

The Almonte Golf Club

**A Story of
Common Cause**

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By Donald J. Childs

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Cover photograph: Alexander George Rosamond, Almonte, Ontario, early 1900s.

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Preface

The Almonte Golf Club has long been forgotten.

The last round was played at the club in 1927, so no former member is still alive. I can find no photographs of its golf course. It is not known to the Canadian Golf Hall of Fame, which does not include it on its historical map of known Canadian golf course locations.

The club was founded in 1902. It laid out four or five different nine-hole golf courses. It staged club competitions for men, women, and juniors. It played home and away matches against the Perth Golf Club, the Ottawa Golf Club, and the Rivermead Golf Club. Its professional course record was set by a future four-time winner of the Canadian PGA championship.

The Almonte Golf Club should be remembered, and not just because of the facts recited above.

Its history illustrates the way small-town golf clubs and their golf courses were born in Canada when golf first became popular in the decades before World War I. And it also shows how established golf clubs at Perth and Ottawa helped people in Almonte build their golf course, making common cause in the promotion of the new game.

Beginnings

A large number of the first golf clubs and golf courses in Canada, like Almonte's, lived but a little while. Others remain alive and well today. In most cases, the stories of their beginnings have many things in common.

Small towns like Almonte generally first became aware of golf when a prominent local person who knew and loved the game drove a few stakes into a town's common, or its fair grounds, or a farmer's field on the edge of town, and then began firing a golf ball at the stakes in sequence. This person was perhaps an immigrant from Scotland or England who had played the game in "the old country." Or this person might have been a businessman, lawyer, banker, or doctor who had encountered the game in Canada – probably at Montreal or Toronto, where golf clubs dated back to the 1870s.

In the 1890s and early 1900s, so far as the Canadian general public was concerned, a hickory stick with an iron blade attached to its bottom end was a very unusual object, so anyone who walked across town clutching the half-dozen clubs comprising the standard set in those days was inevitably asked what these instruments were for and how they were used.

And curious members of the public always stopped to watch an early golfer at play.

In league with the two or three – or maybe half a dozen – other men in the community who knew something of the game, and hopeful of recruiting for their game a few curious local sportsmen, perhaps baseball players, or cricket players, these early small-town golfers inevitably tried to start a golf club.

Such was the case at Perth.

As Joe McLean observes, "The original three-hole course was designed and put in play in 1890 by Captain A.C. Matheson on a portion of his pastureland located beside the Tay River.... He was inspired to build his course and promote the game of golf to 'men of note' within the Town of Perth after visiting Montreal, Quebec, where he was first introduced to the game" (*Flagstick*, 1 September 2015).

Similar stories unfolded in Napanee, Picton, Brockville, Carleton Place, and Smiths Falls.

Beginning in 1886, Napanee lawyer Walter S. Herrington each summer invited dozens of selected friends from across Canada and the United States to his Camp Le Nid on the shores of the Bay of Quinte, where he introduced golf in the mid-1890s.



Figure 1 Golfers at Camp Le Nid, late 1890s. Photo courtesy of Museum and Archives, County of Lennox & Addington.

The sight of his guests carrying bags of golf clubs was to prompt the organization of local golf clubs.

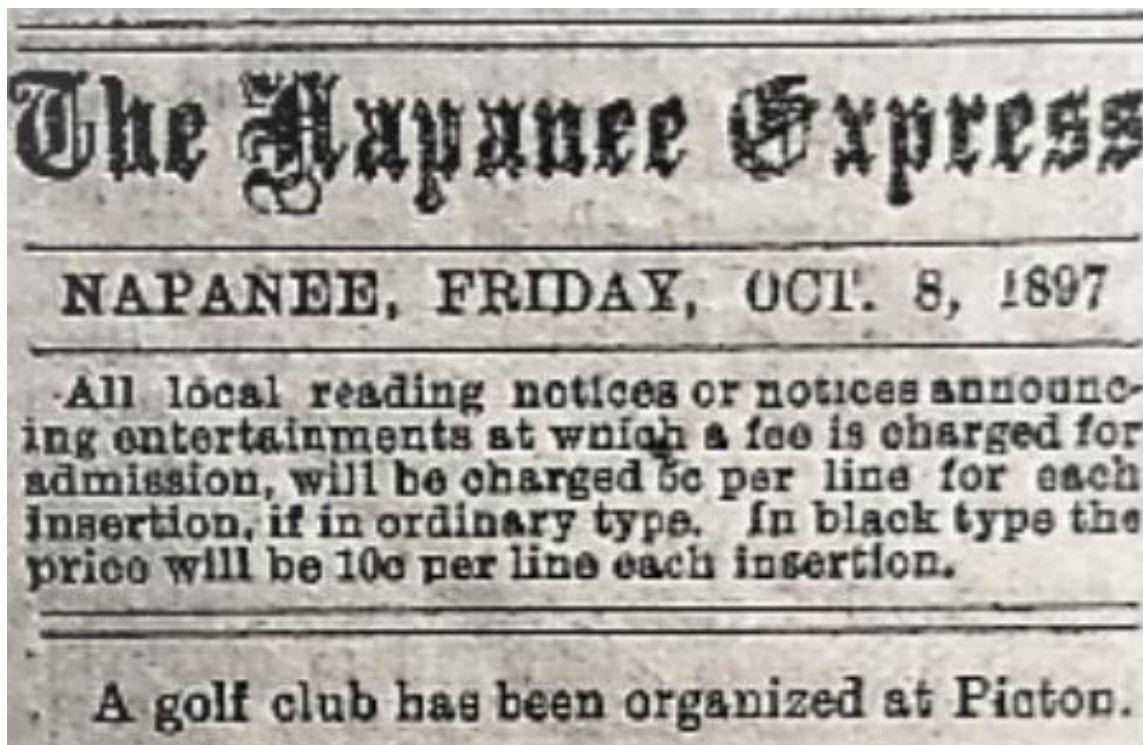


Figure 2 Napanee Express, 8 October 1897, p. 1.

Alas, the newspaper item above is the only evidence of Picton's first golf club. The town did not organize an enduring golf club until 1902.

The *Almonte Gazette* regularly announced the formation of similar early golf clubs in communities throughout Eastern Ontario. For instance, "Brockville has a golf club" (13 May 1898, p. 8). Similarly, we find a reference to the organization of a golf club at Carleton Place later the same year ("The junction town ... is to have a golf club"), but it would not be until 1915 that the golf club that has lasted until today would be established (*Almonte Gazette*, 2 September 1898, p. 8). What would become the Poonahmalee Golf Club of Smiths Falls was being organized in the summer of 1899: "An effort is being made to form a golf club in Smiths Falls" (*Almonte Gazette*, 28 July 1899, p. 6).

Napanee formed its first golf club in 1897, and like Perth's, it still exists today.

Almonters organized their first golf club in 1902, and the newspapers of both Almonte and Ottawa were full of its story.

Almonte Golf 1902

The earliest recorded attempt to organize a golf club in Almonte was not successful – at least not over the long term. But a golf club was formed, a nine-hole golf course was laid out, and play occurred over two seasons. And we have plenty of evidence of the first club's history.

The *Almonte Gazette* first mentions it at the beginning of April in 1902: "A golf club is one of the possibilities this summer in Almonte. Mr. J.H. Porritt, who is an enthusiastic golfer, and who has played over the Montreal links, is endeavoring with much prospect of success to organize a club" (11 April 1902, p. 1).



Figure 3 James Porritt, *Ottawa Citizen*, 16 May 1911, p. 8

Later described as "one of Almonte's best known sportsmen," James Porritt was a wealthy 56-year-old businessman when he began promoting the idea of a golf club for Almonte (*Ottawa Citizen*, 10 May 1911, p. 8). When he revealed his plans to the newspaper, he had been in town only a matter of months.

Born in Yorkshire, England, in 1845, he came to Canada in 1887 as "an extensive woollen importer, having large interests in mills in both Almonte and Port Elmsley" (*Ottawa Journal*, 22 August 1904, p. 9) He arrived in Almonte in 1901 and resided in a house on St. Paul Street on the eastern edge of the town. He owned or rented pastureland that ran south from this house along the east bank of the Mississippi River.

Although new in town, he quickly adopted the behaviour of the town's leaders, on the one hand energetically serving on the town council (travelling to Toronto to lure industry to Almonte), the board of directors at the hospital, the Board of Health, and so on, and on the other hand serving as president of everything from the Citizens' Brass Band to the town's hockey and lacrosse leagues. He was also involved in the organization and management of the Ottawa Valley Hockey League and the Eastern Ontario Lacrosse League. He was noted for his charitable acts, being a generous

donor to St. Paul's Anglican Church in Almonte; in fact, he was once criticized by a fellow town councillor for donating money to charity from the town's contingency funds without adequate authorization.

Porritt also spent freely in support of the sports he loved.

In 1904, for instance, we learn that at Ottawa's first large-scale exhibition of automobiles for purchase "Several sales [had] been made since the fair opened, one of the purchasers being Mr. James Porritt of Almonte" (*Ottawa Citizen*, 22 September 1904, p. 10). It turns out that one of the most important reasons that Porritt bought one of these new-fangled machines was to facilitate travel across eastern Ontario to watch sporting contests: "Messrs. W. Kelly, E. McGregor, S. Cullen, captain, and President James Porritt of the Almonte Lacrosse Club visited Ottawa on Saturday and attended the Cornwall-Capital game at Varsity oval.... The Almonte gentlemen made the trip from their town in Mr. Porritt's touring car, covering the distance in two and a half hours" (*Ottawa Citizen*, 6 June 1905, p. 8). A horse trotting the same distance might have taken twice as long.



