternoon was spent in discussion and the business meeting was held.

In addition to Brockhausen and Bingham, other officers for 1930 were:

1st Vice President - John S. Bone, Blackhawk Country Club

2nd Vice President — Charles L. Ream, Green Bay Country Club

Director for 1 year - C. B. McCann, Hillcrest Country Club

Director for 2 years - Robert Michaels, Oconomowoc Country Club

Director for 3 years — Robert E. Farmer, Brynwood Country Club

The University of Wisconsin in Madison was important, as Bingham noted, in the formation of our Association. Although the record isn't entirely clear, it seems that Dr. James G. Moore (namesake of Moore Hall on the UW campus) of the UW Department of Horticulture was important in arranging a short course for Greenkeepers in Wisconsin. It was a five day conference, held from February 10th through February 14th, 1930 on the UW campus. Fifty-nine Greenkeepers, from Minnesota and Illinois as well as Wisconsin attended. H. Hankinson, in the March 1930 issue of The

National Greenkeeper (this article is reprinted elsewhere in the GRASSROOTS), wrote that this "was the first conference greenkeepers' course ever held by a state university in the Mid-West. Faculty members for this course included the best that could be secured in the various fields. Specialists were selected not only from the College of Agriculture. but also from other places, so that expert instruction in all phases of golf grounds management could be given. The subjects covered a wide range of interests from maintenance problems, golf grounds equipment and land drainage, to discussions regarding care of turf and plantings and the preservation of natural beauty on golf courses."

A photograph of the men attending the first short course is on the front cover and accompanies the "National Greenkeeper" article. it is interesting to make note of those in attendance. The picture gives us a chance, in many cases, to see our predecessor(s), individuals we may have heard about but never seen. It is, for example, one of the few times I've seen a photograph of John Bone. John's name, even today, is occasionally brought up by an older member of Blackhawk Country Club — he had great respect from the members of the Club in his own time. F. B. "Fritz" Reinhart attended this first meeting. Fritz was Don Ferger's immediate predecessor at The Country Club of Beloit, and in meetings I attended in the late 1960's and early 1970's, Fritz was always there. Dick Ryerson is standing next to Fritz Reinhart in this picture - he was the owner of the R. L. Ryerson Co. of Milwaukee and was the distributor of Toro equipment in Wisconsin for many years.

The officers of the Wisconsin Greenkeepers Association for 1931 were the same as those that served in 1930, excepting that Mr. Peter Sieber of the Winneshiek Golf Club was elected to replace Robert Michaels as a director; Mr. Michaels moved out of Wisconsin and was ineligible to serve.

The 1930 short course of instruction for Greenkeepers was so successful that a similar program was held in 1931, February 9th through February 13th.

The program for the 1931 College of Agriculture Short Course for Greenkeepers, Green Committee members and officials of golf clubs is reprinted here. In an invitation to Wisconsin Greenkeepers, Dr. Moore wrote: "The enrollment fee is \$10 and must accompany the application. Other expenses, including hotel, should run from \$20 to \$30. Enrollment is limited to 80." In fact, 62 men attended that meeting.

