



Brookline Historical Society

Incorporated April 29, 1901

Brookline Historical Society

Spring, 1988 Newsletter

Spring Meeting

Date: Sunday, June 12, 3 p.m.

Topic: "Brookline's Legacy of Historic Properties" (slide presentation)

Speakers: Carla Benka and Greer Hardwicke of the Brookline Historical Commission.

Location: Soule Recreation Center (driveway at 652 Hammond St. is marked with "Boston Children's Theatre" sign)

Coming Up

As promised, we're devoting much of the Historical Society's attention this year to a unique legacy that belongs to the Town of Brookline. I'm talking about the many buildings, school and municipal, that remain in the town's hands -- some still in active use, others not -- that have enriched us by their appearance or by their place in the town's history.

The most obvious of those is the Devotion House, home to the Brookline Historical Society. At our annual meeting, Helen MacIntosh alerted us to a few of the problems that afflict Devotion House. It has not been allowed to age gracefully and is in need of some extra attention from the Town. Thankfully, help seems to be on the way.

Because of structural defects, Devotion House could not be used as the site of our spring meeting, as I had hoped. Fortunately, Bill Ward of the recreation department came to the rescue by offering Soule Recreation Center. For those of you who have never visited, it is the wonderful ramshackle building adjoining the playground behind the Baldwin School. The best access is from the driveway off Hammond Street, although people parking on Heath Street near the Baldwin School can also reach Soule by following the path to the playground.

Buildings like Soule and the Baldwin School are just two examples of the many important town-owned structures that often get overlooked in historic surveys. To help us take stock of all the buildings of interest in the town's inventory, I can't think of two better experts than Carla Benka and Greer Hardwick, our speakers for the spring meeting.

Hope to see all of you there.

Calling All Members

A source of pride to me is our success this past year in getting Society members to renew at a higher annual fee (\$10) and attracting many newcomers to join as Sustaining Members (\$20). Because more is being asked of members, it is only fair that the Society not continue to carry as members persons who neglect to pay their dues.

With that in mind, we recently mailed letters to all delinquent members encouraging them to pay up in order to be included on the annual list published in this issue of the newsletter. Many did so, and our final list includes names of over 200 individuals and couples. Bravo!

Please, if there is any error in failing to list a member who is paid-up, let me or Helen MacIntosh know and we will correct it immediately.

A U.S. Open Special

For those who missed Christopher Smith's presentation at the annual meeting, the near-complete text of his paper on golf at the Country Club, featuring a retelling of the dramatic 1913 tournament in which Brookline's Francis Ouimet entered golf history, begins on page 2. I am in awe of Chris's scholarship and his contribution to the Society's archives.

-- John VanScoyoc,
president

Shots Heard Round the World

The following paper was given at the spring meeting of the Brookline Historical Society.

By Christopher Smith

Good afternoon ladies and gentlemen, and welcome to The Country Club. As most of you probably already know this is the oldest country club in the United States having been founded in 1882 - one hundred and six years ago. As you drove in this afternoon you probably recall seeing some of the views across the fairways and down to the ponds which are on the grounds.

Now before I get too far into this paper, I would like to acknowledge reference to Herbert Warren Wind and Elmer Cappers especially for some of their description of the 1913 Open. I am sure many of you know Elmer, a Past President of the Brookline Historical Society and a great raconteur.

So why are we here today? Because the 88th US Open Golf Championship is to be played here once again between June 16th and June 19th this summer. As you can see from this board, the Club has been host to many championships through the years. Not only is this the 3rd US Open, but there have been 11 other major national or international tournaments or matches played here. In addition to being the site of these matches, the club has had a strong representation and relationship with the United States Golf Association through the years.

The USGA was founded in 1894 by 10 representatives from five clubs including Laurence Curtis and Samuel Sears from Brookline representing The Country Club. After St. Andrews, New York, it is the second oldest golf club in this country. Is this why we are here today, or more importantly, why the world's best golfers will be here again in June? In part, I suppose, the answer must be yes. But interwoven must also be the memories of the events which took place, the people who have been involved and the course and club itself.