Figure 4 James Porritt's touring car, circa 1904. The young boy in the front seat may be James Porritt's son Harry.

The local newspaper's report on Porritt's efforts to organize a golf club reads like a summary of his talk with the newspaper's reporter: "Suitable ground for links can be obtained in the vicinity of the high school, and the game is a comparatively inexpensive one to play, and is one which offers exercise of a gentle yet exhilarating nature to those who indulge therein; it should 'fill a long felt want' in the lives of those who do not engage in more active sports" (*Almonte Gazette*, 11 April 1902, p. 1).

The line that golf would “fill a long felt want” in the lives of Almonsters would be repeated in the newspaper as the game was promoted in the following years.

Almonte’s high school, next to which the land proposed for the golf course was located, was on the north side of the Mississippi River on the northern edge of the town limits. It faced Martin Street, which was the name of the 10th Line of Ramsay Township running north through Almonte from St. Paul Street into the country beyond the town limits.

The high school had an open lot that served as a commons (land belonging to members of the community as a whole) across the street from it on the east side of Martin Street.



Figure 5 An enhanced, modified sketch of the Almonte High School, circa late 1890s, showing part of the open ground on the lot across the street from it to the east and north-east that served the community as a commons. Note the variety of “commons” activity depicted on it.

We catch a view of part of this lot in the photograph below, taken several decades after the sketch above was drawn and the fence seen in it had been removed.



Figure 6 Martin St. runs in front of the high school. Cars parked beside the school are on Stephen St. This photograph seems to date from around 1920. Historic Photo Archive. <https://almonte.com/our-history/historic-photo-archive/nggallery/page/10>

Remarkably, this area remains open ground today. Part of it serves as a parking lot; part of it serves as a baseball field. A section of this area can be seen in the photograph below (which shows a view from the front of the high school north-east across Martin Street).



Figure 7 Google Street View photograph of the open ground north-east of the high school across Martin Street where James Porritt proposed to locate the first golf course of the Almonte Golf Club in 1902.

Less than a week after the newspaper report of Porritt's efforts to form a golf club in Almonte, a meeting was announced: "Almonters who are interested in the formation of a golf club are invited to attend a meeting in the council chamber of the town hall next Tuesday evening at 8 o'clock, when the organization of a club will be considered" (*Almonte Gazette*, 18 April 1902, p. 4).

The Almonte newspaper was not a neutral observer of developments in this matter; it made common cause with Porritt and promoted the sport as a benefit to the Almonte community in general and to women in particular:

Golf will be a new article of sport to Almonters and differs from other summer games in that ladies can play it as well as gentlemen – indeed golf would be lacking one of its charms if the fairer sex absented themselves from the links. It is therefore hoped that many ladies will attend the organization meeting on Tuesday evening and be prepared to extend their patronage to the club if it be formed.... Golf clubs in adjoining towns and cities will welcome the formation of a club in Almonte, and a series of matches could without difficulty be arranged. (Almonte Gazette, 18 April 1902, p. 4)

Again, we seem to find in the paragraph above a paraphrase of Porritt's conversations with the writer at the *Almonte Gazette*.

The summary of the meeting to organize the golf club certainly presents Porritt as the main source of information and ideas about how to go about establishing a club and laying out of a golf course:

A meeting was held in the council chamber on Tuesday evening for the purpose of organizing a golf club for Almonte. Mr. Porritt, who has taken an active part in the matter, stated that good grounds could be had on the commons beyond the high school, and explained the steps necessary to put the grounds in shape. It was decided to proceed with organization provided a sufficient number of members can be secured to warrant incurring the necessary expense, and a committee was appointed to procure members. Already a number have been secured, and a meeting will be held later to take definite action. (Almonte Gazette, 25 April 1902, p. 8).

Porritt had clearly been working on his golf club plans for some time before the newspaper first reported on them. He had done his reconnaissance on possible sites for a golf course, and he had

contacted the Royal Montreal Golf Club for advice on laying out a golf course, such that he was able to tell the newspaper that “The Montreal Golf Club has kindly offered its professional to lay out links at Almonte” (*Almonte Gazette*, 18 April 1902, p. 4).

The golf professional in question was James A. Black, one of Canada’s first professional golfers.



Figure 8 James Black, circa 1905. Enhanced, modified photograph from the Charles R. Murray albums, Canadian Golf Hall of Fame.

In the late 1890s, Black had come to Quebec from Troon, Scotland, where he and three other brothers who also immigrated to Canada grew up on golf courses. Their father Alexander was the superintendent at Troon of two 18-hole layouts.

Black was joined in Canada by brothers Gavin, John, and Davie, the latter two also being professional golfers (John would tie for second place at the 1922 U.S. Open with Bobby Jones, one stroke behind Gene Sarazen). Their father Alexander also came to Canada to work as a greenkeeper at the Rivermead Golf and Country Club in 1914.

James Black served as the professional at Royal Montreal until 1904, and then moved to the Beaconsfield golf club. He also laid out a number of other golf courses, mostly in Quebec.

In the winters, he served as a golf professional in California, along with John and Davie, the three always finishing high in the California Open (with John winning it several times).

Whether or not James Black came to Almonte to lay out its first golf course north of the high school is not clear. I suspect that he did. When Porritt told the newspaper that Royal Montreal had offered its golf professional to lay out the course, he was probably reporting the Montreal club’s response to his request that Black be allowed to do so. Black himself was probably the source of Porritt’s explanation to the club of “the steps necessary to put the grounds in shape” (*Almonte Gazette*, 25 April 1902, p. 8). Black was probably just waiting for the call to come to Almonte.

Later Information provided in the newspaper also suggests that Black probably visited the town.

On the one hand, the newspaper refers to the game of golf generally and reports particular news about golf in Montreal in a way that suggests its reporter had been talking with someone like Black:

Golf is a great game and is one that commends itself to those who cannot spare the time necessary for other games. One or two or a dozen can play. In Montreal there are three clubs with an aggregate membership of over 1,000. Professional and business men who are cooped up all day are beginning to realize that it provides just what they want in the way of exercise without being too violent. And the fair sex have made the same discovery. The business man may play a round before tackling the business of the day and the professional man enjoys going over the course when the work of the day is over, or vice versa. Besides the item of exercise, which is a great one, there is the fascination of the game itself. Once begun, it is seldom dropped. The fascination lies in the skill required. To play fairly well is easily acquired. But no matter how long you have been playing, you always find something to learn about the game. That is where the secret lies. (Almonte Gazette, 30 May 1902, p. 8)

The source of the information and opinion above was not just a person familiar with the membership statistics of the golf clubs of Montreal, but also a person intimately familiar with golf culture – someone who knew why contemporary men in business and the professions patronized the game and why someone who played the game long enough to achieve considerable proficiency never tired of it. I doubt that even Porritt, the most knowledgeable golfer in Almonte, had attained such knowledge and perspective: he left Yorkshire before its first golf course had been built and he does not seem to have played golf in Montreal very often: before coming to Almonte he lived near his business interests in Port Elmsley (located between Smiths Falls and Perth).

On the other hand, since golf clubs were not mass produced in 1902, but rather were each made by individual golf professionals in their roles as clubmakers, the Almonte Golf Club needed to purchase sets of golf clubs from a golf professional somewhere, and it seems that its order for such golf clubs coincided with the laying out of the golf course. We learn that early in May “A good list of members has been secured for the golf club, several outfits have been ordered and play will probably begin this week” (Almonte Gazette, 9 May 1902, p. 4).

Since we read at the end of May that “Work has started on the golf links this week, and it is expected that they will be in condition for play by June 1st,” the newspaper’s May 9th statement above that “play

will probably begin this week” was clearly incorrect, as work on the golf course had not yet even started (*Almonte Gazette*, 30 May 1902, p. 8). My guess is that the newspaper mistook the club’s statement that the course would be “laid out next week” for an indication that the course would be ready for play next week. So what was probably told to the newspaper at the beginning of May was that the club had a good list of members, that it had ordered its clubs from the golf professional, and that the latter would lay out the course the next week.

In any event, the golf course was indeed ready for play early in June: “Work on the golf links has been about completed and a few of the enthusiasts have been over the links” (*Almonte Gazette*, 13 June 1902, p. 1).

Laying Out and Building a Golf Course in the Early 1900s

It had been about two weeks between the commencement of work on the golf course and its completion.

Is this possible?

The original layout was “of nine holes, making a course of nearly a mile” (*Almonte Gazette*, 10 October 1902, p. 8).

Note that this reference to the mile-long distance covered by the golf course does not mean that the golf club property extended for a mile along Martin Street (or the 10th Line). In the early 1900s, when newspapers reported the length of a golf course in miles, they were merely presenting the figure achieved by adding up the length of the nine individual holes. They did not factor into the equation the distance covered in the walk from a green to the next tee.

There seems to have been a sense that golf was in an important respect a walk – then, as now, a highly regarded form of healthy exercise, independent of any health benefits also derived from swinging a club. And so there was an interest by newspapers and golf magazines in those days in informing readers as to the length of the walk required to play golf on a particular course (recall the notorious observation attributed to Mark Twain that “Golf is a good walk spoiled”).

Having a length of “nearly a mile,” the course was a short one of less than 1,760 yards – about half the length of a robust nine-hole course today, as measured from the championship tees.

With regard to the time required to construct an early-twentieth-century golf course, note that in 1902, not much earth was moved during the building of such a golf course, either to shape a fairway or to build up a tee or green. A farmer’s field was often chosen for a golf course because the land had been cleared and had well-established pasture grass growing on it – grass that only needed to be cut regularly in order to produce a decent fairway surface from which to play a golf shot.

