

The Greenkeeper and His Association

By ALEX PIRIE

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Read At The Second Annual Convention of The National Association of Greenkeepers of America

AS WE review the history of golf course maintenance we are amazed by the progress in the science and practice of greenkeeping. Such a review gives us a deep appreciation of the part the greenkeepers have played in golf's attainment of its present status.

Back in, let's say, 1907, golf was played by the thousands. Today its players are numbered by the millions. Think of that growth in a period of twenty years!

Greenkeeping back in the earlier days of golf, as you veterans know, was mainly a matter of cutting and rolling. In those days when you got tired of that, you could—cut and roll. That's about all there was to it then.

Those changing times that saw the first acceleration of the growth that has made golf the giant of sports, brought into the picture for the first time a seriously scientific spirit in golf. This great group of new golfing enthusiasts brought to the sport a mass drive toward perfection, not only in the playing of the game, but in the conditions under which the game was played. The great number of city dwellers who took to the sport probably was responsible for an under-current of better grooming of golf courses. They wanted to get back to nature but they wanted their nature sugar-coated, so to speak.

Old Methods Began to Go

THE old methods then began to be questioned by the ever-increasing army of golfers. The green-chairman, the greenkeeper and the pro-greenkeeper began to hear mention of the actions of a golf ball on the green, through the fairways, in the bunkers and in the rough. These comments jarred the complacent ideas of course architecture and maintenance. Club officials and players began to question policies that took scant, if any, notice of such an aggravating item as a worm infested putting green. Nor was that all.

There was a rising tide of protest against cuppy lies

in the fairways. You still hear some of them. Wagon ruts, and holes in the rough, unfairly placed and poorly kept bunkers, lack of drinking water on the course, lack of shelters, poor drainage and a score of other subjects began to get attention, and plenty of it. It must be said for those who were the most ardent and eloquent in their questioning, and most seriously concerned about rectifying the conditions, that they were not adverse to spending some money to get the defects corrected.

Golf had taken a firm hold on its devotees and they were willing to spend some money to provide better

tests of golf and put the proper premium on the correct making of a shot, rather than have a good shot nullified by an avoidable defect in course maintenance. Golf stepped out to keep pace with the industrial development of the times.

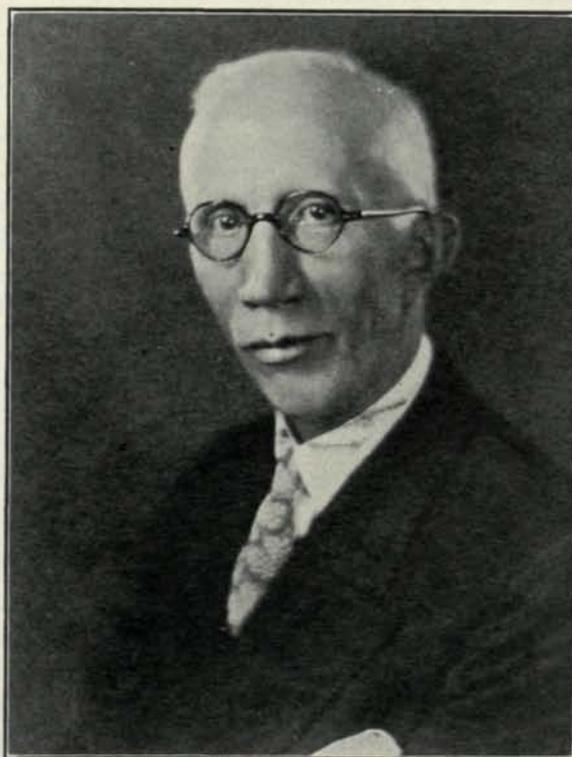
There had been no extensive study of golf course maintenance. What very limited available data there was concerned the care of lawns and conditions were so different as to make this material practically useless to the golf man. Consequently, every green-chairman, greenkeeper, pro-greenkeeper, and many who were not one of these, began to advance ideas as to how this new demand for improvement could be met and satisfied. Out of this healthy conflict of opinion, many sound ideas came. In the main, though,

it was a period of hot-air and dense fog because of the lack of authoritative study and data and the free exchange of practical and significant experiences.

