

Merrickville Golf Courses

A vintage, sepia-toned photograph of a golf course. In the foreground, a man in a dark suit and a flat cap looks towards the camera. To his left, a young girl in a red dress and a woman in a dark coat and hat are visible. In the background, a large crowd of people is gathered on a grassy area, possibly a golf course, with a tall, thin structure, likely a lighthouse or tower, visible in the distance. The overall scene suggests a social gathering or a golf tournament from the early 20th century.

Donald J. Childs

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By Donald J. Childs

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Preface

In Merrickville, where history once knew of no golf courses, it now knows of several.

One of them was mentioned in text describing a postcard showing a “Birds Eye View” of the town as it appeared looking southwest from the top of the Fire Hose Tower (built in 1902).



Figure 1 Undated postcard from the early 1900s.

It turns out that there was a golf course laid out in Merrickville even earlier than the one mentioned on the postcard above, and it was in entirely different location.

The one mentioned on the postcard was laid out in the first decade of the twentieth century on the south side of the town, but the first “Golf Links” was laid out in 1897 on the north side of the Rideau River on the outskirts of the houses, warehouses, and factories in what had since the mid-1800s been called North Merrickville.

Later, there seems to have been another layout of some sort in “Church’s Grove,” which was probably on the east side of town, and there was yet another course laid out in the Fair Grounds on the west side of the town in 1923.

Over the course of a quarter of a century, then, golf was played around Merrickville North, East, West, and South.

NEWS!

Who knew?

The 1890s Golf Fad

According to Josiah Newman, the editor of the *Official Golf Guide of the United States and Canada* (which was published in New York at the beginning of 1899), Merrickville's first golf course was laid out in June of 1897 (Josiah Newman, *Official Golf Guide* [New York: privately printed, 1899], p. 316). Both the *Golf Guide* and the Merrickville golf course were the result of the same phenomenon: a fad for golf that began in the United States in the early 1890s.

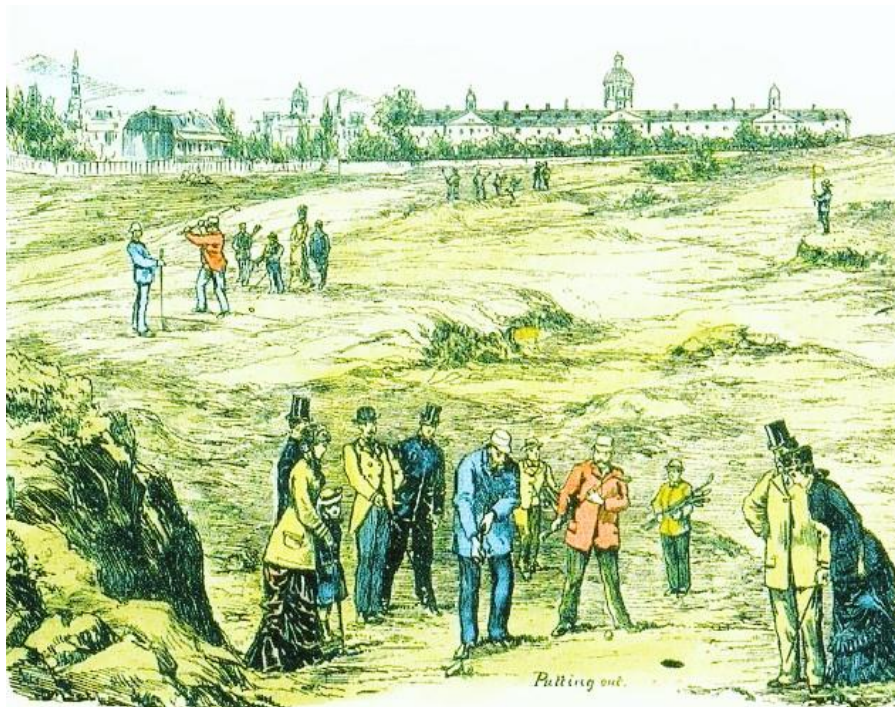


Figure 2 Illustration of a match played between the Quebec Golf Club and the Montreal Golf Club on the latter's golf links on Fletcher's Field in the fall of 1880. Canadian Illustrated News, October 1880.

Golf, mind you, had become established in several Canadian cities a generation before it took off in the United States. Almost twenty years before the fad began, golf clubs had been established in Montreal (1873), Quebec (1874), and Toronto (1876). Two more golf courses were laid out in the late 1870s: one at Niagara-on-the-Lake and another at Brantford. A club was started in

Kingston in 1886, and another was started in Ottawa in 1891. Each club had between a dozen and two dozen players.

But it was not the emergence of these golf clubs that prompted people in communities like Merrickville to think that they should add golf to the sports played in their towns. Rather, it was the early 1890s emergence of golf as a fad amongst the leisured classes of the American Northeast.

When the popularity of golf spread south from Scotland into England in the late 1880s and early 1890s, the result was not just the construction of many new golf courses on the links land of coastal England,

but also the construction for the first time of a large number of inland courses. The development of architectural strategies for designing golf courses on non-links land was the key to establishing the game in North America, for the United States and Canada had little accessible links land but a virtually limitless supply of inland real estate.

The English infatuation with golf was widely reported in American newspapers of the early 1890s, but most important in the development of the American golf fad was the personal experience of the game that members of the American leisured class acquired at Biarritz and Pau in the south of France, where hundreds of the wealthiest Americans spent their winters. Those who fell in love with the game brought it back to the United States, establishing private golf courses on their estates and organizing golf clubs.

Reflecting on the astonishing speed with which the game of golf spread throughout the United States from 1893 to 1895, as what the San Francisco *Examiner* called “the fad of the hour,” the New York *Sun* observed:

Golf is outstripping all the outdoor games just now in its rapid growth.

It took years to fully acclimatize tennis, and, with the exception of baseball, which is a home product, the other fresh-air games and recreations have only become popular by slow degrees.

But golf is advancing with seven-league strides, like Jack in the fairy tale, and will soon travel the continent over, from the Arctic line to the Mexican border, for the game is spreading through Canada as well as the United States.

(Examiner [San Francisco, California] 30 June 1895, p. 32; Sun [New York], 8 March 1896, p. 9)

This golf fad perhaps first crossed into Ontario at Deer Park in Toronto in 1893 (this club would soon change its name to the Rosedale Golf Club), then Hamilton in the fall of 1894, Cobourg in 1895 (where regular summer visitors from Rochester were among those interested in the formation of Cobourg’s first golf club that year), and Cornwall and Port Hope in 1896. American resorts in the Thousand Islands also established golf courses at this time, attracting wealthy visitors from the eastern and central United States. The development of golf in these resorts spurred a number of Canadian communities along Lake Ontario, the St. Lawrence River, and the Ottawa River to establish their first golf courses and golf clubs.

In laying out its first course in 1897, Merrickville was riding the same wave of golf's spreading popularity that other similar communities were experiencing. In Napanee, for instance, the present golf club was established in 1897 to play golf on the very land on which it still plays. Picton first organized a golf club in October of 1897 (*Napanee Express*, 8 October 1897, p. 1). Merrickville's laying out of a course in June of 1897 seems to have spurred thoughts of golf in its nearest neighbour, where it was reported in October that "A golf club is to be organized in Smiths Falls" (*Almonte Gazette*, 9 October 1897, p. 7). In Perth, although Captain Roderick Matheson had laid out a three-hole golf course on his farm in 1890 for the use of six or seven of his friends, it seems to have been only in the fall of 1897 that a proper club was organized (again, perhaps prompted by developments in nearby Merrickville):

Messrs. Hudson and Laing, in [the Perth branch of] the Bank of Montreal, have taken the first steps toward organizing a golf club here, and have begun play in the field across the river on the Matheson farm between the Cheese Factory and the waterworks filtering basin on the island [in the Tay River].

They have so far five putting holes placed, and they hope soon to have a strong club organized.

(Perth Courier, 22 October 1897)

Brockville was only a few months behind the curve: its first golf club was organized in the spring of 1898 and members declared that they were eager to challenge clubs from "other towns in this district" – including "Merrickville" (*Montreal Herald*, 28 April 1898, p. 6). And Carleton Place, known as "the junction town," also became interested in the game in 1898, prompting the newspaper in the rival town of golf-less Almonte to mock its neighbour for its pretentiousness: "The junction town is putting on frills. It is to have a golf club" (*Almonte Gazette*, 2 September 1898, p. 8).

Although in 1903 the publisher and editor of the *Almonte Gazette*, James McLeod, would himself become vice-president of the Almonte Golf Club, which was first organized in 1902, and although he would thereafter boost the game in the pages of his newspaper and even hector readers into joining the club, he mocks Carleton Place for merely succumbing to a fad in 1898 with its attempt to dress up "the junction town."

In 1900, the *Arnprior Chronicle* cast an equally ironic eye on the matter: "Instead of going in for golf, the greatest fad of the day, Arnprior has reverted to lawn tennis. And Almonte comes along and gives us a

drubbing for it" (cited in the *Almonte Gazette*, 6 July 1900, p. 3). But Arnprior's *Chronicle* spoke too soon: the town had its own golf links less than a year later (*Ottawa Citizen*, 1 June 1901, p. 10). And we read in 1904 that both sports were still flourishing in Arnprior three years afterwards: "Arnprior athletics are limited to golf and tennis this season" (*Almonte Gazette*, 17 June 1904, p. 1).

Still, for all the increasing frequency of references to golf in the newspapers of the late 1890s, few people in Ontario were familiar with the game. When a golf course was laid out on the outskirts of Orillia in the spring of 1898, for instance, local residents were baffled to see flags placed in their fields. They leapt to the only conclusion that seemed reasonable:

The report that the C.P.R. was surveying a line into Orillia had a rather amusing origin.

Some who saw the men placing the flags in laying out the golf links on the Dallas farm at once jumped to the conclusion that it was a C.P.R. survey party running a line and immediately brought the good news to town.

(Cited in the Barrie Examiner, 5 May 1898, p. 8)

Eventually, newspaper references to golf became so ubiquitous, and so many summer resorts began to advertise their new facilities for golf, that jokes began to be published for the sake of those who resisted the fad:

"You are having a remarkably successful season, Mr. Whicks," said Atterbury.

"Yes," replied Mr. Whicks. "I advertised this place as the only hotel in the mountains that had no golf-links, and we have had nine applications for every room in the house."

(Almonte Gazette, 15 September 1899, p. 1)

For those sceptical of the game's attractions, the faddists themselves frequently became the object of mockery:

The golf walk is the very latest.

It is described as a loose-jointed stride.

Flapping arms, a 'poked' neck and head and a queer flat chested carriage are its leading characteristics.

You are nobody, of course, unless you have it.

(Northern Ontario Observer [Port Perry], 16 August 1900, p. 1).

Cartoonists engaged in the same sort of gentle mockery:



Figure 3 Crawford Avalanche (Grayling, Michigan), 21 October 1897, p. 3.

character is cruelly displayed by his actions on the golf links and the numerous remarkable attitudes people strike are a cause for amusement to lookers-on. Here are some of the positions witnessed at a recent golf game.

(Crawford Avalanche (Grayling, Michigan), 21 October 1897, p. 3

RESULT OF A FAD

Golf Is Everywhere Now the Game of the Moment

As golf is just now the game of the moment, having shouldered tennis to the back seat, the artists have turned their attention toward picturing and caricaturing the types to be met with on the green golf field. There is no denying a man's

Moreover, since golf was associated with the well-off classes, there was sometimes a sneer in a newspaper's deprecation of those who succumbed to the fad. The writer of the "society news" column in the *Chicago Chronicle*, for instance, lamented in 1897 that "Golf really still is the chief industry" of some of the city's most prestigious country clubs: "In fact, if golf were not beyond the reach of the

masses, because of the amount of territory over which it is played, the [upper] classes would soon tire of it. As it is, it will probably be two or three years before the society editor is called upon to chronicle the passing of the golf fad" (*Chicago Chronicle*, 13 June 1897, p. 32).

Yet the golf fad also penetrated the awareness of downtown working-class kids in a big city such as St. Louis:

The golf fad has cropped out in "The Patch" around the neighbourhood of Seventeenth and O'Fallon Streets. The game may not be played as scientifically as it is at the Country Club or at the Fair Grounds, but the participants manage to get as much, if not more, fun out of it as do their more fashionable rivals.

The equipment consists of an old umbrella handle for a club, a top or base ball instead of the regulation rubber golf ball, and a number of empty tin cans. The cans are laid on their sides along the curb with their open ends out and serve their purpose just about as well as the regulation holes.

The players range in age anywhere from 7 to 15 years. They are getting to be quite expert, and the cats and dogs in the vicinity are becoming painfully aware of the deadliness of their aim.

The game is rather interesting to a spectator until a badly aimed shot of one of the youthful enthusiasts happens to hit him, when he immediately comes to the conclusion that the police ought to suppress the fun.

(Globe-Democrat [St. Louis], 18 May 1898, p. 10

By the mid-1890s, the golf fad that was sweeping through the United States was also sweeping through small-town Ontario, and Merrickville not only did not resist this fad; the bustling little town on the Rideau Canal seems to have put on frills before any of its neighbours did!

First Golf

In Perth, Captain Matheson played golf on the Matheson Farm in 1890 – fully seven years before a golf club was formed in the town. It is also possible that in Merrickville, a solitary figure played golf in the fields around the town before 1897.

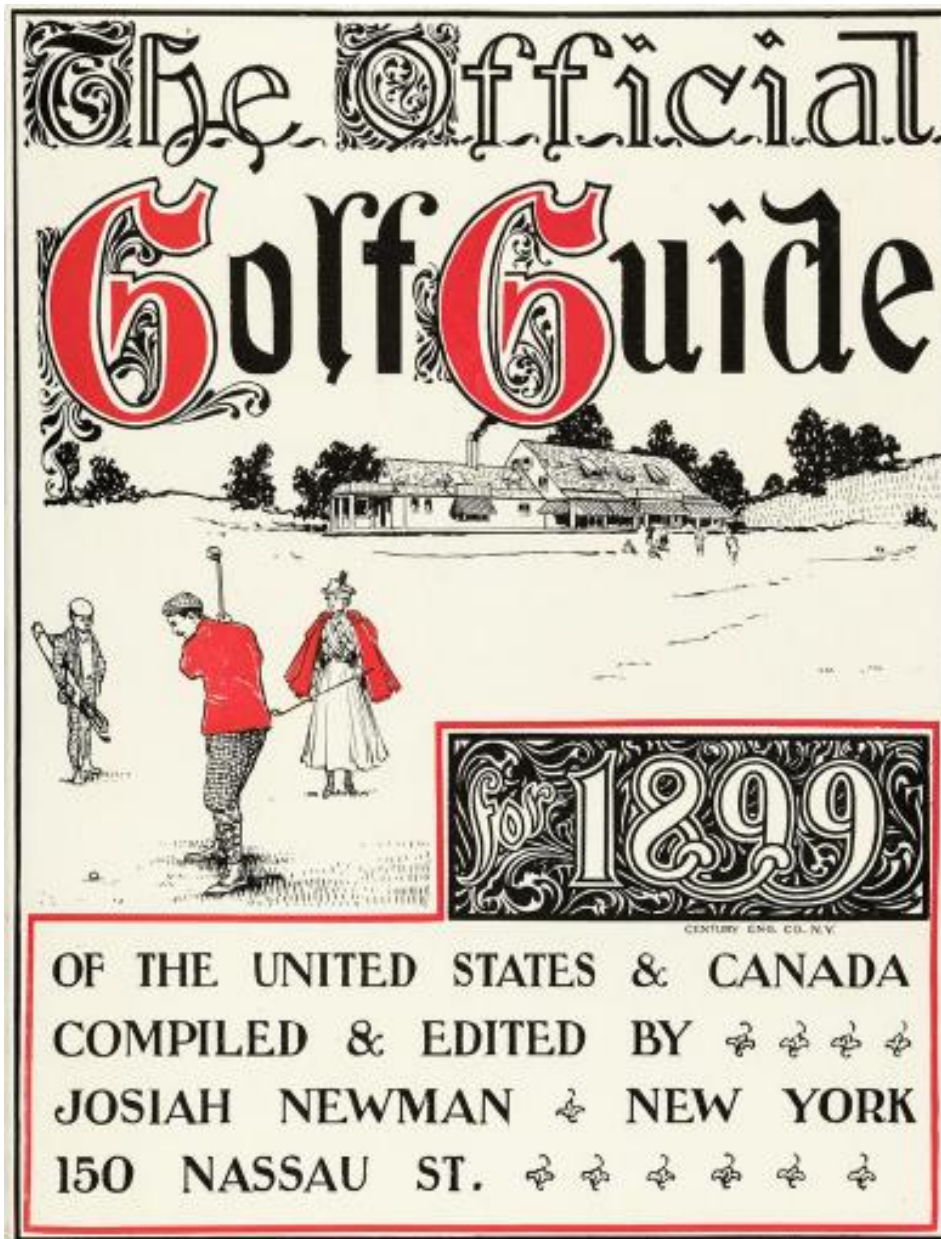


Figure 4 Official Golf Guide, ed. Josiah Newman (New York: privately printed, 1899).

So far, however, there is no evidence of such a lonely pioneer, and so one begins the story of golf in Merrickville with Josiah Newman's observation in the *Official Golf Guide* that a "nine-hole course was first laid out in June, 1897" (p. 316).

At first blush, it is perhaps surprising that news of a golf course in far-off Merrickville had reached New York City.

After all, the *Official Golf Guide* makes no reference at all to

contemporaneous Eastern Ontario golf courses at Perth, Smiths Falls, Napanee, and Brockville, among

others. We know, then, that editor Newman had not undertaken a comprehensive survey of golf clubs in Ontario. Yet, somehow, he had not only learned of the existence of the golf club, but had also learned certain details concerning the golf course: not just that “the nine-hole course was first laid out in June, 1897,” but also that “the course is short but affords good practice” (p. 316).

Newman had not come to Canada to play any of its golf courses, let alone the one at Merrickville. Rather, as we shall soon see, his information about the town’s golf course came from a local correspondent who accepted Newman’s invitation to write to him about the new golf club.

Building a Golf Course in 1897

I suspect that the ambiguous suggestion that the course “affords good practice” means not that the course was only good enough for practice (and not good enough for a proper game of golf), but rather that the course afforded good practice of the game: that is, it provided a sufficient number and variety of challenges to stimulate the development of the golf skills necessary for “good practice” of the game.

It would not have taken long to lay out the golf course in June of 1897 and the work could have been accomplished with local resources. No earth was moved during the building of such a course, either to contour a fairway or to build up a green or a tee-box. A farmer’s pastureland was generally chosen for a golf course in the 1890s because the land had been cleared long ago and had well-established grass growing on it – grass that only needed to be cut regularly in order to produce a decent surface from which to play a golf shot. Generally, the teeing ground was simply a rectangular area of level turf marked out by chalk lines. Putting greens were also located on a level spot, whether in a hollow, on a hog’s back, or on a flat area. The preference in those days was not for an undulating surface, but rather for a flat, level surface that would minimize the break of putts made across it.



Figure 5 A scyther of the greens at the Ottawa Golf Club, circa 1904.

The green might comprise the same grass as found throughout the rest of the field, but it was cut shorter than the fairway grass, and it was usually cut in the shape of a square, with sides of about 30 to 60 feet. The putting surface might be mowed with a mechanical hand mower, or a golf club might hire a person to scythe the greens each morning.

The putting green would be compacted to produce a relatively smooth putting surface on which the bouncing of a rolling ball would be minimized. Compacting would be achieved in one of three ways: by rolling the entire putting surface with a heavy barrel-shaped cylinder (generally pulled by two people); by thoroughly soaking the putting surface with water, placing planks over it, and then pounding the

planks with a heavy object; or simply by pounding every square foot of the putting surface with a heavy-

handled instrument with a flat square bottom. The latter method, used on tees and greens alike, is illustrated in the photograph below.



*Figure 6 A late nineteenth-century golf groundsman (greenkeeper) flattens the surface of a tee or green by pounding it. Michael J. Hurdzan, *Golf Greens: History, Design, and Construction* [Wiley, 2004], chapter 1).*

In the 1890s, construction of a golf course by these methods could be completed in a matter of weeks. Play on the course would then commence immediately.

And as for the routing of the golf holes?

Rudimentary do-it-yourself advice on laying out a golf course was just becoming available in North America by the mid-1890s. In his 1895 book *Golf: A Handbook for Beginners*, James Dwight provides a chapter called “Laying Out Links,” yet it comprises just seven sentences:

It should be understood that links vary greatly in length as well as in the character of the ground. There is no definite distance between the holes.

If you possibly can, get some competent person to lay out the course for you. It is hardly likely that a beginner can take all advantage of the different natural hazards, etc.

The distance between the holes must vary according as open places occur with some hazard in front. As to distance, an average of 300 yards makes a good long course. Some of the holes should be 400 to 450 yards apart, and one short hole of 100 to 120 yards.

(James Dwight, Golf: A Handbook for Beginners [Boston, New York, et al.: Overman Wheel Company, 1895], p. 41).

There you have it. Now go and build it!

In 1897, the Wright & Ditson sporting goods company published a *Guide to Golf in America*, which included a longer section on how to lay out a golf course

The game may ... be played on any fields affording requisite room and turf that can be kept in condition to afford reasonably good lies between the holes....

It is not possible or desirable that the distances between the teeing-grounds and holes should everywhere be the same.... Holes should not be too much alike The distances and hazards should be as varied as possible.

The putting-greens may be sometimes on the flat turf, sometimes on the top of a ridge or knoll, or even on the side of a gently sloping hill.

The first drive from the tee should be sometimes from the crest of a low hill, and sometimes on the flat; and the hazard to be surpassed (for there should be always some hazard or bunker to trap a poorly played drive) should be sometimes near the teeing-ground and sometimes at nearly a full drive's distance from it....

Selecting a convenient place for the first teeing-ground, not too far from the club house, and having determined from the general "lay of the land" the direction in which the first hole is to be, walk in that direction and seek a convenient stretch of level turf which may be used as the putting-green, at least 250 yards from the tee, for

the first hole should not be a short one. See that a full drive will be rewarded with a tolerably good lie.

Having placed a stake in the centre of the spot selected for the first green, consider where is the most favorable spot for the next teeing-ground to be placed....

We continue as before, weighing considerations of distances, difficulty of ground, favorable spots for putting-greens and position of hazards, and driving our little stake that marks the position of the future putting-greens as we go along, constantly bearing in mind that we must return to a point somewhere near where we started, and arriving at the last hole but one choose our last teeing-ground, so that we may return to the home green in such a way as not to endanger the lives of members who may be watching the game from the clubhouse veranda or grounds, and at the same time not make the hole too easy, for the last hole should be a difficult one.

Now we may go over the whole course again and see if it cannot be improved by shifting this hole or that teeing-ground a little.

If it cannot be so improved we may return home and give our orders for the construction of such holes, teeing-grounds and bunkers as we have described.

(Wright & Ditson's Guide to Golf in America [2nd edition; Boston, Massachusetts: Wright & Ditson Publishers, 1897], pp. 29-35)

If the people who laid out the Merrickville golf course in 1897 had happened upon these early North American books on golf, they must have thought Wright & Ditson's advice was encyclopedic compared to the scraps of information they found in Dwight's book.

The key objective in laying out every golf hole in 1897, whether it was 100 yards long or 400 yards long, was to create a line of play on each hole that would require golfers to propel a golf ball through the air over an otherwise impassable barrier stretching from one side of the fairway to the other ("for there should be always some hazard or bunker to trap a poorly played drive"). The golfer who could not raise the ball off the ground was to be penalized by hazards from which the ball might well be inextricable.

For a hole on which the putting green was to be reached with one shot, there would be one such cross hazard. For a hole on which the putting green was to be reached with two shots, there would be two

such cross hazards. For a hole on which the putting green was to be reached in three shots, there would be three such cross hazards.

This architectural practice was known as penal design theory. It had no sympathy for the beginner or the inveterate duffer.

Location

We have a good indication of the location of the first Merrickville golf course: it was “on the Canadian Pacific Railroad, a quarter of a mile from Merrickville depot” (*Official Golf Guide*, p. 316).



Figure 7 Merrickville Train Station circa 1900. Two of the three parallel tracks at the station can be seen.

In 1897, to build a golf course near train tracks was par for the course, so to speak.

On the one hand, the train was generally the most efficient and inexpensive way of travelling from one population centre to another, and so, the closer the course to a train station, so much the better. In Merrickville's case, golfers from nearby communities such as Smiths Falls could easily travel to the golf course. And they did: golfers from Smith's Falls took the twelve-mile train ride to play golf on the North Merrickville links in the late 1800s and early 1900s.

On the other hand, and just as importantly, at a time when golf course designers regarded a hazard as “natural” if it existed at a site before a golf course was laid out, railway tracks were treated as a ready-made golf hazard – and they were especially welcome if a golf club's land was otherwise relatively featureless. Golfers were expected to play their shot out of this hazard – whether the ball lay on a railway tie, against the rail, or nestled in the clinkers (as seen below).



Figure 8 Attended by her caddie, losing finalist 17-year-old Margaret Curtis follows through on her shot from the railway hazard at Shinnecock Hills Golf Club as spectators follow her play during the US Women's Amateur Championship of 1900.

In the 1890s, golf holes were regularly routed perpendicularly across railway tracks in order to test a golfer's ability to hit the golf ball over them through the air.

All hazards in those days were planned to impose the same requirement:

that golfers lift the ball over them with a properly played shot. If there were ponds, creeks, ditches, gullies, or pre-existing areas of exposed sand, golf holes would be routed across them perpendicularly. Other "natural hazards," such as roads, stone fences, cedar rail fences, and even ruined buildings, were integrated into golf holes in the same way.

In 1895, when reviewing the best golf courses in the New York and New Jersey area for *Scribner's Magazine*, golf writer Henry Howland noted the hazards of the latter sort that were found on the best courses. At Shinnecock Hills, he observed, "The hazards are mainly ... some stretches of sand, a railroad embankment, and deep roads, that are tests of skill and temper"; St Andrews, "at Yonkers on the Hudson is an inland course of stone-wall hazards [and] rocky pastures"; the hazards at the Tuxedo Club include "hills, stone walls, railroad embankments lined with blast-furnace slag, ... brook, boulders, and road"; "at the Essex County Club of Manchester-by-the-Sea," "the hazards are nearly all natural, consisting of fences, barns, roadways ..." (*Scribner's Magazine*, vol XVII, no 5 [May 1895], pp. 531-33).

Closer to home, in 1896, when the Kingston Golf Club played a match against the Royal Ottawa Golf Club on the latter's new Chelsea Links in Hull, Quebec, the *Daily Whig* noted that "the grounds were interesting and picturesque and several novelties were presented to the Kingston team in the shape of walls and old houses over which they had to play" (*Daily Whig* [Kingston, Ontario], 26 May 1896, p. 4). Perhaps distracted by the novelty of the old house, the writer neglected to mention the railways, roads and fences on many other holes, such as the 250-yard 8th hole, where, we read, a "railway, a road, and fences face [the] drive" (*Ottawa Citizen*, 26 September 1899, p. 6).

Note that half as much space was required for a proper nine-hole golf course in the 1890s as is required today: less than 40 acres as opposed to approximately 80 acres. For several reasons, golf holes were shorter then than they are now. First, the ball simply did not go as far then as it does now. Second, the hickory-shafted golf clubs of the day, with their small wooden heads and their thin iron heads, were not nearly as efficient as today's clubs. And third, the golf swing was not nearly as powerful as today's swing.



Figure 9 A gutta-percha golf ball of the 1890s. Golfers painted the balls themselves (generally white or red) and had to do so regularly as the paint wore off after a few rounds.

In 1897, the ball was made of “well-seasoned gutta-percha, grooved or notched on the surface and painted white” by golfers themselves (Gardener G. Smith, *Golf* [New York: Frederick A Stokes Co, 1908], pp. 11-12.). The revolutionary Haskell Flyer golf ball that would fly 25% further – the ball with thin strands of rubber wound tightly around a solid core – would not be invented until 1899 and it would not arrive on the market until 1902.

In the 1890s, top golfers could not reliably drive the “guttie” more than 175 yards, and

achieving such a distance required the ball to roll a good distance after it landed. And so, golf course designers thought it reasonable to ask a golfer to cover about 150 yards in one shot, 250 yards in two shots, and 350 yards in three shots. A nine-hole course of 1,800 to 2,200 yards was thought to be a good length. In 1891, for instance, the first golf course laid out for the Royal Ottawa Golf Club in Sandy Hill comprised nine holes adding up to about “a mile” – that is, 1,760 yards – which made the average length of the holes 200 yards (*Montreal Herald*, 25 May 1891, p. 2).

We know that Merrickville's golf course was found within a quarter of a mile (approximately 400 meters) of the train station. This “quarter of a mile” presumably indicates the distance by road from the station to the location of the layout's 1st tee and 9th green (which were traditionally located side-by-side). The nine holes will then have moved away from this access point and worked their way back to it. Our search for the site of the 1897 golf course, therefore, should consider all locations reachable by road within 440 yards of the train station. It turns out there were four such locations, which I have marked by yellow dots (numbered 1 to 4) on the 1905 topographical map seen below.



Figure 10 Map published in 1908 by the Survey Division of the Department of Militia and Defense. This map was the result of surveys made in 1905.

The map above shows the northern suburb of Merrickville, which townspeople called North Merrickville from the mid-1800s onward.

In November of 1892, this area was surveyed and subdivided: plans were made for a dozen new streets and hundreds of houses. As it happens, the four locations marked in yellow above were each at the limits of the planned subdivision. And each location gave immediate access to relatively treeless fields. (The only woods marked on this part of the 1905 map begins at the bottom right corner of the image above, where two green squiggles representing trees can be seen).

On the map above, three parallel tracks on the west side of the station indicate the train yard. There would often have been box cars or an engine on these tracks, making it unlikely that golf holes would have been routed across these three tracks. But at Point 4, two holes (1 and 2) running west and two holes parallel to them (8 and 9), running east back to Point 4, could have been laid out in the relatively narrow field which lay between the triple tracks and the road running along the north bank of the Rideau River (Broadway Avenue West). Four such beginning and concluding holes would have led to and from five more holes further to the west, some of them probably running north and south back-and-forth across the single-lane tracks at that point.

In the undated photograph below, we can see the fields west of the train station in the background.



Figure 11 "The black and white photograph is of two ladies waiting in winter weather at the train station, likely Merrickville." Merrickville Historical Society. Catalog no.: 981.58.6. The outfits that the women are wearing suggest that this photograph was taken in the 1890s or early 1900s.

In the background behind the unidentified women, we can see that the fields west of the train station were relatively treeless.

One can also make out – to the right of the woman on the right – a fence running east and west that parallels the train tracks. And in the distance beyond this fence, almost parallel to it, there is perhaps a cedar-rail fence.

Similarly, to the left of the woman on the left (at elbow level) there may be another cedar-rail fence.

A golf course designer laying out holes in this area in 1897 would have availed himself of both the railway and any such fences to be used as cross hazards.



Figure 12 "Locks Along the Rideau Canal by John Burrows." Circa 1835. Library and Archives Canada, collections and Fonds, Box number A027-02.

Point 1 on the map above (where By Street meets Rideau Street) afforded access to about 20 acres on the south side of the train tracks, this land being bounded on the west by some of the buildings of North Merrickville and on the south and east by the Rideau River. William

Merrick built his first house in this area in the early 1800s, and since that time, it has remained a relatively treeless area, as suggested by sketches from the 1840s – such as the one seen above (in which the artist depicts Merrickville as seen from the possible golf course site under consideration).

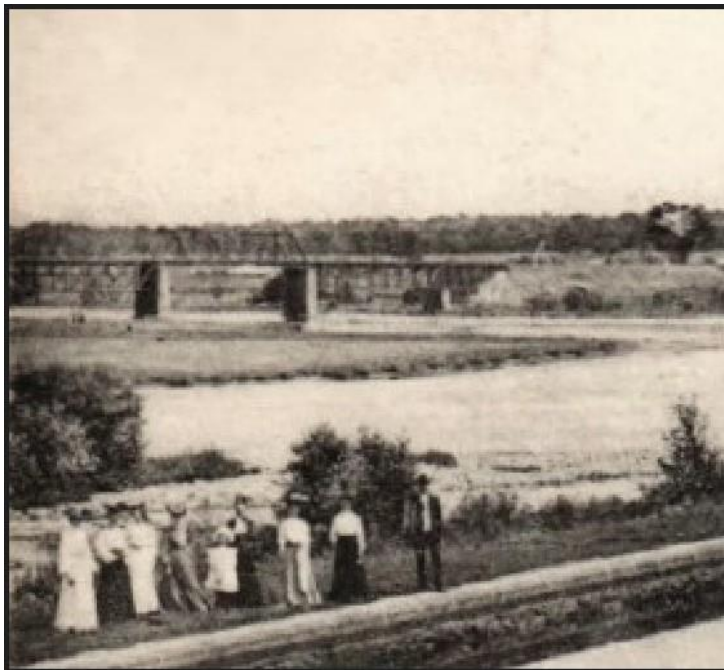


Figure 13 Greatly enlarged detail from an undated pre-1907 postcard showing the lower basin of the Merrickville locks.