The teeing ground might simply be an area of level grass, with a very slight incline upward from back to front to give the golfer’s forward foot a chance to brace a bit against the incline during the swing. More usually, the teeing ground was a slightly built-up area of sand arranged in a rectangular shape. The surface was levelled and compacted



Figure 9 Mold for sand tee.

Beside the teeing ground was placed a box containing sand. This sand would be wetted at the beginning of the day, or a container of water would be kept by the tee to wet the sand.

A hollow conical implement was used to scoop out the wet sand and compact it, such that a cone of sand could then be dumped onto the ground, retaining its shape. The golf ball was placed on this tee of sand.

These sand boxes could provide unwary golfers with unpleasant surprises, as at the Sturgeon Point golf course in 1904:

*Scattered over the golf links at Sturgeon Point are 9 boxes about 18 inches every way, painted white and having a small opening in the top. These boxes contain sand with which little mounds are [formed] upon which to place the ball in position to be struck. One day recently a Point youth found a colony of snakes on the links and evolved the bright idea of putting them into some of the sand boxes. This idea he executed. Soon after, a popular young lady if the Point came along to one of these boxes and thrust in her [hand for] some sand. Instead she grasped a handful of snake!! (** 7/8 **-- *?!) A little later a bachelor enthusiast who infests the Point a good deal seized a fistful of reptile in like manner and the resultant acrobatics are not reproducible with the apparatus at our disposal, nor the remarks permissible under the existing laws regarding the contents of family newspapers. When the latest despatches left the Point, the perpetrator of their 'joke' still survived. (Watchman Warder, 15 September 1904, p. 9)*

No doubt various animals found their own ways into these sand boxes, as they find their way today into the sand containers positioned at tee boxes for the repairing of divots.

Such was the standard way of teeing up the golf ball for a drive until the end of the 1920s, when the wooden tee peg gained popularity.

An example of such a teeing ground with the sand box located beside it can be seen in the photograph below of a woman driving off from a tee box at the Poonahmalee Golf Course in Smith Falls just before World War I.



Figure 10 Photograph from the Foster Family Albums, Smith Falls, Ontario.

Putting greens were also located on a level area of the golf course turf, often at the bottom of a hollow where rainfall would gather and help to keep the putting grass greener and healthier than the fairway (or fair green, as it was called in the old days) when summer droughts made the rest of the grass on a golf course go dormant in those days before golf courses had irrigation systems.

Rakes and shovels might be used to fill in minor depressions or to scrape the top off little rises in order to produce a flat, level surface that would minimize the break of putts made on its surface. The green comprised grass cut shorter than the fairway grass.

Although these early greens were occasionally made in the shape of a circle, they were generally designed as squares or rectangles, with the longest side being perhaps 30 feet in length.

The putting green would be compacted in one of three ways: by rolling the entire putting surface with a heavy barrel-shaped cylinder on a horizontal axis; by thoroughly soaking the putting surface with water,

then placing planks over it, and finally pounding the planks with a heavy object; or simply by pounding every square foot of the putting surface with a heavy-handed instrument with a flat square bottom, as in the photograph below.



*Figure 11 A late nineteenth-century greenkeeper flattens the surface of a green by pounding it. Michael J. Hurdzan, *Golf Greens: History, Design, and Construction* (Wiley, 2004), chapter 1.*

The putting surface, then, was not usually distinguished from the fairway by its elevation above it.

And so for the golfer approaching it, the putting green might be distinguishable from the fair green more by the marker of the hole than by the different nature of the grass. This marker of the hole was not necessarily a flagstick in the early 1900s, but rather a pole with a plate fixed to the top of it indicating the number of the golf hole being played.

Such is the case in the photograph above, and such is the case in the photograph below of the ninth hole at the Links O' Tay golf course in Perth, where we can see that the putting green was barely distinguishable from the fairway or fair green.



Figure 12 A woman putts on the ninth green of the Perth golf course just before World War I.

In 1902, then, two weeks from start to finish on the construction of a short nine-hole golf course such as the one James Black laid out in Almonte was quite usual.

The Press for Golf

During the establishment of Almonte's first club during the spring and summer of 1902, it is interesting to note how the newspaper made common cause with the golf club in efforts to popularize the game.

Throughout the year, the newspaper's editor culled from other publications items that endorsed the game of golf in general, and particularly women's participation in it: "The *Ladies' Home Journal* says: 'If as a nation we played golf more there would be far less suffering from nervous exhaustion, depression – otherwise 'the blues' – biliousness, rheumatism, flat chests, shallow breathing and indigestion than there is at present,'" (*Almonte Gazette*, 2 May 1902, p. 9).

Similarly, a report from the *Smith Fall News* is quoted to assure Almonters that rookies can pick up the game quickly and that respectable ladies do indeed play the game: "Golf is becoming more popular in Smiths Falls every day, and some exceedingly good scores are being made by many of the new players. The ladies are taking a lively interest in the game and every afternoon from six to eight of the fair sex may be seen on the links enjoying the invigorating exercise" (*Almonte Gazette*, 18 April 1902, p. 4).

Perhaps we detect a note of satisfaction, then, in the *Gazette's* final reflections on the golf season of 1902:

Golf has taken a new lease of life and the interest in this old-country game has increased by leaps and bounds. Almost every afternoon a number are on the links, among them several ladies, and it is expected that in the spring there will be something doing in this department of sport. The links here are very good, consisting of nine holes, making a course of nearly a mile. Next spring the members expect to make some additional improvement for the convenience of players and that the number of those who engage in this healthy exercise will be materially increased.
(*Almonte Gazette*, 10 October 1902, p. 8)

Well before the start of the 1903 golf season, then, optimism seems to have prevailed.

The 1903 Season

Unfortunately, the “several ladies” who seem to have played golf “almost every afternoon” during the 1902 season were not joined by many others in 1903. The campaign by the golf club, assisted by the *Gazette*, to promote the game as an ideal sport for ladies met with limited success, such that when the club met to organize in March of 1903, “It was decided not to appoint a ladies’ committee until some idea of the number of ladies who intended to play could be formed” (*Almonte Gazette*, 27 March 1903, p. 8).

It turns out that even though the ladies received a great discount on their memberships – “The membership fee was placed at \$2.00 for gentlemen and \$1.00 for ladies” – not enough ladies joined the club to make it worthwhile to organize a ladies’ club (*Almonte Gazette*, 27 March 1903, p. 8)

Apart from the ambivalent results of the campaign to promote the game among women, expressions of optimism about the year ahead were common in the spring of 1903. The *Ottawa Citizen* said that “Golf is going to boom in Almonte this summer” (24 March 1903, p. 6). The *Almonte Gazette* was similarly optimistic: “Although the snow is not rightly gone, already the talk is of summer sports and not the least among these is golf. The enthusiasts are getting out their clubs and are on the hunt for disciples. They report very encouraging success so far and state that the prospects for a good club this year are of the brightest” (*Almonte Gazette*, 18 March 1903, p. 8).

The *Gazette* clearly tried to help the club in its “hunt for disciples.” It dedicated three separate items on the front page to announcements of the impending meeting about the organization of that year’s golf club: “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 large attendance of ladies and gentlemen is expected at the golf meeting to be held tomorrow” (*Almonte Gazette*, 20 March 1903, p. 1). A fourth version of these announcements came later in the paper, combined with arguments in favor of the game: “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. One proof of the fascinating powers of the game is that no one who has ever tried it has given it up. They all become enthusiastic” (p. 8).

The newspaper seems to be cajoling readers into taking up the game.

Indeed, the *Gazette* almost takes a hectoring tone as it hints that citizens will be negligent of their civic duty if they do not support the golf club:

There is no reason in the world why the Almonte golf club should not be one of the strongest in Ontario. We have grounds which with very little expense could be put in fine shape, giving sufficient space for a nine-hole course (as long as those of Perth and Smiths Falls). If there was a club here a small league might be formed comprising Almonte, Perth and Smiths Falls. It is probable that a meeting will be called in the near future to form a club and it is hoped that there will be a large attendance.

(Almonte Gazette, 18 March 1903, p. 8).

The *Gazette* might just as well have accompanied the article with a cartoon of Uncle Sam (dressed in a golfer's plus-fours, of course) pointing his finger at the reader: "I WANT YOU!"



Figure 13 This poster is a figment of my imagination; I have modified a famous poster used to induce Americans to volunteer for military service during World War I.

It was a matter of civic pride to match towns like Perth and Smiths Falls in terms of the sports pursued within these communities. It was unthinkable that Almonte could not match other towns generally, so Almonters had to be ready literally to play a match against other towns in each particular sport. Perth and Smiths Falls had golf clubs; so Almonte should have one, too.

It is not surprising, then, that the leaders of the golf club were also leaders in the community – like Porritt, who had jumped into the thick of Almonte's political, social, and sporting life as soon as he had arrived in town.

No list of club officers was published in 1902, but the officials listed in 1903 may well have been the same ones who served in 1902: "the following officers were elected: Hon. Pres., Mayor Thoburn, Hon. Vice-pres., Mr. Jas. McLeod; pres., Mr. J.M. Rosamond; sec.-treas., S.C. McLeod; and a committee consisting of Messrs. H. Jamieson, J. Porritt and A.C. McPhail, with power to add two more to their number" (*Almonte Gazette*, 27 March

1903, p. 8). The *Ottawa Citizen* added one more name, reporting that J.W. Treleaven was vice-president (24 March 1903, p. 6).



Figure 14 William Thoburn, early 1900s.

William Thoburn was born in Portsmouth, England, in 1847. He came to Canada with his family in 1857 and lived on a farm in Pakenham. When he was twenty years old, he set out for Almonte and was hired to work in one of the town's many mills for the smallest wage of the day.