The Country Club was formulated in April, 1882 at what had previously been known as the Stock Farm, owned by Francis E. Bacon, here on Clyde Street. The location was selected because the farm had a track for horse racing, a number of stables, a small building to serve as a clubhouse, and over a hundred acres of land. This you can see in the Brookline Atlas of 1884. The founder, J. Murray Forbes, and his friends had one main purpose in mind: the establishment of a club dedicated to sports and to

sociability with a strong emphasis on respectability, a characteristic not always found in anything to do with horse racing (or other sports for that matter) in 1882. To be honest with you, there were also those who believed -- and even professed -- "that the purpose of the Club was that it should be a place for the men of Massachusetts to get away from their womenfolk."

The name of The Country Club was given to the new organization by Mr. Forbes probably because it was the name of a club in Bubbling Well Road in Shanghai, China in the days when he as a young man had served an apprenticeship in the China Trade company owned by his family.

The Club has consistently fostered the development of new forms of sport with emphasis at the beginning on flat racing, polo, and the steeplechase. Early on provision was made also for tennis, shooting, bowling and the like, but it wasn't until November 1892 that Mr. Laurence Curtis wrote a letter to the Executive Committee requesting that a Golf Course be constructed. In March of the following year a six-hole golf course was laid out at a cost of \$50, with the 6th hole ending on the lawn right below the clubhouse. Construction consisted of removing fences, clearing away surface stones and mowing the grass. The stones were piled into mounds and when covered with dirt, were thought to make perfectly good hazards. These sharp mounds, nicknamed "chocolate drops", became the fashion for a time and were even added to courses which had no stones to cover. Little islands of unmowed vegetation were left in the bunkers. These "dragons teeth" added nothing to a high rate of lost balls!

Two of the holes, the 4th and 6th, crossed the race track and caused much friction between the golfers and the equestrians. The golfers were averse to having the horsemen ride over their fairways and the riders claimed the golfers were not always careful to avoid hitting them! One rider is reported to have been suspended from the Club for six months because he said "damn" within hearing of a lady during one of these altercations.

My reading of the earlier records would indicate that golfers were looked upon by the majority of members rather as the untouchables were in India. The horsemen of 1893 considered the game of golf a "boll weevil brought into their paradise". On the other hand the golfers had reason to complain: it's noted in the records that riders that year were reprimanded for chasing some of the sheep, a flock of such four-legged lawnmowers having been used, for the first time in America, to clip the fairways.

Later in 1893, the course was expanded to nine holes (at a cost of \$100) with the home green being removed from the clubhouse lawn, which I am sure had not been too popular with the ladies taking tea out there!

By the end of the 90's, golf had taken on a considerable popularity and was beginning to surpass horse racing in popularity. With this growing interest and the introduction of the Haskell rubber-cored, rubber wound ball in 1903, and various other refinements and improvements over the years, the club, having purchased its originally leased land in 1887 expanded by buying four major contiguous lots in 1898, 1901, 1905, and 1923.

Subsequent to this, additional land was purchased as it became available, so that The Club now has in excess of 350 beautiful acres.

The golf course not only required more holes, but with the evolution of the game, the inclusion of far longer holes than had previously thought either to be desired or practical.

Nowadays, the 1932 layout has been modified to be one, eighteen-hole course, the main course, being essentially the old Squirrel and Clyde courses, (though improvements were made by Geoffrey Cornish and William Robinson to four of the holes in the 60's) and the Primrose remaining pretty much as such.

For major tournaments, some of the Primrose holes are brought into play, and one hole, the eleventh, is a hybrid using the tee and fairway of one of the holes leading up to the green of another. Actually this is one of the most successful of the Tournament holes, so much so that Arnold Palmer described it as being one of the best eighteen holes in the country, this despite having played the par 4 hole in 7-7-6-4 in the 1963 Open.

In addition to the expansion of the property, the club house itself evolved very much in the manner of "Topsy", with additions sprouting out from time to time, and with the embellishment of piazzas etcetera. Internally, rooms were changed around, doorways added and subtracted, and I do know the main bar was reversed!

In 1903 the clubhouse was almost doubled with principal additions being a large dining room and the upstairs banqueting hall where we are now. After various rearrangements, the next major change occurred in 1908. The bar was more than doubled, a billiard room (which is now the library) was added as was the whole third floor encompassing seven members' bedrooms etc. At the other end of the building, the porch was glassed in to provide what is now used as the dining room.