When seen from the opposite side of the river in a photograph from the late 1800s or early 1900s (reproduced to the left), this area is revealed as even more treeless and more grassy than it was in the 1840s. Seen in the background of this greatly enlarged detail from an undated postcard is the original Canadian Pacific Railway bridge that existed from 1886 to 1906. At this point, the Rideau River curls around a 20-acre grassy, treeless area between North Merrickville, the train tracks, and the river.

Part of this area is shown in a photograph depicting the construction of the new bridge in 1907.



Figure 14 Construction of the new CPR bridge at Merrickville in 1907.

The much larger area of fields on the north side of the railway tracks that could be accessed at Point 3 can be glimpsed in the background of another photograph of the original 1886-1906 bridge.



Figure 15 Detail from a photograph of the 1886-1906 CPR railway bridge at Merrickville.

The fields north of the railway tracks are unfortunately obscured by the railway bridge, but they can be seen as they exist today in the photograph below.



Figure 16 Contemporary photograph of one of the fields north of the train tracks.

It would have been a simple matter to have laid out golf holes in the fields of this sort found on either side of the railway tracks. And one could have played across the tracks on the western side of these fields near Broadway Avenue East where the tracks were more or less level with these fields (as opposed to the part of the fields increasingly lower than the steep embankment – seen in Figure 14 above – that was required to keep the tracks level (at 355 feet above sea level) as they approached the river (which was 314 feet above sea level)).



Figure 17 Annotated detail from 1905 map.

Fields accessible at Point 3 on Montague Road were similarly treeless. There was no train track in this area to serve as a hazard, but there was a creek across which golf holes could have been routed (it runs west to east on the map to the left, ending at the Rideau River).

Mind, you, just what sort of a golf hazard this creek might have constituted is not clear: today, it exists only as a narrow ditch, and it is often dry.



Figure 18 Contemporary photograph showing one of the fields north of Merrickville and east of Montague Road through which an intermittent creek flows to the Rideau River.

In the 1940s aerial photograph shown below, I mark the four points a “quarter of a mile” by road from the railway station, and I outline 30-40 acres of fields accessible at these points where the golf course might have been laid out.

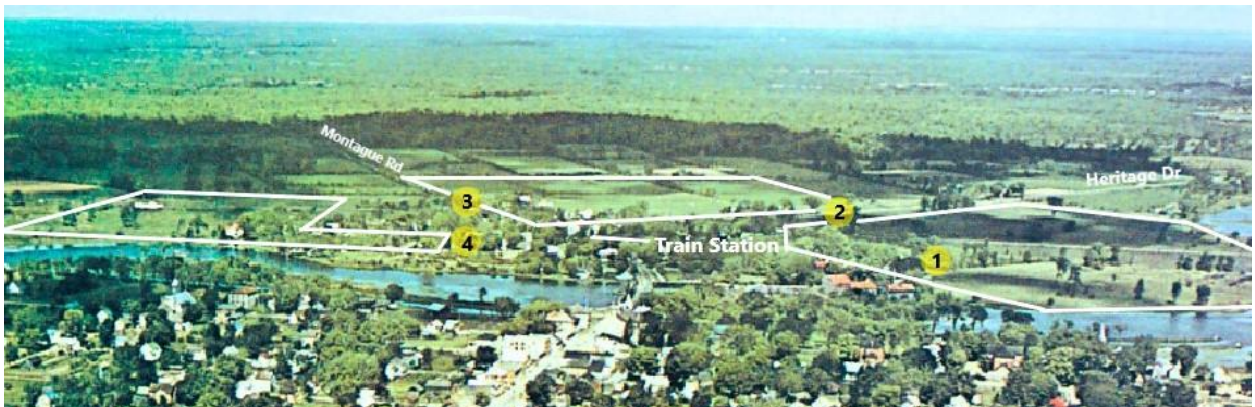


Figure 19 Annotated detail of a 1940s aerial photograph of Merrickville.

The areas outlined above mark out approximately 30 to 40 acres of land, but it is possible that not even that much space was used by the 1897 golf course, for we recall that the *Golf Guide* reports that “the course is short” (*Official Golf Guide*, p. 316).

How Golfers “Appeared on the Links” ...

The only hint as to which of the possible golf course sites marked on the map above was the actual site of the 9-hole course is the following observation about the slow start to the 1900 golf season: “The golf players must be very busy men this summer. They have not **appeared on the links** so far this season” (*Merrickville Star*, 31 May 1900, p. 1, emphasis added).

How should one interpret the word “appeared”?

Does the sentence “[golfers] have not appeared on the links so far this season” mean simply: “No one has played golf yet this season”?

Or does it mean: “No one observing the links from here in Merrickville has seen anyone playing golf out there so far this year”?

That is, should we take the newspaper editor to suggest that when people played golf in North Merrickville, “they appeared on the links” to anyone who happened to look in the direction of the golf course from a Merrickville vantage point?

There is a similarly interesting ambiguity in an observation about early spring play in 1902: “golf parties are to be found daily on the links” (*Merrickville Star*, 29 May 1902, p. 1).

Has someone told the newspaper editor that people are playing on the links each day, or has the editor “found” people “on the links” with his own eyes while walking the streets of Merrickville?

If play on the course was indeed observable from Merrickville, the possible site along Montague Road north of North Merrickville (marked as Point 3 on the map above) could not have been the location of the golf course.

None of this area was visible from Merrickville.

And note that the possible site to the west of the railway station accessible at Point 4 on the 1905 map above was difficult to see from Merrickville because of trees along the road running alongside the Rideau River.

See below a view of this area shown on a 1906 postcard, which looks from the blockhouse on the south side of the Rideau River across the west end of the locks toward Point 4 on the map above.

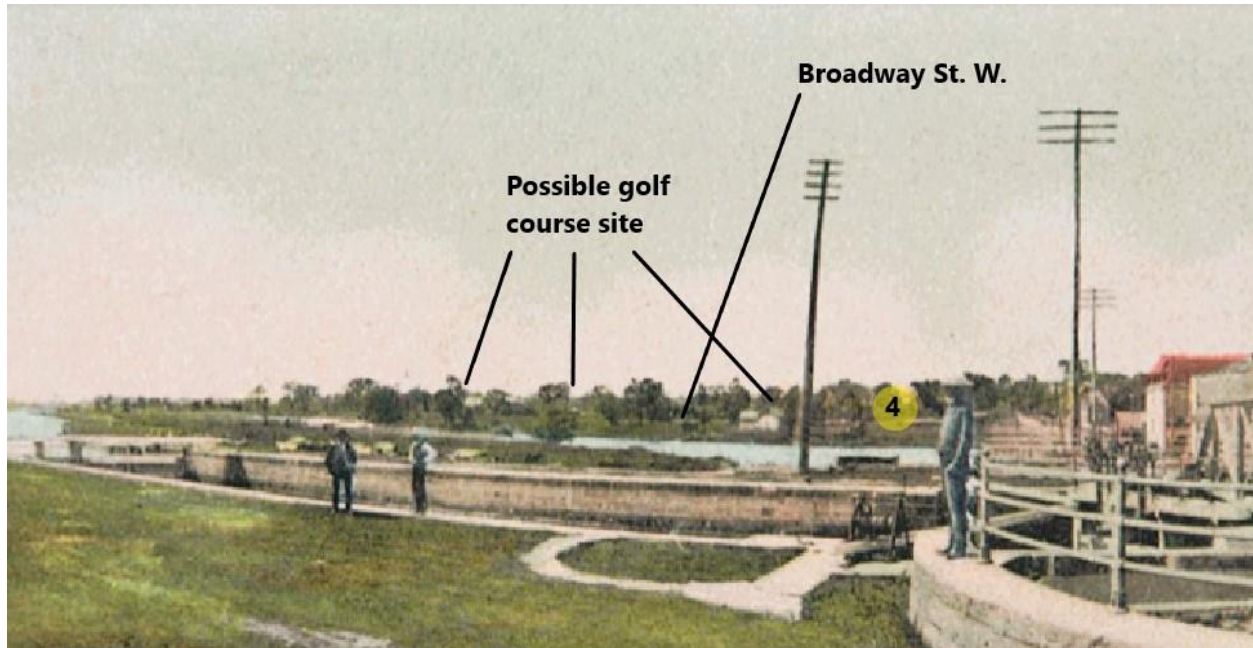


Figure 20 Early 1900s postcard looking from the top of the locks across the Rideau River toward the west end of North Merrickville where a possible golf course site was to be found where the triple railway tracks narrowed to a single track. Point 4 marked above is on Broadway Street West a quarter of a mile from the train station.

It turns out that just one of the possible golf course sites within $\frac{1}{4}$ of a mile of the train station was visible from town – the one seen in the early 1900s views from Main Street East shown below.

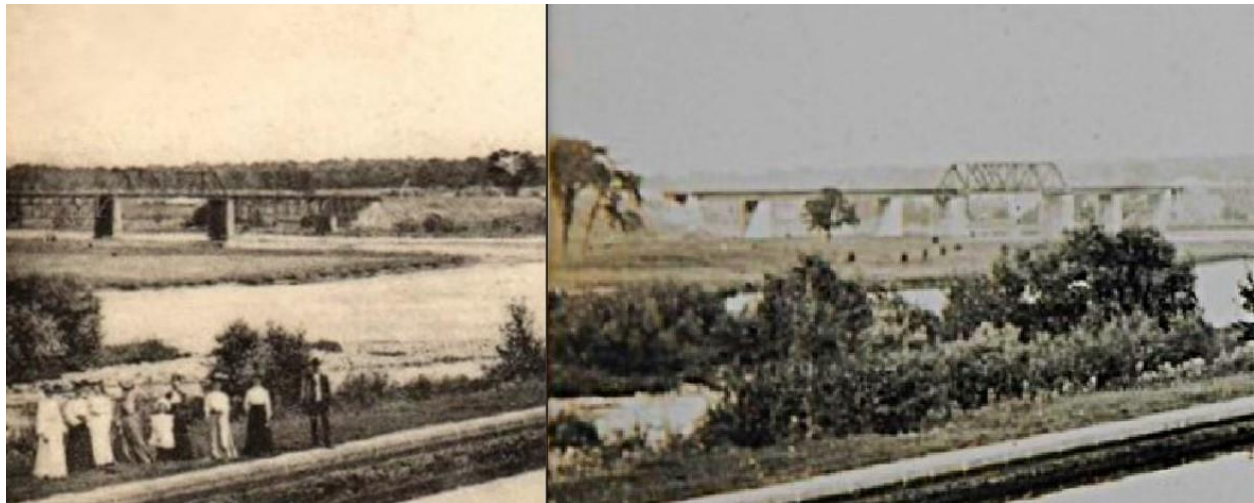


Figure 21 Left: detail from early 1900s postcard, railway bridge from 1886-1906 appearing in the background. Right: detail from early 1900s postcard, railway bridge opened in 1907 appearing in the background.

These photographs show the area that would have been accessed at Point 1 on the 1905 map above at the place where Rideau Street and By Street meet (today, Amelia Street provides access to this area).

The photograph above on the left is a detail from an early 1900s postcard that shows in the middle

ground the easternmost part of this possible golf course site (the postcard shows in the background the 1886-1906 railway bridge). The photograph above on the right is a detail from another early 1900s postcard that also shows in the middle ground a larger portion of this possible golf course site (the postcard shows in the background the railway bridge that opened in 1907).

Unfortunately, because of the way the North Merrickville golf course would have been laid out in 1897, the layout will have left no signs to mark its location: no old putting greens, no teeing grounds, no fairways.

An enterprising golf course archeologist, mind you, would find somewhere under the surface of one or more of the fields surrounding North Merrickville proof of where golf began near the town: there's golf in them thar fields – in the form of buried gutta-percha balls.

The Club

In the spring of 1899, Newman published the item seen below about the Merrickville Golf Club.

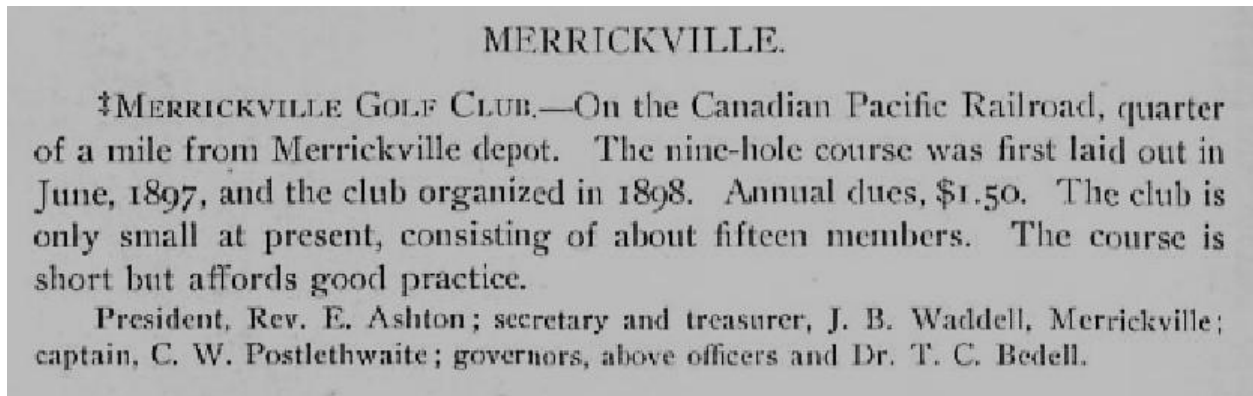


Figure 22 Josiah Newman, *The Official Golf Guide for Canada and the United States* (New York: privately published 1899), p. 316.

Apparently, information supplied to Newman indicated that “the club [was] organized in 1898,” but *The Daily Whig* of Kingston reported nine months earlier, in September of 1897, that “Merrickville Scotchmen have organized a golf club” (*Daily Whig* [Kingston], 7 September 1897, p. 3).

Perhaps supporting the idea that the club was formed before 1898 is the fact that when a golf club was organized in Brockville in April of 1898, the executive committee that was elected at that time was already well aware the Merrickville Golf Club:

GOLF

Getting Into Line At Brockville

A number of enthusiastic golfers met last night and organized a club

The Brockville golfers will turn out some good men.

Matches will be played with Ottawa, Merrickville, Perth and other towns in this district.

(Montreal Herald, 28 April 1898, p. 6)

When Josiah Newman published his *Golf Guide* in 1899, he was also the editor of *Golf: A Bulletin of the United States Golf Association*. The latter job was instrumental in enabling him to conduct the research

that was published in his *Golf Guide*. In November and December of 1898, he published in *Golf* a form that he invited secretaries of golf clubs to complete and submit for publication in his *Golf Guide* (the form is shown below).

Data for OFFICIAL GOLF GUIDE
(Editorial Offices, 150 Nassau St., New York.)

Of the *Club.*

Situated at.....

On..... Railroad Distance from depot.....

Postoffice address.....

Organized..... Incorporated..... Entrance fee..... Annual dues.....

No. of members..... President..... Vice-President.....

Secretary..... Treasurer.....

Captain..... Governing Committee.....

.....

Greenkeeper.....

..... holes, laid out by..... in..... 189.....

Distances.....

.....

Club Champions.....

.....

List of members enclosed?..... State of turf.....

Photograph of clubhouse or players enclosed?..... Maps of course enclosed?.....

Remarks:.....

.....

.....

Date.....

Signed..... Secretary.....

Address.....

114

Figure 23 Josiah Newman, *Golf* [New York], vol 3 no 5 (November 1898), p. 314.

We can see that Newman presented information about the Merrickville Golf Club in pretty much the same order in which his form asked for it: name of the golf club; its geographical situation; the name of the nearest train station; the distance of the golf course from the train station; the year and month the golf course was laid out; the year the club itself was formed; the members of the executive committee; the number of members; information about the golf course.

It would seem that at least one of the members of the first

golf club in Merrickville was so enthusiastic about the game that he subscribed to the New York

publication *Golf* and was able to inform the Club that editor Newman was calling for information from golf clubs to be published in his *Golf Guide*.

And it would seem that the executive committee was eager for the world to know about the Merrickville Golf Club and therefore directed its secretary-treasurer to complete the form and send it to New York.

Four Men and a Course

As was the case in Perth, the laying out of the first golf course in Merrickville seems to have preceded the formation of an official golf club. And, as noted above, it is not clear when the Club was organized: the *Official Golf Guide* says it was “organized in 1898”; Kingston’s *Daily Whig* reported in September of 1897 that “Merrickville Scotchmen have organized a golf club” (*Official Golf Guide*, p. 316). *Daily Whig* [Kingston], 7 September 1897, p. 3).

The editor of the *Golf Guide*, Josiah Newman, had solicited information from club secretaries. And so, one presumes that Newman got his information from the secretary of the Merrickville Golf Club: it ought to have been authoritative.

The *Daily Whig* presented its news about the formation of the golf club in Merrickville in a column called “The News of the District,” which promised the “spice of the articles in the vicinity newspapers,” so its information would seem to have come from the *Merrickville Mirror*. The *Mirror* was the town’s only newspaper – a weekly publication under the proprietorship and editorship of William G. Cave, who had come to town to set up his printing plant in February of 1896 (*Daily Whig* [Kingston], 7 September 1897, p. 3).

Cave’s information also ought to have been authoritative. He knew the Club’s organizers personally, and he knew the president, Reverend Edward Aston, particularly well, once writing of him that he was “one of the cleverest men in the Presbyterian Church in Canada” (*Merrickville Mirror*, cited in *Dundee Courier* [Scotland], 8 February 1899, p. 7). Although it seems that not a single copy of the Merrickville Mirror survives (it was published weekly from February of 1896 to February of 1899), one can reasonably assume that Cave wrote an article about the new golf club much more substantial than the summary provided by the *Daily Whig*: “Merrickville Scotchmen have organized a golf club.”

a relatively substantial article about

Who were these “Scotchmen”?

The organizers in question were presumably the four men named in the 1899 *Golf Guide* as the Club’s governors: “President, Rev. E. Ashton [sic]; secretary and treasurer, J.B. Waddell, Merrickville; captain, C.W. Postlethwaite; governors, above officers and Dr. T.C. Bedell” (p. 316). These four “governors” of the Merrickville Golf Club comprised four different walks of life, yet they were all typical of the class of

people who made up the membership of early golf clubs in small-town Ontario: Bedell was a doctor; Waddell was a banker; Postlethwaite was a merchant; Aston was a minister at the local Presbyterian church.

None of these men was a Scotsman.

John Bell Waddell was born in Quebec, Dr. Thomas Casey Dorland Bedell was born near Picton, Ontario, and Charles Wilson Postlethwaite was a Merrickville man. Reverend Edward Aston was born in England.

Note, however, that many people in Eastern Ontario assumed that Reverend Aston was Scottish. At the end of the summer in 1893, the *Almonte Gazette* introduced him to readers as follows: “Rev. Mr. Aston. A congregational minister from Scotland, has been inducted into the pastoral charge of the Merrickville Presbyterian congregation” (*Almonte Gazette* [Ontario, Canada], 1 September 1893, p. 1). It was reasonable for people to talk of him as the Merrickville minister from Scotland. And so, it is perhaps not surprising to find the editor of the *Daily Whig* described him five years later as “a native of Scotland” (*Daily Whig* [Kingston], 31 December 1898, p. 5). Furthermore, having spent ten years – 25% of his life – in Scotland, Aston may well have spoken with a bit of a Scottish accent.

I suspect that in his article about the new golf club in Merrickville, *Mirror* editor Cave had foregrounded the role of President Aston in the formation of the club and had mentioned that Aston had learned the famous Scottish game on Scottish golf courses. An article that covered such topics would explain how the editor of the *Daily Whig* came to boil it all down to the simple statement, “Merrickville Scotchmen have organized a golf club.”

The organizers of golf in Merrickville were merely honorary “Scotchmen” because they were devotees of the Royal and Ancient Game.

Golf Club President Aston: the Reverend Man from Musselburgh

The reverend undertaking of establishing a golf club in Merrickville was initially a Reverend's undertaking, for, according to the 1899 *Official Golf Guide*, the implicit ringleader of the enterprise was the first president of the Merrickville Golf Club: "Reverend E. Ashton [sic]" (*Official Golf Guide*, p. 316).

The minister's last name was actually **Aston**.



Figure 24 Reverend Edward Aston, circa 1890. Sketch from a photograph. Dundee Courier (Scotland), 8 February 1899, p. 7.

The Reverend Mr. Edward Aston had arrived in Canada in June of 1893 from Musselburgh, Scotland, home of one of that country's most famous golf courses – which is saying a lot of a golf course in Scotland. Between 1874 and 1889, this ancient nine-hole links had hosted six Open Championships, the last of which was won by the man who was golf professional at the links when Aston resided in Musselburgh: Willie Park, Jr.

Edward Aston was born in Eccleshill, near Bradford, Yorkshire, England, early in 1853. His father John was an eminent Independent Minister, a teacher at Airedale Congregational College near Bradford. This college prepared students for a ministry in the Congregational Church – Congregationalism being a Calvinistic protestant approach to Christian worship in which each congregation autonomously and independently runs its own affairs. And so, since the sixteenth century, Congregationalists have also been known as

"Independents" because of their desire to be independent of the authority of the Church of England and the Church of Scotland.

Edward was initially educated at the famous Silcoates School (established in the early 1800s near Wakefield, Yorkshire, for the education of the sons of Congregational clergymen). He then studied inorganic chemistry in the Science and Arts Department of Eccleshill Mechanics' Institute in 1870, graduating "first class" (*Bradford Observer* [England], 17 June 1870, p. 3). His brothers (one older, one

younger) became doctors, but when Edward left school at about 17 years of age, he became a “Banker’s Clerk” (England and Wales Census, 1871).



Figure 25 Airedale Congregational College (Bradford, England), circa 1888 (the cornerstone of this building was laid in October of 1874).

By 1874, however, he had determined to leave the bank and enrol in Airedale Congregational College, where his father was still occasionally encountered on campus performing marriages in the College Chapel. During the 1874-75 school year, Edward entered the College and immediately became a top student: “Mr. Aston had a brilliant student career at Airedale College, being first in some and very high in other of his classes and possessing the esteem of his professors” (*Musselburgh News* [Scotland], 3 February 1899, p. 4).

In 1880, Edward became an “Independent Minister,” ordained in March by the English Congregational Council of Morpeth, Yorkshire, where he served as minister for four years. He had become known to the Morpeth congregation almost a year before this:

[In 1879,] when the church was without a pastor, Mr. Aston, who was then a student in Airedale College, preached as a supply.

The church was so captivated with his sermons that they forthwith invited him to accept the pastorate, agreeing to wait for him till his college course was finished.

Some months after, he became pastor amid many tokens of enthusiastic satisfaction with his settlement.

(The Journal [Newcastle-upon-Tyne, England], 18 November 1884, p. 3)

While still a student in 1879, Aston also lectured at other congregational churches – being described in advertisements as “pastor-elect” at Morpeth.

With a promising future beckoning, Aston married Yorkshire native Mary Shepherd Mackinnon in 1880. The next year, the couple’s son John Edward Jackson was born (the first of five children born between 1881 and 1891 – the others being William Arthur, Daisy Johnstone, Ward Beecher, and Mabel Pitney). Like his father, first-born John Edward Jackson Aston would begin working in a bank, but, unlike his

father, he would make banking his whole career – a career that he began at 17 years of age in Merrickville.

In the fall of 1884, Aston took his ministry to Newburgh, Scotland, where “the members and adherents of the E.U. [Evangelical Union] Church ... cordially and unanimously invited the Rev. Edward Aston, Morpeth, to become their pastor” (*Fife News* [Scotland], 4 October 1884, p. 5). His last sermon at Morpeth was emotional for the congregation: “Last Sunday, the discourse of the Rev. Edward Aston of the Congregational Church at Morpeth seems to have been really an affectionate leave-taking by one who had taken by storm the hearts of the congregation” (*Newcastle Weekly Courant* [Newcastle-upon-Tyne, England], 21 November 1884, p. 6). The leave-taking was also emotional for Aston: “He bade the people a pathetic farewell, thanking them for all their kindness and consideration shown to him” (*The Journal* [Newcastle-upon-Tyne, England], 18 November 1884, p. 3).

Probably as a condition of his appointment in Newburgh, Reverend Aston immediately applied to be admitted as a minister in Scotland’s Evangelical Union of Churches. It is no surprise that Aston’s application was accepted in the fall of 1885, for Scotland’s Evangelical Union and its Congregational Union were doctrinally close: in fact, the former was incorporated into the latter in 1896.

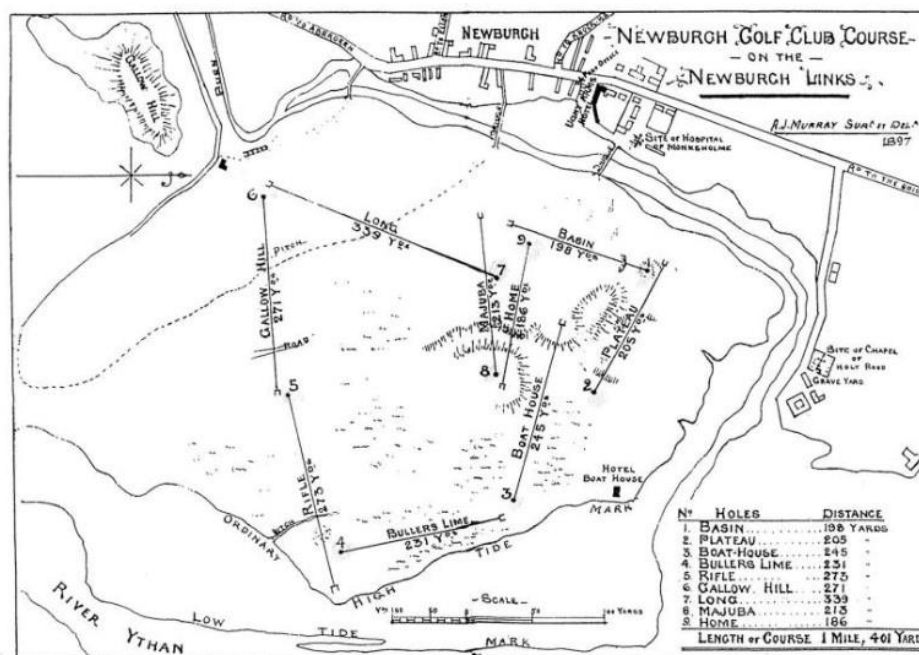


Figure 26 1897 map of the Newburgh links laid out in 1888.

Newburgh, a town of about 3,000 people (in the 1890s) on the River Tay about 10 miles south-east of Perth, laid out its first golf course while Aston was there. Early in 1888, a 2,161-yard 9-hole course was built on links land between the town and the River Ythan. One can see from the map to the

left how small the town was and how impossible it would have been to have lived in the town in the late 1880s and early 1890s (as Aston did) and not notice the activity on the links. And at least several

members of Aston's congregation will have been members of the Newburgh Golf Club, with the urge to talk golf that is shared by all devotees of the Royal and Ancient Game.

Five years later, Aston moved to a church in downtown Musselburgh.

And on this occasion, there were many more people than those in his congregation who were sad to see him go:

PRESENTATION TO A NEWBURGH MINISTER –

An interesting meeting took place on Monday evening at the presentation of a purse and sovereigns to the Rev. Edward Aston, minister-elect of the E.U. Church, Musselburgh, on his leaving Newburgh.

The gist was subscribed to by many friends, not only in Newburgh and district, but also residing in Perth and Dundee.

The meeting was held in the E.U. Church, Newburgh

After a few introductory remarks by the Chairman, ex-Provost [Robert] Taylor [former leader of the Newburgh municipal council, and a local shipowner and quarry owner], in the name of the subscribers and in an appropriate speech made the presentation, Mr. [David] Spiers ["land steward, Mugdrum house"] following with a high eulogium of the character and work of Mr. Aston.

The Rev. Mr. Aston, in acknowledging the gift, referred feelingly to the many kindnesses which he had received from ... congregation and outside friends. He had endeavoured to live up to the determination he had made when he came to Newburgh to have friendly greeting for and be ready to help all he came in contact with, and he could scarcely express the regret with which he parted from the associations formed in that his first charge in Scotland....

The meeting was brought to a close with the usual vote of thanks and Mr. and Mrs. Aston shaking hands with the audience as they left the church.

(Dundee Advertiser [Scotland], 18 March 1891, p. 3)



Figure 27 1890s postcard showing the Musselburgh Town Hall.

Aston served in Musselburgh for less than two years (from 1891 to 1892). He was one of the town's two Congregational ministers. His small congregation met in the Town Hall (seen to the left).

Aston was a rising figure in the Evangelical Union. When he moved to Musselburgh, his Newburgh congregation acknowledged it was

too small to host his talents and ambitions: speaking to the large crowd of Musselburgh and Edinburgh Congregationalists gathered for Aston's installation in Musselburgh, a representative from Newburgh said: "could they have had such [a crowd] as that in Newburgh, it was a question if they had seen him in Musselburgh. He was of the opinion that Mr. Aston would become one of the most powerful preachers of the Evangelical Union. The more they knew of him, the more would they like him" (*Musselburgh News* [Scotland], 27 March 1891, p. 5).

Aston was described as "a forcible, logical speaker," and he chose to address big topics when he spoke (*Daily Witness* [Montreal, Quebec], 6 January 1899, p. 7). For instance, shortly after arriving in Musselburgh, when he was invited to be the lead speaker at a conference sponsored by the Edinburgh District Evangelical Union Guild, he chose as his topic the "Reconstruction of the Church":

A narrow theology could never be the source of a liberal life.... It was vital that congregations entirely reconstruct their ideas of worship.

They needed not less pulpit power but more. Their preachers must be their best men at their best, as it is hard to see how God could bless a pulpit driveller.

Good people said that they prayed silently and meditated in their hearts. That might be profitable to themselves, but it never reached others. They should have more union in song and unison in audible prayer. How could they know there was a union of hearts if there was not a union of voices?...

The work of reconstruction must also extend to the domain of church work. The motto should be to get something accomplished, something done.... [For instance,] If society was so smitten with intemperance as to call for special legislation, the movement ought to be fed with all the energy of the Church.

The Church also needed reconstruction in the matter of the inter-relation of individual churches. They must seek real, firm, co-operative union.

(Fife Free Press [Scotland], 23 January 1892, p. 5)

Aston obviously set high standards both for himself and for his congregations.

His preaching in the Musselburgh Town Hall was meant to be temporary. The goal was to increase the size of the congregation to the point that it could afford to build its own church. Many, including the Musselburgh correspondent for the *Gentlewoman* magazine, thought that Aston was on the way to success:

There are several churches – the Established, Episcopal, Free and U.P. – while the Town Hall is occupied by the Evangelical Unionists, who, aided by the vigorous ministry and eloquent preaching of their pastor, the Rev. Edward Aston, are endeavouring to raise a permanent church where the great universalities of the gospel may be proclaimed.

(Gentlewoman, 23 July 1892, p. 128)

One of Aston's Musselburgh acquaintances later recalled:

The prospect of a successful ministry in even that small charge seemed hopeful enough, but the emoluments were not sufficient for his requirements

His flock dropped away gradually through no fault of his because all acknowledged his earnestness of purpose and appreciated the evangelical character of his teaching and his ministrations to the sick.

But the end had to come, and in December 1892, he was reduced to such straits that he had to resign his position.

(Musselburgh News [Scotland], 3 February 1899, p. 4)

His resignation was reluctantly accepted and once again he was bid goodbye with a generous monetary gift that was sorely needed:

THE REV. E. ASTON, MUSSELBURGH

The resignation by this gentleman of the pastorate of the E.U. Church has caused a considerable amount of talk in the town and neighbourhood.

Mr. Aston's pastorate has not been a long one.... The intimation of his resignation has been received with regret by many whose acquaintance he has made since he came to Musselburgh....

[The managers of his church] passed resolutions regretting that Mr. Aston had felt called upon to resign, recognised the evangelical character of his preaching, and were especially appreciative of his attention in visiting the sick.

They also expressed the hope that a congenial sphere of ministerial usefulness might soon be opened up for him, and as an expression of their cordial good wishes for his future, they unanimously agreed to present him with a gift of money.

(Musselburgh News [Scotland], 23 December 1892, p. 5)

A reporter from the *Musselburgh News* was present for Aston's final address to his congregation, averring that "few of the little gathering which heard his final sermon will ever forget the telling and heart-broken manner" in which it concluded:

THE LAST SERVICE

*Mr. Aston preached his last service on Sunday night from **Micah vi 8**, and in opening pointed out that the text was preceded by one of the most vital questions that could ever be started in the mind of man – "Wherewith shall I come before the Lord and bow myself before the high God?"....*

In every church and nation, great is the controversy that arises out of this question what can a man do or give or be in order that he may feel sure of acceptance with God? Which is most acceptable to God, faith or formalism, creed or conduct?...

Mr. Aston pointed out, first, that manly conduct was the supreme obligation that man owed to God – God required them to do justly, and every man was morally bound to do justly to his brother men

Mr. Aston next pointed out that God required of every man a noble character, and that to love mercy was the very essence of such a character. Love of mercy was the most wonderful feature of the divine nature....

His hearers might depend upon it that the absence of this love of mercy is a black spot in character and in a Christian is too terrible to describe in appropriate language....

More and more we need this divine grace infused into our relations with each other. Harsh judgments, uncharitable conclusions from a few facts, these and many other moods and acts are utterly away from the noble character required by God....