| | sconsin Greenkeepers' Course MONDAY, FEBRUARY 9 |
|-------------|---|
| 1:30 P.M. | |
| 1.00 1.141. | Construction |
| 2:30 P.M. | Topography of the Green in Relation to |
| | Drainage and Play Kenneth Welton |
| | Other Drainage Problems of the Green E. R. Jones The Orientation of the Green as Regards the |
| | Snow ProblemJ. G. Dickson |
| | |
| | TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 10 |
| 8:00 A.M. | What to Look for in a Fairway Mower F. W. Duffee |
| 8:45 A.M. | Fundamentals in Grass Development G. W. Mortimer |
| | What to Look for in Grass SeedsA. L. Stone |
| | Grasses for GreensJohn Montieth, Jr. |
| | Laboratory Instruction Seeds and Weeds. Section 3. Land Drainage. |
| Section 2. | |
| 3:30 P.M. | Experiences in Growing Bent |
| C. T. | Pedlow Robert Zwerg H. A. Arnold |
| | WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 11 |
| | Sources of Plant NutrientsC. J. Chapman |
| 8:50 A.M. | Fertilizing and Top Dressing GreensO. J. Noer |
| 10:00 A.M. | Mowing Greens-Its Relation to Mainte- |
| 11.00 4 14 | nance and PlayJohn Montieth, Jr. Controlling Diseases of the GreenA. S. Dahl |
| | Laboratory Instruction. |
| Section 1. | Mowers. Section 3. Soil Problems. |
| Section 2. | Mowers.Section 3. Soil Problems.Land Drainage.Section 4. Seeds and Weeds. |
| 3:30 P.M. | Landscaping ProblemsF. A. Aust |
| | THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 12 |
| 8:00 A.M. | Grasses for Tees, Fairways and |
| | RoughJohn Montieth, Jr. |
| 9:00 A.M. | How Cutting Affects GrassL. A. Graber |
| | What the Movies ShowF. A. Aust |
| 10:40 A.M. | Traps, Their Location and MaintenanceKenneth Welton |
| 1:30 P.M. | Laboratory Instruction |
| Section 1. | Land Drainage. Section 3. Seeds and Weeds. |
| Section 2. | Soil Problems. Section 4. Mowers. |
| 3:30 P.M. | The Greenkeepers' RecordsF. R. Elwell |
| | FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 13 |
| | The Well-Kept CourseJohn Montieth, Jr. |
| 9:00 A.M. | Fertilizers as Related to the Character of the |
| 0:45 4 14 | Turf on FairwaysGeorge Mortimer How to Determine the Need of Plant Food |
| 9.45 A.M. | ElementsO. J. Noer |
| 10:30 A.M | White Grub Control |
| 11:15 A.M. | The Control of Weeds on the Fairways A. L. Stone |
| 1:30 P.M. | Laboratory Instruction |
| | Soil Problems. Section 3. Mowers. |
| Section 2. | Seeds and Weeds. Section 4. Land Drainage. Final Conference |

The speakers featured on this 1931 program included some of the best minds working on turfgrass and related problems, not only in their time but of all times. John Monteith represented the USGA on the program. He was joined by his USGA Green Section colleagues A. S. Dahl and Kenneth Welton. Dahl's name is frequently found in reviewing early literature of golf course management. And what name is more closely associated with Wisconsin golf course management and the current WGCSA than that of O. J. Noer. Noer received his undergraduate and graduate school training in the Department of Soil Science at the University of Wisconsin-Madison and gave instruction at this conference on topics relating to soils for greens construction, fertilizing and topdressing putting greens, and soil testing. Mr. Noer's topic selection illustrates that 1931 was not the "dark ages," and most any current turfgrass conference will include some discussion of those same subjects. Dr. C. J. Chapman, a renown Soil Scientist, spoke on plant nutrition. The group was addressed by the internationally known plant pathologist Dr. J. G. Dickson. Professors Mortimer, Stone and Graber, all of the Department of Agronomy, participated. E. R. Jones and F. W. Duffee, both on the Agricultural Engineering staff, made presentations on golf course equipment and golf course drainage. Entomologist C. L. Fluke covered the subject of grub control, and Horticulture Professor F. A. Aust spoke on landscaping problems. One has to be impressed with the faculty gathered for the short course as much as by the broad range of subjects and problems discussed. A copy of the proceedings, if one had been published, would indeed be a prize possession of any current professional Golf Course Superintendent.

Paul Brockhausen was reelected president of the Association for 1932, and he was succeeded by charter member R. E. Farmer of Brynwood Country Club in 1933. This might be a good place to make note of the dues of he Association during the early years. The dues for membership from 1930 to 1932 were \$5.00 per year. For the years 1933 to 1935, the dues were \$3.00 per year. Then, a new concept for dues was initiated. The dues for the years 1936 to 1947 were \$1.00 per year, and a collection was taken at meetings to help defray mailing and any other expenses incurred in the function of the Association. The recommendation was that 25¢ per person be given as the hat was passed at each meeting! The dues from 1948 to 1958 were back up to \$3.00 and they climbed back up to \$5.00 per year for the years 1959 through 1966. In 1967 the dues were raised to \$10.00.

In June of 1933 the finances of the National Association of Greenkeepers of America were tied up (reasons are unknown to me). The Wisconsin Association lent the N.A.G.A. \$50.00. This money was repaid to the Wisconsin Association in August 1937.