It was later said "Mr. Thoburn started with a clay pipe and an onion" (*Ottawa Journal*, 1 September 1911, p. 6).

But he made good. He opened his own grocery store, sold it for a tidy profit, and re-entered the milling business, eventually acquiring his own mill (which is now a condominium in downtown Almonte).

He was said to have turned the people skills he honed in the grocery business into a political career. He went from years on the School Board to years on Town Council to seven years as

Mayor of Almonte, and then he won election as the Member of Parliament for Lanark North in 1908 and 1911.



Figure 15 Harold Jamieson, 1893.

Another mayor-to-be was one of the first club officers: Harold Jamieson, a barrister and solicitor. Elected Mayor by acclamation in 1914, he had been a typically civic-minded community leader, serving as Chairman of the Board of Education, Chairman of the Library's board of managers, secretary-treasurer of the Board of Trade, first chairman of Almonte's Electric Light Commission, and so on.

His interest in sports was well-known: in 1900, he was an organizer of the Almonte Amateur Athletic Association, and on Coronation Day in 1902, when King Edward VII ascended the throne, Jamieson was appointed to the sports committee to organize the contests staged in town that day. He also served on

the executive of the Eastern Ontario Lacrosse League. He had long served as a referee in the league, where he developed a reputation as being absolutely fair, albeit somewhat strict.

Club president John Melville Rosamond was the son of the most wealthy and powerful person in Almonte: Bennett Rosamond, owner of the Rosamond Woolen Company and Member of Parliament for Lanark North. Son John was heir to the throne of the empire in woolen and knitting mills that Bennett Rosamond owned. To prepare himself for his future responsibilities, John served as manager of the Almonte Knitting Mills. Bennett Rosamond's only other son having died in the early 1900s, plans for succession went fully awry when John also died prematurely. In August of 1908, while engaged in his favorite recreation, canoeing, he drowned. All alone on the Mississippi River about two miles above Almonte, he apparently fell out of the canoe. The canoe and his hat were retrieved shortly after the accident, but his body was not found for two more days. He was just 48 years old.

A.C. McPhail was a mathematics teacher at Almonte High School. He also served as secretary of the County Association of Teachers of High School and Public School. The Almonte Golf Club's first golf course was literally next door to his workplace. He was a member of the Young People's Society of St. John's Church in 1900 and just two years later was appointed Secretary of the meeting to choose a successor to the minister of St. Andrew's Church. He was appointed to a committee on decorations and another committee on printing and advertising for the coronation of King Edward VII. He was for a decade a member of Almonte's sporting establishment, serving from the mid-1890s onward as an officer of the curling club, competing in shooting competitions in Almonte's Military Rifle League, and so on. On his vacation in 1894, he cycled all the way from Almonte to Halton County. He left Almonte to teach elsewhere in 1908.

J.W. Treleaven was also a teacher, based in Clinton, Ontario, until 1902, at which point he was selected to be the Principal of the Almonte high school. He later also served as president of the County Association of Teachers of High School and Public School. Within a month of his arrival in town he volunteered to serve on the executive committee of the lacrosse club and as vice-president of the golf club. He later served as secretary-treasurer of the curling club. He left town in 1907, however, to return to Clinton as classical master of the Clinton Collegiate Institute.

James McLeod was proprietor of the *Almonte Gazette*, devoted to the newspaper business. When he learned in 1888 that the *Perth Courier* had lost its mailing machine in a fire, he made a point of stopping in Perth on his way to Toronto to loan the rival newspaper his own mailing machine until its burnt one

could be replaced. In the 1890s, he served as secretary-treasurer of the Ottawa Valley Press Association. He was known as an excellent marksman, winning prizes as far afield as Ottawa in rifle-shooting competitions. He was Secretary of the Board of Education and President of the Methodist Bible Society Committee. He was long remembered by many generations of children in Ramsay Township for his visits to local schools, where he awarded Bibles as prizes for children who answered catechism questions perfectly.

It is no wonder, then, that the *Gazette* was effectively campaigning on behalf of the Almonte Golf Club, for its publisher was an officer of the club.

Furthermore, so was his son, Stuart C. McLeod. The latter was a university student when he served as an officer of Almonte's first golf club. Fascinated by politics, he studied political science at university, proceeding beyond B.A. and M.A. degrees to doctoral studies at Harvard University in 1910, where he was granted a Ph.D. in 1914.

In Almonte, he had been very interested in sports in addition to golf, such as curling, serving as club treasurer, and such as hockey, serving as the Almonte delegate to meetings of the Ottawa Valley Hockey League. He also served as a second lieutenant in the 42nd Lanark and Renfrew militia regiment, and he competed alongside his father in rifle-shooting competitions.



Figure 16 Stuart Cameron McLeod, 1885-1944.

After he graduated from Harvard, he was appointed Professor of Political Science at New York University. He maintained his interest in Canada, publishing "Women Voters in Canadian Cities" in 1916 (*National Municipal Review*, vol 5 no 3 [July 1916], pp. 456-60), but he quickly became a significant figure in American accounting. He taught American Institute Courses for Financial and Commercial Service on Wall Street itself. Then in 1919, he became the first National Secretary of the National Association of Cost Accountants (now the Institute of Management Accountants), leading that organization until he died in 1944. Today, he remains something like the patron saint of American accountants and financial professionals, and

so there is a vibrant Stuart Cameron McLeod Society that perpetuates his legacy. Still, Stuart McLeod did not forget where he came from: "Some years ago Dr. S.C. McLeod, of New York City, erected [in Auld Kirk Cemetery] a handsome wrought iron entrance at the corner of the Eighth Line and Wolf Grove Road

in memory of his parents, Mr. and Mrs. James McLeod” (Gary John Byron, *The Auld Kirk Cemetery: Stone Inscriptions* [Perth, Ont: Lanark County Genealogical Society, 2008], p. xi).

In the common cause of promoting the game that the McLeods both loved, one supposes that McLeod the younger was writing some of the items promoting golf that McLeod the elder was publishing in the *Gazette*.

Yet the repeated assurances by the golf club and by the McLeods that the game was becoming popular, and their declarations that it deserved to be so, seem to have belied an anxiety about whether the game would really take hold: “There was a fairly good attendance of ladies and gentlemen at the golf meeting held in the council chamber last Friday evening and a club was organized with sufficient enthusiasm to warrant its success *for this season at any rate*” (*Almonte Gazette*, 27 March 1903, p. 8, emphasis added). So far from instilling confidence in the future of the game in Almonte, this report implies that the existence of the club beyond 1903 is in question. It turns out that the decision about whether to start up the club again in 1903 had actually hung in the balance for a while at the golf meeting that spring: “After some general discussion as to grounds, expenses, etc., it was decided to start a club” (*Almonte Gazette*, 27 March 1903, p. 8).

After drawing back the curtain just a bit so as to reveal a glimpse of the way things really stood, however, the *Gazette* returned to its boosterish ways. Once again, “It is expected that there will be a large membership as the game will fill a long felt want among those who desire an exercise which may be made as strenuous or as gentle as the mind of the player dictates” (*Almonte Gazette*, 27 March 1903, p. 8). Numbers are promising: “To all appearances golf is going to be a popular sport this summer. Although the membership books have not been out a week yet, already over twenty members have been secured, and there are as many more in doubt”; “The club has now over twenty members, and is steadily growing, as those who once try this fascinating sport at once become enthusiastic and are not content until they have their friends into the game” (*Almonte Gazette*, 3 April 1903, p. 8, and 24 April 1903, p. 8). Golf in Almonte never lets you down: “The grounds are not in the best condition owing to the extremely dry weather, but the cool breeze which invariably blows across the links makes a round of the holes an exceedingly pleasant outing” (*Almonte Gazette*, 5 June 1903, p. 8).

New Links in 1903

Despite the appearance of an underlying anxiety about golf's prospects in Almonte in the spring of 1903, the club began work on the golf course in March: "It is proposed to start work on the grounds at once and play will commence in a few days; in fact the grounds are in good shape now, and several players have been around already" (*Almonte Gazette*, 27 March 1903, p. 8).

But there follows in April a mysterious reference to a plan to "improve the course": "The golf links have not been overhauled this this year yet, but they are in very good condition nevertheless, and quite fit for play.... A man will in all probability be put on the links the beginning of next week to fix up the greens and otherwise improve the course" (*Almonte Gazette*, 24 April 1903, p. 8).

The large redesign of the golf course that the improvements in question would ultimately entail was not even hinted at in these early reports. It turns out that the Almonte Golf Club had acquired new land to lengthen the course. Its links would necessarily be redesigned and its overall length would be increased by 50%.

One wonders, then, whether the "man ... put on the links" at this time to see to the redesign of the links was a golf professional like James Black, or perhaps an experienced groundsman from another golf course:

The golf club have enlarged their course to take in the lot on the corner of Mitcheson and Stephen streets, in the rear of Mr. Andrew Bell's property, and have a man at work this week laying the new greens. The course has been greatly enlarged and improved by this addition, and is now nearly a mile and a half in length. (Almonte Gazette, 1 May 1903, p. 8)

Someone had laid out a new course that now measured about 2,600 yards – a standard length for nine-hole courses built in the early 1900s.

Fortunately, the land used for this new extension of the golf course is clearly indicated as the lot north of the high school belonging to Andrew Bell, beginning at the junction of Martin Street and Stephen Street.

Andrew Bell was a civil engineer, Provincial Land Surveyor, and architect. In fact, he designed the famous Rosamond Woolen Mill.