*Only and briefly at the close of the sermon, Mr. Aston stated that this was his last service as the minister of the church and that he confidently awaited the final verdict of Him who called him to preach the Gospel in that place, and for his own part he gave fullest attention to the voice of the familiar and inspiring verse from the thirty-seventh **Psalms** –*

Set thou thy trust upon the Lord,

And be thou doing good,

And so thou in the land shalt dwell,

And verily have food.

(Musselburgh News [Scotland], 23 December 1892, p. 5; 3 February 1899, p. 4)

One week later, implicitly as a way of addressing his sermon's first question – what can one “do or give or be in order that he may feel sure of acceptance with God”? – Aston applied to continue his ministry with the Church of Scotland.

As to his sermon's more mundane question about how he could dwell in the Scot's land and “verily have food,” he decided that while his application to the Church of Scotland was pending, he would earn a

living by teaching. And so, the day after he delivered his last sermon, the following advertisement appeared in local newspapers:

REV. E. ASTON, BRAEMAR VILLA, LEVENHALL, Musselburgh, is Prepared to receive or visit Pupils in Piano, Organ, and Singing, and also to act as Tutor in Classics, Mathematics, &c., to Boys and Young Gentlemen.

(Musselburgh News [Scotland], 23 December 1892, p. 1).

Aston was well-educated in both the classics and the sciences, and so he was well-prepared to tutor students in “Classics, Mathematics, &c.,” but he also read widely in contemporary literature. At the end of 1887, for instance, he arranged for “a service of song” at his Evangelical Union Church in Newburgh and “the subject was ‘Uncle Tom,’ a musically illustrated service compiled and arranged from *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*” (*Fife Herald* [Scotland], 21 December 1887, p. 4). It seems that Aston was the one responsible for the musical illustrations of Harriet Beecher Stowe’s 1852 novel: “A choir of forty voices was conducted by the Rev. E. Aston, E.U. church, who wielded the baton with the skill of a professional” (*Fife Herald* [Scotland], 21 December 1887, p. 4). And earlier the same year, Aston gave a public lecture on American writers. In “Brother Jonathan – His Poetry and Humour,” “Mr. Aston gave a most notable lecture. His quotations from American humorists and poets delighted the audience” (*Fife Herald* [Scotland], 2 February 1887, p. 3).

By March, however, Aston no longer advertised for “Boys or Young Gentlemen” to “Tutor in Classics, Mathematics, &c.”; instead, he offered music lessons only: “REV. E. ASTON, BRAEMAR VILLA, Levenhall, gives lessons on the Piano, Organ, and in Singing” (*Musselburgh News* [Scotland], 17 March 1893, p. 1).

Remuneration for tutoring and for music lessons was to be Aston’s port in the storm of financial distress that he faced, but it was also the case that music was his abiding passion: “he had to eke out his means of livelihood by teaching music, of which he was a brilliant exponent” (*Musselburgh News* [Scotland], 3 February 1899, p. 4).

In Newburgh, Aston had performed publicly on the piano on special occasions such as the opening of the new Town Hall in 1889. And in 1887, at an event to raise funds for the E.U. Church, there was “singing by a choir of forty voices led and trained by the Rev. E. Aston” (*Dundee Courier* [Scotland], 21 December 1887, p. 3). In Musselburgh, however, Aston became especially renowned for lectures on music.

In 1892, for instance, he lectured at Inveresk Parish Hall: “Tickets – Free. A silver collection in behalf of E.U. Church Funds” (*Mid-Lothian Journal* [Scotland], 19 February 1892, p. 1). The topic was Mendelssohn’s music, with the lecturer’s text supplemented with “vocal and instrumental illustrations” by a group of six singers and accompanists – musicians who regularly performed with Aston at such events (*Mid-Lothian Journal* [Scotland], 19 February 1892, p. 1). Versions of the Mendelssohn lecture described below were offered at various places in Scotland and Canada:

Rev. Edward Aston of the E.U. Church, Musselburgh, having a personal appreciation of the genius of the composer, was enabled to treat his subject in an interesting and exhaustive manner.

The early display of genius, the deep religious feeling which inspired many of the finer pieces, and the successful and protracted tours made by the musician were fully entered upon.

The lecturer, who is an exceptionally skilled pianist, rendered selections from the grander passages of the composer’s work, and in the course of his lecture he was assisted by Mrs. Smart, the Misses Tennant, and Mr. Cummings, who gave vocal illustrations of Mendelssohn’s work. The Misses Smith also rendered pianoforte duets ... and added greatly to the interest of the lecture.

(Musselburgh News [Scotland], 26 February 1892, p. 5).

Aston gave another well-received lecture on Handel, which also travelled well over the years:

Musselburgh has seldom been favoured with such an excellent musical treat as that given by Rev. Mr. Aston in Inveresk Parish Hall on Wednesday evening.

His genuine musical and literary ability were alike conspicuous in his treatment of the life and work of the great composer.

The lecture was of an exceedingly interesting and racy nature, dealing with the chief periods of Handel’s life and interspersed as it was with anecdote and incident proved to be both amusing and instructive. It was evident ... that he had thoroughly studied the great masterpieces of the distinguished musician.

The main features of several of Handel's greater works, such as the "Messiah" and "Israel in Egypt," were pointed out with much artistic skill and ability, while the conclusion of the lecture showed him to be possessed of real eloquence and graphic power.

(Musselburgh News [Scotland], 7 April 1893, p. 5)

To sing illustrative songs from Handel's repertoire, Aston availed himself of the same supporting cast of musicians he had used for his Mendelssohn lecture, and he once again performed himself: "Rev. Mr. Aston and Mr. J. Ewart gave three piano and organ duets. Their rendering of the 'Hallelujah' chorus being brilliantly executed and warmly applauded" (*Musselburgh News [Scotland]*, 7 April 1893, p. 5).

Aston's application for admission to the Church of Scotland was finally dealt with in May of 1893:

REV. E. ASTON – The late minister of the Evangelical Union Church, after leaving his charge, applied to the Church of Scotland Committee for admission to that Church.

At the meeting of the Assembly on Saturday, the matter came up for consideration.

The Committee agreed to recommend the application for admission as a licentiate on condition that the applicant attend one session in Divinity Hall and pass the Synodical exit examination. The Rev. John Patrick, Greenside, moved that the recommendation regarding Mr. Aston be adopted; and the motion was seconded.

The Rev. Mr. Duncan, Biggar, as an amendment, moved that the application be declined, chiefly on the ground that Mr. Aston had not passed through a curriculum equal to that required by their own students. It would not be fair to their own students.

This motion was also seconded.

Dr. W.R. Duguid, Buckie (elder), in supporting the amendment, took exception to the grounds upon which they based the motion – the interests of the students. He would support the motion on the ground of the interests of the Church. It was not in the interest of the Church that the pulpits should be filled with imperfectly educated clergymen.

On a vote, the majority of those present stood up in favour of the amendment, which accordingly became the finding of the House.

(Musselburgh News [Scotland], 26 May 1893, p. 5)

Although Aston had been an academic star at Airedale Congregational College, from the point of view of the Church of Scotland, it was agreed by vote that he was an “imperfectly educated clergyman.”

Of course, Reverend Aston will have been disappointed by this decision.

What to do next?

Aston was not long in deciding how he would proceed. He would try his fortune in Canada.

He immediately wrote to the Presbytery of Brockville, Ontario, asking to be admitted to the Presbyterian Church of Canada.

And before he had even received a reply to his letter, Edward Aston set sail for Canada on the Beaver Line's S.S. Lake Superior, arriving in Montreal on June 13th.



Figure 28 S.S. Lake Superior, Beaver Line. the ship was launched in 1884.

Mary and the children would follow nine weeks later, also sailing on the S.S. Lake Superior, departing Liverpool mid-August and arriving in Montreal on August 21st.

During the interim, they would stay on at Braemar Villa in Levenhall, where they had lived since the beginning of 1891. Before and after the Astons' residence in Braemar Villa, it served as a guest house – a home for summer visitors who were offered “superior rooms with attendance in summer months” (*Edinburgh Evening News*, 13 May 1893, p. 2).



Figure 29 Circa 2023 photograph of the Musselburgh golf course, most of which is still located within the town's racetrack, which is still bordered on the top right side by the town's High Street.

Levenhall is the suburb seen at the top left corner of the photograph to the left, appearing just above the top end of the golf course. Braemar Villa was “at the east end of the Musselburgh Links” (*The Golfing Annual*, 1891-92, ed. David Scott Duncan [London: Horace Cox, 1892]). And between Levenhall and the links was the 18-hole putting green constituting the “ladies' course” of the Musselburgh

Ladies' Golf Club (*The Golfing Annual*, 1891-92, ed. David Scott Duncan [London: Horace Cox, 1892]).

Consequently, on his way back and forth to the Town Hall in Musselburgh, Reverend Aston passed the golf links laid out both within and around the town's racetrack, for the town's High Street formed the boundary on one side of the ancient championship links. And note that the High Street was not actually out of bounds in the 1800s: it was treated as part of the golf course. Golfers played shots back onto the golf course from what was then a cobblestone street (damage done to wooden clubs from the striking of

these cobblestones with a vigorous swing led to the screwing of a brass plate onto the bottom of such clubs to protect them: from this innovation came the name for the club called a “brassie, which in the twentieth century came to be called a 2-wood or a 3-wood).

And so, no more in Musselburgh than in Newburgh could Aston have missed the signs of the increasing popularity of golf during the late 1880s and early 1890s. He had lived and worked beside golf courses in both towns, and he would do the same in Canada – not just in Merrickville, but also in Ottawa.

We recall that before leaving Scotland, Aston had applied to the Brockville Presbytery to be admitted as a minister of the Presbyterian Church of Canada. It turns out that the application was lost in the mail. And so, his first order of business upon arrival in Canada seems to have been to make a new application to the Presbytery in Toronto, an application that was tentatively approved within a week of his arrival. After two months, when no objections were received, Aston’s application was formally approved in mid-August – as his family was sailing to Canada.

Newly arrived in Canada in June of 1893, Aston initially spent several weeks in Morewood (a village in Eastern Ontario), residing with the minister, his friend Reverend R.L. Gloag (who would soon return to England). In Morewood, Reverend Aston assisted with the entertainment at the church picnic at the end of the month.

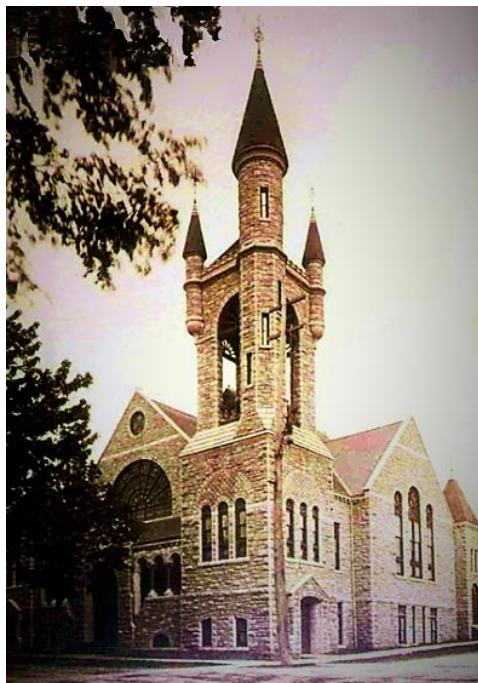


Figure 30 St. Paul's Presbyterian Church, Sandy Hill, Ottawa, mid-twentieth century.

Early in July, however, Aston was appointed to supply at St. Paul's Presbyterian Church in Ottawa in place of the minister who was away on vacation. And so, Reverend Aston “preached” at St. Paul's for “six successive” Sundays (*Ottawa Journal*, 7 August 1893, p. 1; *Ottawa Daily Citizen*, 7 August 1893, p. 8).

Here, Aston will have met Dr. John Thorburn (1830 -1912), one of the most important elders of St. Paul's. he was also a pioneering golfer in Ottawa.

A graduate of the University of Edinburgh, Thorburn began teaching in Musselburgh in the early 1850s but came to Canada in 1856. After teaching in Nova Scotia, he came to Ontario and was appointed headmaster of the Ottawa Grammar School (which would become the Ottawa Collegiate

Institute). In the ensuing decades, he became an expert in education, eventually being awarded honorary degrees by McGill University and Queen's University (including a doctorate from the latter).

Upon retirement from his post in Ottawa, he did not rest: he became head of the Canadian Geological Survey, Chairman of the Board of Civil Service Examiners, Chairman of the Board of Examiners of the Royal Military College at Kingston, President of the Ottawa Literary and Scientific Society, and so on.

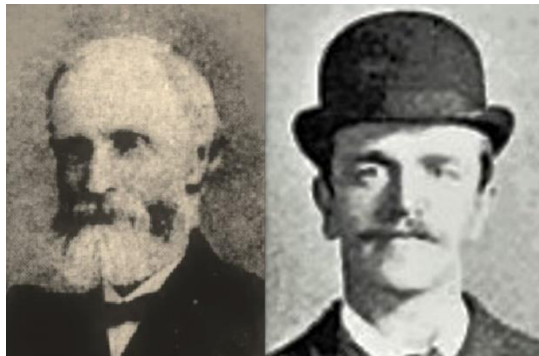


Figure 31 Left: Dr. John Thorburn, circa 1891. Right: Willie Davis (1861-1902), circa 1890.

Thorburn was also one of the four movers and shakers responsible for the founding of the Royal Ottawa Golf Club in the spring of 1891.

In fact, on 27 April 1891, two weeks after the founding of the club, Thorburn was one of four people who walked the property at the east end of Daly Avenue with Willie Davis, the Royal Montreal Golf Club's golf professional, as he laid out the Ottawa club's first golf course that

morning. The five men also made a trial of the layout the same day.

Thorburn will have been involved in St. Andrews' decision to have Aston replace their regular minister for the summer of 1893, and he will no doubt have interrogated Aston about the place they had in common: Musselburgh. Did they play golf together that summer? The Royal Ottawa Golf Club's Sandy Hill course was at one end of Daly Avenue; St. Paul's Presbyterian Church was at the other. Thorburn's residence was on Daly Avenue mid-way between these two focal points of his life.

As his six-week ministry at St. Paul's came to an end, Aston told the congregation that he had been greatly "pleased with the Christian warmth of St. Paul's": "he had enjoyed his ministry in the church very much and hoped that he might again have the privilege of addressing them as it was his intention to reside in Canada" (*Ottawa Journal*, 7 August 1893, p. 1).

And the St. Paul's congregation had been just as well pleased with its supply minister: "Mr. Aston has created a very favorable impression in the Capital, and as he intends to remain in Canada, no doubt those who have heard him will soon be afforded a gratification of their expressed wish to listen to the reverend gentleman again" (*Ottawa Daily Citizen*, 7 August 1893, p. 8).

Reverend Mr. Aston had become a hot prospect.

Would he answer the call of a local Presbyterian congregation?

If so, which one?

Aston returned to Morewood to think it all through. Reverend Gloag once more opened the manse to his friend, and he also welcomed into his home Aston's wife Mary and the couple's five children – ranging in age from 13 to 2 – who had just made their way up from Montreal.

Aston continued to preach and, as usual, made a good impression on the Morewood congregation. Here, news leaked that Aston had received a formal call from the congregation of Knox Presbyterian Church in Merrickville:



Figure 32 Knox Presbyterian Church (opened 1861), Merrickville, Ontario. Circa mid-twentieth century.

Rev. Aston and family, late of England, are the guests of Rev. L.R. Gloag, of this place [Morewood]. He occupied the pulpit of the Presbyterian church on Sunday last and preached a most eloquent and instructive sermon.

We hear that he is about to locate in Merrickville as pastor of the Presbyterian church there. (Ottawa Daily Citizen, 31 August 1893, p. 7)

Aston assumed his ministry in Merrickville in September of 1893, but throughout the fall of that year, he delivered a series of lectures in Ottawa at St. Paul's. We are familiar with one of these popular lectures: "Mendelssohn – Life and Genius," which was supported by "Illustrative music by Rev. E. Aston," as well as by others (*Ottawa Journal*, 21 November 1893, p. 7). In particular, "the Rev. Ed. Aston and Miss Sorley rendered in fine form a characteristic duet from the composer" (*Ottawa Journal*, 22 November 1893, p. 1). What worked in Musselburgh worked in Ottawa: "The attendance was good and all present appeared to thoroughly enjoy the entertainment" (*Ottawa Journal*, 22 November 1893, p. 1).

Aston was resident in Merrickville from the fall of 1893 onward, but Knox Presbyterian Church ("whose congregation enjoyed his ministry") was willing to share him (*Dundee Courier* [Scotland], 8 February

1899, p. 7). Aston became celebrated for his sermons not only in Merrickville but also at other Presbyterian churches throughout Eastern Ontario, from Kemptville to Morewood to Bishops Mills to Russell. He also returned to Ottawa in 1894 to preach at Bank Street Presbyterian Church (*Ottawa Journal*, 15 September 1894, p. 8). He preached in Quebec in 1896 at Howick and English River, and in 1897 he preached at Melville. He went to Lindsay in 1897 and preached there again in December of 1898. Earlier that year he was invited to Buckingham, Quebec, to conduct a service at St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church: "Rev. Mr. Ashton [sic], of Merrickville, Ont., preached at St. Andrew's Sunday. His discourses were much admired" (*Ottawa Journal*, 1 June 1898, p. 2).

And as at Musselburgh, so in Ontario, Aston was invited to lecture on Church affairs. At a meeting of the Brockville Presbytery in 1894 (he would become Moderator of the Brockville Presbytery by 1897), he was one of the ministers asked to speak at its conference regarding "different parts of church service": a "helpful" address was offered by "Rev. Mr. Aston on 'praise'" (*The Advance* [Kemptonville, 13 September 1894, p. 4). The *Merrickville Mirror* confidently declared that Aston was "one of the cleverest men in the Presbyterian Church in Canada" (*Merrickville Mirror*, cited in *Dundee Courier* [Scotland], 8 February 1899, p. 7). Furthermore, "by special invitation," Aston "delivered several courses of lectures on music at Queen's University, Kingston" (*Dundee Courier* [Scotland], 8 February 1899, p. 7).

St. Paul's had him back to Ottawa in the fall of 1895 – not to preach, however, but rather to lecture: "The Rev. Edward Aston of Merrickville will deliver a lecture on 'Handel' with vocal and instrumental illustrations" (*Ottawa Journal*, 8 October 1895, p. 1). Just as his music lectures in Musselburgh were intended to raise money for building his congregation a church, so he lectured in Ottawa to raise money for renovation of the Presbyterian manse in Merrickville.

Aston, of course, was a big hit:

Lecture on Handel

Rev. Edward Ashton's [sic] Entertaining Sketch of the Great Composer

A good-sized audience was delightfully entertained last night by Rev. Edward Aston, of Merrickville, in a most interesting lecture on "Handel."

The lecture was in aid of Merrickville's manse.

Rev. Mr. Aston, in giving a biographical sketch of "Handel," said his life was divided into three periods, the preparatory, from his birth in 1685 to 1720, the operatic, from 1720 to 1740, and the oratorical, from 1740 to 1753, the year of his death. The lecturer interspersed his sketch with several humorous stories in which the life of "Handel" abounds, and which were greatly appreciated by the audience. He concluded with a summary of Handel's character, his place in art and his service to religion. The musical items were rendered by the choir of the church under the direction of Prof. Workman, Mr. Aston himself contributing a piano solo, "The Harmonious Blacksmith," which elicited a hearty applause.

In presenting his work in this city on behalf of his manse, Rev. Mr. Aston is being very sympathetically received by several generous people.

(Ottawa Daily Citizen, 9 October 1895, p. 8)

A few months later, Aston also planned to deliver his lecture on Handel in Kingston, but he became seriously ill at the beginning of 1896:

Rev. E. Aston, of Merrickville, who came to the city [Kingston] to attend the conference of Queen's College alumni, was attacked by tonsillitis almost immediately after his arrival here.

He was removed to the general hospital for treatment and has remained in that institution ever since.

(Daily British Whig [Kingston, Ontario], 5 March 1896, p. 1).

He was in the hospital for three weeks.

A similar problem with his throat had occurred almost exactly one year before when in February of 1895 he suffered a "severe attack of quinsy" – a condition in which an abscess forms between one of the tonsils and the wall of the throat (*Rideau Record* [Smiths Falls, Ontario], 21 February 1895, p.12). In "severe" cases, the abscess can grow so large that it blocks the throat and makes it difficult to swallow, speak, and even breathe. Aston certainly could not preach at this time, but he remained well enough to write out his sermon: "Mr. Henry rendered good services in Knox Church last Sabbath, Mr. Aston being unable to attend. Mr. Henry kindly took the stand and read the sermon which Mr. Aston had prepared"

(*Rideau Record* [Smiths Falls, Ontario], 21 February 1895, p.12). It was expected that Aston would deliver his own sermon the following Sunday, which implies that his 1895 bout of quinsy lasted about two weeks.

It turns out that Aston had been troubled by a severe bout of quinsy some years before he immigrated to Canada. When he lived in Newburgh, he suffered so long and so intensely from this illness that he tried an experimental treatment to improve his condition. He undertook to wear the special appliances (also called “apparel” or “vestments”) associated with the “odo-magnetism” developed by the “medical electrician” “Mr. B. Copson Garratt,” who promised to make one’s body healthier by enhancing one’s electrical life force by devices through which flowed electrical and magnetic forces:

Many people grumble about our climate Of course there is no human possibility of changing the climate, but it is possible to a great extent to nullify its effects We can augment our resisting power and so lessen susceptibility to climatic influences.

This can only be done by keeping every organ fully up to its work. People who are less affected by atmospheric changes than others are only so because in their organs a better action exists than in those persons who feel every variation in the weather.

If the natural action of the heat-producing forces of the body becomes impaired, we should not pander to their weakness by the use of extra dress ... or by using a hot water bottle at night. Such means of obtaining warmth only weaken the natural vigour of the circulation and lessen the resisting forces of the system which should protect us against external influences.

Such artificial means minimize the chances of recovering our normal condition and the cure of any chronic condition.

Our first effort should be not a verbal raid upon the weather but to ascertain the why and wherefore of our increasing susceptibility to weather influences. Can this be overcome?

Yes! Odo-Magnetism supplies a vitalizing force which acts upon, or with, the animating principle of our life and coalesces with all the forces of the physical economy, restoring the natural order and normal condition of our being.

(B. Copson Garratt, Pall Mall Gazette [London, England], 17 March 1887, p. 16)

Aston believed that Garratt's "Odo-Magnetic" appliances had cured his chronic quinsy and wrote to the great Medical Electrician to thank him:

My testimony is this: that the putting on of your appliances marks a turning-point in my physiological experience.

Up to that time, I had been a martyr in a small way. Quinsy six months before had left severely relaxed throat; with this, there was great nervous depression.

For months, my pulpit and pastoral duties were a very great burden, often performed with pain, frequently not performed at all. No words can express the misery, the weariness of that period.

But from the day I began to wear your "Invigorator," there was a change: my general health quickly improved, my throat grew strong, and I have not been out of the pulpit a whole Sunday since. I have sustained a world of worry and trouble [since recovering], but so far there does not seem to have been any serious inroad made on my general health.

I firmly believe your appliances started and maintained this change for the better.

It is easy to say, "You would have got better anyhow." All I have to say is that I did not begin to improve until I commenced the use of your apparel. It is more than a coincidence – it is cause and effect.

For all persons of nervous temperament, electricity in this form is absolutely invaluable.

(Sheffield and Rotherham Independent [Yorkshire, England], 24 July 1889, p. 2)

The set-back to Aston's health in the winter of 1896 was great. Three months after he emerged from the hospital, it was announced that he still needed a period of extended convalescence: "Rev. Mr. Aston, Presbyterian minister at Merrickville, will spend three months' leave of absence, on account of ill health, in Scotland" (*Weekly British Whig*, 18 June 1896).

During this stay in Scotland, he seems to have visited Newburgh, where friends later told the story that after he “emigrated to Canada about four years ago the climate never seemed to suit his health” (*Dundee Courier* [Scotland], 30 January 1899, p. 6). This local newspaper item contains the only reference that I can find to the claim that Canada’s climate did not suit Aston: I suspect that Aston had conveyed this information to his Newburgh friends when he returned to Scotland in the spring and summer of 1896. One suspects that poor Aston had by then abandoned his earlier belief (when he lived in Newburgh) that “Odo-Magnetism” had permanently fortified him against “the weather”: “Odo-Magnetism” seems not to have fortified him against a Canadian winter.

Aston did not, in fact, avail himself of the full three months’ leave that he was granted: he was back home to Merrickville in less than six weeks, and he brought with him his wife’s aunt, 73-year-old Elizabeth Jackson. She still lived in Mary Aston’s hometown, the village of Pocklington in Yorkshire, and the plan was that she would “remain in Merrickville for some time” (*Daily British Whig*, 28 July 1896, p. 3).

Merrickville’s first golf course was laid out within ten months of Aston’s return from Scotland. Had he played golf in Scotland as part of his plan to recover his health?

When the *Toronto Globe* introduced the mysterious game of golf to its readers in May of 1890, it explained the game’s health benefits for office-bound men such as Aston:

Golf is a manly and eminently healthful recreation.

The walk is a tonic, and the clear air that blows over the heights gives zest ... and surely it promises pleasure enough—an afternoon of healthful pedestrianism in the pure country air....

The pace can be made easy or smart ... and thus the exercise adapts itself to the age and exuberance of its players...

The brain is used, too, for calculation is required and one must make allowances for wind and a dozen other things.

(“The Game of Golf—Another Scotch Athletic Exercise Becomes Popular,” The Globe [Toronto, Ontario], 17 May 1890, p. 2).

Might Aston have returned to Merrickville with the idea of laying out a links as part of a long-term plan to maintain his health?

Whatever the case may be, it turns out that by 1896, a mortal threat to Aston's health had already developed in Merrickville – and it was not quinsy. As fate would have it, this superstar minister's term at Knox Church and his term as President of the Merrickville Golf Club would end before the turn of the century, just as his preaching vocation and his golfing avocation were gaining steam:



Figure 33 Town Hall, Merrickville, Ontario. Post-1902 postcard.

Rev. E. Aston, Presbyterian minister of this place [Merrickville], while attending a concert held in the Town Hall on Friday evening, December 22nd, was seized with paralysis from which he never recovered consciousness.

He died Friday morning, Dec. 30, and was buried Monday, January 2nd.

The funeral was largely attended, and the bereaved family have the sincere sympathy of the whole community.

(Ottawa Journal, 10 January 1899, p. 2)

Two months before his death, it had been reported that “Owing to Rev. Mr. Aston's illness, there were no services in the Presbyterian church Sunday” (*Weekly British Whig*, 27 October 1898, p. 4). Was this a sign of a problem relating to his chronic throat problems? Perhaps so, but just ten days before his death, he was fit enough to travel to Lindsay in the second week of December (*Daily British Whig*, 14 December 1898, p. 3).

It turns out that the *Ottawa Journal's* account above of Aston's illness and death provides an incomplete and rather sanitized version of events: the cause of his death was a matter of much controversy in Merrickville – controversy that the Ottawa newspaper did not want to touch.

The *Merrickville Mirror* reported more details:

An altercation ... took place between Demetrius Crozier and Rev. Mr. Aston, rector.

It appears to have been a renewal of some old difficulty.

Mr. Aston shortly thereafter became the subject of apoplexy, brought on by nervous excitement, and has since died.

(Merrickville Mirror, cited in The Advance [Kemptville, 5 January 1899, p. 3].

The “old difficulty” between Aston and Demetrius Crozier (1844-1930) is not explained.

Crozier, but for the last seven years of his life, which were spent with a daughter in Rochester during the summers and a daughter in Minneapolis during the winters, was a resident of Merrickville. He began his work life as a mail carrier – “Mr. Crozier carried mails ... as far as Brockville in his youth” (*Ottawa Journal*, 1 December 1930, p. 11). He would later work as auctioneer, trader, agent for the Provincial Map Publishing Company, canal locks and docks worker, manager of the local ice rink, manager of the winter carnival, caretaker of the fire engine and its apparatus, municipal collector of taxes, street overseer, and so on.

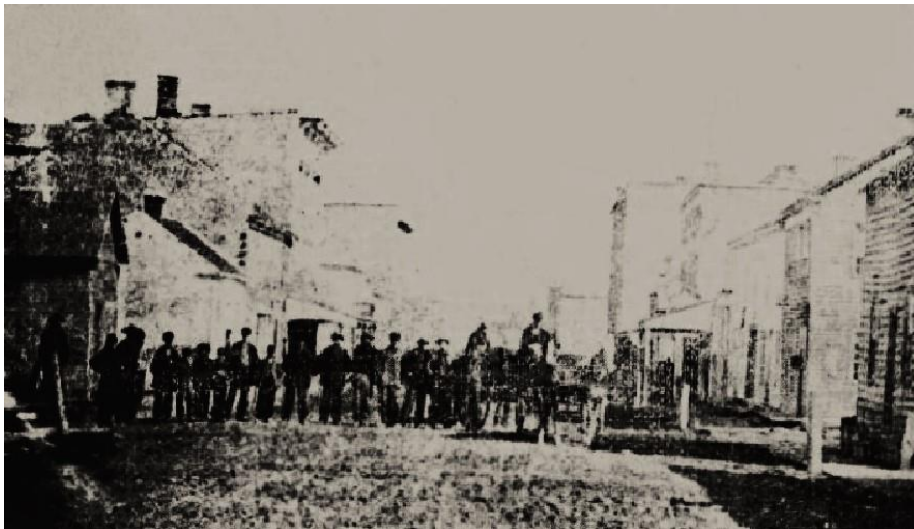


Figure 34 In 1907, Demetrius Crozier submitted this 1867 photograph to the Merrickville Star. Perhaps about to set out with the mail, “He is seated in the Merrickville-Irish Creek stage [coach] at the right of the picture” (Merrickville Star [Ontario], 12 December 1907, p. 14).

He seems to have been a small-scale farmer, too, selling animals and hay periodically, and winning occasional prizes at agricultural exhibitions. Indeed, in the mid-1880s, he served as vice-president of the Agricultural Society.

Over the years, he was appointed to various

committees set up to discuss community issues. On one occasion, he was sent to Ottawa to argue (successfully) to the Canadian Pacific Railway Company that it should restore telephone service between Merrickville and Kilmarnock. He was also a local officer of the Canadian Order of Foresters, the Ancient Association of United Workers, and the Masons.

In 1866, when 22 years old, Crozier responded to the rising threat of Fenian attacks on Canada by joining the Volunteer Militia: he enlisted in the Merrickville Rifle Company and became “one of the valiant ‘fifty-five’ from Merrickville who marched to Prescott and spent three months there awaiting the attack of the Fenian Raiders. He always carried on his watch chain the medal he was awarded for his services at that critical time” (*Ottawa Journal*, 1 December 1930, p. 11).

In 1903, Crozier was the first of the “valiant ‘fifty-five’” Merrickville Veterans to be awarded 160 acres of land in Northern Ontario for his service in 1866 (*Merrickville Star* [Ontario], 9 April 1903, p. 1).



Figure 35 Demetrius Crozier.
Photo courtesy of David Wyatt,
“Harrisons of Merrickville.”
<https://home.cc.umanitoba.ca/~wyatt/harrison-merrickville.html>

In 1890, furthermore, Crozier saved two Merrickville boys from drowning in the Rideau River:

Two boys, Bigum and Trenham, had a narrow escape from death on Monday.

Just above the upper dam, the boys discovered an old raft and they decided to go out on the Rideau and enjoy themselves.

After paddling around for some time, they became aware of the fact that they were gliding down stream towards the rapids.

Then the lung and throat power began to assert itself: “Help! Help!” came lustily over the waters.

They were within two hundred feet of the dam and gliding smoothly on when, happily, Mr. Postlethwaite and D. Crozier, fishing, made for the lads and succeeded in coming up with them within about sixty feet of the falls.

The boys were rescued: by the most strenuous efforts, they [Crozier and Postlethwaite] succeeded making headway against the current.

The raft on which the boys were was dashed against the rocks in the rapids.

(*Weekly British Whig* [Kingston, Ontario], 24 April 1890, p. 3)

There is no doubt about it: Demetrius Crozier was a well-respected citizen of Merrickville before and after the great Christmas “difficulty” of 1898.

Yet, according to Reverend Aston himself, what killed him was a brutal public insult bestowed upon him by Crozier – formerly a member of Aston’s congregation:

Dies of a Broken Heart

Rev. Edward Aston, Presbyterian minister, Merrickville, died last Saturday under very sad and brutal circumstances.

It seems that some years ago a member of his congregation laid a damaging charge against the reverend gentleman, which was afterwards withdrawn.

On the evening of December 23rd [22nd], a public-school entertainment was given in the hall at Merrickville.

To this Mr. Aston escorted a lady friend, and on applying for a seat to the usher, who proved to be Aston’s old enemy, he was greeted with most insulting and brutal language.

Mr. Aston was naturally greatly agitated at this piece of humiliation and took a seat in the rear of the hall.

Shortly afterwards he keeled over in an epileptic fit and was taken home unconscious.

He revived and during his conscious moments referred to the persecution he had been subjected to and also said he was dying of a broken heart.

(Kingston Daily News [Ontario], 13 January 1899, p. 4)

Aston anticipated “dying” and he attributed the cause of his impending death to Crozier’s public expression toward him of sentiments and language the very opposite of the “Christian warmth” and “love of mercy” that the minister had celebrated for years as a preacher.

