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WALTER J. TRAVIS, EDITOR

GLANCES UPON AMERICAN GOLF HISTORY

BY HENRY LEACH

Part II

UPON the point as to whether Savannah was the first golfing place in America, as has been suggested there is a deeply important point to take into consideration now. There has been discovered on file at Albany, an old legal document, or an "Ordinance" as we call such things, which indicates that so early as half way through the seventeenth century there were golfers of some kind in those parts and alas! that they were being persecuted.

Golfers generally were persecuted in those days; the early pioneers of the game had many sorrows and much punishment to bear. In their own way they were like a band of pilgrim fathers. They knew their sport was good, they loved it, they had fine consciences, and they determined that in spite of all smacks and scorn they would strive manfully on, for their own good and for that of those who should come after them. But the others seemed always to regard the game as having intimate associations with the devil. Kings and Councils conceived it to be their business whenever opportunity arose to administer

some rebuff, and, if possible, punishment to these persistent golfers, whose chief fault seems to have been a weakness for playing in the streets and other public places. This is a thing done at St. Andrews itself almost down to this very day, for there are such living champions as Alexander Herd who will tell you that the very first golf they ever played and enjoyed, when they were the smallest bairns, was in the streets and alleys of the old city, along the "wee wyndies" as they called them, the lamp posts being the "holes" in that they were considered to have "holed out" when they made their ball strike such a lamp post. Here is yet another instance of the essential primitiveness of golf, suggesting once more the absurdity of saying that this people or that people invented the game. I have already hinted at the probability of the children of Israel doing something to relieve their sorrows during the sad period of tribulation by devising some such recreation as this, but, really, the more one thinks upon it the more satisfied does one become that the simple principle was first estab-

lished in the Garden of Eden, and that our father Adam was the first golfer of us all. But let that pass.

The point is the persecution. As we know the State made a general attack upon the golfers in England in the fifteenth century. In 1457 there was that famous edict in which Parliament ordained that "golf be utterly cryit doune, and nocht usit," and in 1491 another law was passed to the same effect. What a terrible thing it must have seemed to be a golfer then! Should not the children have fled at the sight of one, as though he were a black and scowling ruffian who had a knife hidden beneath his jerkin and did murders for pleasure in the small hours of the night? And yet in sequestered places and at odd hours even the royalties played golf, and only twelve years after the passing of that second decree it was shown that the King of England was playing the game most extensively. But then kings were always queer cattle. However the point for the moment is that as the players were persecuted in England, so also they were harried in much the same way in the golfing colonies that were established in the new land in the west. When they played in the streets in parts of North America, there were official busybodies to declare and swear that they caused great damage thereby and "exposed people to the danger of being wounded." Think of it! But here is a full copy of the famous Ordinance as it exists in the archives of Albany, and it is a document of great general interest and importance:

"ORDINANCE"

"Of the Vice-Director and Commissaries of Fort Orange regulating Tapsters; against playing Golf in the Streets, against piling Firewood in the Streets and against firing Guns on New Year's Day. Passed December 10, 1659. (Book A, Mortgage

No. 1 in Co. Clerk's Office, Albany, 209.)

"The Worsh. Commissary and Commissaries of Fort Orange and Village of Beverwyck Ordain, pursuant to the Ordinance of the Honble Director General and Council of New Netherland, published here the 6th October, 1656, as they do hereby Ordain, that from this time forth no person shall follow the business of Tapping, before and until he shall have received a License from the Officer, on condition of paying therefor One pound Flemish, and being bound to renew his License every three months, on pain of suspension from his business.

"The W. Commissary and Commissaries of Fort Orange and Village of Beverwyck, having heard divers complaints from the Burghers of this place, against playing of Golf along the streets, which causes great damage to the windows of the Houses, and exposes people to the danger of being wounded, and is contrary to the freedom of the Public Streets; Therefore their Worships, wishing to prevent the same, forbid all persons playing Golf in the streets, on pain of forfeiting f 1.25 for each person who shall be found doing so.

"Whereas experience shows that many Burghers of the Village of Beverwyck deposit and pile their firewood in the Streets, contrary to the freedom of said Streets which must always be kept free and unobstructed, whereby not only people are incommoded, but Wagons, Sleighs and Carts can with difficulty make use of said Streets, to the serious inconvenience of the Public. Therefore the Commissary and Commissaries of Fort Orange and Village of Beverwyck, wishing to provide against such inconveniences, hereby forbid each and every of the Inhabitants of Beverwyck from this time forward from allowing their firewood to stand on the Street beyond the term of ten days, on pain of confiscating said Wood, and, in addition, paying a fine of f 1.25.