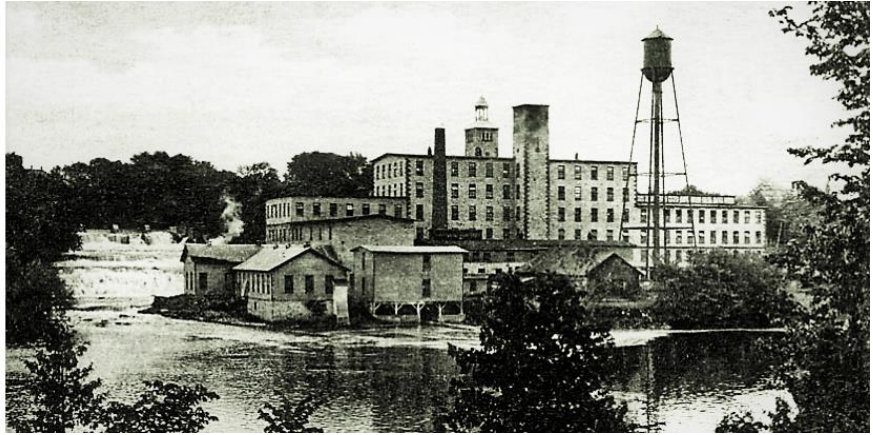


Figure 17 Andrew Bell, circa 1900, and the Rosamond Woolen Mill that he designed in the mid-1860s.

Bell lived along the western side of the lot in question on Mitcheson Street in a house that he built in 1883 called “The Maples.”



Figure 18 Left: "The Maples" early in the 20th century; right: "The Maples" today, with the verandah removed.

Bell had married into the Rosamond family. He was an uncle, in fact, of the president of the Almonte Golf Club, J.M. Rosamond, when the club was granted access to his lot.

Bell's lot behind “The Maples” where the new part of the 1903 golf course of the Almonte Golf Club was laid out remains open ground today. It has been used as a sports field for generations by Almonte's high school.

The photograph below shows today the intersection of Stephen Street with Martin Street mentioned in the *Gazette* article of 1903, and it shows the open ground that stretches north of the high school on the west side of Martin Street. Bell's old house behind “The Maples” is hidden by the line of trees along the west side of the open ground.



Figure 19 Photograph from Google Street View of the lot north of the high school where the extension of the 1903 golf course for the Almonte Golf Club was built.

As was the case the year before, the laying out of the new golf course in 1903 took no more than a few weeks. It was ready for play around the Victoria Day weekend: “Work on the links has been completed and play will begin Saturday afternoon” (*Almonte Gazette*, 22 May 1903, p. 8).

There was reference to just one more event at the golf course in 1903, and that was with regard to the following weekend in May:

Last Saturday was a field day in golf. There was a good turnout of players, both ladies and gentlemen, several of whom were novices and received initiation into the mysteries of the game. The grounds are not in the best condition owing to the extremely dry weather, but the cool breeze which invariably blows across the links makes a round of the holes an exceedingly pleasant outing. The links are open at all times for play. (Almonte Gazette, 5 June 1903, p. 8)

Just a week after this report, perhaps for the sake of the “novices” who “received initiation into the mysteries of the game, the *Almonte Gazette* devoted a relatively large amount of column space to publishing the “cardinal rules for players to observe” (12 June 1903, p. 5).

Could this have been a sign that experienced players were impatient with the ignorance of the rules displayed by the novices?

Were these potential recruits to the golf club encouraged or put off by ambitious talk of building a clubhouse: “There is some talk of erecting a clubhouse, but it is not likely that any action will be taken in this matter before next summer” (*Almonte Gazette*, 1 May 1903, p. 8)? A membership fee of \$2 for men and \$1 for women would not cover such an expenditure, so prospective new members of the club would no doubt have anticipated that there would have been significant new costs to golf club membership in the near future.

Whatever the particular reasons might have been, it is clear that interest in golf waned: no golf club was formed in 1904 or 1905.

The 1902-03 golf course presumably was left untended and returned to its original state – as Bell’s vacant lot, on the one hand, and as a commons, on the other.

A Commons Problem for Early Golfers

Although there were no references in the *Almonte Gazette* after June of 1903 to the golf club's activities, there was a reference, by way of a notice published by the golf club, to difficulties in the conduct of its activities that the club was encountering:

WARNING NOTICE

Notice is hereby given that if the wanton destruction of property of the Almonte Golf Club is not stopped, the severest penalty of the law will be meted out to those who are known to be guilty.

By order.

S.C. McLeod, Secretary

(Almonte Gazette, 3 July 1903, p. 4)

This “wanton destruction” of the club’s property seems not to have involved a single act on a single day. Rather, destructive acts seem to have occurred over time, eventuating in this order that they be stopped. Furthermore, the language of the notice implies that the club secretary is confident that the destruction has been perpetrated by more than one person, for he refers not to the “person *or* persons” known to be guilty, but rather to “those known to be guilty.” Perhaps the scale of the damage had shown that no single person could have been responsible for it.

Perhaps the destruction was merely the random vandalism of mindless hooligans. There could not have been more to it than that, could there?

This question is actually an interesting one.

Recall that Porritt had selected as the location of the 1902-03 golf course an Almonte “commons” – that is, land belonging to the community as a whole. And so this was not the land only, or even the land particularly, of the Almonte Golf Club.

It turns out that in the early 1900s the use of a town’s commons as the location of a golf course frequently became a contentious issue within the community.



Figure 20 Harry S. Colt, circa 1912.

And so when one of Britain's most famous and consequential of golf course architects in the early 1900s, Harry Shapland Colt, wrote an essay in which he described possible locations for golf courses, he included a section on the special difficulties of laying out a golf course on a commons:

Now let us consider ... the case of constructing a golf course on a common. If we have a large tract of good old turf growing on a light, sandy soil with gravel underneath, without semblance of a hedge, with ... some pleasant undulations, and one or two bold features thrown in, there is not much room for complaint, and there is prospect of some very enjoyable golf. However, two difficulties exist – the commoners and the commonable beasts.... Both are apt to resent interference

*with their rights; the former retaliate at times by digging up the best putting green with their spades ... The best plan ... is to encourage the commoners to play golf themselves [Let] a club be started for them, and the ways and means provided for them to enjoy the game In time an annual match can be held between the parent club and the commoners' club, and during the subsequent convivial evening leave may be obtained for making a few more necessary bunkers These hazards must, however, be made with discretion; otherwise a cow or a goat will be sure to fall victim to them, and break its leg or do some other quite unnecessary and foolish thing. Then, again, pedestrians have a nasty way of objecting to being hit by a golf ball. (Harry S. Colt, "The Construction of Golf Courses," in *The Book of the Links: A Symposium on Golf*, ed. Martin H.F. Sutton [London: W.H. Smith & Son, 1912], pp. 15-16)*

Colt treats the matter in an ironic and condescending way, but it is clear that real and serious tensions often arose between members of a golf club playing their game on a commons and other citizens of the

town who wished to retain the right to use a commons for their own purposes, and it is also clear that were always certain citizens ready to insist on their rights by acts of “wanton destruction.”

There was no further reference to the golf club’s troubles on this front in the *Almonte Gazette*. And there were no subsequent references in the newspaper to golf activities on the club’s commons course.

One wonders if periodic destruction of golf course property effectively destroyed the first effort to establish a golf club in Almonte. Recall that the golf course was not in very good condition even before the period of “wanton destruction” began: “The grounds are not in the best condition owing to the extremely dry weather” (*Almonte Gazette*, 5 June 1903, p. 8). It may be that because of the combined assault on course conditions by weather and vandals, the Almonte Golf Club decided that golf was no longer possible or worthwhile as of mid-summer in 1903 and so abandoned its season at that point.

If so, a further consequence of the vandalism may have been the inability in the spring of 1904 to muster support for the re-organization of the club for a new season.

Resuscitation 1906

After no reference to local golf for two years, the *Almonte Gazette* surprised readers on May 4th of 1906 with news that “An effort is being made to resuscitate golf in town. It is a good game, adaptable to almost any circumstance, and very popular where it is played” (p. 1). Just a week later we read that “The golf club has made arrangements with Mr. H. Kearney, of Renfrew, for the use of his farm on the outskirts of the town for golfing purposes, and also the use of one of the buildings for a club house” (*Almonte Gazette*, 11 May 1906, p. 1).

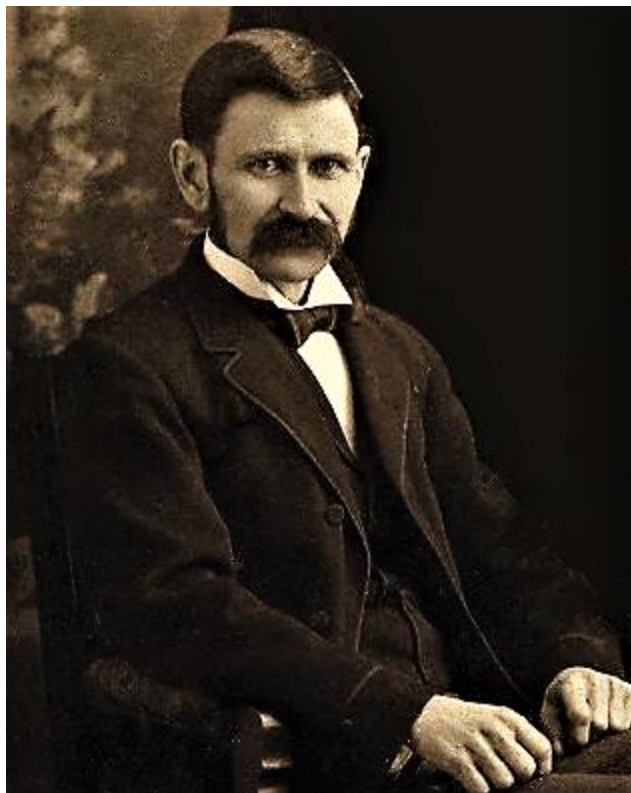


Figure 21 William Henry Kearney, circa 1900.