Nineteen thirty-four was the fifth year in the life of the Wisconsin Greenkeepers Association. The season started with the annual short course in Madison, held from February 27 to March 2, and their annual meeting was on the



1934 WGA meeting at Hillcrest Country Club in Eau Claire.

evening of March 1. At that meeting, the officers for 1934 were elected. They were:

President — Robert E. Farmer (re-elected)

1st Vice-President — J. A. Taylor 2nd Vice-President — G. A. Caley



A late 1930's meeting of the WGA at Meadowbrook Town and Country Club in Racine. The photo was taken following the afternoon of golf and some of "the boys" were still in the shower!

Secretary/Treasurer — H. B. Ream

1st Year Director — C. B. McCann

Key topics of business at the annual meeting were a request for affiliation with the National Association of Greenkeepers of America (N.A.G.A.) and the dues for 1934. The membership voted to affiliate with the N.A.G.A. (WGA member Harry Hanson was one of

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the founders of the N.A.G.A. at the Sylvania Golf Club in Toledo, Ohio. That group was organized on September 12, 1926). A motion was made and passed to retain the 1934 dues for membership in the WGA at \$3.

Secretary Ream, in summarizing the 1934 season, felt it was most successful for the WGA since its birth in 1930. He wrote at some length on their efforts to hold meetings in various sections of the state to encourage attendance at the meetings and afford all greenkeepers the chance to attend at least one meeting without excessive travel expense. Meetings were held at Tripoli Country Club in Milwaukee, Takodah Country Club in Fond du Lac, Lawsonia Country Club in Green Lake and North Shore Country Club in Menasha.

They had another serious goal for 1934. Since they were now affiliated with the national organization, they wanted to schedule joint meetings with other local organizations in other states. Two such meetings were held in 1934. The first was a joint meeting with the Mid-West Greenkeepers Association at the Waterford Woods Golf Club in Waterford, Wisconsin on June 4th. On October 2nd, the WGA met with the lowa and Minnesota greenkeepers at the Hillcrest Country Club in Eau Claire. It is interesting to note, in Ream's report, of how the members felt these joint meetings were successful and needed to be continued in future years. The underlying thought was that such meetings produced a feeling of fellowship and understanding that was essential in a successful national organization (N.A.G.A.). The educational value of the 1934 meetings was also emphasized.

The annual tournament was held at the North Shore Country Club in Menasha on September 17th. Mr. Ream described that day:

"Ray Rolfs won the championship with a very creditable 83 over the difficult layout. John Taylor was runner-up with an 85. Other prizes were won by Harry Hanson, Otto Schael, John Bone, Robert Zwerg, Max Koatz, Dr. D. W. Roth and Howard Ream. The boys all had a most enjoyable time which was somewhat dampened by the fact that our host, Leo Keating, was not able to be with us, due to an illness which kept him in bed."



1934 WGA meeting at Tripoli Country Club in Milwaukee.

The group from Madison that traveled to Menasha cleaned up — Bone, Hanson, Ream and Zwerg were all from the city!

John S. Bone, Greenkeeper at Blackhawk Country Club in Madison was chosen to serve as President of the Wisconsin Greenkeepers Association for 1935. Other officers elected were Leo Keating of North Shore Country Club in Menasha — Vice-President; Howard Ream of Nakoma Golf Club in Madison — Secretary-Treasurer; and Robert Zwerg of Madison Municipal golf courses — new Director. Their annual meeting was again held during the short course in Madison on March 7th.

Notable for 1935 was the strong resolve of the Wisconsin Association to support the N.A.G.A. So strong was the feeling that at the annual meeting the members voted to change the Association's name from the "Wisconsin Greenkeepers Association" to "The Wisconsin Section of the Greenkeepers of America." Robert E. Farmer, past president of the WGA, described the sentiments of the members and their decision to change the name this way: "We Greenkeepers in Wisconsin feel that we are an integral part of the National Greenkeepers of America. We want to express that feeling in the name of our local section. We feel that there is righteousness and justification in the name Wisconsin Section of the Greenkeepers of America, because only in complete unison is there complete strength. Many are the things to be accomplished when we will function as the Greenkeepers of America. Our motto for such a goal is 100 per cent membership." The date of this name change was March 7. The motion to change the name was made by John S. Bone and seconded by Del Stollenwerk.