"In like manner also, the Commissary and Commissaries forbid, as they do hereby most expressly prohibit any of the Burghers or Inhabitants of the Village of Beverwyck, shooting on New Year's Day, on account of the great damage and disorder such firing causes; on pain of Twenty-five (guilders) for each person who shall be found to have done so.

"Thus done in Fort Orange, at the Meeting of the Court of said place, on the tenth of December, A^o 1659."

There it is. Those seem to have been somewhat severe times in Fort Orange and the Village of Beverwyck. One is impressed by the association with the game here again of our old friends, the Dutch. But the dominant consideration is that when we have

read this document and accepted it as we are obliged to do, we must feel, perhaps with some touch of regret, that there is an end to the pretensions of our good Savannah to being the first place in America where golf was played. What was done at Fort Orange and the aforesaid Village of Beverwyck was not the tapping of a ball with a stick in such a way that it might be said to be something like golf, but it was definitely and officially described even in those distant days as "playing at golf." Such evidence is necessarily final, and this Ordinance preserved at Albany is to be regarded as the most important record in the early history of the game in America. However, it was evidently but a scrambling, casual kind of golf that was played, and Savannah did the thing more nicely and orderly and in a gentle way. There was no New Year's ball of the golf club at the Village of Beverwyck. Had such a thing been attempted I fear those terrible Worshipful Commissaries would have taken some action in the matter.

Then there is the case of South Carolina to consider briefly, for here also there is a challenge in history to Savannah. It seems quite certain that the game was played in South Carolina in 1788, and that in a proper and orderly golf-club manner, with no such danger to the public as affrighted the Commissaries of Fort Orange, who by this time had been gathered to their fathers for more than a hundred years. . . . In the year I have named the following advertisement appeared in a local newspaper:

"Anniversary of the South Carolina Golf Club will be held at Williams's Coffee House on Thursday, 29th instant, when members are requested to attend at 2 o'clock precisely, that the business of the Club may be transacted before dinner."

One thing we notice in this ad-

vertisement is that in those early days the affinity between golf and dinner, so well recognized in later periods, is properly established; but, more than that, there appears to be something of the same kind of special prandial fraternity between the golfers and the same ceremonies observed, as in the case of the old Scottish golf clubs and the Royal Blackheath organization. If any of the minutes of the old South Carolina club had, to our great joy and satisfaction, been preserved, we might have had records of the betting of sums of money and many bottles of wine upon the golf matches that were made at such dinners, just as was done in Scotland and at Blackheath. However, that is simply speculation. During many subsequent years these meetings of the South Carolina Golf Club took place in the clubhouse on what was known as "Harton's Green," which is now in the heart of Charleston. It may very well have been that this was the first golf-club house that was ever established in America. If that were so then it shared the fate of pioneer establishments in many other places where towns have widened and gathered in the outlying lands. Such is the whole of the evidence that is available to us of the golf that was played in the earliest times in America. It is slight, but yet it is important, and it is material for many ruminations.

I WISH to make a few notes of my own, with some information that I have had the good fortune to collect, concerning the beginnings of the next era, when golf was started in something of the thorough modern way, but yet very simply and modestly, never to look back again, but to grow slowly and surely at first, and then veritably like wildfire into the big thing that it

is on the American continent and the factor it is in American life.

One summer's afternoon when I was idling about New York the fancy seized me to see if by any manner of means I might in this city discover any rare golf books. It is the kind of thing I have done before in many places, with wonderful results. It hardly seemed that New York was a happy hunting ground, for American golf literature is for the most part new, and not many people imagine it going back beyond Mr. Travis's practical book, which came out at the beginning of the century and was undoubtedly the first of its kind. America in the main has relied for most of its golf literature on England, though lately she has begun to establish some sort of independence. However, I determined to see what could be done, proceeded down Fifth avenue, and turned off into West 23rd street until I found myself in the retail department of one of the biggest publishers in the world. I was not aware that they had ever handled any golf books, but I asked them what they had got, and they kindly showed me something that I had written myself. Then I carefully explained that I sought rarities, and wondered if they had such things. The assistant thought not; it was highly improbable. Certainly it was; I agreed. It would have been nearly as reasonable to have asked them if they had any of the eggs of the great auk, or a first edition of the Holy Bible. However, when you are engaged upon enterprises of this kind the quest should not be abandoned lightly at the first negative. Old books must be stalked with patience, or they will never be caught. Upon the packed shelves everything was new and well bound; but who knew what there might be in cellars? Putnam's is an