Evidently, this “insulting and brutal language” was related to a “damaging charge” made by Crozier “some years ago” – a charge he had “afterwards withdrawn.” Given that Crozier obviously continued to feel strong animus toward Aston several years after the original incident, one wonders why he had withdrawn the original charge.

Had pressure to withdraw the charge been brought to bear upon Crozier by his fellow Knox congregants?

And just what was the “old difficulty”?

Recall that Aston’s Ottawa lecture on Handel in the fall of 1895 “was in aid of Merrickville’s manse” (*Ottawa Daily Citizen*, 9 October 1895, p. 8). It turns out that plans to build a new manse suddenly changed:



Figure 36 The Manse of the Knoxville Presbyterian Church of Merrickville, Ontario, in the early 1900s. Historical Sketch of Knoxville (Presbyterian) Church, Merrickville, Ont., Commemorative of the 50th Anniversary of the Opening of the Church, Feb. 5th, 1911 (*Merrickville: Star-Chronicle Printing House, 1911*), no page numbers.

During Mr. Aston’s time, the matter of building a manse came up for consideration and the preliminary steps were taken towards the project.

After matters had progressed to some degree, it was learned that the present manse property could be purchased and this proposition met with the approval of the congregation.

(Star-Chronicle [Merrickville, Ontario], 9 February 1911, p. 8)

Fund-raising for a new manse had indeed “progressed to some degree”: “In prosecuting his work in this city on behalf of his manse, Rev. Mr. Aston is being very sympathetically received by several generous people” (*Ottawa Daily Citizen*, 9 October 1895, p. 8). Aston had apparently raked in a good deal of money from supporters in Ottawa. Had Crozier quarrelled with Aston about how that money was to be managed and spent? Was there a dispute between Crozier and Aston about taxes?

At virtually the same time as Aston was raising money in Ottawa in the fall of 1895, Crozier’s mother died. Reverend Aston presumably conducted the funeral services for Crozier’s mother: had some difficulty arisen between them regarding the funeral?

Note also that as a result of the Christmas altercation between them (before a large audience in the Town Hall!), Crozier seems to have proceeded to seat the “lady friend” accompanying Aston – with

Aston apparently deciding to leave her and take “a seat in the rear of the hall.” Could the “old difficulty” between the two men have had something to do with the unidentified “lady friend” escorted by Aston? Was it the appearance of Aston in the company of this particular person that set off Crozier?

Yet whatever constituted the “old difficulty,” one wonders why, given that “they had not been on friendly terms for some time,” the old difficulty was revived on 22 December 1898 (*Weekly British Whig*, 20 July 1899, p. 1). Had the same situation that caused the original difficulty somehow recurred? Or had the two men somehow avoided each other for years before the accident of their meeting face to face in the Town Hall occurred, leading to Crozier’s discovery that night that none of his anger had abated since their original altercation?

Back in Newburgh, a writer in the *Dundee Courier* said of Aston’s time in Canada: “It appears that he suffered a good deal of persecution at Mirrickvale [sic], including a false charge to which he was subjected out of vindictiveness” (*Dundee Courier* [Scotland], 30 January 1899, p. 6).

“False charge”?

“Vindictiveness”?

In a second article about Aston’s death, the *Dundee Courier* claimed that Aston had been subjected to “vile persecution” by Crozier – “a vile persecution and public insult which were, humanly speaking, instrumental in bringing on apoplexy” (*Dundee Courier* [Scotland], 8 February 1899, p. 7).

Once again, we find that details about Aston’s experiences in Canada had been communicated to his old friends in Newburgh, who were convinced when they learned of Crozier’s involvement in Aston’s death that Crozier had been in the wrong from the beginning.

Whatever the explanation of the longstanding disagreement between the two men, there was enough pathos in the story of Aston’s sudden and shocking death for accounts of it to be reprinted in newspapers across Canada, with appropriately sensational headlines: “Relentless Persecution: Rev. Edward Aston Dies Under Very Sad Circumstances” (*Manitoba Morning Free Press*, 14 January 1899, p. 9); “Of Broken Heart: Queer Death of a Presbyterian Minister at Merrickville” (*Windsor Star*, 14 January 1899, p. 5).

And the news was widely reported in Scotland. It made a particularly strong impact in Musselburgh: “A profound impression of sympathy has been made in Musselburgh because of the pathetic, if not tragic,

end of the career of Rev. Edward Aston" (*Musselburgh News* [Scotland], 17 February 1899, p. 4). And the *Dundee Courier*, as we know, published two articles about the sad event.

News printed in Kingston's *Weekly British Whig* a few weeks later makes one wonder whether Reverend Aston suffered from a hereditary vulnerability to shock: "Dr. J.P. Aston, Eccleshill, England, an older brother of the late Rev. Edward Aston, Merrickville, is dead. It is said that his death was caused by the shock of the news of his brother's death" (*Weekly British Whig* [Kingston, Ontario], 2 March 1899, p. 10). John Pitney Aston died on January 15th, 1899 – "about a week [after] news was received of the death of his brother, the Rev. Edward Aston in Canada" (*Leeds Mercury* [England], 18 January 1899, p. 7). Each brother received shocking news, suffered a week-long decline, and then died.



Figure 37 Demetrius Crozier, early 1900s.
Photograph courtesy of David Wyatt.

With a single verbal blow, Demetrus Crozier killed two Astons!

Had Crozier himself been presented in 1899 with my last sentence above, he would have added it to the newspaper clippings about the altercation that he collected over the course of six months.

These clippings were part of a formal petition that he presented to a meeting of the Brockville Presbytery requesting that Mary Aston be directed to stop blaming him for her husband's death.

He had identified her as the person responsible for negative insinuations about him in the local newspapers:

AGREED TO WITHDRAW

Provided the Widow and Family Will Cease Talking

Brockville, July 14 – At a largely attended meeting at the presbytery of Brockville, a matter that engaged the serious consideration of the presbytery for some time and evoked much discussion was a petition presented in person by D. Crozier, a member of the Merrickville church, asking the presbytery to investigate certain rumors which connected his name with the late pastor of that church, the Rev. Mr. Aston.

It will be remembered that about the first of the year Mr. Crozier and Mr. Aston met in a hall at Merrickville.

They had not been on friendly terms for some time, and an altercation arose, in the midst of which Mr. Aston was taken suddenly ill, owing to the excitement of the occasion, and died a few days later without regaining consciousness.

His last words were: "My heart is broken."

Mr. Crozier came in for some criticism at the time, chiefly in the newspapers. These clippings he had attached to his petition, and as he read them, Mrs. Aston, widow of the deceased clergyman, present at the meeting, although given no permission to speak, interrupted with the remark that the statements were true.

This created a scene.

The matter was discussed at some length.

The presbytery considered it was a question for the civil courts, and refused to entertain the petition, but appointed a committee composed of Messrs. McDougall, Strachan and Gill to confer with Mr. Crozier, with the result that Mr. Crozier has decided to drop the whole matter and withdraw the papers from the presbytery provided that Mrs. Aston and family, in consideration of the above, cease all reference to the unfortunate circumstance.

The presbytery instructed Mrs. Aston to govern herself accordingly.

(Weekly British Whig, 20 July 1899, p. 1)

For a second time, Demetrius Crozier had agreed to "withdraw" charges: the first, an unknown charge against Reverend Aston; the second, an implicit charge of slander against Mary Aston.

"The presbytery instructed Mrs. Aston to govern herself accordingly": I suspect that Mary Aston knew very well how to govern herself – and that the way to govern oneself was not necessarily according to instruction, but rather according to the best traditions of the Congregationalist faith in which she was raised – that is, according to her own conscience.

The Aston family left Merrickville in 1899. For a decade after his death, Edward Aston was not mentioned in the Merrickville newspapers. He was remembered only indirectly when the newspapers mentioned that Mary, John, William, Daisy, Ward or Mabel had returned to the town to visit old friends

or when one of them got married or had a baby. But in 1911, Knox Presbyterian Church celebrated its 50th anniversary, and the name Edward Aston was not only printed in the newspapers again, but it was also spoken loudly again during the festivities:

Letters were read from Rev. Dr. MacLaren Rev. J.J. Wright and Rev. Mr. McMullen all of whom had been pastors of Knox Church.

There was read a short biographical sketch of the Rev. E. Aston, who died here while pastor of the church, and whose remains are buried in the Merrickville cemetery.

(Daily Witness [Montreal, Quebec], 10 February 1911, p. 12)

The chapter I have written above also “provides a short biographical sketch of the Rev. E. Aston, who died while” serving as first president of the Merrickville Golf Club: long may his name be remembered for that, too.

Aston Family Postscript

The Kemptville *Advance* observed that Reverend Aston left a “widow and orphans” (*The Advance* [Kemptville, 2 March 1899, p. 8).

Using the word “orphan” here is technically incorrect, but it perhaps correctly reflects the reporter’s sense of the difficulties that would face the five children, now ranging in age from 7 to 17: since their mother had no income, they were in straits as dire as an orphan’s.

And so, in the spring of 1899, ministers in the Brockville Presbytery exhorted their congregations to contribute generously to a fund to be collected for the aid of the bereft family.

In the parlance of the day, John was now the man of the family.

J.E.J. Aston was employed as a clerk at the Smiths Falls branch of the Union Bank, whose manager allowed him to work at the Merrickville branch for the week following his father’s funeral, presumably so he could stay in the Presbyterian manse with his mother and younger siblings at that traumatic time. Mary moved to Smiths Falls in June of 1899. We know from references in the *Merrickville Star* that Ward was living in Smiths Falls in 1899; that in 1900, William (who was by then also a clerk in the Union Bank) visited friends in Merrickville from his residence in Smiths Falls; that in 1901, “Mrs. Aston and daughter

Mabel, of Smiths Falls," visited friends in Merrickville (*Merrickville Star*, 7 February 1901, p. 1). All six lived in the same house in Smiths Falls at the time of the Canadian census in the spring of 1901.

John was transferred back to Merrickville in mid-1899, then Winchester in 1900, and then spent from August to December of 1900 exploring England and Scotland in an attempt to recover his health. He was back to Winchester in 1901, then spent a period in Regina before being appointed manager of the Union Bank in Crysler, Ontario. He was residing in Crysler when he married in 1907 – his sister Daisy also being described as a Crysler resident when she served as a bridesmaid at his wedding.



Figure 38 The Daily Whig (Kingston), 27 March 1905, p. 3.

On arrival in Crysler, one of the first things John did was to buy a piano (see the advertisement to the left). Presumably, John had been taught to play by his father.

By 1908, John had been transferred to Mount Brydges (near London, Ontario), where the couple's first child was stillborn in 1908 and where another girl was born healthy in 1909.

He eventually returned to Eastern Ontario, where he would retire in the 1930s as a manager of a branch of the Royal Bank. He eventually moved to British Columbia, passing away in Victoria in 1961.

It turns out that John was not the only child that paterfamilias Edward Aston taught to play the piano: the youngest one, Mabel (born in Musselburgh in 1891), loved the piano so much that she became a piano teacher.

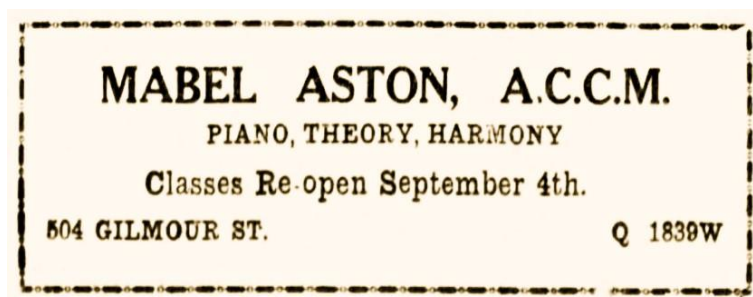


Figure 39 Ottawa Citizen, 1 September 1928, p. 27.

She lived in Smiths Falls (probably with her mother) while attending high school there. Then, in 1907, she enrolled at the Ottawa Ladies' College, where she earned the diploma Associate of Conservatory Canada Music (A.C.C.M.).

Mabel taught piano for four decades in Ottawa, her students ranging from beginners to advanced. She also played publicly, both at recitals (beginning in 1907) and on the radio (in the 1920s).

Mary Aston moved back to England shortly after Mabel graduated from the Ottawa Ladies' Collegiate – perhaps around the time that John was transferred to the London area. Both Mabel and Daisy accompanied her. The three of them lived in Mary's hometown: the village of Pocklington in Yorkshire. They resided in Ebenezer House with Mary's 88-year-old aunt Elizabeth Jackson, who had visited the family in Merrickville in 1896. Ebenezer House was a property that had been in the family since the mid-1800s.

Mabel was back in Ottawa in 1912, possibly just for a visit to act as a witness at brother Ward's wedding in December of that year. But she resided in Ottawa permanently as of the 1920s. Her mother, who died in 1935, would move to Ottawa in 1922 and spend her last years with Mabel, who died in 1976.

Daisy (who was born in Newburgh in 1885) returned to Canada in 1916 to work as a housekeeper in Wiarton, Ontario (where her brother John then lived), and in 1919 attempted to enter the United States to live with her brother Ward in Oswego, but she was rejected at the border: for some reason, she initially indicated that her name was Daisy Henry.

She returned to England and was living in Bournemouth when her mother died in 1935. Daisy passed away in Hampshire in 1972.

William, born in Morpeth in 1883, lived in Smiths Falls while attending high school there in the early 1900s and then followed his older brother into banking, eventually working his way to a position in Regina as an accountant. Shortly after World War I broke out in August of 1914, William travelled to Vancouver to enlist in the 95th Canadian Rifle Company on 9 November 1914. After training in England, he entered battle in France in the fall of 1915, was wounded in the face in January of 1916, and upon his return to the battlefield in the spring was reported missing in action: he had been captured by the Germans and spent the next two and a half years as a prisoner of war. Released in November of 1918, he would return to Canada a married man in September of 1919. And he returned to the Union Bank – not the Regina branch, however, but the branch in Alexandria, Ontario, where his brother John was then manager. William passed away in 1962. His only child, Mabel, was born in 1922; she passed away in Montreal in 2024.

Ward Beecher Aston, born in Newburgh in 1887, followed his older brothers into banking. He went to Western Canada to work in Regina with older brother John in 1904. By 1911, he was working at the Bank

of Montreal in Toronto. Married in 1912, he and his wife moved to Detroit, Michigan, in November of 1913. He was now an Insurance Agent. Then they moved to Oswego, New York, where he worked as a clerk in the Hotel Pontiac. The couple had a baby. Ward became a naturalized citizen of the United States in April of 1917 and in June registered for the U.S. Military Draft.

In 1919, Ward travelled to Oklahoma City to direct fund-raising campaigns for the Salvation Army in Oklahoma, Louisiana, and Texas. In 1920, he travelled to Georgia to raise funds for the Anti-Saloon League (a temperance movement). He stayed in Port Chester, New York, during the spring of 1920 to organize fund-raising for the Salvation Army again.

Figure 40 Oswego Palladium (New York), 8 January 1921, p. 5.

Then it was back to Oswego to work as an investment security dealer.

In 1926, an Act of Parliament in Canada granted his wife a divorce on account of her husband's adultery.

Ward Beecher Aston appears in the U.S. Census of 1930, residing in a hotel in Buffalo, New York,

indicating that he is working as a salesman. When his mother died in 1935, he was living in Montreal (as was his brother William).

What a wild mix of money and salvation – matter and spirit – shows in this man's careering trajectory through banking, insurance, and securities, on the one hand, and through fund-raising for temperance and salvation, on the other.

John and Mabel obviously followed their father in his love of the piano. All three sons took to banking, as their father briefly had when he first left school. But only Ward seems to have heeded, in his own peculiar way, Reverend Aston's exhortation to express spiritual energy by doing things that made a material difference in the world: "The motto should be to get something accomplished, something done," Reverend Aston said in 1892; "If society was so smitten with intemperance as to call for special legislation," he continued, "the movement ought to be fed with all the energy of the Church" (*Fife Free Press* [Scotland], 23 January 1892, p. 5).

Ward had lots of energy and he tried to feed with that energy many things within and without himself.

He died in Hampshire, England, in 1968, perhaps living near – or with – his sister Daisy.

The Newburgh Links and the Merrickville Links

Knox Presbyterian Church had granted Reverend Aston a “leave of absence” entirely “on account of ill health” and it was originally projected to be for three months (*Weekly British Whig*, 18 June 1896).

For a couple of reasons, I suspect that when Reverend Aston travelled to Scotland in 1896, he spent most of his time in Newburgh. First, as mentioned above, when Aston died in 1898, it was only from Newburgh (and not from anywhere else in Scotland or anywhere at all in Canada) that the story emerged that after he “emigrated to Canada about four years ago the climate never seemed to suit his health” (*Dundee Courier* [Scotland], 30 January 1899, p. 6). Second, also as mentioned above, it was only in Newburgh that Crozier’s damaging charge against Aston was said to be “false” and attributable to “vindictiveness” (*Dundee Courier* [Scotland], 30 January 1899, p. 6).

I regard the fact that the information above emerged only in Newburgh (and in no Canadian newspaper) as an indication that Aston visited Newburgh in 1896 and told friends there that he had returned to his old haunt town to recover from the effects of Merrickville’s winter climate on his throat and that he was also recovering from a stressful interaction with Crozier.

Aston had many good friends in Newburgh, and a number of them were wealthy, successful, and politically important figures (who had subscribed to the fund to be given to him on his departure from the town and who had presided over the banquet at which the gift was presented). When he returned five years later, with his stories of bad health and vindictive persecution in Merrickville, I wonder whether some of these old friends persuaded him to play golf on the Newburgh links as a way of recovering his health.

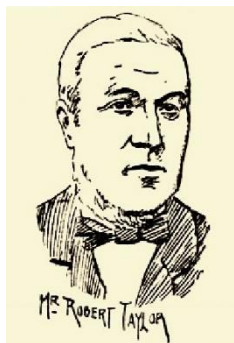


Figure 41 Robert Taylor, *Dundee Courier*, 19 May 1896, p. 4.

For instance, the ex-provost of Newburgh Council, Robert Taylor, who was the local dignitary who presented Aston with the purse of sovereigns on the latter’s resignation of his charge in Newburgh in 1891, was an avid golfer who became club champion in 1894 and regularly played on the Newburgh club’s men’s team in competitions against other clubs in Fife throughout the 1890s. He returned to Newburgh Council as Bailie in May of 1896 and may well have introduced Aston to the game of golf when the latter arrived in town in June or July.

If Aston did indeed take up the game in Newburgh in the spring and summer of 1896, he may well have begun to play golf in pastures around Merrickville when he

returned to town later that summer – his purpose being to provide for himself a local opportunity for the healthful exercise that he had found golf to have provided in Scotland.

After all, it seems that Odo-Magnetism had not worked, so why not give golf a try?

I think it likely that Aston was the only person in Merrickville with substantial knowledge and experience of the game of golf and that he was the one who laid out a proper golf course in June of 1897 – his play in fields around Merrickville probably attracting the attention of the 14 people who by the end of the summer decided to form a golf club.

If such was the case, the Newburgh links would probably have served Aston as his model for the Merrickville course.



Figure 42 Annotated detail from the 1897 map of the Newburgh Links shown above.

Note that several golf holes at Newburgh (the 5th, 6th, and 7th) were routed across ditches and a road, precisely as required by the penal golf course architectural tenets of the day.

There also seems to have been a very up-to-date turf dyke or cop bunker on the 1st hole, about 160 yards from the tee.

On several holes, tee shots were played across immediately preceding fairways and greens: this was a common strategy in the 19th century for making relatively long holes when a golf course was laid out in a small

area.

On the 8th hole, most notably, one played across the fairway and putting green of the hole just completed. Similarly, on the 1st, 2nd, 5th, and 8th holes, golfers hit their tee shots over part of the putting greens on the holes just completed.

Similar strategies for routing fairways might have been employed in the design of the 1897 North Merrickville course.

Golf Captain Postlethwaite

The Merrickville Golf Club's first "captain" was "C.W. Postlethwaite" (*Official Golf Guide*, p. 316). The office of captain was conventionally awarded to the club's best golfer. Sure enough, he became Club Champion in 1898.

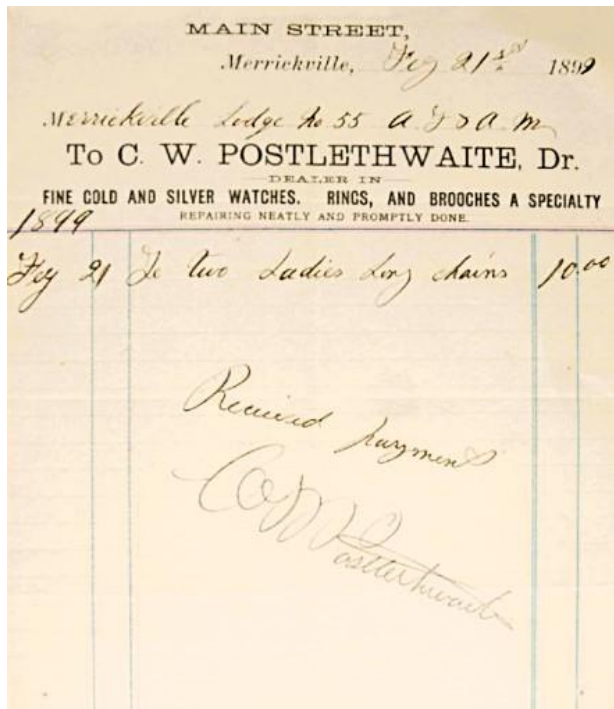


Figure 43 Merrickville Historical Society,

Born in Merrickville in 1863 (of parents who came from the Lakes District in England), Charles Wilson Postlethwaite spent the next 51 years in Merrickville.

His father was a blacksmith and Charles seems to have followed him into a career in metalworking: he first described his job to census takers as that of a pattern maker, next calling himself a blacksmith, and then a jeweller.

Seen to the left is a receipt signed by Postlethwaite for payment by the local Masonic Lodge (of which Postlethwaite was a member). An acknowledgement of payment for "two ladies' long chains," the receipt describes Postlethwaite

as a "dealer in fine gold and silver watches.... Rings and brooches a specialty."

When the editor of the *Merrickville Star*, Frank Albert James Davis (1874-1953), strolled past Postlethwaite's storefront in the early 1900s, he could not refrain from publishing a compliment that turned into a free advertisement:

Mr. C.W. Postlethwaite has taken a noteworthy means of keeping his goods before the public eye.

His windows are always tastefully arranged but on Wednesday, he had one of the finest displays of watches, clocks, chains, rings, and in fact all kinds of jewelry on exhibition it has been our privilege to witness for some time.

A call at his store for anything in this line will amply repay all intending purchasers.

(Merrickville Star, 24 September 1903, p. 8)

Postlethwaite was also an insurance agent.

And then he decided to become an optician: "Mr. C.W. Postlethwaite has completed the course prescribed in practical and theoretical optics and has passed such a satisfactory examination as to approve his ability as an optician. He has received his diploma from the Canadian College of Optics" (*Merrickville Star*, 9 June 1904, p. 1). Thereafter, he was described in the local newspapers as a "jeweller and optician" (*Merrickville Star-Chronicle*, 9 February 1911, p. 1).

Whether addressing the Masons, the Oddfellows, the congregation at Trinity Anglican Church, or meetings of Merrickville businessmen trying to coordinate their opening and closing hours, Postlethwaite was a gifted public speaker.

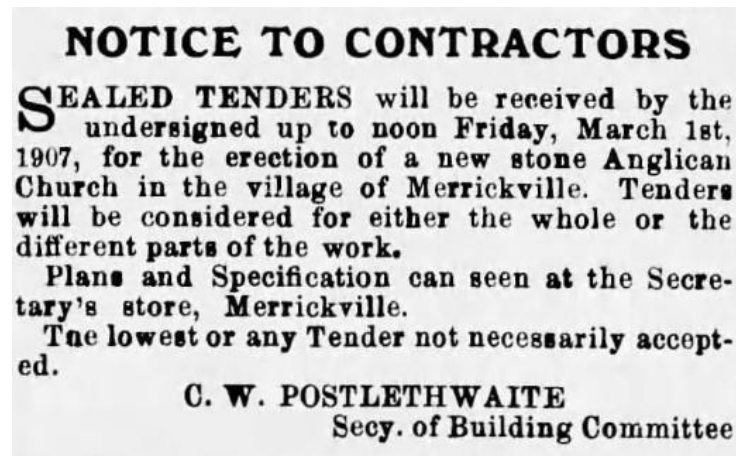


Figure 44 Merrickville Star, 21 February 1907, p. 8.

For instance, when the congregation of Trinity Anglican Church met in 1904 to decide whether to alter and repair the existing church or replace it with a new one, Postlethwaite helped the 50 people at the meeting "almost unanimously" to agree to erect a new building: "Mr. C.W. Postlethwaite pleaded eloquently for a new church for their own credit and for the honor of God" (*Merrickville Star*, 27

October 1904, p. 5). Postlethwaite was named Secretary of the Building Committee.

Similarly, when Postlethwaite was asked to represent the Oddfellows' Grand Master of Ontario in presenting the quarter-century membership jewels to certain Oddfellows of Rideau Lodge in Smiths Falls, his speech was received almost rapturously:

Bro. Postlethwaite was down for a speech, but instead of that, he delivered an oration which has never been excelled by any previous speaker in that lodge room.

He was closely listened to and his remarks were heartily enjoyed by all present.

The congratulations he received afterwards were an assurance of a hearty reception on any future occasion.

(Rideau Record [Smiths Falls, Ontario], 29 April 1913, p. 8).

Postlethwaite enjoyed performing in public. He was a member of Merrickville's "Dramatic Club," performing in "Among the Breakers" in 1899 to raise money for the Public Library (*Merrickville Star*, 5 October 1899, p. 1). And he also regularly offered recitations of both prose and humorous poems at community events held at the Town Hall.



Figure 45 Charles Wilson Postlethwaite (1863-1928). Pictured with the 1899 senior Merrickville Hockey Club for which he served on the executive committee. Merrickville Historical Society, catalog number: 982.5.21

Postlethwaite was one of the substantial cohort of public-spirited men in the town who regularly served on the executive committees of the local sports clubs – not just the golf club, but also the hockey club, the football club, the lacrosse club, and so on.

And like other members of this cohort, he performed his share of public service more generally: he regularly served as an auditor for the local Council, and he served terms as Chairman of the School Board and as a member of the Public Library Board.

In 1914, however, after 25 years of business in Merrickville, Postlethwaite moved to Ottawa, where he became very "active in Anglican church work" and was for a number of years "a lay reader at St. Bartholomew's church" (*Ottawa Journal*, 28 December 1928, p. 7).

He eventually decided to follow the example of his son, Reverend G.S. Postlethwaite, and study for the ministry: in due course, he "was ordained minister by the Bishop of Montreal on December 18, 1927" (*Ottawa Journal*, 28 December 1928, p. 7).

He was immediately appointed "Rector of the Anglican churches at Danford, Kaywood [Cawood], Kazabazua and Alwyn, Que." (*Montreal Star*, 28 December 1928, p. 4). When he was appointed to this position, however, he was not healthy. It turned out that he had just a year of life left, but he made a difference: "Since he had assumed charge ["of the parishes in the Gatineau district"], many changes had been brought about and at Kaywood [Cawood], the church was reopened after being closed for some years" (*Ottawa Journal*, 28 December 1928, p. 7).

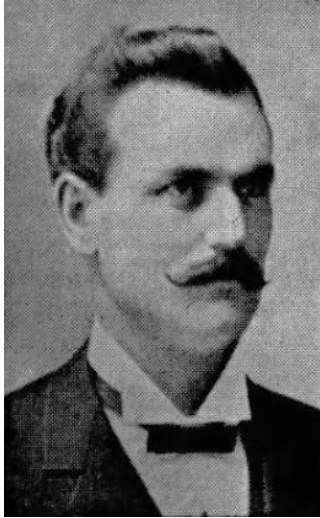


Figure 46 C.W. Postlethwaite, circa 1909. Star-Chronicle (Merrickville, Ontario), 15 April 1909, p. 1.

As we know, Postlethwaite served from 1904 to 1909 on the committee overseeing construction of the new Trinity Anglican Church in Merrickville. Its opening in 1909 was one of the highlights of his service to the community and of his service to God.

Upon his death in 1928 at 65 years of age, after a funeral service at his residence in Ottawa, Reverend Postlethwaite's remains were returned to Merrickville for a funeral service in that same Anglican church.

While serving as Captain of the Merrickville Golf Club in 1898, Postlethwaite that year won the only known golf tournament played in Merrickville and, in doing so, he established the lowest score ever recorded for the regulation two rounds of the 9-hole course laid out in June of 1897: 84.

This also happens to be the only score ever recorded for this golf course.

The Secretary-Treasurer: Banker Waddell

The person who wrote to Josiah Newman about the Merrickville Golf Club was presumably its first “secretary and treasurer,” John Bell Waddell, the manager of the local branch of the Union Bank and an active member of Reverend Aston’s congregation (*Official Golf Guide*, p. 316).



Figure 47 John Bell Waddell pictured with the 1899 senior Merrickville Hockey Club. He was a member of its executive committee. Merrickville Historical Society photo 982.5.21.

At the beginning of November in 1898, Waddell offered Reverend Aston’s eldest son, 17-year-old John, a starting job in the Union Bank. Within a month, young Aston passed the audition: “John Aston, in the Union Bank on probation for the last month, has been accepted and left last month for Smiths Falls, where he will enter that branch” (*Weekly British Whig* [Kingston], 15 December 1898, p. 11). Given the calamity impending for the Aston family just two weeks later, it was a remarkable stroke of good fortune that John earned a good job at this time.

When Reverend Aston’s funeral took place at the beginning of January in 1899, Waddell arranged for John to spend a week back in the Merrickville branch, presumably so that John could stay in the manse with his family at that difficult time.

Waddell had been born in Buckingham, Quebec, in 1866, and right out of high school was employed by the Merchants Bank, but in the early 1890s he went to the Union Bank of Canada. He arrived in the Merrickville area in the summer of 1894 when he was sent to the Smiths Falls branch of the Union Bank to work as a teller.

For the next 25 years, he served as manager of branches in Merrickville, Norwood, Carleton Place, Smiths Falls, Toronto, and Montreal. In 1911, he was appointed inspector of the Union Bank’s eastern division.

By the 1920s, Waddell had resigned from the Union Bank to serve as president, vice-president, or director of many prominent companies, including the Canadian Industrial Alcohol Company, Sir Mortimer Davis Incorporated, Consolidated Asbestos, Federal Asbestos, Canadian Consolidated Rubber, Northern Explosives, Bluestone Mining and Smelting, the Dominion Reduction Company, and the Mason

Valley Mines Company. Ironically, having resigned from the Union Bank, he was shortly afterwards made one of its directors.

When posted to Smiths Falls in 1906, Waddell joined the Poonahmalee Golf Club. And in the fall of 1907, the *Smith's Falls Record* reported that "Mr. J.B. Waddell broke the record at the golf links and now has the championship honors. He made the round in 36" (Cited in the *Merrickville Star*, 3 October 1907, p. 1). The previous record was 39, so Waddell had achieved a notable feat.

Course record holder and club champion in Smiths Falls! It had all begun in Merrickville ten years before.



Figure 48 John Bell Waddell (1866-1932), circa 1922.

When Waddell left Smiths Falls for Toronto in 1908, he immediately became a member of the Rosedale Golf Club, and when he was transferred to Montreal in 1913, he became a member of the Royal Montreal Golf Club. Then he became a member of the new and exclusive Mount Bruno Country Club when it opened after World War I ended.

By the time he passed away in 1932, John Bell Waddell had travelled far from Merrickville's Union Bank, far from the Merrickville Golf Club, and far from the first Merrickville golf links laid out north of the town in 1897.

The Merrickville Golf Club had shockingly lost its president before the beginning of the 1899 golf season, and it would lose its secretary-treasurer before the beginning of the 1900 season: Waddell was transferred to Norwood.

When it was announced at the beginning of February 1900 that Waddell would be leaving Merrickville for Norwood, the *Merrickville Star* observed:

It will be a decided loss to Merrickville as he has been one of our foremost citizens ever since his arrival here some four years ago. He was always prominent in anything put forward for the town's welfare

He will be especially missed in amusement circles as he was always an enthusiastic member of any organization put forward in this line.

(Merrickville Star, 1 February 1900, p. 1)

Reference above to “amusement circles” was a reference to sports. Waddell had served on the executive committees of all the town’s major sports.

A banquet to bid farewell to Waddell produced “the largest gathering that ever assembled at a function of this nature in Merrickville” and toasts by representatives of businesses and activities in which Waddell had been involved included toasts by people running lawn tennis, hockey, croquet, baseball, and golf: “all expressed their regret at Mr. Waddell’s enforced departure from our midst” (*Merrickville Star*, 8 February 1900, p. 1). The toast by the Merrickville Golf Club was offered by Captain and 1898 champion Charles Postlethwaite.