A listing of local, state, regional, etc. associations that affiliated with the National Association of Greenkeepers of America on July 14, 1935, in the order of their affiliation, are:

Mid-Atlantic Association of Greenkeepers

Wisconsin Greenkeepers Association

Cleveland District Association of Greenkeepers

Minnesota Greenkeepers Association

Greater Cincinnati Association of Greenkeepers

Philadelphia Association of Golf Course Superintendents

Mid-West Greenkeepers Association

An invitation was extended to the N.A.G.A. to hold their Turfgrass Conference and Show in Milwaukee in either 1934 or 1935. Invitations were also extended for later dates up until 1942. The invitation was extended again in 1970 or 1971. No reasons for declining these invitations are in the records.

They were men of strong conviction and positive action. What a fine example they set.

A review of the events of 1936 shows that, once again, the year was inaugurated by the annual short course for greenkeepers on the UW-Madison campus. But it had been shortened to two days and it was held on the 27th and 28th of February. Many subjects were covered by many familiar speakers. The program for that year is reprinted here. Noer is now working for the Milwaukee Sewerage Commission, and Emil Truog was included as an instructor. Truog, of course, had a substantial background and wide recognition as a Soil Scientist. The USGA Green Section staff was again on hand.

Secretary Ray Rolfs, recording the highlights of the meeting, commented that the annual meeting was held after a "delightful" banquet. John Bone and Leo Keating were re-elected President and Vice-President and Ray Rolfs of North Hills Country Club in Menomonee Falls was elected Secretary-Treasurer. that had to aim for wider appeal and a concomitant decrease in print space for the news of local organizations in the Greenkeepers' Reporter. If this indeed was the case, much of the news (now history) of local groups was not recorded. That leaves us with our own Association resources, which are nil. It may be that local news was recorded in some form of a newsletter (like the GRASS-ROOTS). That is well and good, but these kinds of journals are not usually kept and bound and maintained as part of the public record in libraries. Our only help for clarifying the past record is access to private collections.

John Bone presided over the group for a third year, and Ray Rolfs served as the Secretary/ Treasurer. This year was one where monthly meetings were held from April through October. The tournament meeting in September was hosted by Brynwood Country Club and Rolfs wrote that "the greenkeeper and green chairman at the Club solicited so many prizes that when they were distributed, even those who hadn't played received something as a prize!" The attendance at the meetings averaged between 30 and 0, and again, they made an attempt to spread the host clubs



1935 Wisconsin, Iowa and Minnesota joint meeting held in the Twin Cities.

From about 1937 forward, information on state organizations that was recorded in national journals starts to diminish in its quantity. One can only speculate as to the reasons why but there are a couple of possibilities that might explain it. It has been apparent from these few paragraphs about the Wisconsin group that support for the national association was strong. One can suppose that such feelings were widespread and that other states lent the same kind of support to the N.A.G.A. This might have led to a national publication

across the state to make the travel involved more equitable for everyone. Seasonal topics were discussed at each meeting and they initiated a "question box" format to encourage these discussions. The short course, by now a strong tradition, was held in Madison and Rolfs reported that "we have appointed a committee to draw up a program for the 1938 winter school. We are expecting some of the Mid-West boys to attend and want them to assist us in selecting subjects which appeal to most greenkeepers."

The year was a difficult one for many greenkeepers — the summer was dry and those with no fairway irrigation (the vast majority) found their golf courses very brown and there was real concern with perennial weeds taking a firmer hold, especially the dandelions. The summer also presented problems with sod webworms, cutworms, sunscald and considerable brown patch, but apparently most were satisfied that control measures available in 1937 were sufficient to keep putting greens in good condition.

The annual short course for greenkeepers was a strong tradition by now. Read what Norman C. Johnson of the Medinah Country Club in suburban Chicago wrote about the 1938 short course:



1939 WGA meeting at Waupaca Country Club.

WISCONSIN SHORT COURSE

A Short Course for Greenkeepers was held at the University of Wisconsin, Madison, on March 7, 8 and 9. The good attendance shows the great interest taken by greenkeepers to gain further knowledge on the latest developments in turf maintenance.