Early Greenkeeping a Mystery

MANY of the older greenkeepers who had a good working knowledge of the fundamentals of the business built around themselves a screen of mystery and reserve, which gave plain evidence that what they had learned—or thought they had learned—in the hard school of experience, was to be used only by themselves in advancing themselves and the interests of their club.

They were not to be blamed for this. It was the



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who says he is proud that he is a greenkeeper

policy of the times. Then along came some apostles of a new philosophy. It's stated in a rather vivid fashion by saying, "If I had a dollar and gave it to Bill and Bill gave it to you, you'd have a dollar and Bill and I would be a dollar shy. But, if I had an idea and give it to Bill and Bill gave it to you, all three of us would have an idea."

There was so much sound common-sense in the new thought that the wise men who made ideas mean dollars to them, threw overboard the old policy of secrecy. You find, among the leaders in this business of greenkeeping, and among those most successful in other lines of commercial activity, that they are free to acknowledge that they used to be hard-shelled in protecting their ideas against exposure to the less competent and experienced. It is emphatically to their credit that these men today are most active in marshalling the present drive toward a more thorough and business-like understanding of the many problems arising each day to plague those responsible for golf course maintenance.

The day of the lone-wolf has gone. In greenkeeping, as in every other phase of human endeavor, unity of the group rather than individualism is the predominant note. Times not only ARE changing, but they HAVE changed. The golden rule is being applied not only as a policy, but also as a measuring rod. If we are inclined to be cynical, we might consider that the betterment is due to the cause mentioned by Elbert Hubbard, who wrote, "Humanity now acknowledges that honesty is the best policy—having tried everything else."

I have, up to this point, outlined generally the conditions that made the organization of the National Greenkeepers Association inevitable.

Piper and Oakley Were Pioneers

About ten years ago, two able and earnest authorities became deeply interested in the scientific development of grasses better suited to the playing of golf in this country. They were Drs. Piper and Oakley. Their first contribution to the literature of this subject was "Turf for Golf Courses." It was the pioneer standard volume. It not only advanced some new and some little known theories and practices, but it compiled the results of most successful experience in golf turf culture. It was indeed a book that could be "opened with expectation and closed with profit."

In 1921 the United States Golf Association organized the Green Section. This forward step by the U. S. G. A. established an authoritative bureau of scientific experimentation and assayed the prevailing practices. It spurred greatly the advancement of golf course maintenance in the United States. Golf in general and greenkeeping in particular advanced tremendously from the unselfish labors of Piper, Oakley, Carrier and their associates. The game continues to owe them an increasing

debt of gratitude. They gave ungrudgingly of their knowledge. When Dr. Piper passed on to those ever green fields, greenkeepers with whom he had come in contact, whether personally or through his writing, felt his loss keenly.

These two factors, the Piper and Oakley book, and the Green Section, I believe provided the urge that resulted in the formation of a greenkeepers association. Such an association as the National can carry on the work in a practical fashion, focused on the conditions with which its members have to cope, and thus bring to the assistance of its members a practical and personalized help, involving not only the findings of laboratory practice, but those of the many expert greenkeepers.

There has been such promising development of truly scientific methods among greenkeepers that it is not difficult to believe that the time is coming when a very appreciable amount of the burden of this scientific research and development work will be assumed by a thoroughly qualified greenkeepers' association.

Young Men Coming Along

THESE are many young men now coming out of agricultural schools with the ambition of making golf courses the field of their life's work. They have established a good scientific basis for their work, which, when correlated with the strictly practical aspects of their labors, prepares them to advance golf course maintenance at a faster rate, and further than we now may deem possible. Though the need and high value of a purely scientific organization devoted to golf turf matters always will be with us, I believe it to be within the province of your organization to benefit golf with an intimate application of a very profitable combination of the practical and the scientific in course maintenance.

When you consider the advancement made by greenkeepers along the above lines since the Green Section came into being, you will realize that this forecast may not be such a wild dream after all.

It need not be emphasized that such a development, meaning thriftier and better maintenance to the golf clubs, will mean more money in the pockets of the responsible greenkeepers.

You may say "Pirie's statement may be all right for those who will be in the generation following us, but how about the present?"