Property owner William Henry Kearney was not a farmer, but rather a wealthy watchmaker and jeweler who had once lived at Leckie’s Corners (about a half mile outside Almonte to the west, at the junction of the old Perth Road and the 8th Line), where for a while he had located his business premises.

But Kearney also owned a farm at the north end of Almonte, right at the edge of town beyond the high school.

Much of the farm fronted Martin Street (the 10th Line of Ramsay Township), just beyond the site of the 1902-03 links, so members of the original Almonte Golf Club would find that their journey to the new golf course followed a familiar route.

Having secured a lease on the Kearney Farm for a year, members did not let the grass grow under their feet: we are told on May 11th that “The course will likely be laid out shortly” (*Almonte Gazette*, 11 May 1906, p. 1). Whether or not a golf professional was engaged for this work is not mentioned.

New members were signing up: “Quite a few have already signified their intention of taking a hand in the game and just now it looks as if Almonte will have a successful club this summer” (*Almonte Gazette*, 18 May 1906, p. 1).

In the middle of May, we read that “Men are at work this week putting the golf ground on Mr. H. Kearney’s farm in shape for play, and it is expected everything will be in readiness in a few days” (*Almonte Gazette*, 18 May 1906, p. 1). The news the next day in one Ottawa newspaper said the same thing: “The golf links are being put in shape this week and it is expected that play will commence at an early date” (*Ottawa Citizen*, 19 May 1906, p. 3). And several days later the other Ottawa newspaper revealed that “The Golf club expects this week to have grounds ready for practice” (*Ottawa Journal*, 23 May 1906, p. 6).

Then came the announcement:

Work on the golf grounds is almost completed, and it is expected everything will be in readiness for opening on Saturday afternoon, when everyone who is at all interested in the game, both ladies and gentlemen, are requested to meet at the club house on Mr. Kearney’s farm adjoining the town, just beyond the high school on the tenth line.... Bring along your clubs and balls. (Almonte Gazette, 1 June 1906, p. 3)

Although we are told that “Workmen have been engaged *for some days* in putting the greens in shape and otherwise preparing for the season,” it is still hard to believe that a golf course could have been laid out and made ready for play in about three weeks, yet we know that in those days such a feat was par for the course, so to speak (*Ottawa Journal*, 23 May 1906, p. 6, emphasis added).

The mention above of “putting the greens in shape,” by the way, is ambiguous: in those days, as was mentioned above, the word “green” referred both to the grass on the putting areas and to the grass on the fairways. The latter was called the “fair green”; the former, the “putting green.” Today, we retain the latter term, but have abandoned the former, such that the word “greens” is understood to refer only to putting surfaces.

The new club was serious about the game and the course over which it would be played. It had invested a good deal of time and effort in the development of its links. And it made it clear that it would not tolerate the kind of vandalism of its golf course that had occurred in the past:

Notice – Warning

The Almonte Golf Club has secured the right from Mr. Kearney to use his farm for golfing purposes. Neither the right granted nor the use of the field will interfere with the right of any one else, and notice is hereby given that any person or persons found

interfering with or damaging any property of the golf club will be prosecuted as the law provides. (Almonte Gazette, 8 June 1906, p. 3)

The assertion that “Neither the right granted nor the use of the field will interfere with the right of any one else” might be construed as an indication that the “wanton destruction” of the club’s golf course in 1903 had been understood by the club as having been undertaken as an expression of resentment by certain people that their rights to the commons had been interfered with.

Kearney himself reinforced the club’s warning with his own announcement in the same issue of the local newspaper:

To Trespassers

Notice is hereby given that any person found trespassing upon the Kearney farm or damaging trees or property in any way will be prosecuted according to law.

H. Kearney (Almonte Gazette, 8 June 1906, p. 4)

Kearney’s warning against damaging trees on his farm makes one wonder if the felling of trees across the holes of its 1903 commons course had been part of the “wanton destruction” that the Almonte Golf Club suffered then.

Kearney, who lived in Renfrew, seems to have left his Almonte farm as pastureland that could be rented by other farmers. His main focus may have been to make money from his property through its quarry. He seems to have retained a local woman as his agent in matters relating to the farm and the quarry: “Good pasturage can be had on the Kearney farm adjoining the town. Also parties requiring building stone can be supplied by applying on the premises to Mrs. Jessop” (*Almonte Gazette*, 15 June 1906, p. 3).

This quarry was apparently integrated as a hazard into the layout of the golf course. After the first tournament ever held on the course by the Almonte Golf Club, the *Gazette* reports that Dr. John King Kelly, who had in fact easily won his match in the tournament in question, complained that “that quarry will be responsible for some serious case of angora pectoris [chest pain] before the snow flies” (*Almonte Gazette*, 17 August 1906, p. 1).

Like every other proper golf club at the time, and perhaps to mitigate the effects of the literal ups and downs of a game of golf taking in the Kearney Farm quarry, the Almonte Golf Club advertised for

caddies: “Boys and girls who wish to earn a little spending money can do so by ‘caddying’ at the golf links when play is going on. The work is easy and can be done by any bright boy or girl” (*Almonte Gazette*, 1 June 1906, pp. 1 & 3). One notes again the club’s interest in incorporating ladies and girls, as well as gentlemen and boys, into Almonte golf culture.

Interestingly, the golf club signed a lease for the use of Kearney’s farm, and then welcomed “everyone who is at all interested in the game, both ladies and gentlemen,” to “bring along your clubs and balls” to the new golf grounds, *before* it had actually constituted itself as a golf club (*Almonte Gazette*, 1 June 1906, p. 3). The resuscitated Almonte Golf Club did not get around to organizing itself until the middle of June:

A well attended and enthusiastic meeting of those interested in golf was held on the links on Friday afternoon. Those who had previously played went over the course, and quite a few made their debut as exponents of this popular game. During the afternoon the ladies served tea beneath the shady trees, after which a meeting for organization was held. (Almonte Gazette, 22 June 1906, p. 4).



Figure 22 Alex Rosamond, circa 1910.

The *Gazette* used the word “resuscitate” advisedly.

A “body” had indeed revived: the core of the body that had organized the club in 1902 and 1903 seems to have been the same one that organized the club during the spring of 1906: “Almonte Golf Club has been formally organized with the following officers: President, Mr. Alex Rosamond; secretary-treasurer, Mr. E.R. Crombie; committee, Mr. H. Lundy, Mr. James McLeod and Mr. J. Porritt” (*Ottawa Citizen*, 23 June 1906, p. 17).

The latter two club members, Porritt and McLeod, had served on the earlier executive committee, and they were no doubt among the most important of the movers and shakers in the spring of 1906 when, Lazarus-like, the golf club got up off its death bed.

Note also that the new president, Alexander George Rosamond, was a first cousin of the golf club’s first president, J.M. Rosamond. Perhaps out of a sense of *noblesse oblige*, the Rosamonds had supplied another family member to support this aspect of Almonte’s sporting culture.



Figure 23 Alexander G. Rosamond, left, and Bennett Rosamond in the office of the Rosamond Woolen Company, circa 1910.

Yet Alex Rosamond was not just another member of the family that owned the Rosamond mills. He would become president of the Rosamond Woolen Company when his uncle Bennett died. He would also inherit from his uncle the grand Almonte house known as Pinehurst (which still stands today, operated as an upscale Bed and Breakfast establishment).

Within business, political, social, and sporting life in the

Town of Almonte, Alex Rosamond was as ubiquitous as other club members, if not more so, especially when it came to playing sports and serving on committees that managed sports, schools, hospitals, public utilities, trade, agriculture, and so on.

Almonte's Civil War: North versus South

The new club's first tournament occurred in August, and it was designed to catch the attention of the town.

It was a "golf match between two picked teams" – "the first in the club's history" – and it generated "a good deal of interest" because of the rationale for composing the two teams (*Almonte Gazette*, 10 August 1906, p. 1). The teams were "picked" to stoke community interest, one team of seven representing citizens living on the north side of the Mississippi River, the other team of seven representing those living on the south side.

The contest was certainly given extensive newspaper coverage:

Local golf enthusiasts had their first match, North vs. South, on Friday and Saturday of last week. Great interest was taken in the contest by all the players and victory hung in the balance until the last stroke was played. Score:

North		South	
A. Rosamond	5	E. Crombie	0
E.C. Lindsay	1	W. Torrance	0
T. Lawton	0	Dr. J. Kelly	5
H. Jamieson	0	J.T. Kirkland	0
J. Porritt	0	J.W. Treleaven	0
W. Thoburn	3	Rev. C. Daly	0
H. Lundy	0	W.C. Pollock	5

Majority for south, 1 hole. (Almonte Gazette, 17 August 1906, p. 1)

The Men of the Club

James McLeod did not play in the tournament, but he was a keen spectator. In a *Gazette* item called “Short Puts” he decided to introduce readers to some of the club’s members by means of a humorous account of their personalities and their play.

We find Dr. Kelly in the quarry, complaining that “that quarry will be responsible for some serious case of angora pectoris before the snow flies”; when Mayor Thoburn played sports, he laughed a lot, perhaps at his own mistakes: “Mr. Thoburn’s hearty laugh was reminiscent of bonspiel times and made one forget that this is the good old summertime” (*Almonte Gazette*, 17 August 1906, p. 1).



