



GOLF HOUSE — *Immaculate, Impressive and Inspiring*

By Monroe S. Miller

It's a trip I recommend you take someday; Golf House will not disappoint you. I stop there almost every year when I am on my trip to see the fall foliage in the northeast. It almost merits the status of a pilgrimage when you are as involved with golf as you are when it is your career.

Golf House is located in New Jersey, a state that isn't often a vacation destination. But the USGA headquarters are close to both Philadelphia and New York City —about 50 miles west of New York —and Interstate highways can get you close. I-80 and I-78 run east/west and Far Hills, home of Golf House, is between them. I-287 (north/south) also passes within a few miles of the village of Far Hills. Surprising to me on my first visit, in fact, was the pretty New Jersey countryside. If you are like me, I used to think of that state as having more than its share of toxic waste sites, congestion, air pollution and crime. It is so small that it seemed there would be little left for natural beauty or productive agriculture. A ride near the Delaware Water Gap or a trip to Cape May will remove your prejudice. Not only that, the great Green Bay Packers Coach Vince Lombardi is buried in the Mt. Olivet Cemetery in Middletown, which isn't particularly far from Far Hills.

Despite a location in the midst of two heavily populated areas, once you are through the small town of Far Hills and are approaching Golf House, the sense of a quiet, peaceful wooded countryside overtakes you. There are large estates, riding stables and country homes. I am often left with an expectation of a fox hunt — red fox on the run, fox hounds in pursuit, natty hunters on beautiful horses giving chase. It seems an area of escape for the most prosperous of Manhattan.

The directions and signage to Golf House are not impressive, however. The first trip there left me feeling foolish — I stopped to ask a man for directions and without saying a word,



The well maintained entrance to Golf House sets the stage for an inspiring visit.



The Administrative Building is where Jim Snow's Green Section office is located.



This is the view of Golf House that welcomes you as you leave the parking lot and walk to the museum.



The library is through the door between the white columns, a view seen as you stand in the yard fronting the Administrative Building.



The Testing and Research Building is the third of the USGA headquarters.

he pointed to a small sign. It's quite understated!

The road into the museum and headquarters is a long, curving drive through a mostly grassy area, dotted with mature evergreens and large

deciduous trees. I am always there in autumn, so the fall color has been great. The road leads to a circular drive in front of the museum or down to a parking lot well shaded by big trees.

The headquarters facility actually consists of three main buildings — Golf House itself, a relatively new and formidable headquarters building, and research and testing center beyond that. They are all in immediate proximity to one another.

The gem is Golf House. It is a 75-year old Georgian Colonial mansion that the USGA has called home since March 8, 1972. It was designed in the 1920s by John Russell Pope, one of America's foremost architects. He designed famous buildings like the National Gallery of Art, the National Archives building, and the Jefferson Memorial, all in Washington, D.C. He also designed the American Battle Monument in France.

The main entry is a large wooden white door flanked by two white columns. It opens into the center portion of the mansion which serves as a lobby. On either end of the lobby (we are still on the first floor) are two large rooms. One is the gift shop — heaven if you are looking for a gift for someone involved with golf. The other is the Bobby Jones Room. It is a sitting room with comfortable couches and chairs and a prize collection of Jones memorabilia.

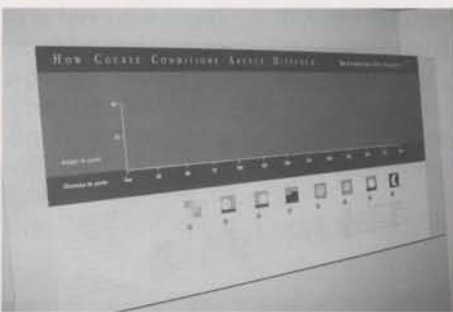
Through the lobby and running the distance of the three main rooms is an exhibition gallery that changes from time to time.

This center portion of the house is flanked by rooms that are rectangular and at a right angle to the center section. There are connecting hallways to them. The left room houses the best portion of the facility — the library. It is an impressive sight. I cannot imagine what titles they might be missing. The center of the library is occupied by a large conference table. I have spent some time at it, including making notes for this short article.

Outside of the library (actually, just before its entrance) is the Francis Ouimet Room.



Tours of the test facility are self-guided.