I'll say that one of the urgent demands of the present is an individual consciousness of responsibility for the attainment of this future ideal. Subject yourselves and your organization to an analysis to see if you are qualified to work toward the ideal of the future, and to get this ideal defined.

A Tribute to the Officers

John Morley, your competent and conscientious president, already has given evidence that the national

organization is of the character to work substantially and speedily toward its bright destiny. Something is being done right at this meeting. Mr. Morley and his associated prime movers in this organization have outlined the benefits to be obtained by an organization such as yours. It takes a lot of courage and ability to make such an organization successful. And it certainly takes the "everlasting teamwork of every blooming soul." Your officers have great credit due them for the speed with which they have obtained national recognition and respect for the organization. Whether or not this fine work continues depends a whole lot on what each individual member does for and with the association.

What is the association doing to make it worth-while for a plain, every-day greenkeeper or pro-greenkeeper to belong to the National?

What the National Offers Members

It is only a little over a year ago since this Association was organized and what it has accomplished in that time is clearly demonstrated before us now. Here, in convention assembled, are greenkeepers and pro-greenkeepers from all parts of the United States and some from Canada. Sitting in with them are the foremost scientific authorities of both countries on golf grasses; turf diseases, fertilization of soil; golf course drainage; grub control; maintenance problems; construction of

putting greens; bent nurseries; care of new courses; protection of trees; bulb grown plants; greenkeepers bookkeeping and tennis court construction and maintenance. Nor is that all!

There is on display every conceivable implement required in the upkeep of a golf course. All are the very last word of their kind and present most vividly the progress made in the last few years along the lines of mechanical development in golf course machinery. Gasoline tractors; gang mowers; power spraying machines; sprinkling outfits; putting-green mowers, both power and hand operated; dump wagons; mower sharpeners, power and hand; compost distributors and mixers; hole cutters; seeding machines; bunker and green rakes; in fact, every utensil one can think of that goes with efficient greenkeeping.

Every possible phase of golf course maintenance is here presented for the man who cuts the greens as well as for the man in the experimental station, laboratory or machine shop, who labors that the greencutters may have better greens to cut and better implements to work with.

Surely, it is worth-while to belong to an association that can, and does, secure for its members the benefits of such a vast wealth of experience and cooperation! This unity of purpose recalls the story of the three stonecutters at work in a stone quarry. One was asked what he was doing and made the brief reply that he was cutting stone. The second man on being asked the same question said he was working for eight dollars a day. The third man in reply to the question said he was building a cathedral. There was one man just working, another man working for what he could get out of it, while the third man—evidently an idealist—was building his "cathedral." They were all engaged in the same great purpose however—although they were doing so from different motives—and the "cathedral" could not have been built if all of them had not been working together in its erection. This parable teaches us that co-operation is operative, irrespective of human motives, also that it is essential if stately structures are to be built and progressive purposes consolidated.

Association is a Clearing House

THE National Association of Greenkeepers has established a common meeting ground and clearing-house upon which and through which can be secured the helpful co-operation of each and every one of its members in the daily problems with which greenkeepers as a class must contend and master if they are to become thoroughly competent in their business. No greenkeeper or pro-greenkeeper can afford to be without the facilities offered him through membership in this Association if he intends to keep pace with the times and be worth more to his club, to his family and to himself. Not only do these facilities cover the practical

The New Treasurer



LEWIS M. EVANS
New N. A. G. A. Treas.

"FULL of pep and enthusiasm" aptly describes the new Treasurer of the National Association of Greenkeepers of America—Lewis M. Evans of Philadelphia. Cedarbrook where Mr. Evans is greenkeeper is a championship course, 6703 yards long. The Philadelphia Open played there in 1925 was won by Johnny Farrell.

Mr. Evans is a native Philadelphian having been born in the Quaker City, March 2, 1877. He started work as a construction engineer on the first unit of the Philadelphia Subway. Later he drifted into landscape construction and was construction superintendent of the North Hills course when it was made over into an 18-hole layout. He was construction superintendent on the Cedarbrook course where he is now employed as golf course superintendent.