The person who would succeed Waddell on the School Board, and who had served alongside him on executive committees for various sports, read a poem he wrote about Waddell:

***Farewell Verses to Mr. J.B. Waddell on the
Eve of His Departure for Norwood
By E.J. Angus***

*Who came to town some years ago,
Amongst a people all too slow,
And has not found a single foe?
— Friend Waddell.*

*Who won close friends from all around
And climbed fame’s ladder with a bound?
A man in whom no guile is found —
It’s Waddell.*

*Who ran the bank with great success
And cheated none, we all confess,
Although he kept accounts by guess?
— Friend Waddell.*

*Who charmed the ladies by his gait
And round the corners laid in wait
In order to secure a mate?
— 'Twas Waddell.*

*Who guided straight fair Cupid's dart
And twined his image round each heart,
Which made it hard for them to part
With Waddell?*

*Who bowed so graceful on the street
At every one he chanced to meet
And twirled his cane in style so neat?
— 'Twas Waddell.*

*Who has decided now to leave
And give us very short reprieve
Which causes one and all to grieve?
It's Waddell.*

*So now we bid a sad farewell
We cannot find fit words to tell
But hope we're understood quite well
By Waddell.*

*We trust from Norwood's shady vale
To think of us you'll never fail
And that we'll hear each weekly mail
From Waddell.*

(Merrickville Star, 15 February 1900, p. 8)

The lines in the poem above about Cupid's arrow and about Waddell's finding a mate refer to the fact that at the time Waddell was transferred to Norwood, he was engaged to Harriet Jean Percival. The latter may have met Waddell at the beginning of 1900 when they were both appointed to a committee working to raise funds for charities supporting the families of Canadian soldiers fighting in the Boer War, 1899-1902, known today more often as the South African War.

In February of 1901, Waddell married Percival, daughter of Roger Croft Percival, who owned Merrickville's Percival Plow & Stove Company. Thereafter, Waddell became involved in the company first as a director and then as president. The fact that Waddell's in-laws lived in Merrickville ensured that he visited the town many times each year.

When Waddell died in 1932 and suffered the ultimate "enforced departure from out midst," the pastor of Montreal's Church of the Messiah spoke of him in celebratory terms reminiscent of Angus's poem from 32 years before:

"In addition to the business associations of the late John Bell Waddell, in which he held important positions, he undertook philanthropic responsibilities," said the Rev. Lawrence Clare, pastor of the Church of the Messiah [Westmount, Montreal, Quebec], in reference to the life of Mr. Waddell at the funeral service yesterday

"It is a good thing for men to take social responsibility. There is a peril in this, however, and it is a real one. The peril is that in business, and even philanthropic affairs to an extent, one tends to look upon human beings as a means to an end.

Mr. Waddell avoided this and did not make a tool of human beings. He was full of personal kindness. He showed much private generosity"

When he turned to another side of the character of the deceased citizen, he added: "He was a man of wide culture and was interested in the fine arts, especially music. He filled his life with things of value and, if you talked to him, you realized this. He had a genial sense of humor and he was a sociable person. This is how we should remember him. This is the best way we can show our affection for him – that is, thinking of him in all the fullness of his personal life – physical, mental, temperamental."

(Gazette [Montreal, Quebec], 3 June 1932, p. 6)

The Good Doctor: Club Director without Portfolio

The 1898 Merrickville Golf Club had one more governor, newly arrived Merrickville physician Dr. T.C. D. Bedell – a director without portfolio. He was just 24 years of age – not just the youngest member of the executive committee, but also the youngest person known to have been a member of the Club.

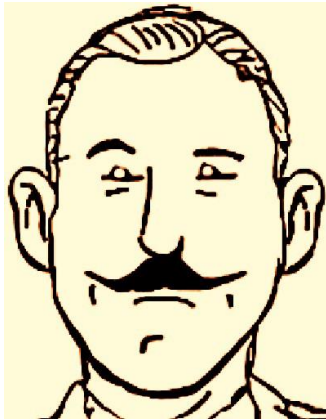


Figure 49 Undated sketch "The Doc," drawing of Dr T.C.D. Bedell by Matthew K. Barrett.

This early commitment to the community was a sign of things to come. He served regularly on the school board beginning in 1899. In 1900, he was elected Chairman of the committee charged with raising Patriotic Funds to support Canadian participants in the South African War. He joined the Oddfellows. In 1901, he was elected a municipal councillor – council members in those days being called the “town fathers” (*Merrickville Star*, 9 May 1901, p. 8). In 1902, he was elected treasurer of the Merrickville Fire Company and the next year he was appointed a member of its engine team. In 1903, he was appointed Medical Health Officer.

Bedell would later accept nomination for the position of reeve when the incumbent refused to run again (the reeve declaring that “someone else should shoulder some of the work”), but Bedell was a reluctant candidate: “Bedell says he is not anxious for office” (*Ottawa Journal*, 28 December 1910, p. 12).



Figure 50 Laura Amelia Whitmarsh, circa 1901.

Born Thomas Casey Dorland Bedell in Hillier, near Picton, Ontario, in 1874, he had come to Merrickville in the mid-1890s directly upon graduation from medical school at the University of Toronto in 1896 and established “a large and lucrative practice” (*Merrickville Star*, 10 October 1901, p. 1). As we know, from the beginning, Bedell was “all in” when it came to integrating into his new community, and that included marrying a local woman and starting a family. In 1901, he married Laura Amelia Whitmarsh in Merrickville: “The groom is one of our most promising physicians, having a large and lucrative practice both in town and country, and the bride is one of our most popular young ladies” (*Merrickville Star*, 10 October 1901, p. 1).

Bedell also supported the town’s many sports clubs. In 1899, he was elected president of the Croquet Club. In 1900, he worked with Waddell and Gordon Ross Putnam to establish a senior men’s hockey

team in Merrickville. In 1901, he was elected president of the Lawn Tennis Club. In 1902, he was elected vice-president of the Lacrosse Club. In 1911, he was elected president of the Merrickville Croquet Club, charged with passing regulations on the size of the ball to be used and with fixing up the grounds and putting them into “first class condition” (*Ottawa Journal*, 23 March 1911, p. 3).

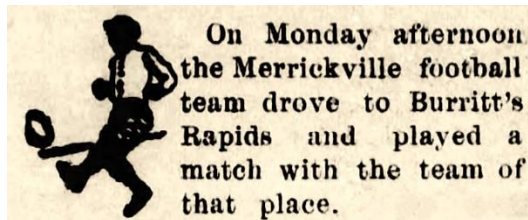


Figure 51 Merrickville Star, 19 September 1901, p. 8.

Bedell was still young enough in the early 1900s to be active in sports, too. He played fullback for the Merrickville soccer team in home and away matches against the Burritt's Rapids team in 1901. In 1902, he refereed a hockey game in Merrickville between the town's married men and its bachelors.



Figure 52 Lieutenant-Colonel T.C.D. Bedell, 156th Regiment, 1916.

After being active in Merrickville in the early 1900s raising Patriotic Funds to support the wives and children of Canadian soldiers fighting in the South African War, Dr. Bedell enlisted as an officer in the Canadian Militia, serving in the 56th Lisgar Rifles.

Originally appointed the medical officer of this regiment in 1907 at the rank of Lieutenant, he became a Captain early in 1908, then took “an advanced course in military training” and was by the fall of 1908 promoted to the rank of Major, making him the second most senior officer of the 56th (*Merrickville Star*, 14 May 1908, p. 1).

Upon the outbreak of World War I in August of 1914, Bedell immediately enlisted in the Canadian Expeditionary

Force and was one of the first to embark for England.

After months of rigorous training on Salisbury Plain, he served in the trenches of France and Belgium for eight months in 1915 until he was hospitalized with trench fever. Upon recovery, he was sent back to Canada to raise a new infantry battalion of volunteers to be drawn largely from Leeds and Grenville.

Now a Lieutenant-Colonel, Bedell returned to England with this new battalion in the fall of 1916.

Almost as soon as this battalion arrived in England, however, it was disbanded, the soldiers distributed to other units, but Bedell worked tirelessly to have it reconstituted and was ultimately successful.

In the spring of 1917, however, Bedell relinquished command of this battalion in order to transfer to the Canadian Army Medical Corps. From this point until the end of the war he commanded a number of military convalescent hospitals in England.

After the war, he remained a leading figure in ceremonies and reunions throughout Eastern Ontario commemorating the war service of veterans. In connection with these activities, he occasionally returned to Merrickville.

But he spent his retirement in Bloomfield, close to his place of birth in Prince Edward County, Ontario, where he died in 1946 – apparently the last surviving member of the 1898 Merrickville Golf Club's board of governors.

Poetry in Motion

I like to think that John Bell Waddell and Dr. T.C.D. Bedell were such good golfers by 1900 that their golf swings were a form of poetry in motion that attracted the attention of Merrickville's two most famous poets.



Figure 53 Laura Bedell. Early 1900s.

Bedell's wife Laura began writing poetry as 8-year-old Laura Whitmarsh.

Born in Colton, New York, in 1874, Whitmarsh was raised in Merrickville by her paternal grandparents after her mother died when Laura was just two years old.

She said her poetry was originally inspired by her grandparents' gardens and by the countryside around Merrickville, but her passion for poetry did not initially please her grandmother: "My grandmother resented me using her writing paper, so I wrote poems on the backs of

wallpaper rolls" (*Kingston Whig-Standard*, 11 April 1969, p. 21; 10 April 1964, p. 22).

Beginning to publish poetry in magazines shortly after World War I ended, she would go on to publish four books of poetry, and she would continue to publish individual poems in journals and magazines in Canada, the United States, and England.

Although she continued to write poetry until she passed away in Kingston, Ontario, in the early 1970s, she did not write in the Modernist style popularized by T.S. Eliot, Ezra Pound, and Hild Doolittle but instead remained self-consciously dedicated to 19th-century conventions.

She generally focused on nature – trees, streams, flowers, birds and so on – and argued that a person can "sense through beauty [that] God is nigh" (Laura Bedell, "The Law of Beauty," in *Spun Lace* [Toronto: The Writer's Studio, 1933]).

But Laura Bedell occasionally broached broadly political topics, as in the following poem (which also happens stylistically to be one of her most "modern" poems):

How Could You Know?

*You who sip from day to day
From out a silver spoon,
How could you know
The heat and burden of the way
My tired feet go?*

*You with your silver and your gold
To satisfy each wayward whim,
How could you understand
The sting of cold
And my restricted hand?*

*How could you know my needs
Who know not stinted ways,
Or any lack of golden days
Or gold control;
How could you know
The longing in my heart,
The hunger of my soul?*

(Laura Bedell, Telegraph-Journal [St. John, New Brunswick], 3 September 1930, p. 4)

Harriet Jean Waddell began publishing poetry two years after her husband died in 1932, producing three books under the name Jean Percival Waddell.

All her poems expressed in one way or another her strong Christian faith. A reviewer of her first book, *Down Aisles of Calm* (1934), noted that her poetry consists “almost entirely of mystical-religious verse”: “It should, I think, be criticized as that, rather than as poetry” (Anne Margaret Angus, review of *Down*

Aisles of Calm [Toronto: Ryerson Press, 1935], *The Province* [Vancouver, British Columbia], 26 January 1934], p. 36).

Her second book, *A Harp in the Wind* (1938), was similar: "Many of the poems express fellowship with the universal, through the emotional experience of the poet herself rather than from any intellectual preoccupation. Her feeling for the abstraction of the spirit is idealistic and courageous" (EJR, review of *A Harp in the Wind* [Toronto: Ryerson Press, 1938], *The Hamilton Spectator* [Hamilton, Ontario], 21 January 1939, p. 12).

A reviewer of her next book, *Candled by Stars* (1944), found the same focus on immaterial things:

the poems are not about material things, they tell no stories. They are about thoughts, feelings, and convictions.

The writer has suffered much and come through with a faith in God and the unseen world which she voices throughout her poems.

She has lost a dear one and still does not feel wholly separated from the one who has vanished from her sight.

(Eileen C. Cushing, review of Jean Percival Waddell, Candled by Stars [Toronto: Ryerson Press, 1944], Saint John Times Globe [St. John, New Brunswick], 15 December 1944, p. 7).

During World War II, however, concern about the large-scale death and destruction occurring throughout the world sometimes found its way into her poems, as in "From Slumber Shaken," in which she suggests that the war has awakened her from a spiritual slumber:

From Slumber Shaken

There was dreaming in the stillness of the night.

There was coolness in the soft caress of air.

There was calmness in the spirit's homing flight.

There was healing in the anodyne of prayer.

Crashed the beauty and the silence! Greed and hate,

Rampant, rage and rend asunder earth and sky.

Winged is murder. Fire and poison devastate.

Woe and wailing shriek to heaven as men died.

Was it hell cast amorous eyes upon our world

And in lurid lust for conquest, girt in steel,

All its furies, all its madness on us hurled,

Treading man beneath a crunching, poisoned heel?

Gone the dreaming? Gone the glory of the night?

Gone all the beauty past restoring? Heaven forbend!

We who builded – building, badly, blind of sight –

Wake to pledge a New World tasking, war at end.

God is God and faith is fearless. Right is might.

Go we resolute and dauntless, winged our aim.

Must we suffer? Let us suffer! Must we fight?

Fight we, passioned with love's passioning of flame!

(Montreal Star, 11 January 1941, p. 8)

When she published her final collection in 1944, Waddell announced: “the royalties accruing from the sale of this slender book are to go to a war charity” (*Saint John Times Globe* [St. John, New Brunswick], 15 December 1944, p. 7).

Finances

In 1898, the Merrickville Golf Club's "annual dues" for members were "\$1.50" each – the cost of four golf balls (*Official Golf Guide*, p. 316). Members were few: "The club is only small at present, consisting of about fifteen members" (*Official Golf Guide*, p. 316). And so, the Club collected \$22.50 in membership fees in 1898.

The Royal Ottawa Golf Club had annual dues of \$15.00 in 1898 and a membership comprising 67 men and 47 women. That a tiny town of less than 1,000 people produced 15 male golfers whereas a big city 60 times larger produced just 67 male golfers is remarkable. All 67 of those Ottawa golfers were rich, mind you, and so was their golf club.

With so little money, the Merrickville Golf Club did well to build and manage a golf course in the late 1890s.

Did the Club have to rent the land where the golf course was laid out, or did a landowner allow them to use it for free?

The Club presumably hired day labourers to prepare putting greens in June of 1897. Was a caretaker for the grounds hired after that to cut the greens regularly and to change the location of the holes occasionally?

Did the fairways need to be mown (with a horse-drawn mower)? Or were sheep or cattle grazed on the golf course to keep the grass low?

In 1897, start-up expenses for golf course equipment could well have used up most of the first year's budget.

The putting green was the most expensive area to equip. Probably the most expensive piece of equipment was the most essential: a hole-cutter. And nine iron hole rims would have to be purchased. And then there were hole markers, which came in two forms: there was the pole (usually bamboo) with a numbered marking flag at the top, or there was the iron pole (up to four feet high) with a metal disc welded to the top to display the hole number.

Any place on the course where the location of a putting green was not visible to a player from the teeing ground or the fairway would require a tall marker flagpole to indicate the direction of play.

Teeing grounds would be marked out with chalk and/or tee marking plates or disks laid flat on the turf. And at each tee box there would be placed a wooden box full of sand – a handful being scooped out by golfer or caddie to mould into a little mound from which tee-shots were played (the wooden tee peg would not displace sand until the late 1920s).

A container of water would be placed in or near the sand box for moistening the sand before molding it into a mound and also for rinsing the hands after making the mound.

The cost of most of these items is indicated by the advertisement seen below which appeared in the 1897 Wright & Ditson *Guide*.

GOLF SUNDRIES.



Steel Hole Cutters

For cutting the hole in centre of putting green. The earth is ejected when withdrawn from the hole, as shown in cut. Simple and efficient, and made of best quality steel.

No. 10. Steel Hole Cutter, Each, \$3.50.

Iron Hole Rims

Iron Hole Rims for lining holes in putting green. The cross piece in No. 20 Rim prevents ball from falling to bottom of hole.

EACH.

No. 15. Plain Rim 35c.

No. 20. With Cross Piece.. 50c.

Marking Discs

Made of heavy tin, painted red and white, and numbered 1 to 15, to designate the number of hole. The iron shaft is strongly fastened to disc and about four feet long.

No. 3. Heart Shape.....	Each, \$0.75
No. 4. Oblong Shape.....	" .75
No. 6. Windmill.....	" 3.00

Marking Flags

No. 1. Fine Bunting, with staff, and numbers on each flag. Per doz., \$10.00

Direction Flags

With 7-foot poles.

No. 9. All White, or Red and White.....	Per doz., \$10.00
No. 11. All White, or Red and White.....	" 10.00

Putting Disc

No. 1. Putting Disc.....	Each, 50c.
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Teeing Plates

Round Shape, made to lie flush with ground. Used to mark the limits within which the ball must be "teed."

No. 8. Teeing Plate.....	Per pair, 50c.
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Figure 54 Wright & Ditson's Guide to Golf in America (2nd edition; Boston: Wright & Ditson Publishers, 1897), n.p.

Similar prices were cited the year before in a contemporary Buffalo newspaper.

The price of the hole cutter was the same: "a steel hole cutter costs \$3.50" (*Buffalo Courier* [New York], 10 May 1896, p. 11). "Iron hole rims" cost "25 to 50 cents apiece," that is, from \$2.25 to \$4.50 for a collection of nine (*Buffalo Courier* [New York], 10 May 1896, p. 11). And "the marking discs [cost] from 75 cents to \$3 each," that is, from \$6.75 to \$27.00 (*Buffalo Courier* [New York], 10 May 1896, p. 11).

Apart from the hole-cutter and hole rims, home-made items could replace some of the equipment above.

In the first two photographs below, one sees that in the early 1900s, the Perth

Golf Club used an iron pole with a metal disk at the top to mark the holes, whereas the Napanee Golf Club simply used a stick with a piece of cloth fixed to it. In the next two photographs, one can see that

the golfers at Camp Le Nid on the Bay of Quinte used a small flag to mark the teeing ground whereas the Poonahmalee golf club in Smiths Falls marked the teeing ground by means of an elevated sand box.



Figure 55 Left to right: unidentified golfer at Perth Golf Club putts toward the hole marker disc on the 9th green, circa early 1900s; D'Arcy Sneath putts toward rudimentary pole on the 8th green at the Napanee Golf Club, 1912 (photograph N08886, courtesy of the County of Lennox and Addington Museum and Archives); an unidentified golfer stands beside a home-made tee marker flag at camp Le Nid, circa 1898 (photograph N-11016, courtesy of the Lennox and Addington Museum and Archives); a woman tees off beside an elevated sand and water box at the Poonahmalee golf course in Smiths Falls in the early 1900s.

Perhaps an indication that laying out the course and equipping it left the new Merrickville Golf Club with bills to pay is the fact that the Club's governors spent the winter arranging to begin the second season with a fund-raiser featuring a famous entertainer from Toronto.

Atlantic Antics

On Friday, 15 April 1898, the Merrickville Golf Club raised money for the upcoming season by presenting a public entertainment: “The concert given in the town hall Friday night by Leroy Kennedy [sic] for the benefit of the golf club was a good success. The programme was very comical throughout” (*Weekly British Whig* [Kingston, Ontario], 21 April 1898, p. 4).

The entertainer was actually named Charles LeRoy Kenney, born 1869, but his name was often misspelled Kennedy.



Figure 56 C. Leroy Kenney, circa 1900.

Kenney discovered young that he could sing and that he could act. His voice was his instrument and it earned him admission to the University of Trinity College in Toronto in the mid-1890s, where he enrolled in the School of Elocution of the Toronto Conservatory of Music, a precursor of the Royal Conservatory of Music. In the spring of 1896, he graduated with an Associate Diploma from the Toronto Conservatory of Music (A.T.C.M.).

He became a well-known performer in Toronto while at university.

In the spring of 1895, he played Lorenzo in the School of Elocution’s production of a scene from Shakespeare’s *The Merchant of Venice*. In the School’s recital in February of 1896, Kenney was a hit in another role: “Mr. C. Leroy Kenney, in Dickens’ “Nicholas Nickleby Leaving Yorkshire School,” gave a “vivid portrayal of the novelist’ inimitable character. He is a gifted impersonator” (*Toronto Saturday Night*, 15 February 1896, p. 11). Two weeks later, “the Parliament Street Methodist Choir was assisted by ... C. Leroy Kenney, elocutionist” (*Toronto Saturday Night*, 28 February 1903, p. 10). The next day the “third recital of the season by pupils of the School of Elocution” occurred (“the Conservatory of Music was crowded to the doors”) and the first “elocutionary selection” from the writings of Eugene Field “was given with well controlled emotional power by Mr. C.L. Kenney” (*Toronto Saturday Night*, 29 February 1896, p. 6). Ultimately, however, “the interest of the evening centered in the closing number, Jerome K. Jerome’s comedy, “Barbara,” in which, playing Finnicum, “Mr. Kenney did some artistic character work as the old lawyer” (*Toronto Saturday Night*, 29 February 1896, p. 6). One success followed another, and in the school’s

fourth recital at the end of March, when “only those who arrived early obtained seats,” “Mr. C. Leroy Kenney scored another popular success in *The Rangers*” (*Toronto Saturday Night*, 21 March 1896, p. 6).

In his final year at the university in 1895-96, Kenney had hit upon his life’s work: what reviewers called “impersonation” and “artistic character work.” Reviewers referred not to impersonation as we know it today (impersonation of the voices and mannerisms of well-known politicians and celebrities), but rather impersonation of character types – ways of speaking, mannerisms, attitudes, and preoccupations stereotypically associated with certain ethnicities, races, people who did certain jobs, and so on.

Kenney became what was known as a “monologue entertainer.” He launched his post-university career in the summer of 1896 with a performance “of miscellaneous readings and a monologue recital of Act I of Sheridan’s comedy, ‘The Rivals’” (*Evening Star* [Toronto, Ontario], 10 July 1896, p. 4). His performance of all the roles in Richard Brinsley Sheridan’s 1775 bawdy romantic comedy based on mistaken identities was a great success – so much so that he jettisoned his other material and simply presented the whole play, “Sheridan’s famous **three act** comedy, ‘The Rivals,’ arranged as a monologue” (*Montreal Star*, 18 April 1898, p. 2, emphasis added). That is, Kenney performed all the roles in the play.

After his success in Toronto in 1897, he toured Eastern Ontario and Quebec during the winter and spring of 1898, being promoted as “the prince of entertainers and reciters at present to be found in North America,” a performer of “really first-class art” (*Quebec Gazette* [Quebec city, Quebec], 13 April 1898, p. 3).

By this point, however, Kenney decided that in addition to performing Sheridan’s play, he would write a play of his own in which he could develop characters that would allow him to show the full range of his abilities. He called the play “Atlantic Antics,” and it was this play that he performed in Merrickville.

Just as Chaucer presents travellers to the Christian shrine at Canterbury amusing each other with stories that he called *The Canterbury Tales*, so Kenney presents voyagers sailing across the Atlantic Ocean amusing each other with conversation. A brief review of the original Toronto performance gives an idea of the play:

The new monologue entertainment, bearing the somewhat euphonious title of “Atlantic Antics,” composed by Mr. C. Leroy Kenney, was presented by the author for the first time last evening in St. George’s Hall.

Mr. Kenney has succeeded in putting together a monologue brim full of fun.

The title is derived from the scene of the play, which is in the schooner Seahorse on the Atlantic Ocean, on board of which are a jolly party of men and women.

All of these characters were taken with equal ability by Mr. Kenney, which showed his usual versatility.

Each of the characters contributed a song or story to the programme, but the graphic description of a horse race, as told by Harry Hamilton, and the eccentricities of Miss Scragg were probably the best.

(cited in The Montreal Star, 20 April 1898, p 9)

We also have a review of the performance of this play in Montreal less than a week after Kenney performed it in the Merrickville Town Hall:

“Atlantic Antics” is a clever sketch of life on an Atlantic sailing vessel [the “Sea Horse”] in which Mr. Kenney assumes all the roles.

The result showed Mr. Kenney to be a most versatile artist and the audience was treated to some excellent character sketches.

The sketch included a number of diverse characters: the captain of the Sea Horse, a pair of young lovers, a simpering swell, an Irishman with a tongue touched by brogue and clever at repartee, an old maid, a Yankee with a fondness for yarns, and an old gentleman whose prominent feature was his forgetfulness.

All these roles were enacted thoroughly.

Two clever samples of the entertainer’s powers were given in the captain’s story and the lover’s story.

(Montreal Star, 22 April 1898, p. 2)

And yet another review (of a performance in Windsor, Ontario) suggests that the play also involved moments of pathos: “C. Leroy Kenney [was] the man of the evening. Mr. Kenney entertained the audience for one and three-quarter hours with his famous ‘Atlantic Antics,’ which at times deeply touched the feelings and as quickly again caused uproarious laughter” (*Windsor Star*, 26 April 1902, p. 3).

In Merrickville, it is possible that Kenney performed both “The Rivals” and “Atlantic Antics” on the same night, as he did in Sherbrooke, Quebec, three weeks later:

C. LEROY KENNEY, THE “AMERICAN GROSMITH” –

will appear in the Art Hall on Tuesday and Wednesday of next week under the auspices of the Sherbrooke Lacrosse Club when he will give “Atlantic Antics” and “The Rivals” on Tuesday and “Merchant of Venice” and “The Sleeping Car” on Wednesday.

Mr. Leroy Kenney has appeared in all the chief cities of the Dominion, and so well did he satisfy the public that return engagements in most cases have been the result.

(Sherbrooke Examiner [Quebec], 6 May 1898, p. 5)

Note that since Shakespeare’s *The Merchant of Venice* was by no means a comedy, and since “the programme was very comical throughout” in Merrickville, we know that he did not perform Shakespeare in Merrickville.

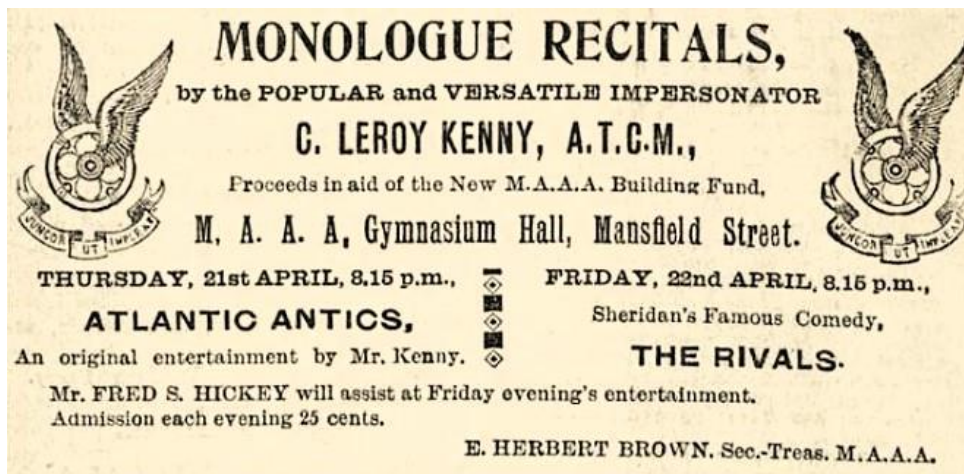


Figure 57 Advertisement placed by the Montreal Amateur Athletic Association in the Montreal Herald, 19 April 1898, p. 4.

His 1898 tour featuring “Atlantic Antics” was put together by “H. Percy Hill, business representative of the well-known entertainer, C. Leroy Kenney” (*Daily Whig* [Kingston, Ontario], 10 May 1898, p. 6).

Hill arranged the schedule and contracts months before the performances and seems to have visited the performance venues a week or two before Kenney arrived. And so, it would seem that the Merrickville Golf Club had arranged for Kenney’s April performance earlier in 1898, if not at the end of 1897.

Tickets cost 25 cents each. Selling out the Town Hall would mean that the Merrickville Golf Club would in one night take in more money than annual membership fees brought in.

Kenney's manager put together a week-by-week tour of Eastern Ontario that included visits to Cornwall, Morrisburg, Renfrew, and Carleton Place before the visit to Merrickville. Then Kenney was off for four days of performances in Montreal. Next it was Quebec City. At the beginning of May, he was performing in Sherbrooke, Quebec, but by the end of the month he was back in Ontario at Kingston.

His performances in Montreal and Quebec City were sponsored by athletic associations raising funds for the year's activities. Similarly, his performance in Sherbrooke was under the auspices of the lacrosse club. Kenney's manager may well have "sold" the executive officers of the Merrickville Golf Club on the idea of bringing Kenney to Merrickville by telling them how satisfied similar sports clubs and athletic associations were with their receipts from Kenney's performances.

In 1899, Kenney modified his act after the South African War broke out, supplementing his performance of character sketches with patriotic songs – always in great demand from audiences during the war years from 1899 to 1902.

By 1900, he also developed an expertise in the new art of moving pictures and worked for several years at the beginning of the twentieth century for the Biograph Company, which presented to rapt audiences a series one- to three-minute films showing beautiful scenes from around the world. On the one hand, he was "C. Leroy Kenney, the Biograph Company's entertainer and lecturer, who announced the pictures and sang," and, on the other hand, he was the company's media liaison expert who explained the new motion-picture technology to curious reporters.

But Kenney ultimately returned to his impersonations and character sketches, continuing to entertain audiences all across Canada well into the 1940s.

The 1898 Golf Tournament

The money earned from Kenney's performance in April of 1898 probably played a part in enabling the Merrickville Golf Club to conduct its big golf tournament that summer.

In celebration of the 31st anniversary of the birth of Canada, the Club held a four-day golf tournament at the beginning of July.

Fourteen of the club's fifteen members participated in a match-play competition. After three days of elimination rounds, just two competitors remained to battle for the championship. The *Ottawa Journal* noted that for the first three days of the tournament, "The game was very interesting all through, but as usual the finals are the more interesting part of the tournament" (*Ottawa Journal*, 4 July 1898, p. 6).

The finals involved an 18-hole match play competition, pitting the 35-year-old club captain Postlethwaite against the local grocery and hardware king, 55-year-old William Miskelly.

Miskelly was always said to **look** younger than his age ("At 84 years of age he is still actively in business and doesn't look a day over 70"), and at golf he seems to have **played** younger than his age (*Ottawa Citizen*, 17 September 1927, p. 2).

William Miskelly (1843-1933) had been born in County Armagh, Ireland, coming to Canada with his family when just two or three years of age. Nonetheless, when he was in his late eighties, it was said: "his mind still recalls in dim outline scenes in his native country beyond the seas" (*The Weekly Advance* [Kemptville], 10 December 1931, p. 6).

He lived in Welford township near Merrickville before moving into the town in 1859, when he was 16. He immediately joined Merrickville's militia rifle company and served in Prescott in 1866 during the period of threatened Fenian Raids. He had just opened his tinsmith shop in the town when he had to leave it "to take care of itself" while he was away guarding the border for "three months and ten days" (*Ottawa Citizen*, 17 September 1927. P. 2).

When he died in 1933 in his 90th year, the Merrickville correspondent for the *Ottawa Journal* noted that "For more than 50 years he conducted a tinsmith business here and was active in all the work that had to do with the welfare of the community" (*Ottawa Journal*, 26 August 1933, p. 23).

In Merrickville, Miskelly served as reeve, councillor, school board trustee, and so on, from the 1870s to the early 1900s. His calm but determined and forceful manner in all things (which may have helped him to reach the finals of the 1898 golf tournament) was shown in an incident that occurred when he was the township's reeve in the early 1890s – a time when Merrickville had no resident policeman:



Figure 58 Postcard showing St. Lawrence Street, Merrickville, circa 1890s.

One day there blew into the village a stranger who had too much hard stuff on board. This stranger walked up and down St Lawrence Street trying to pick a fight He finally took off his coat and, trailing it on the sidewalk, defied any and all of the residents to step on it.

Finally, Reeve Miskelly came on the scene and saw that it was up to him to cope with the situation. He ordered the stranger to leave town or view the inside of the lock-up. This stranger expressed contempt for lock-ups in general, and the Merrickville one in particular. Then the reeve placed the obstreperous one under arrest and conducted him to the lock-up. He walked quietly enough to the place, but when inside the door, changed his mind about staying.

After some words, the stranger started to push the reeve aside in order to escape. The right fist of the reeve suddenly shot to the stranger's chin. He fell in a heap on the floor.

The belligerent one got slowly to his feet and gazed admiringly on the representative of law and order.

"Look here," he said, "that's all very well, but I'll bet you five dollars you can't do that again. You caught me when I wasn't looking."

The reeve started toward his prisoner again with the intention of once more vindicating law and order.

But the stranger had had enough. He stepped back. "All right," he said. "I'll stay."

(Ottawa Citizen, 24 April 1937, p. 2)

This incident occurred a few years before Miskelly appeared in the finals of the Merrickville golf tournament, but one supposes that Postlethwaite would have been well aware of Miskelly's reputation for composure under the pressure of circumstance and that he would have been in no doubt that Miskelly would play as hard as he could in the championship final of the great Merrickville golf tournament of 1898.

Postlethwaite was up to the challenge.

Yet he seems to have been required to play perhaps his best golf, for the *Ottawa Journal* marvelled that his "score was very low, 84 for 18 holes, resulting in a victory for Mr. Postlethwaite, the captain of the club" (4 July 1898, p. 4). The fact that the match-play contest continued for the full 18 holes implies that Postlethwaite was not able to vanquish Miskelly until the last hole.

Unless and until we learn of a lower score recorded on the first Merrickville golf course, 84 must stand as the 18-hole course record.

Golf 1899-1902

Just how long Merrickville's original golf club lasted is not clear.