By 1932 various other cosmetics had taken place including the removal of the large bay windows on the first and second floors, and the club house looked pretty much as you find it today.

So much for the location. Let's turn back now to what was going on here and especially on the golf front. You may recall that the first major tournament to be held here was the Women's Amateur in 1902 otherwise known as the sixth National Women's Tournament. I haven't been able to find too much written about the Tournament itself. I do know that the contestants were advised that as The Country Club had no facilities for ladies in the clubhouse, it had been arranged to quarter them (don't you like that -- like horses!) to quarter them at the hotels Somerset, Victoria and Lennox. However, they were most cordially invited to use the clubhouse during play, and they could take their meals in the upstairs dining room.

On the first day of the qualifying rounds, the lowest scores of 89s were turned in by Miss Genevieve Hecker of the Apawamis Club in Rye, New York, the reigning champion, and by the Country Club's Miss Louisa Wells. The highest score was 133.

After the preliminary rounds, the competition finally came down to these two with Miss Hecker winning the championship match 4 up and 3 to play. Apart from the Boston Transcript's reporter stating on Miss Hecker's behalf that she was not used to the throng of two thousand "which pressed its way along behind the players", most other reporters seemed to have as much to say about what the ladies wore as to how they played.

Incidentally, it was de rigueur for men to wear a proper golfing jacket during this period. This is an official Country Club coat of the period worn by a former member. It wasn't until 1903 that a notice was sent out to members informing them that "The Golf coat is now a green coat with a primrose collar instead of a red collar". (In case you haven't noticed, the Club's colors are green and primrose!) By the way, when you leave, you might notice a set of golf clubs in a case adjacent to the coat room downstairs. These clubs were owned by Murray Forbes, our founder, and were presented to the Club by his family. I find it interesting to note that there are almost as many left handed clubs there as right handed.

Of course, clubs had names - not numbers in those days. The four woods were called:

1. Driver
2. Brassie
3. Spoon, and
4. Cleek.

The irons were called:

- 1/ Driving Iron (also a cleek)
2. Midiron
3. Mid-Mashie
4. Mahie Iron
5. Mashie
6. Mashie Niblick



Francis Ouimet

7. Pitcher of Lotter
8. Pitching Niblick
9. Niblick, and Putter

There is no question that by far the most noteworthy event which occurred here was the 1913 Open Championship. This was won by a young 20 year-old Brookline boy by the name of Francis Ouimet, who defeated Harry Vardon and Ted Ray of England in the playoff. How many people here have heard of Frank Ouimet? One favorite portrait shows him wearing the red coat as Captain of the Royal and Ancient Golf Club, Saint Andrew's, Scotland, a position to which he has elected in 1951- the first non-Britisher to be elected to that position.

Francis Ouimet was born in Brookline on May 8, 1893, and at the time of the tournament lived at 252 Clyde Street not far from the 17th fairway where he was to make golf history. As a small boy he used to take a shortcut across the course to the Putterham School which has since moved from its location on Newton street behind the 6th tee. He frequently found golf balls that he and his brother used on a makeshift three-hole layout they had created on a pasture behind their home. Before long he became a caddy at The Country Club and there occurred what he was to say later gave him the greatest thrill in his young life. His own words will tell the story best:

"One day I carried for a dear old gentleman named Samuel Carr. All the boys liked him. He asked me if I had any clubs, and I replied I had two. He gave me a driver with a

leather face, a loft, a midiron and a putter." Mr Carr could not possibly have known what a great impetus he had given to the career of a future champion.

Mornings as early as 4:30 or 5:00, Ouimet would cross the street and play as many holes as he could before the greenskeeper spotted him and drove him away. Once, a member, Theodore Hastings, asked him if he would play a round with him, and the lad could not resist even though he was aware that the rules would be broken. He ran home for his clubs and dashed back to carry not only Mr. Hastings clubs but his own as well. He played the first nine holes in thirty-nine which considerably amazed his host. On the second nine the only hole on which he had trouble was the one completely in view of the Caddy Master, whom he expected to see at any moment running after him. In his excitement he got a ten on the hole. Even with that "blow up" his total for the round was eighty-four. Happily, at the conclusion the Caddy Master was "reasonable."