old and honourable firm. So I engaged a higher official of the emporium in conversation, and had the good fortune to interest him in many things that I said. Presently I returned to the subject of the golf books, and he puckered his brows as some indistinct remembrance seemed to cross his mind. He thought a little more intensely for a few seconds, and then looked toward one of the topmost shelves. He seemed to remember that some time during spring cleaning or stock-taking he had seen something about golf up there, and had not taken the trouble to throw it among the rubbish. He indicated the place, and with a ladder I scaled the heights myself and made the search. I came down the ladder successful and joyful. Two small volumes were the prize. One of them (the other does not matter now), was published in 1895. It was called "Golf in America—A practical Manual," by James P. Lee, and I imagine it to be the first golf book published in America, and should be surprised to know that there are many copies of it now in existence. I took the last from Putnam's, and it had been at the back of a shelf undisturbed for more than a decade. I could find no American golfer with a copy of it, though of course there must be some somewhere. It is a neat little book in a yellow cloth cover, with representations of golf clubs on it, and besides the practical parts, which concern us very little in these times, it contains much interesting information concerning the growth of the game in those days, which information has its historical value now. The photographic pictures have a value also. The frontispiece represents the clubhouse of the St. Andrews Golf Club, as it was then, and in other parts of the volume there are views of the pioneer players on

the St. Andrews course. Also there is much statistical information concerning the golf clubs of that time and their strength and officers. In his preface Mr. Lee wrote:

"A new game has lately been added to the list of our outdoor sports. At first there were reasons why it did not appear to be a game to which the American temperament would seem to be permanently attracted, and grave doubts were expressed as to its ability to hold its own in this country. Such was the reception of golf. As time went on, however, and the game became more widely known, a change occurred. The extreme enthusiasm of those who took it up induced others to play, and every day added to the ranks of its adherents. The secret of the game was no longer a sealed book; its apparent simplicity and lack of interest were seen to be delusions, and its success was assured."

He then goes on to remark upon the establishment of the U. S. G. A. which prompted him to produce his little book, which was prepared with the assistance of Mr. H. O. Tallmadge, the secretary of the Association at that time. Mr. Lee does not tell us anything about the Indians when he comes to treat of the history of the game in his own country, and he is silent also upon Savannah, the Village of Beverwyck, and South Carolina. He deals with plain and sure facts of the modern time as he knew them for certain, and so he begins with St. Andrews at Yonkers, which was the cradle of the modern American golf.

But before I quote from Mr. Lee in this matter I shall exercise the privilege that is in my power and tell my own story first. It is told on good enough authority. Some of the main facts are, of course, known to most American golfers of experience; they have nearly all heard of the Apple Tree Gang. But a few details were filled in for me when one night three or four years ago I sat by a log fire in a clubhouse in Massachusetts and heard the story of the foundation of

the St. Andrews Club at Yonkers by Mr. John Reid, the elder, from the lips of Mr. John Reid, the younger, who was then secretary of the U. S. G. A. He told me how his father and Robert Lockhart, who went to the same school in Scotland, came to America together; how Lockhart who, as a buyer of goods, had to pay periodical visits to his homeland, talked of the strange game that was being played there; how Mr. Reid found himself keenly interested and gave an order that clubs and balls should be brought across the water; how he first tried his swings and strokes in a field that was near to their house at Yonkers, John Reid, the younger, "fielding," for his father; how the captain of a steamship was enjoined to bring another set of clubs over with him from England, and how from these models, irons were thereafter cast in America. After this he told me how some other people, not many in numbers but high in their enthusiasm, were attracted to this new pastime with which the Reids were gallantly experimenting, and how the first little golf club was formed here at Yonkers in November, 1888, and called the St. Andrews Golf Club. These men were as the golfing fathers of their land. As we leaned over the fire when the wind and rain were lashing outside—it was the night before Ouimet achieved his great victory and gave a new distinction to American golf—the son of the father told me how the members came to be known as the Apple Tree Gang because of the tree near to the first hole on which they hung their coats; how for a beginning, six holes were laid out on Mr. Reid's land, his house serving for clubhouse; how he gave a medal which must have been the first prize ever put up for a golf competition in Amer-

ica, being for an annual thirty-six holes stroke competition, and how it was won for eleven years, three of them being in succession, by Mr. George Sands. And much more besides of that earnest and fateful beginning.