As president of the Philadelphia Association of Golf Course Superintendents Mr. Evans has close contact with greenkeepers and their problems, and is well equipped to take on the responsibilities of his new and important office in the National Association.

side of our daily work, but they also provide the latest scientific data on the more perplexing problems which arise from time to time.

This Association and its individual members owe a great deal to the trained specialists in the various scientific studies essential to a more complete comprehension of the different elements which compose intelligent greenkeeping. These men have given—and are giving—most generously of their time and labors that we as practical men should have a better insight into the basic fundamentals of our calling.

If the National Association of Greenkeepers had done nothing else but bring the scientific and practical men together in amity and understanding to work for the common cause of sound greenkeeping practices its success would have been assured on that accomplishment alone. This, however, is only one of the many truly progressive steps it has taken and when I look back into the years that are gone and compare them with the splendid educational opportunities this association is offering today, I can truthfully and sincerely say to all greenkeepers or pro-greenkeepers that they should not hesitate to take full advantage of those facilities if they are earnestly desirous of developing the best that lies within them and in rendering a full, intelligent, faithful and co-operative service to the great game of golf.

In closing permit me to quote you Henry Van Dyke's inscription for the house of a friend:

*"The lintel low enough to keep out pomp and pride;
The threshold high enough to turn deceit aside;
The doorband strong enough from robbers to defend;
This door will open at a touch to welcome every friend."*

So may be always the portals of the National Association of Greenkeepers.

State Aid For Ohio Golf

Ohio Agricultural Experiment Station
Wooster, Ohio

National Association of Greenkeepers of America
405 Caxton Building,
Cleveland, Ohio

Gentlemen:—

This summer we contemplate making a rather complete survey of golf courses of Ohio, with a view to determine if possible, the kind of soil conditions usually associated with good and with poor greens.

Our plan is to visit various golf courses, and at each one take soil samples from their best and their poorest green, and on each of these make such studies as will bring out the difference between the two. We propose to determine the kind and number of soil layers of which the greens are composed, the relative thickness of each, the mechanical composition, the reaction, the kind of drainage, etc. We want also at the same time to get as much information as possible regarding methods of establishment and maintenance of greens. We contemplate the survey with a view to getting information together for publication, and would of course like to make it as useful as possible.

I enjoy reading the copies of the NATIONAL GREENKEEPER which has been coming to me regularly since last fall. I find much useful information in them; so much that I would be pleased to receive any back numbers of which you may happen to have duplicates.

F. A. Welton,

March 13, 1928

Associate Agronomist.

Where the Big Tournaments Will be Held

March 26-30—Men's Championship, **Shore Hills Golf & Country Club**, Bermuda.

March 26-31—Gulf States Championship, **Biloxi G. C.**, Biloxi, Miss.

March 29-30—Twenty-sixth Annual North and South Open Championship, **Pinehurst, N. C.**

April 4-7—Florida State Amateur Championship, **Timuquana C. C.**, Jacksonville, Fla.

April 6-12—Twenty-eighth Annual North and South Amateur Championship, **Pinehurst, N. C.**

April 16-20—Eighteenth Annual Mid-April Tournament, **Pinehurst, N. C.**

May 7-12—British Open Championship, **Royal St. George's Club**, Sandwich, Kent.

May 14-19—British Ladies' Championship, **Hunstanton.**

May 21-26—British Amateur Championship, **Prestwick, Ayrshire.**

June 11—Qualifying Rounds in National Open Championship, various districts.

June 13-16—Metropolitan Amateur Championship, **Fenimore C. C.**, White Plains, N. Y.

June 21-23—National Open Championship, **Olympia Fields C. C.**, Chicago.

July 18-20—Metropolitan Open Championship, **Shackamaxon C. C.**, Westfield, N. J.

July 31-Aug. 5—Public Links Championship, **Cobbs Creek Course**, Philadelphia.

August 30-31—Walker Cup Matches, **Chicago Golf Club**, Wheaton, Ill.

September 10-15—National Amateur Championship, **Brae Burn C. C.**, West Newton, Mass.

September 24-29—Women's National Championship, **Virginia Hot Springs Golf and C. C.**, Virginia Hot Springs, Va.

October 5-6—Lesley Cup Matches, **Winged Foot Golf Club**, Mamaroneck, N. Y.