Under the overrestrictive rules of the day, he had to give up caddying when he became sixteen or be classified as a professional. While this cut down on his income, it did not keep him from playing the game at every opportunity. He had a hand in forming a golf team at Brookline High School, which then joined an informal schoolboy league made up of players from Greater Boston public and private schools.

In early 1913 he won the Massachusetts Amateur Championship at Wollaston and qualified for the National Open to be played here. The Tournament was given extensive coverage by the press and reporters were sent by English journals to cover the progress of the two great English golf heroes Harry Vardon and Ted Ray. The only doubt expressed in the early articles was which of these two would win, though some thought a third Englishman, Wilfred Reid, had a chance. No one mentioned Ouimet as a possibility, even though two or three said he might be among the qualifying amateurs.

Harry Vardon was actually making his second tour of this country with the backing of Lord Northcliffe, the owner of the London Times. His series of exhibition matches with Ted Ray had been an unprecedented success and wherever they played, record or near record crowds had turned out to watch them. Vardon's swing was a flawless fusion of grace and power and there is no doubt that many of the spectators turned out to learn from watching him.

Ray, on the other hand, was a perfect Pythias (Damon) for their matches. A bulky slope-shouldered man standing an inch over six feet and weighing about two hundred pounds, Ted Ray threw all his weight and strength into his strokes. He broke the rules of correct body movement right and left. He swayed on his backswing and came into

the ball with a lurch, but he could get away with it because of the fundamental rhythm of his swing and the grooved arc of his clubhead.

It goes without saying that he could hit the ball a proverbial country mile. The challenge was for him to keep it straight (a problem not unknown to many of us!). A large laissez-faire mustache gave Ray's otherwise mild face a rather fearsome aspect. He played in a long, loose, tweed jacket and a crushed felt hat, and he was never seen off the course minus a pipe, usually a big Sherlock Holmes model.

Vardon and Ray came early to practice and groused about the height of the grass on the course, remarking that they had not expected to play in a hayfield. This was somewhat unfair as it had been raining for several days and it was impossible to get onto the course to cut it. Further, the date had been changed at Vardon and Ray's request from June to September so that they could compete. Apparently the course dried up in time as the Christian Science Monitor said that "the links were in fine condition."

So on to the Tournament! On the first day, Ouimet turned in a score one stroke more than the famed Harry Vardon, rated by some as the greatest golfer in the world. One reporter noted that an errant slice from one of the competitors had hit the right ear of Laurence Curtis, father of golf at The Country Club, and had then bounced safely onto the green for a four. The next day, as expected, Ray was the leader three ahead of Wilfred Reid. Naturally everyone expected the final rounds to be "all English."

Typical Headlines read:

"Vardon and Ray versus very few Americans"

"Invasion now looks more threatening than it did", and

"Britons Leading".

After singing the praises of the English players, the Times of London added "...Ouimet's performance excited intense admiration but it is doubted so young a player can survive the ordeal of maintaining his brilliance throughout the competition."

This was enough for the locals. The crowds swelled and excitement grew. After three rounds, Ouimet succeeded in tying Vardon and Ray. After four rounds they were still level and headed for a playoff on Saturday. It seemed impossible.

One English favorite, Reid, who, as you will recall, had been three strokes behind Ray after two rounds, had been

eliminated on Friday. And then the news leaked out that on Thursday evening, before the fourth round, Reid and Ray had had an altercation at their hotel. Reid, it seemed, had claimed that the English taxation system favored the rich. Ray disagreed and engaged in personalities asserting that Reid, who was from Surrey, could not properly discuss the matter since Surrey men lacked the understanding to comprehend the situation. Reid retaliated that Jersey men, and Ray was from Jersey, didn't amount to much. The burly Ray stood up, reached across the table and, in the words of the local papers, "implanted two powerful blows on Reid's nose". This made Reid, a much smaller man than Ray, "absolutely incapable of getting up championship golf the next day." Reports of this happening caused Ray to lose favor with the crowds, and in the play-off it was "manifest that the gallery was taking delight in any trouble that happened to him."