Figure 24 The Reverend Mr. Charles H. Daly, circa 1905.

Perhaps anticipating the development of the refreshment cart, “Rev. Mr. Daly thinks that the water wagon should accompany the players around the links” (*Almonte Gazette*, 17 August 1906, p. 1).

McLeod plays on the difference between the sand in a trap and the sand kept in boxes by the teeing ground for making a conical tee from wet sand (the wooden tee-peg would not become usual for another twenty years): “Mr. Porritt likes lots of sand, but he must have it wet”; McLeod teases another member about the intensity of his demeanour on the course: “Dr. Kirkland’s expression when ‘addressing’ the ball was characterized by force and vigor”; and his tongue is firmly in his cheek when he compliments President Rosamond, who would for many years be elected club captain (an honour usually reserved for the best golfer), on his score: “Mr. Rosamond’s score of 132 for 18 holes was made by consistent good play throughout” (*Almonte Gazette*, 17 August 1906, p. 1). To have averaged more than 7.3 strokes per hole on the Almonte golf course required not consistent good play, but consistent bad play.

Members must have hooted out loud when they later read this item.

Given that club membership in 1906 comprised “An initial list of about fifteen members,” a total that included several women, and given that we can tell that a number of people who we know were club members did not play in this match (such as James McLeod and his son Stuart), the

newspaper's list of the fourteen men who played in the match must introduce us to most of the other gentlemen members (*Almonte Gazette*, 22 June 1906, p. 4).

Concerning the social standing of the club members that we meet for the first time in the newspaper items quoted above, there are no surprises.

There were two medical practitioners, Dr. J. T. Kirkland and Dr. J.K. Kelly, both of whom were club members for as long as there was an Almonte Golf Club.



Figure 25 Dr. John King Kelly, circa 1920s.

Dr. John King Kelly (1874–1954) was a highly regarded physician in Almonte for 50 years. He lived in a house on Little Bridge Street, where he also operated his medical practice. His first wife, Mayme Price, died in childbirth, but his second wife, Gertrude Shields, a nurse, joined him in his practice.

Born and raised in Almonte, John Kelly was the eldest of a well-known athletic family, which included Billy, a famous lacrosse player, and Dick, a well-known runner.

Dr. Kelly loved sports (serving as president of the Almonte hockey club for many years), but he was not able to pursue the ones his brothers did because of severe rheumatoid arthritis.

Despite the diagnosis of an ostensibly disabling arthritis, and despite being assured that because

of his condition he would never be able to attend university, Kelly nonetheless studied medicine at McGill University. Confined to a wheelchair during his final year of study due to the arthritis, having to be pushed by others from class to class, he graduated in 1896, at the age of 22.

Shortly after graduation, he went to New York City, where he spent six months taking intensive curative and restorative therapy, after which he returned to Almonte to set up his practice. Over the next sixty

years, he helped to bring into the world and attend to the health needs of several generations of Almonters, in addition to serving as the town's medical officer of health.



Figure 26 Dr. John King Kelly, circa 1953.

Despite the fact that he suffered from permanent deformity of both his spinal column and the metatarsal bones in his feet, Dr. Kelly became one of the best golfers in the Almonte Golf Club. Furthermore, he was perhaps the staunchest supporter of the club, being a member from the first iteration of the club to its last.

Among the other kinds of members of the club, there were of course bankers, supporters of golf clubs all across North America from the very earliest days of golf on this continent.

Edward R. Crombie began 1906 as the manager of the Almonte branch of the Canadian Bank of Commerce, but later that year he changed addresses and became manager of the newly-opened branch of the Sterling Bank. Club member E.C. Lindsay had just arrived in town from the Traders' Bank in North Bay to serve as Crombie's assistant manager.

Another new arrival in Almonte was the Reverend Mr. Charles H. Daly (seen in a photograph above). He had served in a Presbyterian church in Lyn, just north of Brockville, until the spring of 1906, when he came to Almonte to take up his duties as pastor of St. John's Presbyterian Church. He was called to British Columbia in 1912 but was an avid member of the Almonte Golf Club up to the time of his departure.



Figure 27 W.C. Pollock. Modified and enhanced photograph of 1893.

William C. ("Billy") Pollock was a lifelong friend of Dr. Kelly and fellow sports addict. He was the owner of two lumber yards in Almonte. He was also appointed the assessor for Almonte, the determiner for many years of the value of property for the town's real estate taxation purposes. He was also appointed as a Sub-Collector of Customs.

Then there were the downtown merchants. W. Torrance was perhaps the leading Almonte merchant, having been elected president of the Retail Merchants' Association. Not just a golfer, he was also a curler, gun club member, lacrosse referee, and so on.

And of course there were club members associated with the mills. T. Lawton was a superintendent of the Rosamond Woolen Mill. Herbert W. Lundy was managing director and secretary-treasurer of the Anchor Knitting Company of Almonte.

Old Ways and New Ways at the Club

Some things had not changed at the club since 1902-03.

The annual dues remained the same: "The membership fee is only \$2 for this season" (*Ottawa Citizen*, 23 June 1906, p. 17). Whether ladies would form their own club still remained in doubt: "The ladies will decide among themselves whether they will form an organization of their own or unite with the gentlemen" (*Almonte Gazette*, 22 June 1906, p. 4). And what women might decide in this regard would not change the role they had performed since 1902: "In any event, they have kindly volunteered to serve tea at intervals during the season and these promise to be most enjoyable functions if last Friday's may be taken as a sample" (*Almonte Gazette*, 22 June 1906, p. 4).

Although the initial 1906 membership list of fifteen people was more than 25% smaller than the membership list of 1903 (when the previous version of the club collapsed), as always, reports given to the newspapers were all positive. The *Ottawa Journal* observed that "The course is in good condition and there has been an encouraging attendance since the organization" (*Ottawa Journal*, 21 June 1906, p. 6). The *Ottawa Citizen* reported that "Quite a number of members have already been secured and it promises to be a popular game" (*Ottawa Citizen*, 23 June 1906, p. 17).

This time, the promise seems to have been fulfilled: "The golf links are becoming a popular resort and golf seems to have come to stay this time" (*Ottawa Citizen*, 27 June 1906, p. 14).

McLeod's newspaper continued to present the game, the club, and the course in optimistic terms: "The golf links are being pretty freely patronized afternoons and evenings, and some of those who have been trying their 'prentice hands are developing wonderful expertness in handling the clubs" (*Almonte Gazette*, 29 June 1906, p. 1). This time, novices initiated into the mysteries of the game were not subjected to the *Gazette's* list of golf's cardinal rules. In fact, everything said about the new players coming to the club was encouraging: "Although the game is new here, considerable interest is being taken, and before the end of the season a fair knowledge of the game will have been acquired" (*Ottawa Journal*, 18 August 1906, p. 7).

Still, new players needed more than words of encouragement if they were to acquire competence at the game. The club recognized this fact and did something new: "Almonte Golf Club will import a professional to coach the players on the fine points in the game" (*Ottawa Citizen*, 25 August 1906, p. 10). Maintaining its tropes about golfers as initiates into a mysterious religion, the *Gazette* writes that

“The golf club have made arrangements with a professional golfer to come to Almonte for a couple of days and show the local worshippers of the gutta-percha ball how the game is played” (*Almonte Gazette*, 24 August 1906, p. 1).



Figure 28 George Sargent, early 1900s.

The nearest golf professionals were George Sargent at the Ottawa Golf Club and Charles Murray of the Royal Montreal Golf Club.

Although the Almonte Golf Club had contacted Royal Montreal for the services of its golf professional James Black in 1902, it apparently did so only because it was the only club known to James Porritt. With Alex Rosamond as president, the situation had changed, for he was a member of the Ottawa Golf Club (it would not be termed “Royal” until June of 1912). Rosamond and his wife often visited Ottawa, both to stay with his wife’s parents and to be entertained at the theatre or at important dinner parties, so it would have been easy for the president of the Almonte Golf Club to visit the Ottawa Golf Club and speak with Sargent in person about Almonte’s request.

In 1906, the club was going about things the right way in its attempt to establish a golf culture: to the *sine qua non* of the golf course on the Kearney farm, it had added a club house, caddies, club matches, and a golf professional as coach. None of these things had been part of club life from 1902 to 1903.

Next on the agenda was a match with another golf club:

Arrangements have been made for a golf match here on Monday between Perth and Almonte. It is expected that the match will be eight players a side. There has been good attendance at the links for some weeks, so that this match, the first one ever played in town, should prove of interest to not only the players but to spectators also.
(*Ottawa Journal*, 4 September 1906, p. 6)

Whereas in 1903 there were no references to any golf activity in Almonte after June, as interest in golf seems to have waned, the golf season of 1906 lasted right into November: “Lacrosse and baseball are laid away, and hockey can only be enjoyed in the anticipation, but golf goes on as serenely as ever, if anything enjoying an added zest from the crispness that fills the air. It is a game that appeals to all classes and is adaptable to almost every condition” (*Almonte Gazette*, 2 November 1906, p. 1).

In 1906, however, the golfers of November had extra motivation to enjoy the Kearney course for as long as the weather allowed, for they knew that when they struck their last shot that season, they had struck their last shot ever on the links of Kearney Farm.

Kearney Farm Links Kaput

The Almonte Golf Club played over the golf course laid out at the Kearney farm for just the 1906 golf season.