After the great tournament of 1898, interest in golf seems to have languished until mid-summer. It was only at the end of July that the editor of the Merrickville Star observed: "The interest in golf is reviving here [in Merrickville]. A club is being organized in Smiths Falls and there is a possibility of having a few games between the two clubs before the season closes" (*Merrickville Star*, 27 July 1899, p. 1).

Sure enough, at the end of that summer we read that "A number of Smiths Falls golf players, with a couple of the home team, played over the links here last week" (21 September 1899, p. 1).

Similarly, in 1900, it seems that no golf at all was played until the beginning of June: "The golf players must be very busy men this summer. They have not appeared on the links so far this season" (*Merrickville Star*, 31 May 1900, p. 1). The newspaper made a similar observation in the fall: "The weather could not be surpassed for golf and yet very few games are indulged in by our enthusiasts" (*Merrickville Star*, 11 October 1900, p. 1).

But golf seems always to have been a prime sport for special occasions. Although little golf had been played during the 1900 season, things changed at Thanksgiving: "Croquet and golf will be in order on Thanksgiving Day, and some interesting games may be looked forward to" (*Merrickville Star*, 18 October 1900, p. 1). A week later we learn that "keenly contested games were played" that weekend on the "golf links" (*Merrickville Star*, 25 October 1900, p. 1).

Representatives of Merrickville again engaged the Poonahmalee Golf Club of Smith's Falls in competition in 1901: "Dr. Bedell and Messrs. [G.R.] Putnam and [C.W.] Postlethwaite went up to Smith's Falls on Monday. While there they went over the golf links with some of the local players, winning by a score of 164-170" (*Merrickville Star*, 18 July 1901, p. 1).

These scores suggest a 36-hole stroke-play best-ball competition on the 9-hole Poonahmalee course, with a three-man Smiths Falls team competing against a three-man Merrickville team, each player playing his own ball, but only the best score of the three scores made by each team counting as the team's score for each of the eighteen holes. On the Poonahmalee course, the Merrickville team averaged 82 strokes for each 18 holes and 41 strokes for each 9 holes. (Recall that in 1907, John Bell

Waddell would set the Poonahmalee course record of 36, breaking the 1905 record of 39, and that Postlethwaite completed 18 holes on the short 9-hole North Merrickville course in 84 strokes in 1898.)



Figure 59 The 1901 Merrickville golf team that defeated the Poonahmalee Golf Club team at Smiths Falls. Left to right: Dr. T.C. D. Bedell, C.W. Postlethwaite, G.R. Putnam.

G.R. Putnam is the only member of the 1901 Merrickville golf team with whom we are not familiar.



Figure 60 Gordon Ross Putnam (1860-1918) in his Masonic uniform. Merrickville Historical Society. "Photograph of Gordon Putnam." Catalog number 981.71.46.

Gordon Ross Putnam (1860-1918), a very successful financial agent in Merrickville who was at various times school board chairman, district census commissioner, reeve (as of 1902), and so on, served alongside Bedell, Waddell, and Postlethwaite on the executive committees of many local sports organizations (such as lawn tennis, lacrosse, hockey, and so on).

He was probably also a member of the original Merrickville Golf Club.

But whether or not Putnam, Bedell, and Postlethwaite had travelled to Smiths Falls as representatives of the Merrickville Golf Club or merely as individual golfers from Merrickville who agreed to take on a team from Smiths Falls is not clear.

The possibility that golf in Merrickville was no longer organized by an official golf club but rather was pursued by individual golfers is implied by a newspaper report in the fall of 1902 that "Some of the local golf enthusiasts have received an invitation from the Smiths Falls golf club to go up and play them a game. In

all probability the invitation will be accepted some day next week” (*Merrickville Star*, 9 October 1902, p. 1). In due course, we read that “A number of local golf players are in Smiths Falls today where they are enjoying a game” (*Merrickville Star*, 16 October 1902, p. 1).

The sentence “Some of the local golf enthusiasts have received an invitation” is interesting: the Poonahmalee Golf Club seems to have issued its invitation not to the Merrickville Golf Club, per se (from which a team of golfers might be selected for the competition in question), but rather to individual golfers. If so, the Poonahmalee club effectively chose the Merrickville golf team!

In April of 1903, the *Almonte Gazette* reported: “An effort is being made to start a golf club at Merrickville” (*Almonte Gazette*, 3 April 1903, p. 8). Had the original golf club been disbanded in 1901 or 1902, leaving it up to Poonahmalee in 1902 to invite individual golfers from Merrickville to come to Smiths Falls to play the local team?

In retrospect, we can see that the Merrickville Golf Club had certainly suffered significant setbacks at the end of the nineteenth century. Club President Reverend Edward Ashton had died before the 1899 season started. Secretary-Treasurer J.B. Waddell was transferred away from Merrickville shortly after the 1899 season ended. Aston and Waddell represented 50% of the 1898 board of governors.

Perhaps equally significant for the club was the likely loss of nominally less important members.

For, by definition, fads do not last. And so, across North America in the early 1900s, faddists dropped the game as quickly as they had picked it up. As the *Victoria Daily Times* observed at the beginning of the 1903 golf season, “It is said that the golf fad has about run its course, and that a season of decadence of enthusiasm has set in” (*Victoria Daily Times* [British Columbia], 22 June 1903, p. 4).

But even if the Club had been disbanded or had simply lapsed through neglect, the golf course nonetheless remained in place in 1902 and it was used. That spring, the local newspaper observed that a new generation of players was demonstrating interest in the game:

Golf seems to have taken quite a strong hold on some of the young men of the town and golf parties are to be found daily on the links.

The game furnishes good clean sport, and no doubt as the season advances quite a number of new recruits will join the ranks to try their skill at the “auld Scottish game.”

(Merrickville Star, 29 May 1902, p. 1)

If original faddists had left the game, there was a chance that newer, younger faddists would replace them!

On Thanksgiving Day in 1902, we once again find that golf was part of the holiday activities: “golf players enjoyed several rounds on the links” (*Merrickville Star*, 23 October 1902, p. 1).

These golfers presumably comprised both older, original members of the 1897 Club and a new generation of golf enthusiasts that had taken to the links in the spring of 1902. The future of golf in Merrickville would probably depend on whether the new golfers developed an enduring enthusiasm for the game.

Women Golfers?

I can find no reference to any woman ever having played golf on the original Merrickville course.



Figure 61 "Portrait of Laura Bedell."
Merrickville Historical Society, catalog
number: 981.65.2. Circa early 1900s.

But it strikes me as quite likely that at least Laura Bedell, wife of Club director Dr. T.C.D. Bedell, tried her hand at the game.

After her marriage to Dr. Bedell in 1901, she soon gave birth to a boy and then a girl. But this did not deter her interest in sports.

In 1908, she played for the Merrickville women's hockey team. At the time, Merrickville iced both a Junior women's team and a Senior women's team, 34-year-old Bedell playing for the latter.

After a defeat in March of 1908 at the hands of the Smiths Falls "Humming Birds," the Merrickville women's team came in for criticism by some middle-aged men in town who thought they knew a thing or two about the way the game should be played, so the Senior women's team challenged these men to a match:

Our best team of lady hockeyists came up smiling after their defeat by the Smiths Falls humming birds and answered the criticism of men over that game by [challenging] ... to play them for fun, money, or marbles.

The old boys were game and gathered up all the shin pads and wooden bound blades available – some of the latter being relics of grandpa days

There was a glitter of do or die in 14 pairs of eyes as the teams lined up before the referee to receive warnings and orders.

(Merrickville Star, 12 March 1908, p. 1)

There were 14 pairs of eyes facing off because in those days, a hockey team comprised six skaters and a goaltender.

According to the report of the game sent to the editor of the *Merrickville Star*, Bedell played a significant role in the game, as suggested by the following (generally tongue-in-cheek) reporting:

Very close checking, ice rough and players ditto....

Face off. Marjory misses and visits the ice in a hurry. Bedell rushes and swipes the air, also falling and hurting the ice; Bedell off for ten minutes for putting back the ice

Game very fast – E.H. Tallman [for the men] slides into the net, but score goes [up]

[Apparently disputing the referee's decision,] Bedell upsets the fence [around the rink] – Church mixes it with the referee

Tallman and Bedell off for tripping “dirty work” is being yelled by the crowd, which upsets a barrel of water on the ice and spoils a sure win for the Amazons.

(Merrickville Star, 12 March 1908, p. 1)

If this account of the game is to be trusted, Laura Bedell was a tough competitor, had a short fuse when it came to mistakes made by a referee, and demonstrated a penchant for “dirty work.”

The one who “swipe[d] the air” on ice might also have swiped the air a few times on the golf course.

Mervyn Miskelly and the “Hot-Stove” Parliament

So far, we have met six members of the Merrickville Golf Club, which began with 15 members. I list them in order of their age in 1897: William Miskelly (age 54), Reverend E. Aston (age 44), Gordon Ross Putnam (age 37), C.W. Postlethwaite (age 34), John Bell Waddell (age 31), and Dr. T.C.D. Bedell (age 23).

In terms of the golf demographic that emerged in the 1890s, Waddell and Bedell were relatively young players of the game – Bedell especially so.

When the golf fad arrived in North America in the mid-1890s, the game acquired a reputation of being a sport for old people. And, indeed, most of the men and women who founded golf clubs in the mid-1890s ranged in age from their mid-40s to mid-60s. By far the majority of these middle-aged club founders were men, and the majority of them had played sports in their youth but were no longer capable of playing with young men on the baseball diamond, the soccer pitch, the hockey rink, the cricket pitch, the lacrosse field, and so on. But here was a sport that they were still capable of playing and it would allow them to express the athleticism and the competitive spirit that endured in them.

Did young people in Merrickville take up the game?

In 1902, we recall, the local newspaper observed that a new generation of players was indeed demonstrating interest in the game:

Golf seems to have taken quite a strong hold on some of the young men of the town and golf parties are to be found daily on the links.

The game furnishes good clean sport, and no doubt as the season advances quite a number of new recruits will join the ranks to try their skill at the “auld Scottish game.”

(Merrickville Star, 29 May 1902, p. 1)

In the spring of 1902, young men frequented the links daily!

There is no indication who these young men were, but we might infer that they were from the cohort of young men who played on virtually every sports team representing Merrickville at the turn of the century. The same young men represented the town at hockey, baseball, lacrosse, and soccer. There

were three Kyle brothers, three Church brothers, two Morrison brothers, two Watchorn brothers, and a number of other individuals.



Figure 62 Mervyn Miskelly (the upper figure) in his mid-teens, circa 1896-97. "Photograph of Lacrosse Team," Merrickville Historical Society, 982.5.18.

My hunch is that one of "the young men of the town" who made up the "golf parties" of 1902 was 21-year-old Mervyn Miskelly, at that point the eldest son (since the 1897 death of his older brother William) of William Miskelly, the runner-up in the great Merrickville golf tournament of 1898.

I would not be surprised to learn that then 17-year-old Mervyn had caddied for his father at this four-day event.

And from what is known of Mervyn's relatively catholic interest in sports, it would be surprising if he had not later taken his father's clubs to the course to give the game a try himself.

Apprenticing with his father as a tinsmith, Mervyn played on all the town's teams from the late 1890s to 1904, when he went to Manitoba and Saskatchewan to work in hardware and lumber sales.

And young Mervyn was both a sports star and a team leader.

Just two months before Miskelly left for the West, the local newspaper observed: "Kyle and Miskelly [are] one of the best defense combinations ever put on the ice by Merrickville" (Merrickville Star, 11 February 1904, p. 1). When the Merrickville team visited Brockville several weeks later, the *Brockville Times* observed:

"Miskelly ... received applause for his clever dodging" (*Brockville Times*, cited in *Merrickville Star*, 24 March 1904, p. 8). He was an important figure on the sporting scene: "Mervyn will be greatly missed here as he was a valued member of our baseball and hockey teams" (*Merrickville Star*, 7 April 1904, p. 1). Perhaps it should be no surprise that he made a similar impression in Manitoba – after just eight months:

"Reddy," as he is familiarly known, will be greatly missed, especially in athletic circles, as he was always to the front in all sports.

An excellent baseball player, and a scientific exponent of hockey, his will be a hard place to fill.



Figure 63 17-yr-old Mervyn Miskelly stands behind committee member J.B. Waddell in "Photo of the Merrickville Hockey Team, 1899," Merrickville Historical Society, 982.5.21.

(The Recorder [Reston, Manitoba], cited in Merrickville Star, 22 February 1906, p. 1)



Figure 64 Top figure: Mervyn Miskelly in "Merrickville Hockey Team, 1903-04," Merrickville Historical Society, 981.71.50.

As though proving that he was indeed "to the front in all sports," Mervyn took up curling when he arrived in Regina and played in many bonspiels.

In the late 1890s and early 1900s, before Mervyn left Merrickville, curling had been played in communities surrounding Merrickville, but it had not been played in the town itself and Merrickville never formed a curling team – despite discussion in the early 1900s of the possibility of building a curling rink and icing a team.

It seems reasonable to assume that in Merrickville, Mervyn was also "to the front" in most sports, and that this 21-year-old was probably among the young men who began to play golf daily in the spring of 1902.

Born in 1881, Mervyn Forsey Miskelly was the son of William Miskelly and Ellen Bellerose (1843-1892). He had two older

siblings: William (1870-1897) and Edith (born 1875).

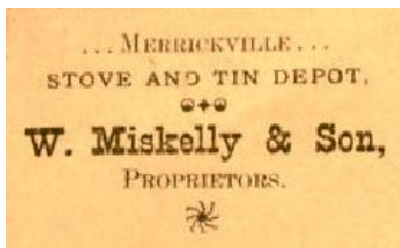


Figure 65 Detail from W. Miskelly & Son invoice. "Merrickville Masonic Lodge Invoice with W. Miskelly," Merrickville Historical Society, 2006.96.130.

By 1895, eldest son William had been asked by his father to join him as a partner in his store. Invited by the journal *Hardware: Devoted to the American Hardware Trade* "to contribute ... news of new stores, changes, improvements, etc.," Miskelly proudly wrote to announce that "Wm. Miskelly, Hardware merchant, has taken his son into partnership, and the firm now is W. Miskelly & Son" (vol 11 [10 May 1895], p. 50). But son William was in poor health, suffering from a mysterious illness that had him travelling to Montreal early in 1895

to be examined by experts. He was occasionally unable even to leave his house. Poor William died in 1897, and so teenaged Mervyn seemed destined to become the next son in Miskelly & Son.

When Mervyn was invited to take his brother's place in the family firm, he was also thereby invited to witness – and even participate in – conversations about town events, for, as Linda Seccaspina points out, the chairs around the hot stove in the centre of the Miskelly & Son store formed the unofficial town

clearing-house for local news, views, and ideas – something of a hot-stove parliament, so to speak (<https://lindaseccaspina.wordpress.com/2019/02/21/tales-of-miskelly-of-merrickville/>).

It was probably here that various men such as Bedell, Waddell, Putnam, and Postlethwaite, among others, gathered at the beginning of the appropriate seasons to discuss the formation of the local sports teams – and they probably did so in front of Mervyn himself, who starred on these teams.

Mervyn knew Dr. Bedell particularly well, for they played together on the 1901 Merrickville soccer team (Bedell at full back and Miskelly at forward). Bedell had previously come to know Mervyn when he treated him for a serious, famous, and mysterious gunshot wound:

Accidentally Shot – Bullet Not Yet Located – Removed to Hospital

Mervyn Miskelly accidentally shot himself on Sunday with a twenty-two calibre revolver.

He was stepping into Thomas Edward's buggy in front of his [Miskelly's] residence on Brock Street, holding the revolver in his hand, when in some way it was discharged. The bullet entered the calf of the leg, making an ugly and painful wound.

Dr. Bedell was sent for and examined the wound but was unable to locate the bullet. Up to the time of writing, it was still in his leg. It is feared that if it is not soon located, blood poisoning may set in.

(Weekly British Whig [Kingston, Ontario], 31 March 1898, p. 4)

William Miskelly will have feared he was going to lose another son!

Just what happened to cause the wound remains unclear, mind you, for the boys were determined to hide the truth:

Shot at Merrickville

On Sunday evening last, while the other members of the family were at church, Mervyn Miskelly, a boy about 16 years of age, was shot in the leg.

A young companion was with him at the time and contradictory statements are told regarding the circumstances.

One boy said it occurred in the house of the wounded boy's father, while the other claims it was by firing off the 22-calbre rifle through the bottom of a buggy in which they were driving and that it was done to frighten the horse.

(The Advance [Kemptonville, Ontario], 31 March 1898, p. 3)

Yeah, right Mervyn may have been "a bit of a lad."

Dr. Bedell may also have been the doctor who stitched up the serious face laceration that Miskelly suffered in a contentious and controversial hockey game against Kemptonville two years later: "Miskelly met with an accident which kept him from playing the remainder of the game.... [He] received a bad cut on the cheek from [Kemptonville player] Bank's skate striking him. This will mean he will not be able to play anymore this season" (*Merrickville Star*, 15 March 1900, p. 1).

Perhaps the Miskelly's hot-stove parliament was where Aston, Waddell, Postlethwaite, and Bedell first talked of the possibility of laying out a golf course on the northern edge of the town in 1897. And if it is the case that the original golf club lapsed, it may have been here that talk of forming a second golf club arose during the winter of 1903.

However much golf Mervyn may have played up to 1903, however, he would be absent from the local sports scene for eight years as of the spring of 1904: "Mr. Mervyn Miskelly left for Winnipeg on Tuesday. He expects to remain in the west for some time and may possibly make his permanent residence there" (*Merrickville Star*, 7 April 1904, p. 1). Mervyn's aunt lived at Sandford, Manitoba, a few miles outside of Winnipeg, and it may have been through her that Mervyn got a job in Reston, Manitoba, in a hardware and lumber business.

As we know, he was a popular figure in Reston and a leader in baseball and hockey (he was captain and manager of the latter team). When he moved to Saskatchewan (where he was appointed manager of the Independent Lumber Company at Wolseley in 1906), he assumed a similar role in baseball and hockey. And, as mentioned above, he also took up curling.

When he returned to Merrickville from Blaine, Saskatchewan, in the fall of 1912, he was now 31 years old but still sufficiently fit and competitive to be selected for the town's hockey and baseball teams. Furthermore, he resumed his position of leadership, being named captain of the baseball team. As such, in an intensely competitive match against Kemptonville in 1913, he so vehemently opposed an umpire's

controversial decision in favour of Kemptville during the ninth inning of a tied game that he withdrew the Merrickville team from the field in protest and forfeited the game.

By the time World War I broke out in the summer of 1914, Mervyn had begun to turn away from playing sports to supporting sports. For instance, he became what was called a “judge of play” for hockey games (*Weekly Advance* [Kemptville, Ontario], 10 February 1916, p. 1). And he was set back from hopes of continuing to play hockey and baseball at a high level by a gruesome injury to his hand:

Some days ago, Mr. Mervyn Miskelly was unfortunate enough to jam the blade of a large pair of shears into the palm of his hand, cutting a long deep gash, and severing an artery and a nerve.

He lost all sensation and motion in his hand but is now praising the care and skill of the doctor in uniting the ends of the nerve and, at present, the hand is slowly regaining its lost functions.

(Weekly Advance [Kemptville, Ontario], 15 June 1916, p. 3)

This accident was probably the result of a mishap in the hardware store.

Age was telling generally on Mervyn’s generation of town sports stars: the old boys were not as swift or as strong as the younger generation and so retired from play. But some of Mervyn’s old teammates did not so much retire from sports as volunteer for the Canadian Overseas Expeditionary Force.



Figure 66 Lawrence Wood Miskelly, 156th Battalion, CEF.

And in August of 1916, Mervyn’s own 20-year-old half-brother, Lawrence Wood Miskelly (1896-1969), abandoned his undergraduate studies at the University of Toronto’s Victoria College to enlist in the army: “Another of our fine young men has heard and heeded the call of duty. Mr. Lawrence Miskelly, an undergraduate of Victoria College, has gone to Barriefield to enlist in the 156th battalion” (*Weekly Advance* [Kemptville, Ontario], 24 August 1916, p. 7). His Commander was Dr. T.C.D. Bedell.

Sergeant L.W. Miskelly sailed from Halifax for Liverpool in October and spent the rest of the war as a clerk for a number of Canadian army units at various camps in England.

One wonders how older brother Mervyn felt as his younger brother was celebrated as among the finest examples of young Canadian manhood for hearing and heeding the call of duty.

Early in the war, Mervyn helped to organize social events to raise money for Patriotic Funds (money distributed by charities to support families aiding the war effort). It may have been Mervyn who was responsible for the following arrangement: “Mr. Wm. Miskelly’s has been made the depository for old rubbers, rags, and waste paper, which are being zealously collected by the Red Cross” (*Weekly Advance* [Kemptonville, Ontario], 24 August 1916, p. 7). The Red Cross organized this recycling campaign to support the war effort. Perhaps Mervyn was travelling in aid of some such work when the Kemptonville newspaper observed the following in the summer of 1916: “Mr. Mervyn Miskelly is playing the elusive Mr. Pimpernel. One day last week he was in Barriefield, the next day at Gananoque, the next somewhere on the St. Lawrence, and so on *ad infinitum*” (*Weekly Advance* [Kemptonville, Ontario], 20 July 1916, p. 3).



Figure 67 Private Mervyn Forsey Miskelly, 38th Battalion, Canadian Expeditionary Force, 1917.

Mervyn had hesitated to follow Lawrence’s example. Perhaps he thought his hand injury would render him unfit for service. Perhaps his 73-year-old father needed help running the hardware store. In the end, however, on the first day of spring in 1917 (51 years after his father had left his newly established business to travel to Prescott with the Merrickville Rifles to guard against a Fenian invasion), Mervyn left the store in his father’s hands and travelled down to Kingston to enlist.

Private Miskelly served for several weeks in Canada as a driver for an ammunition column but prepared to sail for England in April by signing a will – devising all his real estate and bequeathing all his personal property to his father.

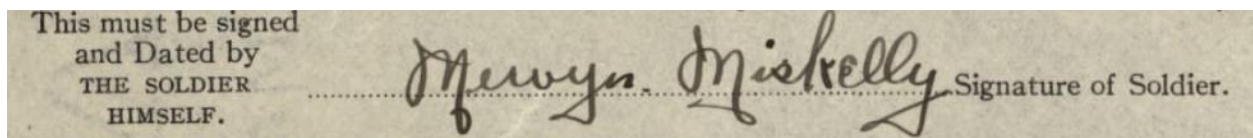


Figure 68 Mervyn Miskelly's signature on his Will, dated 21 April 1917. Library and Archives Canada. Personnel Records of First World War. Canadian Expeditionary Force (CEF), Item number 185200, Reference: RG 150, Accession 1992-93/166, Box 6243-55.

He sailed at the end of April of 1917 and trained in England for service in the trenches. At the end of the summer, he was sent to the battlefield in Belgium. And in the fall of 1917, on the day before Halloween, his battalion was ordered at 5:40 am to “go over the top” of the front-line trenches in the Battle of Passchendaele, also known as the Third Battle of Ypres.

Mervyn Miskelly died in action that day, and because of the intensity of the battle, he lay where he fell.

Afterwards, his body could not be found, although the Imperial War Graves Commission searched for the bodies of tens of thousands of missing soldiers like him until 1921. And so, along with the names of 54,000 other soldiers whose bodies were never recovered from No Man's Land, his name was engraved on the Menin Gate in Ypres in 1927.



Figure 69 Section of the Menin Gate bearing the name of Mervyn Forsey Miskelly. A digital poppy has been added to the photograph to mark his name.

At Ypres, each day at 8:00 pm since the opening of the monument on 2 July 1928, to express gratitude for these soldiers' sacrifices, the Last Post Association has closed the road that passes under the Menin Gate and its buglers have sounded the "Last Post."

A large crowd attends each ceremony. The ceremony will be held again tonight.



Figure 70 Union Cemetery, Merrickville. On the opposite side of this monument is the name Lawrence Miskelly. On another side is the name of Lawrence's mother. On the remaining side are the names of Mervyn's parents.

Without a body, a funeral service was held for Mervyn Miskelly back home in Merrickville in the fall of 1917.

And he was given a burial plot in Union Cemetery.

His plot remains empty to this day, still marked by the stone monument seen in the photograph to the left.

And yet, should a sudden heaving frost in a distant Belgian field someday disturb his bed, and a farmer find his bones, Mervyn might yet come home to Merrickville, and the plot beneath this marker receive his mortal remains.

Mervyn's death affected his father deeply: "during the war, he suffered the loss of his business associate – a son who was killed in France – and from that time his activities and interest began to wane" (*The Weekly Advance* [Kemptville, Ontario], 10 December 1931, p. 6).

William Miskelly had one son left.

Lawrence, of course, had never been in danger of dying in combat. But he was not unscathed by the war. In fact, I suspect that his much-admired brother Mervyn's death in the fall of 1917 had a psychological impact on Lawrence, for shortly after his brother's death, he complained to army doctors of a condition they could neither explain nor treat:

Man well nourished. Well developed....

Slight dyspnoea on exertion.... ["Dyspnoea" is feeling sort of breath, "air hunger," chest tightness and working hard to get enough air.]

Other systems normal.

Man complains of dizziness and shortness of breath on exertion.... Gets dizzy when he straightens up after stooping over....

Man says his condition (shortness of breath and dizziness) dates back to 1918.

(Personnel Records of the First World War, Library and Archives Canada, Canadian Expeditionary Force (CEF), RG 150, Accession 1992-93/166, Box 6243-54, Item no. 185199)

I wonder if his brother's death prompted Lawrence Miskelly to suffer from anxiety, which, by causing the "fight or flight" response in the body, can lead to faster, shallower breathing and an increased heart rate – producing hyperventilation and shortness of breath. Dyspnoea.

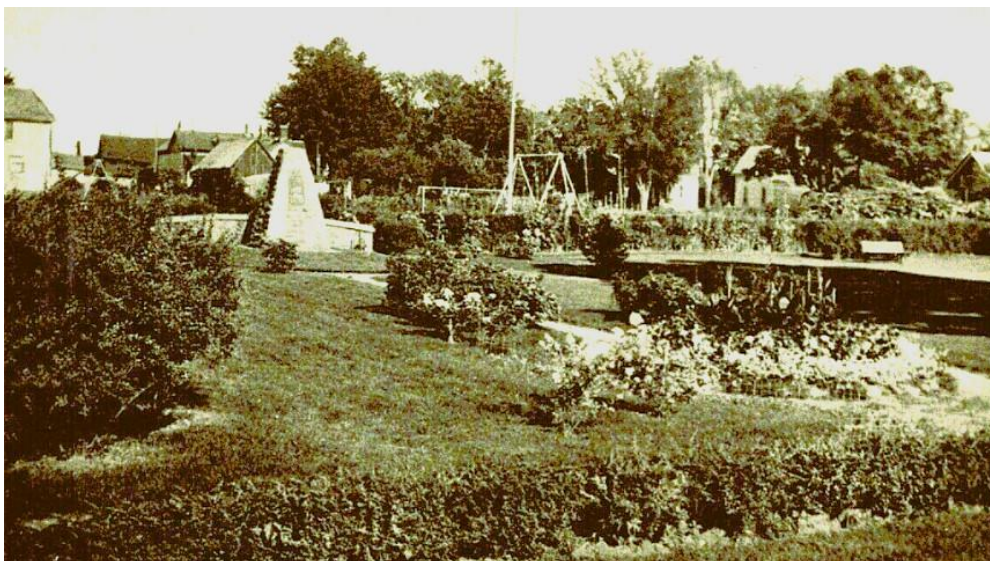


Figure 71 Mid-twentieth-century postcard showing Merrickville's Memorial Park and Cenotaph.

After the war, Lawrence Miskelly lived and worked in Toronto. He visited his parents several times each year until his father passed away in 1933 and then his mother, in 1948. And he

often visited his brother's memory, regularly sending wreaths to Remembrance Day services in Merrickville's Memorial Park – wreaths placed by a local friend of the brothers' "in memory of Mervyn Miskelly" (*Weekly Advance* [Kemptville, Ontario], 14 November 1935, p. 1)

A Mervyn Miskelly Postscript:

To An Athlete Dying Young

By A.E. Houseman

The time you won your town the race

We chaired you through the market-place;

Man and boy stood cheering by,

And home we brought you shoulder-high.

Today, the road all runners come,

Shoulder-high we bring you home,

And set you at your threshold down,

Townsmen of a stiller town.

Smart lad, to slip betimes away

From fields where glory does not stay,

And early though the laurel grows

It withers quicker than the rose.

Eyes the shady night has shut

Cannot see the record cut,

And silence sounds no worse than cheers

After earth has stopped the ears.

*Now you will not swell the rout
Of lads that wore their honours out,
Runners whom renown outran
And the name died before the man.*

*So set, before its echoes fade,
The fleet foot on the sill of shade,
And hold to the low lintel up
The still-defended challenge-cup.*

*And round that early-laurelled head
Will flock to gaze the strengthless dead,
And find unwithered on its curls
The garland briefer than a girl's.*

Post-Fad Golf

The Merrickville Golf Club was by no means the only Eastern Ontario golf club formed in 1890s that disappeared after a few years. A Picton Golf Club that was formed in 1897 did not last long, and neither did the Carleton Place golf club planned in 1898.

In many cases, golf clubs came and went as the faddists came and went.

Yet the departure of the faddists was seen by golf's devotees not as debilitating, but rather as strengthening the new game.

In his 1901 essay, "Golf in Canada," W.A.R. Kerr, an accomplished amateur golfer at the Toronto Golf Club who won the Canadian amateur championship in 1897, reflected on the post-fad state of the game:

Golf is somewhat of a fad at present; that is to say, it is being played by people who have in turn tried their hands at every passing game that has been born and died within the last twenty-five years.

This does not mean that golf will languish when its present pretended admirers jilt it and shift their affection to the next fashionable favourite.

When the popular wave leaves it, golf will not be stranded, it will still float on the steady-going current which has brought it down through half-a-dozen centuries.

(Canadian Magazine, vol 17 [May to October, 1901], p. 340)

The feeling in the United States was the same. In 1901, Robert Bage Kerr, Secretary of the United States Golf Association, was asked about golf's prospects as it moved from its late-1800s growth as a fad to its hope in the early-1900s to grow as a serious sport:

Possibly there is not so much furor about the sport [today], but this is because it is no longer a novelty. It is taken as a matter of course now that a man plays golf in his leisure moments and not so much talk is made of it.

Another thing is that the faddists have left the game for good. And, I might add, for the game's good also.

This is another reason why there is less talk about it. The man who played because it was "the thing," and not because he liked it, has given way to those who love the sport for its own sake. There are just as many players and just as many links, but the game has assumed a more rational and permanent basis.

(Tribune (New York), 25 November 1901, p. 9)

What was happening in Merrickville in the early 1900s?

Founders Aston and Waddell were gone, but by 1902, young men were playing on the links daily. Would this new generation of golfers develop a genuine enthusiasm for the game, or would these young men turn out to be just another wave of faddists?

A New Golf Club or More of the Same?



Figure 72 F.A.J. Davis (1875-1953).
Historical Sketch of Knoxville
(Presbyterian) Church, Merrickville, Ont.,
Commemorative of the 50th Anniversary of
the Opening of the Church, Feb. 5th, 1911
(Merrickville: Star-Chronicle Printing
House, 1911), no page numbers.

In March of 1903, the editor of the *Merrickville Star*, F.A.J. Davis, observed: “Sap’s runnin’ Now for croquet and golf” (12 March 1903, p. 1).

And so, we can see that as the eighth spring arrived since the laying out of the first golf course in June of 1897, golf was sufficiently well established amongst a certain cohort of Merrickville sportsmen for the return of spring to be associated with the return of golf.

Two weeks later, editor Davis extended his support for golf beyond mere words to deeds, for he made his office available to devotees of the Royal and Ancient Game: “A meeting for the purpose of organizing a golf club will be held in the *Star* office on Tuesday evening next at 8 o’clock. A full attendance of all those interested in the game is urgently requested. – T.C.D. Bedell, President” (*Merrickville Star*, 26 March 1903, p. 1).

What does it mean that Davis refers to “a meeting for the purpose of organizing a golf club”? Had the original Merrickville Golf Club gone out of existence, requiring a meeting to organize a new golf club?

Perhaps, but not necessarily.

The calling of “a meeting” of all those interested in the game” “for the purpose of organizing a golf club” was the way newspapers of the day indicated that a pre-existing club was expecting to organize a new executive committee for the coming season. Since these early golf clubs did not function during the winter, they were regarded as lapsing each fall and beginning anew each spring.

In Almonte, for instance, a golf club had been established for the first time in 1902 (it enjoyed a successful season), and then in March of 1903, the editor of the *Almonte Gazette* published announcements exactly like those in the *Merrickville Star*: “A meeting will be held in the council chamber tomorrow ... evening for the purpose of organizing a golf club”; “Don’t forget the meeting to

organize a golf club in the council chamber tomorrow ... night”; “A meeting will be held in the council chamber tomorrow ... night for the purpose of organizing a golf club in town. It is hoped that there will be a large attendance of both ladies and gentlemen as this is a game in which both sexes may indulge” (*Almonte Gazette*, 20 March 1903, pp. 1, 1, 8).

In the spring of 1903, being called to the meeting in Almonte “to organize a golf club” were the same people who had played golf in Almonte well into the fall of 1902. The same phenomenon may have occurred in Merrickville at the exact same time.