On Saturday, the 20th, despite the rain, a crowd of ten thousand was on hand for the playoff, by far the largest in US golf history up to that time. Ouimet was obviously the favorite. The Evening Standard of London reported: "The electric state of the atmosphere found vent in thunders of applause when the American Champion did better than his opponents. On our home links we are not accustomed to such demonstrations and this probably rendered the effect of such thunders on the visitors all the more important. Ray, at any rate, obviously felt the disconcerting power of the applause," and this was no doubt compounded by the crowds' antagonism to him after hearing of the brawl.

By the time they had arrived at the par four seventeenth tee, Ray was out of it for all practical purposes, and Ouimet had a one stroke lead over Vardon. However, it was Vardon's honor. He decided that here was the time to close the gap and went for the shortcut on the dogleg to the left. The shot proved to be his undoing and he caught the bunker at the angle of the dogleg. From his lie, he could not go for the green and was on in three, holing out for a five. Ouimet, on the other hand, was on in two and left himself a very difficult downhill putt eighteen feet above the hole. Two putts would give him that valuable insurance stroke over Vardon, but he tapped the ball over the slippery downhill grade...and holed it. It was all over. He routinely parred the eighteenth and the Championship was his. The crowds were all over him and he was carried off the course on their shoulders.

The most significant thing about this victory is that it changed the American public's attitude to golf. Heretofore it had been regarded as an elitist sport. Now the common man had won, and from now on it was to be the common man's sport as well. Public golf courses began to be built and I don't need to tell you of how it subsequently evolved. The key shot in this triumph was



Francis Ouimet at the Country Club

the treacherous putt on the seventeenth, and this, together with the other in that round, quickly became known as "the shots heard around the world."

I will not attempt to describe the Walker Cups, and the US Amateurs, and all the other tournaments depicted on the board with an exception of the 1963 Open, held on the 50th anniversary of, and in honor of, Francis Ouimet's 1913 victory. Naturally the press latched onto the connection and everyone with the slightest possible connection to it was interviewed -- some would say ad-nauseum." Eddie Lowery was discovered to be living in California and was flown in for the occasion. There were nine former champions among the 150 entrants and the hot favorites were Palmer, Nicklaus and Player, though Cary Middlecoff told the press to watch Julius Boros. After the first two rounds, Palmer, Finsterwald and Cupit were tied for the lead. Nicklaus and all of the amateurs

it should be noted, had missed the cut no doubt partly due to the heavy winds which persisted. After the third round, it was Tony Lima and Walter Vurkemo.

Boros, with one of the earlier starting times, played the fourth round very conservatively often electing to drive with a low-numbered iron and finished with a 72 for 293. Thinking he was out of it, he retired to the Clubhouse for a beer. Arnold Palmer, playing his usual aggressive game, almost carried off the prize and would have had he not missed an 18 inch putt on the seventeenth. Cupit, in one of those strange coincidences that golf comes up with now and again, and with a lead of two strokes, elected to take the short cut Vardon had attempted in the 1913 playoff, and landed in the same bunker. His efforts to get out of the trap cost him the lead and he ended in a three-way tie with Palmer and Boros.

To be honest, the playoff was not especially exciting. Boros took the lead after two holes and never lost it. Palmer had a number of difficulties not least of which being digestive problems. He never got going properly, and on the 11th he put the prize out of reach. He hooked his tee shot into the trees, and trying to hit a 'screamer' through the opening, missed by inches and the ball bounced back and landed in a tree stump. He hit it once again and succeeded only in 'squishing' it out a few feet. When he finally got the ball in the cup, he had taken a seven.

So Boros was the winner. At the presentation, Ouimet was called upon to make a few comments. Everyone expected him to make some reference to the dramatic events of 1913. But turning the spotlight away from himself he said, "Wasn't Julius wonderful?"

Now its on to June and the 88th Open.

Let me conclude by quoting from Francis Ouimet at the 50th Anniversary dinner:

"To me the property around here is hallowed. The grass grows greener, the trees bloom better, there is even warmth in the rocks that you see around here. And I don't know, gentlemen, but somehow or other the sun seems to shine brighter on The Country Club than on any other place that I have seen."

Thank you.