The registration office was open at 11 A.M. and by noon, the book showed 58 names.

At 1:30 the sessions began, with Professor Moore as chairman. Professor Emil Truog of the Soils Department was presented and he gave a very interesting talk on "The Fundamental Basis of Fertilization," including a laboratory demonstration.

O. J. Noer, Milwaukee Sewerage Commission, gave a splendid talk on his personal experiences with rapid soil tests and their advantages and limitations. Due to the fact that so many of us are just a little uncertain on soil testing and its limitations, it did make an impression on *how* and *when*.

C. R. Zeasman followed with "How to Locate and Lay Tile," with a blackboard illustration, I venture to say there were plenty taking notes during his explanations, for this is a subject concerning the foundation of every good golf course.

On Tuesday our forenoon session began at 8:30 with a talk "Bacteria in the Soil—What They Are and What They Do." This was given by Perry Wilson of the Bacteriology Department, and was illustrated with slides.

T. C. Allen, Department of Economic Entomology, followed with "Arsenicals—Their Properties and Differences." At this time literature was passed out to the students—"A Table of Arsenical Poisons and Their Relative Merits."

Dr. John Monteith gave us a very interesting talk on "Latest Developments in the Control of Turf Diseases." His subject was brought out very clearly by the use of slides taken from various courses throughout the country.

Our morning session ended with an address by O. J. Noer on "Pertinent Observations and Comments on Turf Problems of 1937." In all of these talks time was allotted for ther classes to ask questions, which were answered very efficiently by the speakers.

The afternoon session was in the Horticultural Building, as were those previous, and started off with "Special Grasses for Use on Golf Courses" by Dr. Monteith. The class derived a great deal of knowledge from this talk.

The next speaker of the afternoon was Herb Graffis, Editor of "Golfdom." Mr. Graffis' address was "How Can Officials and Players Be Educated as to the Best Greenkeeping Practices." This vital subject was to my estimation directed to the individual greenkeeper, and to those of us who were present, let us all reserve a little space in our cerebrum for this advice. It will have a great deal to do with our profession as a greenkeeper.

A very interesting topic given by Professor Moore on "The Pruning Problems of the Greenkeeper," was discussed freely and many questions answered in the short period that Professor Moore had allotted himself.

"Our Experiences in the Proper Cut of Greens for Best Play and Maintenance" was the subject of round table discussion. Those participating were Ray Gerber, Glen Oak CC, Glen Ellyn, Ill.; A. A. Germann, Naperville CC, Naperville, Ill.; John Bone, Blackhawk CC, Madison, Wis.; and Ray Rolfs, North Hills CC, Menomonee Falls, Wis.

After much discussion the class was adjourned until 6:00 P.M. when we

met at the Wisconsin Union to delve into the subject of Atrophy. The important topic of the evening was southern baked ham assisted by scalloped potatoes, salad, vegetables, pie and coffee. After the subject was well taken care of Professor Moore introduced Mr. Sanborn, a member of the Conservation Commission of Wisconsin. He spoke to us briefly on what the Conservation Commission consists of, and proceeded to take us on a journey through the Wisconsin wilds by way of a motion picture camera. It was all very enjoyable and educational.

"The Use and Abuse of Watering Systems on Golf Courses" was the first topic on the Wednesday program. Dr. Monteith covered this subject very well and brought out many good points to remember.

O. J. Noer presented an interesting slant on "Meeting the Seepage Problem," which also included tiling problems.

Harold Clemens, Sunset Ridge CC, Northbrook, Ill. followed with "My Experience with Poling," which brought forth a great deal of discussion on the benefits of brushing greens in the spring.

M. P. Christensen of the Jacobson Mfg. Co. gave the class first hand knowledge on "Golf Course Mowers and Their Maintenance."

A. L. Stone of the Department of Agronomy closed the meeting with an interesting talk on "Dandelions, Chickweed and Crab Grass." Literature was available concerning weeds and their control methods.

And to those who gave us their time and knowledge, we wish to express thanks and our sincere appreciaton for their fine work.

—Norman C. Johnson, Medinah Country Club, Medinah, Ill.