It is not just possible, then, but perhaps likely that the Merrickville Golf Club had existed continuously from 1897 to 1902 and that similar unreported meetings had been called each spring to organize the Club for the coming season. If this is the case, the fact that Bedell is described as Club President in the spring of 1903 may indicate not necessarily that he would be president for the 1903 season but only that he had been the 1902 President and so had the responsibility for calling the initial meeting in 1903 at which a new executive committee would be elected.

In retrospect, it is no surprise that Bedell had ascended to the presidency of the Club. From the moment of his participation in the founding of the Club in 1897, he became a life-long devotee of the Royal and Ancient Game. Even during World War I, for instance, Bedell kept his hand in the game. When officers laid out “a good nine-hole course” at Kingston’s Barriefield camp, Bedell challenged the man who laid out the course “to decide the champion”: “Lieut. [Col.] T.C. D. Bedell, commanding the 156th Battalion, is an enthusiastic golf-player and still holds several championships. He has challenged Capt. Norwell to decide the champion” (*Daily British Whig* [Kingston], 17 August 1916, p. 9).

Bedell must have been optimistic about the prospects of for golf in 1903.

C.W. Postlethwaite and William Miskelly both still lived in Merrickville in 1903. So did G.R. Putnam, who had become Reeve. And John Bell Waddell no doubt still played golf when he visited town after his transfer to Norwood and then Carleton Place. In 1900, for instance, he returned to town at least four times to see his old friends and, following his marriage in 1901, he regularly returned to town to visit his in-laws. These men had never been faddists but rather were numbered from the beginning among “those who love[d] the sport for its own sake.”

And Bedell must have hoped that the old stalwarts would be supplemented by like-minded “new recruits”: “some of the young men of the town.” Mervyn Miskelly, the leading sportsman among these young men, was still in town in 1903.

Alas, the meeting called for 31 March 1903 was not a success: "A sufficient number of those interested did not turn out on Tuesday evening at the organization meeting of the golf club" (*Merrickville Star*, 2 April 1903, p. 1).

Were the young men of the town who had taken to the game so enthusiastically the year before mere faddists?

Try, try, and try again: "Another meeting will be held shortly when it is hoped there will be a full attendance" (*Merrickville Star*, 2 April 1903, p. 1).

Yet after this hopeful note in the *Merrickville Star*, we hear no more of any attempt to organize the golfers of Merrickville.

Did the Club go out of existence at the beginning of 1903?

Other Eastern Ontario towns of similar size had trouble sustaining a golf club at this time. In Picton, for instance, the Presbyterian minister of St. Andrew's Church, Reverend Donald George Macphail, brought golf to town in the 1890s and converted a number of young men to the game, but nothing came of the organization of a Picton Golf Club in the fall of 1897. It was not until 1902 that a proper and enduring Picton Golf Club was formed, and it still exists today. (See my essay, "Early Golf in Picton: Of Presbyters & Proselytes, 1897-1907" on my website, *Golf Histories of Eastern Ontario, the Outaouais, and Jekyll Island*.) And in Almonte, a golf club was formed in 1902 and much encouraged by the *Almonte Gazette*, but it may not have even finished the 1903 season. It was not until 1906 that it was revived and endured for another ten years, being revived again in 1925 and enduring until 1927. (See my book, *The Almonte Golf Club: A Story of Common Cause*, on my website, *Golf Histories of Eastern Ontario, the Outaouais, and Jekyll Island*.)

If the Merrickville Golf Club did indeed lapse in 1903, did the game itself nonetheless continue to be played by individual devotees of the Royal and Ancient Game without any affiliation to or regulation by a formal golf club?

It is hard to tell, however, what the lack of news about a subsequent organizational meeting in 1903 might mean, for there had been no items in the *Merrickville Star* announcing organizational meetings for the spring of 1899, 1900, 1901, or 1902, although golf was played continuously on the North Merrickville golf course in each of these years.

The report in the spring of 1903 by the editor of the *Almonte Gazette* that “An effort is being made to **start** a golf club at Merrickville” may have been a misinterpretation of the announcements he had read in the *Merrickville Star* about the meetings called to organize the Club once more (*Almonte Gazette*, 3 April 1903, p. 8, emphasis added).

And so, for all we know, the Merrickville Golf Club may have continued on its quiet way in 1903 just as it had for the previous six golf seasons.

It may even have laid out a new golf course in 1903.

Golf Course Two: Golf Links in the Background

In addition to the original golf course laid out in North Merrickville, golf enthusiasts apparently also played at some point on a golf course somewhere south of the town.

As mentioned above, we know this fact because an early 1900s postcard provides an aerial view of the town and adds text that indicates “Golf Links in back ground.”

Seen below, the postcard provides a southwest perspective of a small portion of the town. In the foreground is St. Anne’s Roman Catholic Church. At the right margin of the photograph is Read Street. The junction of St. Patrick Street and Main Street is also visible.

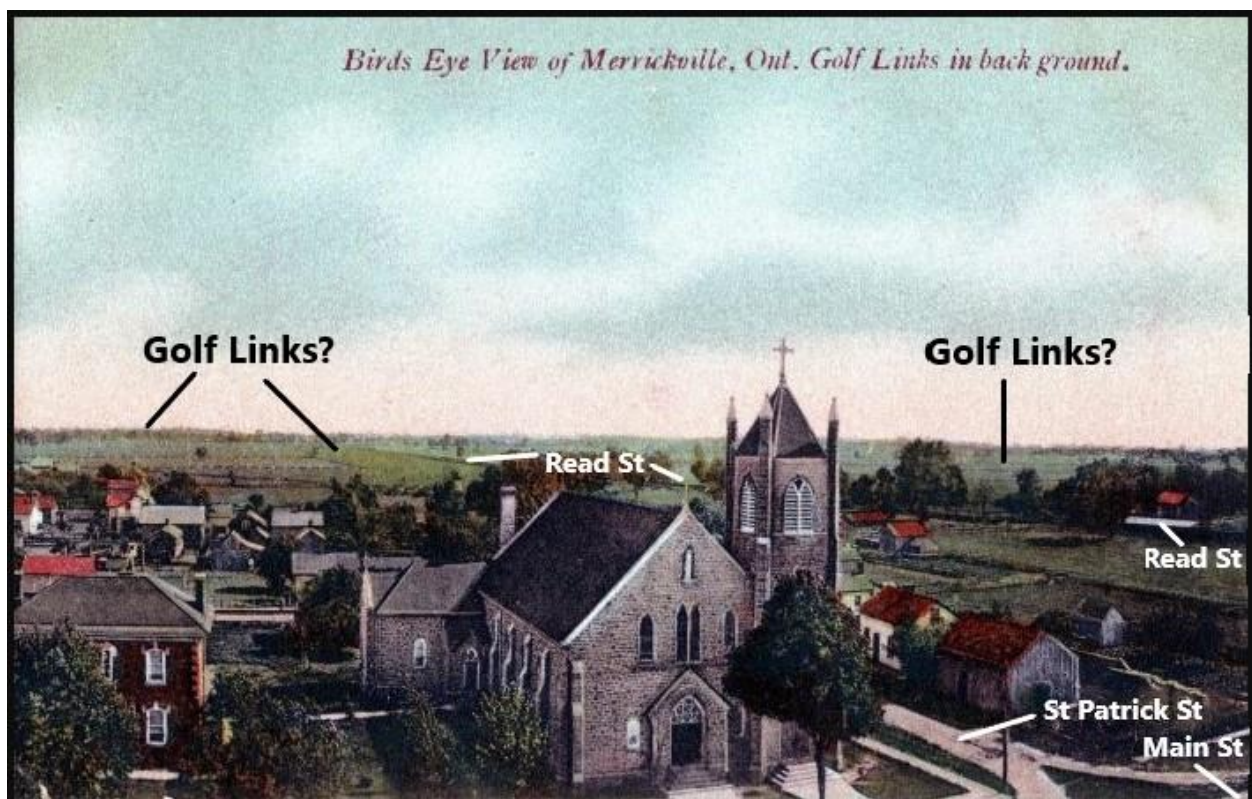


Figure 73 Annotated early 1900s postcard.

According to the information provided by the postcard, the “Golf Links” was in the fields south or southwest of the town – on one side or the other of Read Street, or perhaps even crossing back and forth over this street.

I can find no information about the publication date of the postcard shown above, but we know that the photograph was taken from the top of the town’s fire hose tower.



Figure 74 Merrickville
fire hose tower,
November 1972.

A common feature of Canadian cities and towns in the late 1800s and early 1900s, such towers were necessary for drying recently used fire hoses, allowing them to hang vertically for drip drying.

Built by a local contractor in the second half of 1902, the Merrickville tower (seen to the left) was about 65 feet high, with a base 10 feet square and a top 7 feet square.

The tower immediately attracted an enterprising person who took photographs overlooking Merrickville in various directions and then sold several of them to postcard companies.

Since practical, affordable colour photography was not possible in the early 1900s, the photographs in question were black-and-white.

Purchased by postcard companies, these black-and-white photographs were then hand painted by one or more persons to produce an image that could be mass-produced as a postcard.

Seen below is a postcard showing the view to the east from this tower.



Birds eye View of Merrickville, Ont. From Hose Tower looking East.

Figure 75 Undated early 1900s Merrickville postcard.

Another early 1900s Merrickville postcard also presents a “Birds Eye View” from the same tower.

But this postcard looks south and provides a perspective similar to the one shown in the “Golf Links in back ground” postcard seen above, although it notably presents a field of view twice as wide as the one shown in the “Golf Links” postcard.



Figure 76 Circa 1903 postcard.

Both the postcard shown immediately above and the “Golf Links in back ground” postcard seem to have used the same original photograph: note that the tree in front of St. Anne’s Church, which was completed in 1903 and was formally opened by a service held that fall, is exactly the same height in each postcard and note also that the tree canopy in each case spreads just far enough left to begin to obscure the bottom corner of the right-most window above the main door of the church.

For the postcard shown immediately above, the artist painted the roof of the church red and painted the house to the left of the church as having a red roof and sand-coloured bricks, for the “Golf Links in back ground” postcard, the artist painted the roof of each of these buildings gray and painted the bricks of the house in question a reddish brown.

Another version of the postcard immediately above shows exactly the same field of view and contains exactly the same accompanying text. It also paints the roof of the house to the left of the church red, but it depicts the bricks of this house not as sand-coloured but rather as reddish brown – as was the case for the “Golf Links in back ground” postcard. Seen below, this postcard seems to have used the same photograph as was used for the other two postcards.



Figure 77 Another undated postcard showing the view looking south from the top of the Merrickville fire hose tower.

The painters responsible for the images on these postcards apparently chose whatever colours they liked for depicting roofs, bricks, leaves, sky, and so on.



Figure 78 Postmark on the back of the postcard immediately above.

Note that the postmark on the postcard above with the wide view of Merrickville (and with the house in question depicted with a red roof and sand-coloured bricks) indicates that it was sent 4 August 1903 (about two months before the church in

the foreground – St. Anne’s Roman Catholic Church – was officially opened).

If all three postcards are indeed based on the same 1903 photograph (as seems likely), one might suppose that the “Golf Links” south of the town existed by the summer of 1903.

Curiously, however, one cannot make out a golf course in the background of any of the three postcards, so, although the text reading “Golf Links in back ground” is evidence that a golf course existed south of town whenever this particular postcard was printed, the photograph itself does not provide evidence of the existence of the golf course in question.

See below, for instance, the “Golf Links in back ground” postcard’s depiction of the fields south of Merrickville and east of Read Street.



Figure 79 Greatly enlarged detail of the postcard showing "Golf Links in back ground."

There is room for a golf course in the fields depicted above, but the painter has depicted none of the fairways, tees, and putting greens associated with a golf course.

Similarly, no golf course is depicted in the same area as shown on the other two postcards.



Figure 80 Greatly enlarged detail from the 1903 postcard.

One can make out quite similar features in the fields depicted by the painters in each of the two enlarged details shown above, but neither painter depicts a recognizable feature of a golf course.

Similarly (as seen below), no features of a golf course are detectable in the only other fields visible in the “Golf Links in back ground” postcard: the fields west of Read Street that are traversed by Corktown Road.



Figure 81 Enlarged detail from the "Golf Links in back ground" postcard.

It is possible, mind you, that a golf course was detectable in the background of the original black-and-white photograph on which each of the three the postcards was based and that no painter deemed these background features worth depicting in the painted version.

Or perhaps when taking the original photograph, the photographer had noticed the golf course in the distance and made a note of this fact when he sold the photograph to postcard companies: “Golf Links in back ground.”

Who knows?

It is also possible that a golf course was laid out in fields south of Merrickville several years after the 1903 photograph was taken and that this golf course became sufficiently well-known as a feature of the town that a postcard company decided to recycle a cropped version of the 1903 photograph and simply assert by a new text that there was a “Golf Links” in the background.

Note that the postcard that indicates “Golf Links in back ground” was cropped to show no more than half of the relatively panoramic view presented on the other two postcards. It much less of Merrickville than the other two postcards show. And it shows at its right margin a red-roofed building on Read Street and a yard to the right of it not shown on the other postcards. The “Golf Links in back ground” postcard seems to have been specially cropped to make sure that the “back ground” comprised not the buildings of Merrickville seen in the other two postcards but rather the fields where the golf course was laid out.

Furthermore, unlike the other postcards, the “Golf Links in back ground” postcard does not bother to mention that it shows a view from the hose tower, and neither does it indicate that it shows a view of just the south part of the town. Instead, it points out that one sees two things: first, a “Birds Eye View of Merrickville, Ont” (perhaps all of Merrickville, for all the person receiving the postcard knows) and, second, the town’s golf course.

And so, a person receiving this postcard was implicitly being told that the “Golf Links” was an important feature of Merrickville.

From the point of view of our interest in the “Golf Links” in question, the curious fact that the golf course to which the postcard refers is not visible oddly affirms its importance: the postcard company regarded the “Golf Links” as such a prominent and well-known feature of Merrickville that it judged this golf course to be worth mentioning despite the fact that it could not be made out in the background.

Finding the “Golf Links” South of the Town

As is the case with the fields adjacent to North Merrickville where the first golf course was laid out in 1897, so with the fields along Read Street where the second golf course was located south or southwest of the town: somewhere under the turf, there are golf balls waiting to be found to tell us just where the golf course was located.

But these golf balls will not be gutta-percha balls, but rather examples of the new golf ball invented by Coburn Haskell in the late 1890s.

<h1>The Haskell Golf Ball</h1>		
<i>A justly celebrated favorite, because of those pre-eminently</i>	<p>MADE IN TWO MARKINGS</p> 	<i>good qualities not possessed by any other ball.</i>
	<p>REGULAR & BRAMBLE</p>	
<p>The experience of golfers everywhere justifies the statement that there is no golf ball like the “Haskell,” and that its use means play of a higher order and the satisfaction that comes to one who has bettered his score or, maybe, reduced the bogey.</p>		
<p>The B. F. Goodrich Co., Akron Rubber Works AKRON, OHIO</p>		
NEW YORK, 86-88 Reade St. DETROIT, 305 Woodward Ave. BUFFALO, 9 West Huron St.	SAN FRANCISCO, 392 Mission St. CHICAGO, 141 Lake St.	PHILADELPHIA, 922 Arch St. BOSTON, 167 Summer St. DENVER, 1615 Tremont St.

Figure 82 An advertisement for the new rubber-cored “Haskell” golf ball published in *Golf*, vol 10 no 4 (April 1902), p. 287.

Featuring a solid rubber core wrapped with high-tension rubber thread, all contained within a thin rubber cover, this new ball displaced the old gutta-percha ball as of 1902 when the U.S. amateur championship was easily won that year by the great Walter J. Travis while using the new ball.

Nicknamed the “Haskell Flyer,” or simply the “Haskell,” the new golf ball flew 20% further than the old ball. In fact, the increased distances over which the new golf ball could be driven may be a reason that the “short” course of 1897 was replaced at some point with a new one (*Official Golf Guide*, p. 316).

Golf Course Three: Church's Grove

How long after 1902 or 1903 golf was still played on the original 1897 course is not clear, but we know that by 1905, some form of golf was also played in Merrickville at a site called "Church's Grove":

The Sunday School of Trinity [Anglican] church had its picnic on Wednesday in Mr. Church's grove, and a very pleasant outing was enjoyed by the scholars and many older friends. The programme embraced the drive from the church to the grove, games of various kinds, singing, football, golf practice, races and abundant feast partaken of in real picnic fashion.

(Merrickville Star, 10 August 1905, p. 1).



Figure 83 Ethel Grace Postlethwaite (1890-1960) circa 1907. Merrickville Historical Society, Photo 2019.FIC.022.

The phrase "golf practice" is ambiguous: does it mean that the golf activity at Church's Grove amounted to no more than practice, or does it mean that the children practised a game of golf?

It is clear that at least one golf skill was practised in competition, for there were two prizes for "Putting the golf ball," one for girls and one for boys (*Merrickville Star*, 10 August 1905, p. 1). The girls' putting prize was won by 15-year-old "Ethel Postlethwaite," niece of the captain of the original Merrickville Golf Club and winner of the 1898

tournament, Charles Postlethwaite (*Merrickville Star*, 10 August 1905, p. 1).



Figure 84 Lawrence Jakes, Merrickville Historical Society, Photo 2023.FIC.016.

Champion of the "boys" was 15-year-old "Lawrence Jakes" (1890-1914), son of Merrickville merchant George Jakes, in whose store Lawrence worked (*Merrickville Star*, 10 August 1905, p. 1).

Poor Lawrence would drown while duck hunting nine years later, a short while after the photograph to the left was taken in 1914.

Whether the facilities for golf at the 1905 church picnic comprised proper golf links or were an impromptu layout of a rudimentary nature is not clear. Had the Sunday School teachers simply dug holes in everyday, ordinary turf for purposes of a crude putting competition, or were the golf facilities of a more sophisticated nature – facilities in place before the picnic was held?

When the Anglican church's Sunday School picnic was held at Church's Grove again in 1906, sports again featured prominently among the activities, but golf was not specifically mentioned: "The annual picnic was held in Church's grove and was largely attended. A good program of sports was held, and other games and amusements, and a bountiful supper all contributed to the enjoyment of the occasion" (*Merrickville Star*, 16 August 1906, p. 1).

Perhaps golf was part of the sports programme; perhaps not.

The report about the 1909 picnic was similar: "Trinity Church Sunday School held its picnic ... in Church's beautiful grove. Conditions were most favorable, the crowd large, the provisions plentiful, and the enjoyment universal. There was a good program of races, sports, baseball, and other attractions" (*Star-Chronicle* [Merrickville], 5 August 1909, p. 1).

Was golf included among the unnamed "sports"?

In 1905, "Church's Grove" was owned by John Muir Church (1869-1948), the manager of the Union Bank in Merrickville. Along with Charles Postlethwaite, Church was one of the most important laypeople in Merrickville's Trinity Anglican Church. In 1904, he chaired the meeting of 50 members of the congregation that almost unanimously agreed to tear down the existing church and replace it with a bigger, better building (which was opened in 1909). So, of course, John Church offered his church the use of his grove for Sunday School picnics.

John was the grandson of Emily Lawrence (1797-1831) and Dr. Basil Rorison Church (1800-1858). The latter (born in Elizabethtown township, Leeds and Grenville County) had settled in Merrickville in 1831 to practice medicine:

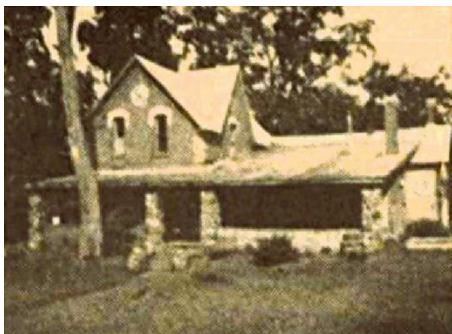


Figure 85 Mid-20th-century view of the Colonel By residence purchased by Basil Church (441 Main Street East today).

Travelling down through the new [Rideau Canal] waterway, [Dr. Basil Church] arrived at the village of Merrickville The village, owing to its situation on the main route to the upper country, was rapidly becoming an active business and even a manufacturing center. Dr. Basil Church, impressed by what he saw, remained over and, hearing that Colonel By's late residence was for sale,

purchased it and the historic residence became the home of the Churches of Merrickville.

(Ottawa Citizen, 18 August 1934, p. 28)



Figure 86 Pedestal of the grave marker for Dr. Basil R. Church, Union Cemetery, Merrickville, Ontario.



Figure 87 Dr. Mills Kimble Church. Merrickville historical Society.

From 1854 to 1858, Church represented the Merrickville area as a Member of the Legislative Assembly of Canada.

He would be succeeded as a doctor in the town by his son, Mills Kimble Church (1828-1904). The latter did not study medicine, however, until he had sated his wanderlust by prospecting for gold (moderately successfully) in Australia. After medical studies at McGill University, he practised in Ottawa and then at Pierpont Manor in Jefferson County, New York State, before settling in Merrickville in the 1860s with his wife Amanda Camilla Merrick, a granddaughter of Merrickville's founder, United Empire Loyalist William Merrick (from Massachusetts).

In 1888, M.K. Church established the town's first drug store – “partly for his own requirements and partly for the requirements of the fast growing community” (*Merrickville Star*, 15 September 1904, p. 8). On his death in 1904, he was said to have possessed “a kind and generous heart, an essential qualification of the true healer,” was known to have “performed many an errand of mercy without exacting any fee,” and was “always held [in] a very high place in the estimation of all classes of people” (*Merrickville Star*, 15 September 1904, p. 8).

By 1848, Basil Church seems to have acquired not just Colonel By's old house on Main Street East, but also the entirety of Wolford Township's Concession A Lot 8 on the eastern edge of Merrickville, as shown on the map below (the “Messrs.

Merrick” owned Concession A Lot 9, where most of central Merrickville would be built).

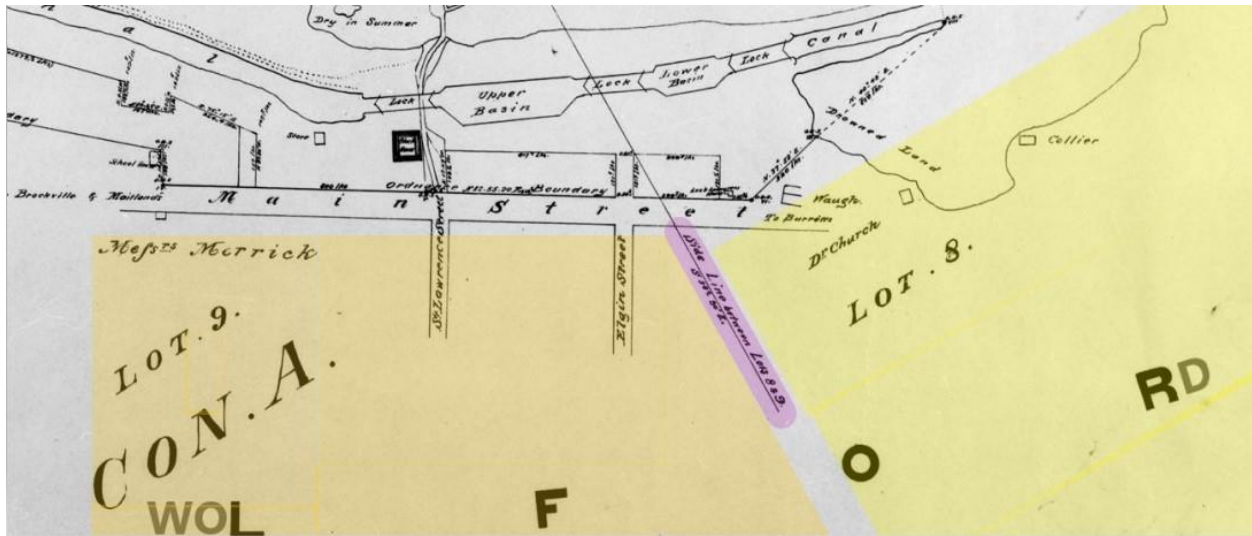


Figure 88 Library and Archives Canada, Collections and Fonds, 25 January 1848 digital map of Merrickville, MIC/410/Rideau Canal/1848 [1874] [Merrickville Lock station]. Lot 8 owned by "Dr. church." Lot 9 owned by the "Messrs.. Merrick."

Basil Church also acquired a second house on Main Street East, as seen on the 1861-62 map below.

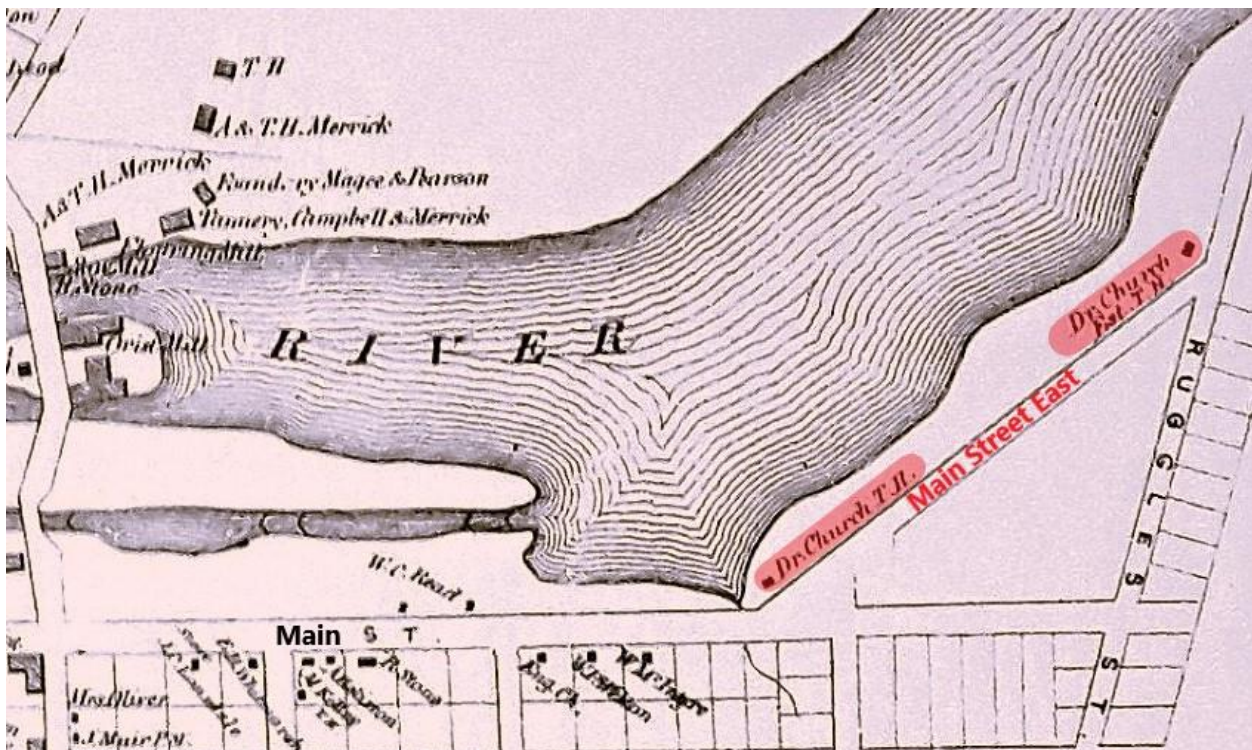


Figure 89 Annotated detail of 1861-62 map of Merrickville. Library and Archives Canada, Collections and Fonds. H2/420/Leeds/1861-62, Box number: 2000220843. "Dr. Church T.H." presumably means "Dr. Church Title Holder."

By the time the map above was drawn in the early 1860s, however, Basil Church was no longer the owner of the two houses in question or of Concession A lot 8, for while living in Toronto in 1858 during his second term as M.P.P., he died suddenly at 57 years of age.

The new owner of Concession A Lot 8 was his son M.K. Church.

Note also that the owner of Concession I Lots 8 and 7 was Basil Church's son-in-law Dr. Christopher Leggo: "He learned his profession chiefly under ... Basil R. Church, of Merrickville, his father-in-law. He practised in Merrickville, for some time, removing to Ottawa in 1866" (*Ottawa Journal*, 27 January 1886, p. 1). It may be that Basil Church had owned all three lots and passed the one along to his son and the others to his daughter and son-in-law.

So, where was "Church's Grove"? It is possible that it comprised the land seen below along the southeast and east bank of the Rideau River as the latter turned north toward the railway bridge.

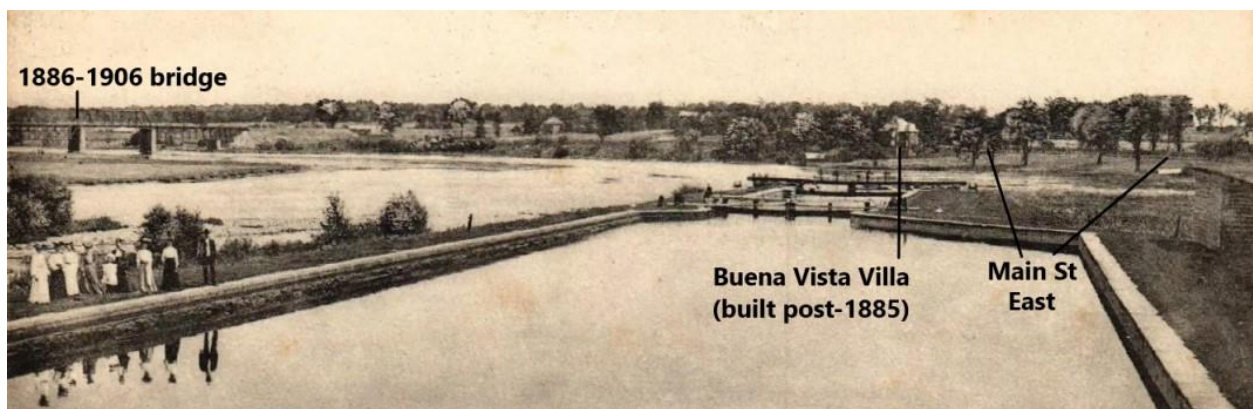


Figure 90 Annotated detail from an undated pre-1907 postcard.

In the photograph above, M.K. Church owned the land from the extreme right edge of the photograph (approximately where half of one of the houses he owned on Main Street East can be seen cut off by the edge of the photograph) past his residence at what is today 441 Main Street East.



Figure 91 Left to right: 441 Main Street East and 435 Main Street East, Merrickville, Ontario.

As we know, the house in which the Church family resided was built by Colonel By (when the latter was personally supervising construction of the locks at Merrickville) and was subsequently purchased by Basil Church. The house in question is obscured in the photograph above by the trees to the north of Buena Vista Villa (to the left of this house in the

postcard photograph above) but can be seen in the contemporary photograph above.

Sometime after the 1885 marriage of M.K. Church's daughter Mildred Lee Church to Thomas Henry Watchorn (a partner in Watchorn & Company, woolen manufacturers, until he retired in the early 1890s), Church allowed this couple to build Buena Vista Villa beside him, less than 100 yards from his own house.

Northeast of Church's house near the railway, the land along the riverbank was relatively treeless.



Figure 92 Photograph of the CPR railway bridge in place from 1886-1906. The land in the foreground is on the east side of the Rideau River.

In the photographs above, what we can see of the land that stretches along the bank of the river from Church's first house on Main Street East all the way to the railway underpass certainly would have made a fine grove for picnics and children's sports. Was this the site of "Church's beautiful grove" (*Star-Chronicle* [Merrickville, Ontario], 5 August 1909, p. 1)?

Note, however, that Church's Grove also had to accommodate adult sporting events on proper playing fields and that it had to accommodate crowds of up to 10,000 people.

The first reference to the Grove that I can find comes in 1894 when every Orange Lodge in Grenville County, as well as several lodges from adjoining counties, came to Merrickville to celebrate "The Glorious 12th" – the annual blow-out celebration of King William III's 1690 victory at the Battle of the Boyne:

The 203rd anniversary of the day that made King William III the unquestioned king of all Ireland was celebrated here [in Merrickville] on the 12th.

The town was handsomely decorated with evergreen trees planted all along St. Lawrence Street, while a number of beautiful arches spanned several of the streets....

During the morning, several smart showers fell.

Although the streets were in a very muddy condition, nothing could daunt the wearer of orange, and he marched through the mud with as much heroism as if he was marching to the relief of Derry or to the sack of Drogheda.

By ten o'clock, every one of the thirty-three lodges had arrived that took part in the procession.

About noon, the clouds rolled by and everything promised a fair afternoon. After all had regaled the inner man, a procession was formed and marched to Dr. Church's grove, headed by the Smiths Falls band

Arriving at the grounds, Mr. T.A. Kidd took the chair and called speakers to the platform [among them, the local M.P.P. and the village's church ministers, including Reverend Aston]

It is estimated that between 7,000 and 8,000 people were within the limits of the corporation and the count showed 1,253 Orangeman in procession....

The hotels were all crowded to their utmost capacity, while the eating and drinking booths all over the town, together with the dancing stands, all did a rushing trade....

One thing was most noticeable and that was the absence of drunkenness. Very few, and those principally old toppers, were seen anything the worse for liquor.

Not an Orangeman was seen under the influence.

Things have changed considerably in thirty years. Such is the effect of education....

(Rideau Record [Smiths Falls], 12 July 1894, p. 3)

The celebration of "The Glorious 12th" was not held in Merrickville every year (Orange Lodges decided in January which village or town would host the party), but when it was held in Merrickville (and when there were similar events in town), Merrickville was filled with visitors (see the postcard below showing crowds during the 24th of May weekend in 1906), and it turns out that Church's Grove was big enough to host the thousands that came to town.