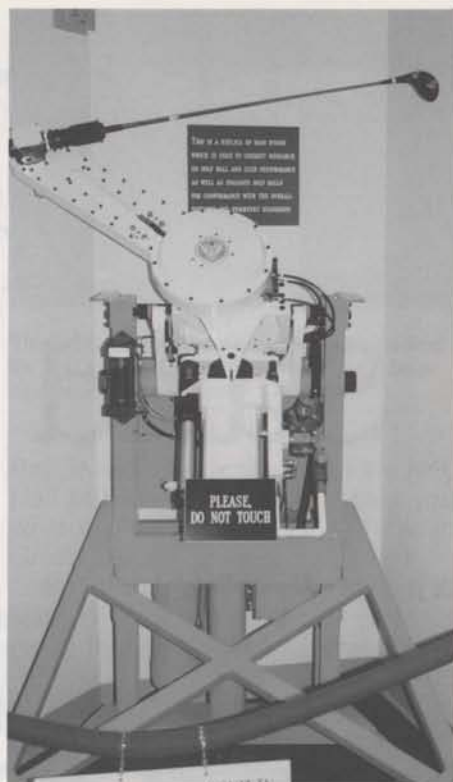


Every golf course superintendent would love to have this graphic display available in lockerrooms and the golf shop!

The opposite wing has displays of golf balls, prints and lots of other golf artifacts from the rubber ball era of golf. Just before entering this wing there is a small room, similar to the Ouimet Room, that has a display of memorabilia from the gutta percha era of golf.

Routing takes you upstairs from the rubber ball displays. The Clubs of Champions Room is at the top of the steps. From there you move through a hallway to a small theater, and from there to a display area. It is immediately above the gift shop, lobby and Jones Room. One year pieces of golf course equipment were featured — horse drawn mower, cup cutters, cup liners, old tools, etc.

From there you enter the hallway again. There are lots of photos and



The famous "Iron Byron" that is used to test golf equipment and execute USGA research.

posters on the walls, and a room on the back of the house is a photo gallery. Another room features a club makers work studio from two different eras — turn of the century and maybe the 1940s, for example.

The next room has old golf equipment on exhibition. At that point stairs take you back to the first floor. The area above the library is used for offices.

My usual practice is to go from Golf House to the Administrative Building and call Jim Snow. Sometimes he is there; sometimes he is out of the office. Last fall Kimberly Erusha came down to visit for awhile. She's from Iowa, so we had some Midwestern conversation to share!

The final stop is to the research and test center. These days there is a self-guided tour; it wasn't always so. One year, while nosing around, I struck up a conversation with a staff worker and got a good look inside. The famous "Iron Byron" is there, although it has never been outside and in use during one of my visits. A wide open grassy field — range or fairway — is behind the test center. It starts at the observation deck and extends well beyond the range of even Iron Byron.

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If you are looking for a Wisconsin connection — I always am — I found this: when the move to Far Hills was made in 1972, Lynford Lardner was the president of the USGA. Mr. Lardner was a member of Milwaukee Country Club and a partner in the Foley and Lardner law firm that is so widely known today.

Before moving to the New Jersey countryside, Golf House was a five-story limestone building located at 40 East 38th Street in Manhattan. Their collection has certainly been more accessible in New Jersey than it was while in midtown Manhattan!

I have visited the Pro Football Hall of Fame in Canton, Ohio and enjoyed it greatly. The Baseball Hall of Fame in Cooperstown, New York has been a stop for me three times even though I am no great baseball fan. It



The practice fairway/range is behind the test center.

is a Mecca for any sportsman, however. And the village of Cooperstown is right out of a Currier and Ives print. The Basketball Hall of Fame in Springfield, Massachusetts is more commercial and less impressive than these others. My favorite, of course, is the Packer Hall of Fame in Green



The USGA uses the practice range behind its test center to promote the Green Section research program.

Bay. It had more visitors than the NFL Hall of Fame in 1997; that tells you what a great collection they have in Green Bay.

But most impressive, to me at least, is the collection at Golf House. I really hope you get to see it sometime. 🏌️

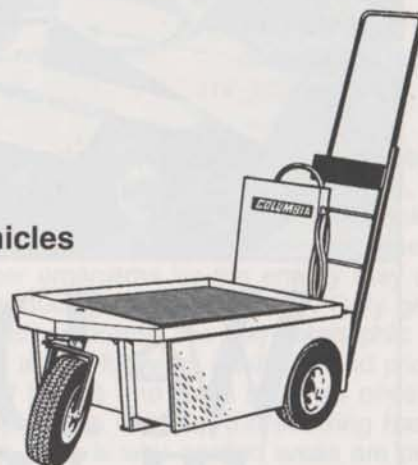
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