Upon all this Mr. Lee in the little book I have mentioned, published in 1895, says:

"It was early in the year 1888 that the founders of the St. Andrews Golf Club of Yonkers took up golfing as a pastime. The membership of the club is now full, and for a considerable time a long list of applicants for admission have been knocking at the door. The club, however, had its small beginnings, and can look back at the time when Mr. Robert Lockhart came with his clubs upon his back and initiated Mr. John Reid to the mysteries of the ancient and royal game. Mr. Reid was so taken with the new game that he speedily initiated J. B. Upham, H. O. Tallmadge, H. Holbrook and others. On Nov. 13, 1888, it was decided to form a golf club and to call it the St. Andrews Golf Club of Yonkers, and Mr. Reid was elected president, which office he continues to hold. The club proceeded to lay out links consisting of six holes about one hundred and fifty to two hundred and fifty yards apart, and spent two or three years in playing the game upon their first course, until they were forced to abandon it. Another six-hole course was laid out which had longer holes and better greens. Over this course the club played for two years, until the land was sold for building. The game had in the meantime become so popular, that it was decided to make a move to secure a permanent home. The country about Yonkers was looked over, and eventually it was decided to rent the Odell Farm upon the Saw Mill river road. The present clubhouse and links are the result. The house has been thoroughly fitted up as a club, and is most comfortable. The present links consist of nine holes."

That was in 1895. However, it would be to no purpose to pursue the old good story of Yonkers any further at this moment.

A LITTLE HALO of romance seems now to hang upon the early days of most of the original golf clubs of the United States. Those clubs were not formed, as new golf clubs now are, in

the quick and ready-made and expensive way, a corporation with tens of thousands of dollars to back them up, a magnificent new clubhouse in which a president of the United States might find himself almost as well situated as at the White House, and dynamite to assist in the preparation of the course when necessary. No, they were started of necessity in the very small and struggling way, and they grew up through the force of spirit and enthusiasm rather than by the faster force of dollars. I have many of these histories, privately gleaned when in the States, besides me. They cannot all be told in pages such as these, but there is one that is worth the telling. It is that of The Country Club at Brookline, Mass., and it makes a pretty story as it should do. The first seeds of golf in Massachusetts came from Pau in France, where there is the oldest club and course on the continent of Europe, one that I know well and care for much. In the summer of 1892 a young lady from Pau went upon a visit to Mr. Arthur Hunnewell at Wellesley, Mass., and took with her a set of golf clubs and balls. Massachusetts did not even know of the game at that time, though it was being played at Yonkers, Shinnecock, and other places. The girl explained to Mr. Hunnewell how the clubs were used, and some of his relations, who owned adjacent estates and were fond of outdoor pastimes, watched and were quickly attracted to this strange and provocative pastime. On the first of June, Mr. Hunnewell made this entry in his diary—"F. B. arrived to-day from Europe," and on the fifteenth of September he wrote this—"We are getting quite excited about golf." Then a fortnight later he wrote—"J. B. is here and plays golf all day." See how the old game was working its unflin-

charm in that new soil! Is it not an interesting coincidence that twenty-one years from that time, to the month and the week, Ouimet won the great championship on the course of The Country Club? Mr. Hunnewell invited many of his friends to come and attempt the game at his place, and they did so with the inevitable result. He had made a course of seven holes of moderate length over undulating lawns and some park land. He had an original way of making the holes themselves, sinking five-inch flower pots in the turf. For hazards there were avenues, clumps of trees, beds of rhododendrons, an aviary, a greenhouse and many other various and curious things which are not brought into the schemes of golf course architecture in these advanced days in which we live and labour, and a drawing room window occasionally entered into the considerations.

Mr. Laurence Curtis (to whose notes upon the subject I am indebted for this information) seeing the fascination that this new game exercised upon the minds of all who became associated with it, wrote a letter to the executive council of The Country Club informing them of it, and he suggested that it was a pastime that might prop-

erly be brought within the scope of that organization. He said that the cost of an experimental course need not be more than fifty dollars. Several members of the club supported the suggestion, with the result that the council agreed to it and a course was laid out in the spring of the following year. A lawn in front of the clubhouse was fixed upon as the site for the home hole, but it was soon discovered that this place was too dangerous for it and it was removed. The game became a strong attraction at The Country Club immediately, new members came along in large numbers because of it, and it has flourished exceedingly at Brookline since those days. Mr. Curtis became the first secretary of the golf committee. The example of this powerful club was followed at the Essex County Club at Manchester, then just being started. The Country Club's championship in 1893 was won by Mr. Herbert Leeds, with a score of 109 for eighteen holes, Mr. Curtis being one stroke more. The same season a Country Club team won a tournament that was played at Tuxedo against the St. Andrews and Tuxedo clubs. And golf flourished in the United States forever afterwards.

