



# 1930

By **Monroe S. Miller**, Golf Course Superintendent, Blackhawk Country Club

It took the publication of Gene Haas' book about our organization — *Caring for the Green* — to get me thinking about the year our professional ancestors formally banded together.

That was back in 1930, and the times were surely tough. Black Thursday — October 24, 1929 — was a very recent event when the greenkeepers assembled in Madison during the cold days of the winter of 1929/1930, and the effects of the stock market crash and the depression were being felt all over the country. Discretionary spending on things like golf was predictably affected to an even greater extent.

But some good things were still happening in America. Amelia

Earhart set an aviation speed record for women at 171 mph. And Charles Lindbergh, a former University of Wisconsin - Madison student, broke the cross-country flying record in 1930. At the Indianapolis Speedway, the 500-mile race on Memorial Day was won with a speed of 100.4 mph.

President Taft died in 1930. He was President of the United States of America 1908 - 1912, and he became Chief Justice of the Supreme Court after his presidential term.

Frozen foods were on the market for the first time in 1930, and Grant Wood painted his famous "American Gothic" that year.

The weather was in the news in 1930 - big time. It was a very dry year. Crops suffered greatly, and

most likely golf courses did, too. The government budgeted \$121.9 million for crop relief for farmers to make up for some of the lowered crop yields.

Closer to home, the Field House at the UW - Madison was completed and opened for use. The Badgers beat Penn in basketball on December 18th, 25 - 12. The Field House today looks almost exactly like it did back then.

The Badgers won the Big 10 baseball championship, and they were the Big 10 indoor track champions. They finished last in Big 10 football, however.

The biggest news in golf in 1930 had to be what was unthinkable back then — Bobby Jones won the four major championships of his era in

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one year. He took victories in the US and British Opens and Amateurs. Jones won the British Amateur at St. Andrews, the British Open at Hoylake (by 10 strokes), the US Open at Interlachen CC (in Minnesota) and the US Amateur at the Merion Cricket Club.

Jones was honored with a ticker-tape parade in New York City after the British victories. The United States captured another Walker Cup in 1930, at Royal St. George in Sandwich, England. It was our sixth consecutive victory, and the team included Bobby Jones and Francis Ouimet.

Tommy Armour beat Gene Sarazen in the PGA Championship, a big tournament then but not one of the four majors it is today.

Miniature golf took off in popularity in the 1920s, and by 1930 a total of \$125 million had been invested in "Tom Thumbs," as the miniature golf courses were known then.

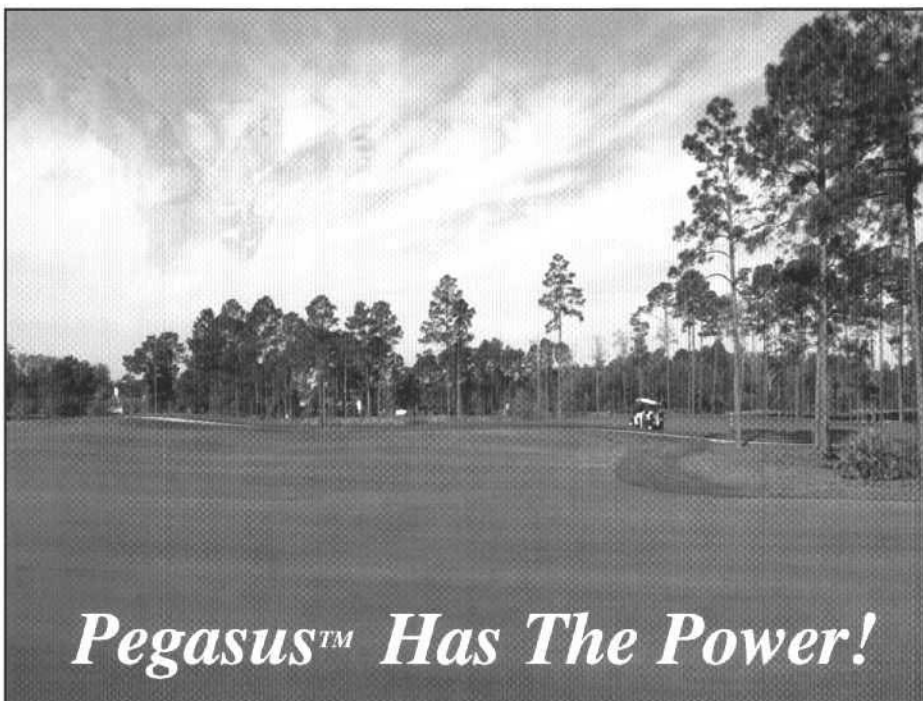
And the Merion Cricket Club in Philadelphia must have consulted a crystal ball when they made their decision to install a state-of-the-art watering system. After all, the year was in the throws of a drought and the system was operable (in late July) for the late season US Amateur, the final tourney of Bobby Jones' grand slam. It took until 1938 for the first hoseless fairway irrigation systems to appear in Wisconsin, at Blue Mound and Blackhawk.

Even though times were tough after the crash and during the depression, there was quite a bit of golf course construction activity in Wisconsin. Although speculation on my part, such discretionary activity could have been due to low labor costs because of the lack of jobs. Obviously low labor costs reduce significantly the cost of construction. Land may have been very affordable. And then there is the old saw that says people of means always have money. Who knows? Between 15 and 20 courses opened in Wisconsin in 1929, and around a dozen or so in

1930. Lawsonia, North Shore GC, Mascoutin, Johnson Park, Bloomer GC and Spooner GC are among the familiar courses opened in 1930. And in Wisconsin golf competition, Ned Allis of Milwaukee CC won the State Amateur at Blue Mound.

It was against the backdrop of 1930 events that the golf course

greenkeepers of Wisconsin met in Madison at their land grant university for an educational conference. They used that meeting to organize themselves into the association we know today. They could not possibly have imagined how far we have come in 75 years. ♣



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