Figure 93 1906 postcard showing crowds in Merrickville on 24 May 1906.

Crowds on “The Glorious 12th” often filled Church’s Grove to capacity, as in 1908 when organizers “expected the greatest gathering ever held in Merrickville ... perhaps ten thousand people”: “At 1 p.m. the procession was formed on the Park grounds and more than an hour was required for the entire marching body to pass any point on the parade line. The procession ended at Church’s Grove, which was over-run with people” (*Merrickville Star*, 9 July 1908, p. 1; 16 July 1908, p. 1).

Church’s Grove, then, must have covered a large area: we know that the grounds were large enough to accommodate a platform for speakers, areas for bands and dancing, areas for sit-down meals, and both a baseball diamond and a soccer pitch.

A large gathering in 1902 to celebrate the coronation of King Edward VII included all of these activities:

The Orange Young Britons will hold a picnic in Dr. Church’s grove on ... Coronation Day.

Addresses will be delivered

The Citizen’s Band has been engaged, and suitable music for dancing will also be arranged.

A baseball match is being arranged for, also, which should prove a good drawing card.

Admission to grounds, including dinner, 25 cents; supper, 15 cents; children under 12, 15 cents.

(Merrickville Star, 7 August 1902, p. 1)

In the event, a soccer match replaced the baseball game:

The picnic held in Dr. Church's grove on Saturday last (Coronation Day) ... was a huge success.

During the afternoon, short addresses were delivered ... [all speakers] were given an attentive hearing by the large gathering.

During the afternoon, a football match was played between Carley's Corners and a Merrickville team.

The game was interesting from start to finish and was closely watched throughout by the spectators. The result was in favor of the visiting team by a score of 2 to 0....

Dancing was indulged in during the afternoon by the gathering, quite a number availing themselves of the opportunity of tripping the light fantastic.

(Merrickville Star, 14 August 1902, p. 1)

Soccer and baseball require large areas of flat, relatively level turf. It is not clear that the land along the banks of the Rideau River between M.K. Church's first house on Main Street East and the railway underpass had areas appropriate for these sports.

Was Church's Grove somewhere else?

It might have been on the east side of the town south of Main Street East, for the Church property comprising Concession A Lot 8 stretched back to what is now McLean Road. This part of the lot was more or less bisected by Collar Hill Road, which was known simply as Collar Street in the late 1800s and early 1900s – a time when a site along this part of Concession A Lot 8 was operated by M.K. Church as a gravel pit.

The mid-twentieth-century photograph below provides a view of Collar Street from Collar Hill Cemetery; in the background is a depression that may have been the Church family's gravel pit.

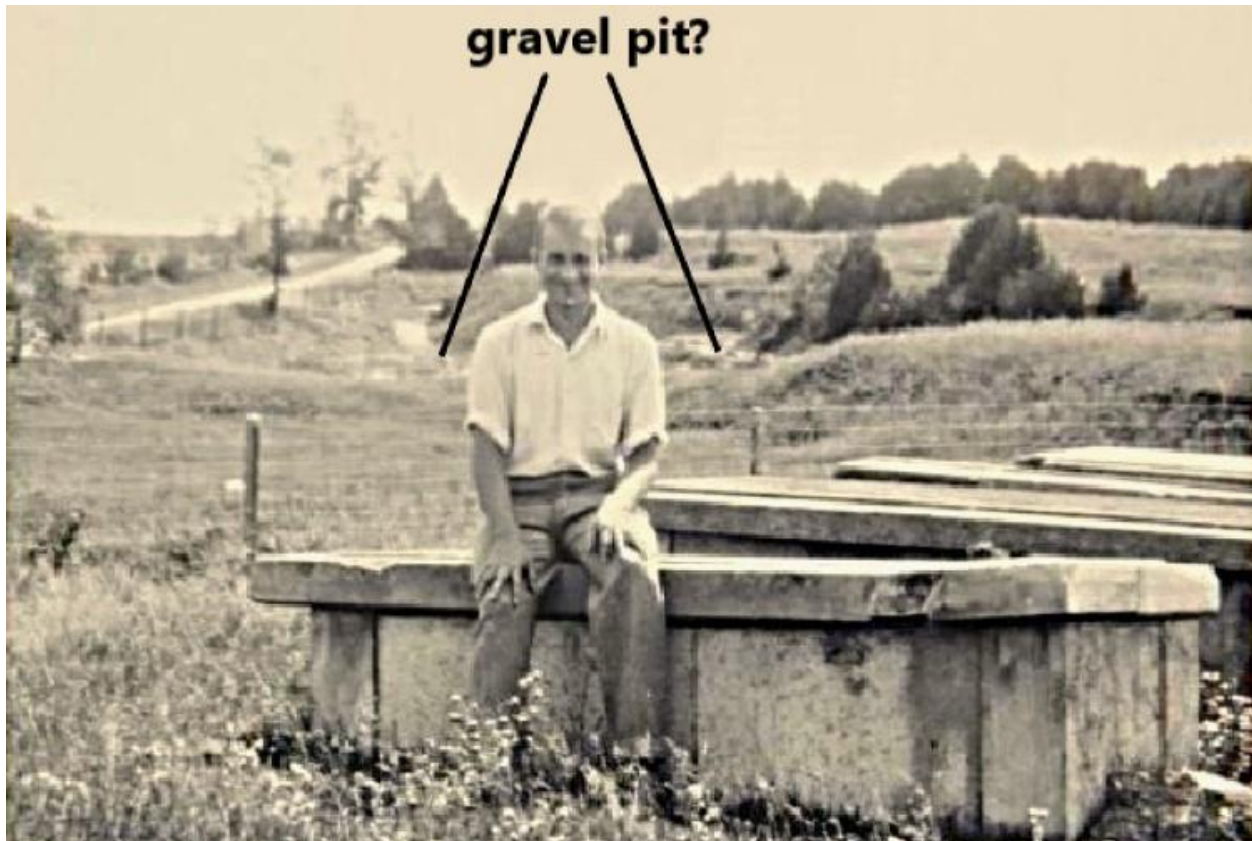


Figure 94 Merrickville Historical Society. "Photograph of Unidentified Man at Collar Hill Cemetery." Circa 1948. Catalog no. 2009.35.8A.

In 1897, M.K. Church agreed to have "gravel taken from his lot on Collar Street" by the town: "A contract was entered into May 1st, 1897, whereby Dr. Church agreed to supply the corporation with gravel for the term of ten years for the sum of \$50" (*Merrickville Star*, 14 November 1901, p. 1). The town used the gravel on its streets.

And so, the mud through which Orangemen occasionally marched on a rainy 12th of July was Church mud, and in the summer, when downtown merchants "sat on their own dry goods boxes dreamily breathing into their lungs a section of the gravel pit," it was Church dust they inhaled (*Merrickville Star*, 28 May 1903, p. 1).

Although the land on either side of Collar Hill Road is today densely overgrown with trees and bushes, it was largely open field in the early 1900s – an area where there might well have been flat, level areas for a baseball diamond and a soccer pitch, a dancing area, a platform for speakers and bands, and a place for a sit-down meal.

And perhaps also a place for "golf practice."

As we know, John Church owned the grove in 1905, having inherited it from his father the year before. Is there any reason to think that he might have laid out some sort of golf course on this property?



Figure 95 John Moir Church, circa 1920.
Merrickville Historical Society.

John Muir Church was born in Merrickville in 1869. He was a good student and he enjoyed athletic pursuits.

When the bicycle fad arrived in Merrickville in the mid-1890s, for instance, a newspaper noted the spectacle of mid-20s John trying to learn how to ride one (*Ottawa Journal*, 21 April 1897, p. 5).

Unlike his grandfather, his father, his father's brother (Clarence Church), and his father's brother-in-law (Christopher Leggo), John chose banking over medicine (as would his two younger brothers).

He began as a cashier in the Union Bank in Merrickville but then moved to the Winchester branch as accountant. He was next appointed accountant at the Union Bank branch in Carleton Place. After three years, he was once again on the move:

Mr. J.M. Church, the genial accountant of the Union Bank here for the past three years, has been transferred to Crysler, Ont., with a promotion to the position of manager, a branch of the bank having been opened at that place.

We congratulate John upon his promotion and, although loath to part with him, wish him the fullest measure of success in his new sphere.

(Carleton Place Herald, cited in the Merrickville Star, 11 January 1903, p. 8)

Even when living in Winchester, Carleton Place, and Crysler, Church (who remained a life-long bachelor) regularly returned to Merrickville to visit his parents at the family home.

It is interesting to note that for two weeks in the summer of 1899, Church served as a temporary replacement for Waddell as manager of the Merrickville Union bank while Waddell was away on vacation. At this time, we recall, Waddell was serving as secretary of the Merrickville Golf Club. Waddell

and Church soon became very good friends, with Church serving as Waddell's best man at his 1901 wedding. Given their mutual interest in sports during the late 1890s and early 1900s, the two friends may well have played golf together on the North Merrickville golf course.

In due course, John Church became just as great a supporter of Merrickville sports as Waddell had been, especially as of 1904 (the year his father died), when he was appointed manager of the Merrickville branch of the Union Bank – "one of our own town boys," noted the editor of the *Merrickville Star*, "for whom we bespeak a hearty reception" (*Merrickville Star*, 22 September 1904, p. 8).

For the next eight years, Church would live with his widowed mother in the family home and serve as a member of the executive committee of many of the town's main sports teams: he was made Honorary President of the hockey club for 1905, 1907, 1908, and Honorary Vice-President for 1910 and 1912; in 1908, he was Treasurer of the Croquet Club; he was Vice-President of the Baseball Club for 1908 and 1912.

He also became an active member of the Merrickville Civilian Rifle Association, the recently established Board of Trade, the Laymen's Missionary Movement, the Conservative Association (like his father), and the Dramatic Club.

It is no wonder that when the Union Bank transferred him to Aylmer, Quebec, in December of 1912, citizens of Merrickville asked the bank to change its mind:

It is with genuine feelings of regret that we announce the departure of Mr. J.M. Church, who has been the very efficient manager of the Union Bank branch here for a number of years.

Mr. Church has been promoted to the bank branch at Aylmer, Que.

When it first became known that Mr. Church had received the new appointment, a widely signed petition was sent to the head office of the Union Bank in an attempt to retain Mr. Church, but in a lengthy reply addressed to the petitioners, it was explained that it was advantageous to all parties in the removal of Mr. Church, chiefly because it was a promotion which he had deserved for some time.

(Star-Chronicle [Merrickville, Ontario], 5 December 1912, p. 1)

One reason to think that Church might have set up some sort of golf facility in his grove is the fact he was instrumental in establishing and managing a new Merrickville club in the spring of 1905:

A number of businessmen of Merrickville got together last Wednesday ... to discuss the advisability of forming a Club in the town and after careful consideration an organization was formed called the Merrickville Club....

The rooms in the Jakes' block will be used as a dropping in place for the members and their friends.

Games, athletics, social intercourse and kindred pastimes are the objects of the organization.

(The Advance [Kemptonville, Ontario], 10 May 1905, p. 1)

The Club soon became known as the Merrickville Social Club, of which Church was elected Treasurer in 1905, and of which he soon became President.

Did Church develop an area in his grove for “golf practice” for members of the new club? After all, the Club was in many ways an organization that brought together the men who were the organizers of local sports, and it seems that they were still interested in “games, athletics, social intercourse and kindred pastimes.” As we know, the grove had long been a place where sports such as soccer and baseball had been played: why not make it a place where Club members could also engage in “golf practice”?

When Church went to Aylmer during the winter of 1912-13, he took his mother with him and sold the family home at 441 Main Street East. Whether or not he sold his grove is not clear. But it continued to be used by the community and continued to be known as Church’s Grove long after the departure of the Churches for Aylmer.

Two years after John Church left Merrickville, for instance, Church’s Grove remained a site for church picnics: “the Presbyterians are to have a picnic in Church’s grove on Labor Day” (*Weekly Advance* [Kemptonville, Ontario], 3 September 1914, p. 1). And as late as 1931, Merrickville’s Golden Key Mission Band (the United Church’s children’s band comprising “little tots,” their favourite diversions consisting of “games ... and candy”) availed itself of the grove: “The Golden Key Mission Band held their annual picnic on Tuesday afternoon at Church’s Grove. A good time was reported” (*Weekly Advance*

[Kemptville, Ontario], 4 July 1931, p. 2; 14 May 1931, p. 5, *The Advance* [Kemptville, Ontario], 9 July 1931, p. 9).

In the end, however, just where Church's Grove was located remains a mystery. As we know, the Church family owned land along the Rideau River and it owned land along Collar Street, yet it might also have owned land elsewhere that contained the grove in question.

We know that Church's Grove was far enough from Trinity Anglican Church for the Sunday School managers to arrange a "drive from the church to the grove" for the children, and we know that it was close enough to the town for 10,000 people to walk there – including more than 1,200 Orangemen who made their way to the grove after marching from the Fair Ground around many of the streets in Merrickville (*Merrickville Star*, 10 August 1905, p. 1).

Golf 1913

The only other reference to the playing of golf in Merrickville after 1905 that I have found occurs in a column about Merrickville news that was regularly printed in the *Weekly Advance* newspaper published in nearby Kemptville (the *Weekly Advance* took over the subscription list of Merrickville's *Star-Chronicle* when the latter went out of business at the end of March of 1913).

In April of 1913, the Kemptville newspaper's Merrickville correspondent wrote to the editor of the *Weekly Advance* as follows "The golf season opened here last week" (*Weekly Advance* [Kemptville], 17 April 1913, p. 13).

The Merrickville correspondent writes not as though golf had suddenly returned to the town after an absence of several years, but rather as though yet another season of golf activity was commencing—as usual, that is.

And so, golf would seem to have had its seasons in Merrickville right down to the beginning of World War I – if not continuously since 1897, at least fairly regularly.

I suspect that by 1913, Merrickville's golfers were playing on the "Golf Links" mentioned on the postcard shown above – that is, a golf course laid out south or southwest of the town. If so, I wonder whether the town's golf enthusiasts had laid out this course themselves or instead availed themselves of the services of a golf professional.

Although the short nine-hole golf course of 1897 was probably laid out by one of the local golfers who had some experience of the game (the most likely candidate being Reverend Aston, who had come to Ottawa from golfing environments at Newburgh, Musselburgh, and Ottawa), by the early 1900s, golf clubs in Eastern Ontario had begun to hire the golf professionals in Montreal, Ottawa, or Toronto to lay out their golf courses.

In Almonte in 1902, for instance, the Almonte Golf Club accepted the offer by the Royal Montreal Golf Club of the loan of its professional, James Black, for the purpose of laying out of its first links. And in 1907, when the Almonte Golf Club moved to new grounds, it brought in George Sargent from the Ottawa Golf Club to lay out its new course. At Caledonia Springs, Charles Murray of Montreal's Westmount Golf Club was brought in to build a nine-hole course in the spring of 1904. And the Picton

Golf Club brought in George Cumming of the Toronto Golf Club to lay out its first nine-hole course in 1907.

Perhaps someday we will find in an old newspaper or golf magazine evidence of a golf professional's visit to Merrickville in the early 1900s to lay out a new golf course.

That there is no further mention of the "Golf Links" in Merrickville after 1913 is perhaps not surprising, for golf became relatively dormant in Canada during World War I.

So many golf enthusiasts enlisted in the Canadian Expeditionary Force or left their towns and cities to become involved in the civilian war work (in industry and government) that most golf clubs scaled back their operations. For the duration of the war, big clubs in Eastern Ontario, such as Royal Ottawa and Rivermead, suspended competitions with other golf clubs, and even suspended competitions within the individual clubs. Furthermore, like big golf clubs from coast to coast, Royal Ottawa dedicated parts of its property to growing vegetables and grazing sheep to provide food for the war effort.

Many small golf clubs simply disbanded.

Such was the case in Almonte.

Such may have been the case in Merrickville.

Golf Course Four: Love's Labours Lost

There was a fourth golf course laid out in Merrickville.

In the summer of 1923, the Smiths Falls *Record* reported on the most popular sports being played in the town:

Merrickville News

Lawn-tennis and golf are engaging the attention of a number here this summer, while there are of course those who play baseball.

Manager Killaly of the Union Bank is believed to be responsible for the introduction of golf, which is played on the fair grounds – grounds very fair for the pastime, though scarcely large enough.

The going away of J.E. Angus, combined with other circumstances, has given croquet a temporary quietus.

(Smith Falls Record [Smiths Falls, Ontario], 19 July 1923, p. 2)

The Union Bank manager in question was Richard Hartley Killaly, and he was new to town.

News had emerged in Merrickville at the beginning of February 1923 of an imminent change at the Union Bank: “C.A. Wright, manager of the Merrickville branch of the Union Bank of Canada is about to be promoted to take charge of the branch of the same institution at St. Catharines” (*Daily Standard* [Kingston, Ontario], 5 February 1923, p. 12). Wright, who had come to Merrickville from the Crysler branch in 1918, knew he was going to St. Catherines, where Killaly was manager. And Killaly, of course, knew that he was leaving St. Catharines, but he did not know at first that he would be replacing Wright in Merrickville, for the Union Bank’s initial plan was that Wright would be “succeeded by W.J. Dickson of Toronto” (*Daily Standard* [Kingston, Ontario], 5 February 1923, p. 12).

But it was Killaly who arrived in Merrickville at the beginning of March 1923. And like all previous Union Bank managers sent to Merrickville, he soon integrated himself into the community: he became an active member of the local Masonic lodge, participated in the high school’s field day at the Fair Grounds, acted as a judge at the public school’s writing competition, and so on.

Three decades before, Union Bank manager J.B. Waddell had been a founding member of the Merrickville Golf Club, then Union Bank manager J.M. Church made Church's Grove available for "golf practice" in 1905, and, for some reason, R.H. Killaly's first contribution to community life in Merrickville in the spring of 1923 seems also to have been to organize a golf course for Merrickville.

Why did he do this?



Figure 96 Hamilton Hartley Killaly (1800-1870), 1862.

Killaly was born in Niagara-on-the-Lake in 1874 but raised elsewhere: first in Lachine, Quebec, where his father, Hamilton Hartley Killaly, Jr (1839-1892), was employed as a civil engineer at the Lachine canal, and then (from age ten onwards) in Morrisburg, where his father was sent in 1884 "as resident engineer of the Cornwall and Williamsburg canals enlargement" (*Daily Standard-Freeholder* [Cornwall, Ontario], 16 September 1947, p. 11).

Hamilton Hartley Killaly's father, Hamilton Hartley Killaly, Sr (1800-1874), had also been a civil engineer. Educated at Trinity College, Dublin, Ireland, he immigrated to Canada in the late 1830s and surveyed the Welland Canal. He was subsequently appointed Chairman of the Board of Works for Lower Canada, heavily involved in building canals along the St. Lawrence River.

The son of pioneering civil engineers on his father's side, R.H. Killaly descended through his mother, Charlotte Elizabeth Jane McMurray (1843-1928), both from a pioneering Anglican minister and from an Ojibway chieftain.



Figure 97 Susan Neengai Oshawguscoday Waishkey Johnston.

His mother was the daughter of Reverend William McMurray (1810-1894) of Niagara-on-the-Lake, where the latter was the minister at St. Mark's Anglican Church (in whose churchyard R.H. Killaly would be buried). In the early 1830s, even before he was ordained a minister in the Anglican church, McMurray was sent to Sault Ste Marie to convert the local indigenous peoples to Christianity, in which endeavour he was very successful. He married Charlotte Oge-bu-no-quah Johnston, a daughter of fur trader John Johnston, Sr. (1762-1828), on the one hand, and Susan Neengai Oshawguscoday Waishkey (1772-1843), on the other. The latter was a daughter of an Ojibwa chieftain (R.H. Killaly's great-great-grandfather).

R.H. Killaly became neither a civil engineer nor an Anglican minister, but rather a banker. He began with “Molson’s Bank in Montreal and other places” and then in 1912 was appointed manager of a branch of the Union Bank on St. Catherine’s Street in Montreal (*Financial Post* [Toronto, Canada], 9 March 1918, p. 8). He would later be transferred to St. Catherine’s, Ontario, in 1918, to Merrickville in 1923, to Carleton Place in 1929, and finally to Lambeth (near London, Ontario) in 1930, after which he retired to St. Catherine’s in 1935.

Killaly’s sporting passion was not golf, but competitive shooting. In St. Catharines, he was a member of the Garden City Gun Club, notorious locally for being willing to travel through bad weather to compete against gun clubs far and near. A blizzard was no deterrent to this hardy band:

The regular bi-monthly shoot of the Jordan Gun Club was held in a howling blizzard on Saturday, and it speaks highly of the enthusiasm which the trap-shooters show in the sport when they shoot under such bad weather conditions.

Several members of the Garden City Gun Club ... motored out [to Jordan Station] and, after bucking several big snowdrifts, arrived to enjoy the afternoon’s sport.

(The Standard [St. Catharines, Ontario], 28 February 1921, p. 3)

The St. Catherine’s newspaper was impressed: “These boys certainly deserve credit for the enthusiasm they display toward the trap-shooting game” (*The Standard* [St. Catharines, Ontario], 14 March 1921, p. 5).

Killaly won one of the trap-shooting prizes, so, of course, the drive was worth it!

The only connection between Killaly and the game of golf that I can find comes from an obituary item about him, the local newspaper observing after his death in St. Catharines in 1943 that he had been “actively connected with the St. Catharines Winter Club in the capacity of secretary and was also a former secretary of the St. Catharines Golf Club” (*The Standard* [St. Catharines, Ontario], 9 December 1943, p. 2).

The writer of this newspaper item reports accurately only on Killaly’s activities in St. Catherine’s since his retirement to the city in 1935. Even so, he writes quite inaccurately that Killaly “had resided in St. Catherine’s for the past 15 years, previous to that time being located in Montreal” (*The Standard* [St. Catharines, Ontario], 9 December 1943, p. 2). As we know, after Killaly left St. Catherine’s in 1923, he did not make the city his residence again until his retirement in 1935, which means that when he died in

1943, he had resided in the city for the past eight years (not “the past 15 years”). Claiming that before retiring to St. Catharines, Killaly had been “located in Montreal,” the writer seems unaware that Killaly had come from Montreal to serve as manager of the St. Catharines Union Bank from 1918 to 1923. And the writer does not know that after beginning as a banker in Montreal, Killaly had also been manager of the Union Bank in Merrickville (1923-1929), Carleton Place (1929), and Lambeth (1930-35).

It seems likely, then, that the writer’s mention of Killaly’s service as secretary of the St. Catharines Golf Club refers not to the years 1918 to 1923 but rather to a time in the late 1930s or early 1940s during Killaly’s retirement. Note that the writer’s other mention of Killaly’s work as a sports club secretary refers to his service at the Winter Club for which he became secretary in 1940.

Apart from the obituary reference to his role at some point as secretary of the St. Catharines Golf Club, I can find no evidence that Richard Hartley Killaly ever played a round of golf anywhere – other than (perhaps!) on his own golf course at Merrickville.

I suspect that the key to understanding Killaly’s role in laying out the golf course on the Merrickville Fair Grounds in 1923 is his marriage from 14 years before:

The marriage took place quietly on Saturday afternoon at St. Mathias’ Church, Westmount, of Miss Sarah Louise Mewhort, daughter of Mr. Wilson F. Mewhort, to Mr. Richard Hartley Killaly of the Molson’s Bank, son of the late Hamilton Hartley Killaly, C.E., of Morrisburg, Ont., and of Mrs. Killaly of Montreal, and grandson of the late Archdeacon McMurray, of Niagara, and the late Hon. Hamilton Hartley Killaly, C.E., of Toronto.

(Montreal Star, 28 June 1909, p. 5)

From the point of view of the history of golf in Merrickville, the most important fact about Killaly’s bride is not mentioned in the announcement above: she was a devotee of the Royal and Ancient Game.

Note, however, that her name was not “Newhort,” but rather Mewhort, and that her father was not “Wilson S. Newhort,” but rather Wilson Ferguson Mewhort (1839-1916).

Born to Scottish immigrants Jean Anne Malloch (1847-98), of Perth, Scotland, and the latter’s husband, Wilson Ferguson Mewhort (1839-1916), a successful Montreal merchant, real estate agent, and financial agent, Sarah Louise Mewhort (1870-1946) was one of three daughters.

Her younger sisters would graduate from nursing schools in the United States: youngest sister Jessie married a doctor and moved to Virginia; her other sister Helen became a nurse in Buffalo and would regularly visit Louise in St. Catherines.

Louise, however, became a teacher.

She attended the High School for Girls in Montreal, graduating with the Diploma "Associate in Arts" in 1887. She then enrolled in McGill University. In 1888, she was appointed Secretary for "second year lady undergraduates of McGill University" (*Montreal Herald*, 9 October 1888, p. 7).

In the early 1890s, she graduated with a B.A. and became a high-school teacher, appointed to Montreal's Riverside Educational Institute in 1893. But shortly thereafter she returned as teacher to her alma mater, the Montreal High School for Girls, where she may have been one of the first teachers appointed to teach physical education to girls.

She flourished as a teacher for two decades. In 1909, as "Mrs. L. Mewhort Killaly, B.A.," she spoke at the "45th annual convention of the Provincial Association of Protestant Teachers of Quebec" (*The Daily Witness* [Montreal Quebec], 9 October 1909, p. 4). Around the start of World War I in 1914, however, she was pensioned off for physical inability to do her work.

She was keen on sports from an early age. In the early 1890s, for instance, she participated regularly in tandem canoe races held at various Montreal-area yacht clubs. Sometimes her partner was a woman; sometimes it was a man.

And then, in her early thirties, she discovered golf.

When the Westmount Golf Club was founded in her own neighbourhood in 1902, she immediately became a member of the club and was soon competing on its ladies' team against other clubs. In 1905, when the women's team of the Royal Montreal Golf Club played the best golfers from the other clubs in Montreal, Louise Mewhort was selected for this All-Montreal all-star team (*Gazette* [Montreal, Quebec], 9 June 1905, p. 4).

She would soon join the Beaconsfield Golf Club and then the Royal Montreal Golf Club. Immediately selected to the ladies' team at each of these clubs, she played against other clubs as far away as Ottawa and Quebec City. Wherever she became a member, she immediately became one of the top golfers, and she soon became a leading figure in the "ladies' sections" of these golf clubs by election to executive committees, handicap committees, and so on.

Her Montreal golf résumé was substantial: she defeated many of the top women golfers of other clubs in match play, she won an all-Montreal single-day tournament, she competed in the Montreal City and District Championships (she won the Approaching and Putting competition), and she competed in the handicap tournament of the Royal Canadian Golf Association national amateur championship in 1913.

And so, from 1902 to 1917, Louise Mewhort/Killaly was one of the stars in the Montreal golf firmament.

But then her husband was transferred to St. Catharines.

When the couple moved to St. Catharines in 1918, Lousie joined the St. Catharines Golf Club. In 1920, she was elected Captain of the ladies' section of the Club, which suggests that she was recognized as one of the best women players. She played competitions at the Club out of the A Class, of course, and in 1920 won both low gross competitions and handicap competitions. When partnered with other players, she also won Foursomes competitions (in which golfers play as a team of two, playing shots alternately).

As Captain of the St. Catharines Golf Club, she seems also to have had important committee responsibilities. And as Captain, she was also the one to take charge each spring of nominations to the Club's executive committee.

Furthermore, as Captain, she led the women's golf team in matches against other clubs, meaning that she usually played in the first match against the other club's best player. In the early 1920s, she led the team in matches against Glendale, Lockport, Niagara Falls, Niagara-on-the-Lake, and so on.

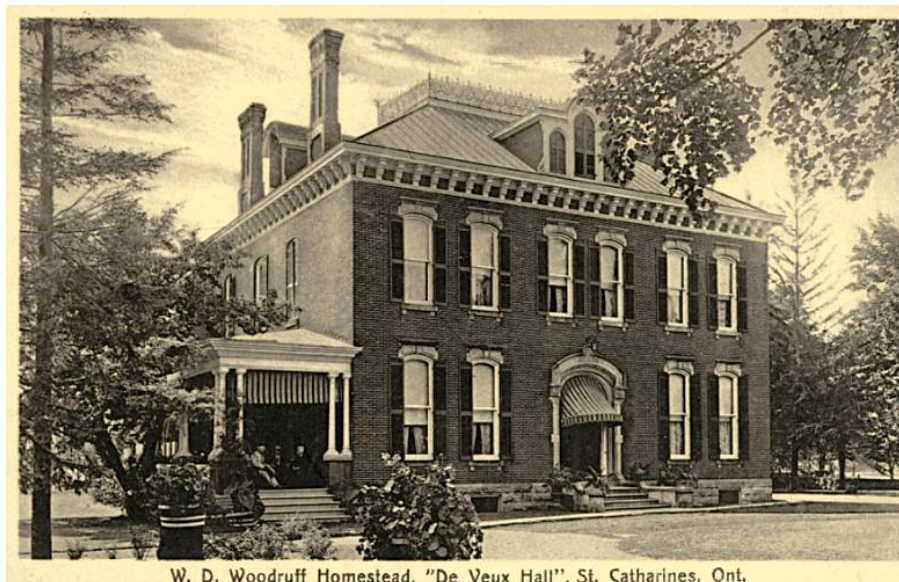


Figure 98 Early 20th-century postcard showing Deveaux Hall, St. Catharines, Ontario.

Louise became a very good friend of the President of the ladies' section of the St. Catharines Golf Club, Annie Leslie Woodruff (née Wallis, 1874-1934) – the unexpectedly widowed wife of 56-year-old paper manufacturer Welland Deveaux Woodruff (1861-1920),

long-serving President of the St. Catherines Golf Club.

Annie Woodruff regularly hosted ladies' section elections, executive committee meetings, and prize giving ceremonies at Deveaux Hall (seen above). Annie and Louise soon became regular companions, with Louise regularly asked by Annie to help serve tea at high-society gatherings at Deveaux Hall, and with Annie regularly inviting Louise to visit her at Deveaux Hall after Louise had moved with Richard to Carleton Place and then Lambeth.

But there was no need for Louise to visit Annie and stay at Deveaux Hall when Richard was transferred to Merrickville in the spring of 1923, for Louise decided that she would not move to Merrickville.

She was thoroughly invested in her golf life at the Club and in her wider life in St. Catharines. She presided over teas held at the St. Catherines Golf Club, she hosted meetings of the St. Catharines Women's University Club at her home, she acted as a patroness of the Girls Sports Club of St. Catharines, she was a fund raiser for the local YWCA, and she competed for the Lincoln Regiment Badminton Club of St. Catharines. When Richard moved to Merrickville at the beginning of March 1923, Louise was at a special golf club event at Deveaux Hall – this time receiving an award for wins during the previous season.

For the six years of Richard's tenure as Union bank manager in Merrickville from March of 1923 to January of 1929, the social columns of newspapers in St. Catharines and in the Merrickville area never note an instance of "Mr. and Mrs. R.H. Killaly" travelling together to this or that destination. Instead, we learn of Louise participating in events in St. Catharines, and we read of Richard in Merrickville travelling alone to do this and that here and there.

Reports of his travel in 1923 are typical of every year of his time in Merrickville. In May, we read the following in the St. Catherine's newspaper: "Mr. R.H. Killaly was in town for the weekend" (*The Standard* [St. Catharines, Ontario], 29 May 1923, p. 2). Killaly spent the Labour Day weekend duck hunting in the woods southwest of Merrickville (*Record News* [Smiths Falls, Ontario], 6 September 1923, p. 2). He took time away from Merrickville in November: "Mr. R.H. Killaly, manager of the Union Banks, is away on a couple of weeks' vacation" (*Record News* [Smiths Falls, Ontario], 8 November 1923, p. 2). There is no mention of Mrs. Killaly in connection with Merrickville.

I wonder if Merrickville's fourth golf course originated as a labour of love: that is, as a strategy on the part of a Union Bank manger transferred to Merrickville to persuade his golf-mad wife to live with him in the town – or at least to visit him.

Alas, if so, love's labours were lost: Louise did not come to Merrickville.

Yet at the beginning of 1929, when her husband was made the manager of the Union Bank in Carleton Place, she decided to move there and join him!

Why was it that Louise was willing to live in Carleton Place but not in Merrickville?

Carleton Place had a golf course!

And so, Richard and Louise were back together again, and they stayed together.

They remain together to this day, for they lie buried side-by-side in the churchyard of St. Mark's Anglican Church in Niagara-on-the-Lake – the church once presided over by Richard's grandfather.



Figure 99 Grave marker for R.H. Killaly and Louise Mewhort. Note that the latter's name was spelled Mewhort and she was born in 1870. St. Mark's Anglican Church, Niagara-on-the-Lake, Ontario.

The St. Mark's churchyard is just four blocks from the Niagara-on-the-Lake golf course, where golf has been played since the mid-1870s and where Louise played many a round in the 1920s.

One should have known that Louise simply had to reside near a golf course!

Afterword

At this point, we do not know the precise lifespan of either the first Merrickville Golf Club or any subsequent golf club formed in the town.

And neither do we know precisely where the first, second and third of the Merrickville golf courses was laid out.

Yet for all that we do not know about the late-1800s and early-1900s golf clubs and golf courses of Merrickville, at least we now know that they existed.

A start on recovering the history of golf in Merrickville has been made.