Perhaps uncertain whether golf had “come to stay this time,” the club had leased Kearney’s farm for just one year. It had not anticipated that Kearney would sell the farm, but so he did: “Mr. W.H. Kearney, of Renfrew, has sold his farm adjoining the town to Mr. Wm. Wright, of Renfrew, who is moving down and will take up his residence there. He will probably operate the property as a dairy farm” (*Almonte Gazette*, 27 July 1906, p. 1)

William Wright was on the premises immediately, advertising the availability of his new quarry’s stone: “Parties requiring building stone of the best quality can be supplied from the quarry on the Kearney Farm. Apply on the premises to Wm Wright” (*Almonte Gazette*, 3 August 1906, p. 4). As of August in 1906, club members will have had no doubt that they were golfing on borrowed time at the Kearney farm, for Wright was on the premises to tell them so.

If Wright had indeed operated the property as a dairy farm, the Almonte Golf Club might have been able to continue playing golf on the land. Plenty of golf courses in those days shared pastureland with cattle and sheep. But the club was not even allowed to contemplate such a possibility, for Wright was not going to use the golf club land as a pasture after all:

Unfortunately, Mr. Wright, who recently purchased the Kearney farm, has decided to plow up the ground used for the golf club, and it will be necessary to procure new links. There are several places available and a committee composed of Messrs. A. Rosamond, H. Jamieson and W.C. Pollock was appointed to procure a suitable place. The choice is likely to fall upon Mr. Porritt’s farm beyond Mr. Weatherly’s. He has decided to pasture a portion of it along the river, and has kindly offered it to the club.
(*Almonte Gazette*, 30 November 1906, p. 1)

It seems that Porritt was poised to come through again: first, he had found the commons; now, he was prepared to offer the club the use of his own farm. He was fast becoming the patron saint of the Almonte Golf Club.

His house and his farmland can be seen in the background of the photograph below.



Figure 29 James Porritt (man with the beard) and members of the Almonte Lacrosse Team on the N.L.A.S. fairgrounds sometime after 1904, when Porritt was elected president of the team. The Porritt and Weatherly houses are visible in the background on the north side of the Mississippi River, where Porritt's pasturelands slope downhill from left to right in the background of the photograph.

The *Almonte Gazette* and the Religion of Golf

In marking Porritt as a saint for his service to the golf club, I use religious language advisedly. It is in keeping with the language of the *Almonte Gazette*, which refers to golfers as devotees, novices, disciples, and worshippers. The newspaper implies that golfer's spiritual mode is that of enthusiasm, which was long associated with religious fanaticism. Religious enthusiasts try to make converts. The newspaper also describes new golfers as being initiated into the mysteries of a religion, and it depicts club members as crusaders. The golf course is their mecca.

The enthusiasts are getting out their clubs and are on the hunt for disciples. (Almonte Gazette, 18 March 1903, p. 8).

There was a good turnout of players, both ladies and gentlemen, several of whom were novices and received initiation into the mysteries of the game. (Almonte Gazette, 5 June 1903, p. 8).

One proof of the fascinating powers of the game is that no one who has ever tried it has given it up. They all become enthusiastic. (Almonte Gazette, 20 March 1903, p. 8).

The club has now over twenty members, and is steadily growing, as those who once try this fascinating sport at once become enthusiastic and are not content until they have their friends into the game. (Almonte Gazette, 24 April 1903, p. 8).

Local golf enthusiasts had their first match. (Almonte Gazette, 17 August 1906, p. 1)

A well attended and enthusiastic meeting of those interested in golf was held on the links. (Almonte Gazette, 22 June 1906, p. 4).

There is an enthusiasm over the game this season that has been somewhat lacking in past years and which augurs well for the success of the club. (Almonte Gazette, 17 April 1908, p. 11).

Owing to the unpropitious appearance of the elements, the crusade of the Almonte Golf Club to Ottawa on Saturday has been postponed. (Almonte Gazette, 24 July 1908, p. 5).

A meeting to reorganize the Golf Club will be held in the town clerk's office All enthusiastic lovers and haters of golf are invited to attend. If you belong to the latter class you will be converted. (Almonte Gazette, 2 April 1909, p. 4).

The golf club have made arrangements with a professional golfer to come to Almonte for a couple of days and show the local worshippers of the gutta-percha ball how the game is played. (Almonte Gazette, 24 August 1906,

the devotees of the game are looking forward to an enjoyable season. (Almonte Gazette, 21 May 1915, p. 1)

Some good scores were turned in, particularly by the new devotees of the game, many of whom have become enthusiastic followers of the sport. (Almonte Gazette, 21 July 1925, p. 1).

the golf grounds ... are daily the mecca of the golfing enthusiasts of the town. (Almonte Gazette, 5 July 1907, p. 1).

Enthusiastic novices and disciples initiated into the mysteries of golf worship daily at their golf ground Mecca and occasionally crusade to Jerusalem (Ottawa, that is).

Hmmmm....

A New Layout in 1907

The Almonte Golf Club built a new golf course in 1907.

In keeping with the *Gazette's* religious metaphors, it might have been called Medinah. In fact, it was simply referred to as the Almonte golf course. Yet that no one thought to give it a special name should not obscure the importance of the new course in breeding a new assurance in the golf club's proceedings henceforth.

Implying confidence in its future, and perhaps indicating that the club regarded itself as continuous with the golf club of 1902-03, the club seems to have encouraged newspapers to call its 1907 spring organizational meeting its "annual" meeting:

Almonte Golf Club Annual

The annual meeting of the Almonte Golf Club was held in the Town Clerk's office and organization for the coming season was undertaken. Mr. A.G. Rosamond was elected president, Mr. W. Thoburn, vice-president, and Mr. P.A. Greig secretary-treasurer.

The following were elected a management committee: W.C. Pollock, Harold Jamieson, Dr. Kelly, T. Lawton and J.M. Rosamond. (Ottawa Journal, 21 March 1907, p. 2)



Figure 30 Percy A. Greig, Torontonensis (Toronto: K.G. McClean, 1903), p. 278.

The only new person elected to club office was Percy A. Greig.

He was a recent graduate of the Osgoode Hall law school at the University of Toronto. He replaced Harold Jamieson as partner to his father A.M. Greig in the latter's law firm.

Before he left for university, he was the "crack point man" of the Almonte lacrosse team, and at the University of Toronto he subsequently became the captain of the lacrosse team that won the Inter-Collegiate world championship for 1902-03 (*Ottawa Citizen*, 26 July 1904, p. 8). Greig seems to have been exceptional at every sport he tried, and he remained famously fit in Almonte to the very end of his life, walking to work carrying his brief case until the day he died at 84 years of age.

Percy Greig and Stuart McLeod are a sign that the Almonte Golf Club had attracted some young, athletic men to the game at a time when golf was still considered by many to be an old man's game.

The role of treasurer was an important one at his time, since "The club [had] failed to secure their last year's grounds, Mr. Wright requiring it for agricultural purposes" (*Ottawa Citizen*, 23 April 1907, p. 11). The most important news from the "annual meeting," therefore, concerned the question of a new golf course:

The question of grounds was discussed and the grounds committee appointed last year were re-appointed with instructions to take the matter up and report at a meeting which would be called as soon as they were in a position to report. Further matters essential to perfect organization were left for discussion after the question of grounds is settled. From present indications the club will be much stronger than last year, many new members having expressed themselves as desirous of taking up the pastime. (Ottawa Journal, 21 March 1907, p. 2)

Although it had been said last November concerning the many possible locations for a new golf course that "the choice is likely to fall upon Mr. Porritt's farm beyond Mr. Weatherly's," nothing seems to have been done about this matter during the following four months.

Another month passed after the March "annual meeting" before further progress was reported:

A special meeting of the golf club was held Saturday in the town clerk's office to receive the report of the special grounds committee. The report recommended that the new grounds be obtained if possible in the rear of Mr. Weatherly's residence, and it is expected that a course will be at once laid out there. (Ottawa Journal, 22 April 1907, p. 5)

We know that Porritt had offered his pasture to the club last November, so the question of whether building the new grounds there would be "possible" seems to have boiled down to a question of rent. Porritt had offered his pasture then, but apparently not for free. Perhaps as a negotiating strategy, the club let it be known that "There are several available places each of which will be looked over by the committee and reported upon later" (*Almonte Gazette*, 22 March 1907, p. 1). Then came the news: "The golf club has rented the use of Mr. James Porritt's farm across the river from the agricultural grounds for

their links and work will begin immediately to prepare the grounds” (*Ottawa Citizen*, 23 April 1907, p. 11).

Porritt had not abandoned his farming operation, mind you, as we can see from an accident his son suffered during the first summer of play on the new course:

Master Harry Porritt, son of Mr. Jas. Porritt, received a kick in the abdomen which caused serious injury. He had gone to the pasture for the cows and came too close to a horse belonging to Mr. James Little, which was pasturing in the field. He was found lying in the field and for a few days the chances of recovery were small. Now, however, he is getting on well and it is thought he will pull through. (Ottawa Citizen, 9 July 1907, p. 9)

Harry Porritt did indeed pull through, and he later also pulled through World War I.

As we shall see shortly, Porritt allowed his cows to graze on the course (and perhaps James Little’s kicking horse, too) even while golf was being played.

Perhaps the best news that the Almonte Golf Club received in April came even before the lease was signed with Porritt, and that news came from Perth: “The Perth golf club have kindly offered the services of their grounds man and the club will accept the aid so generously offered” (*Ottawa Journal*, 22 April 1907, p. 5). What Perth offered was Free: greenkeeper William Free, that is. He would make sure that the crew building the Almonte Golf Club’s new course was guided by an experienced eye.

And so the first-ever club competition between Almonte and Perth the year before had paid almost immediate dividends: Perth Golf Club would make common cause with Almonte Golf Club in the construction of the latter’s new golf grounds.

The consensus was that Porritt’s pastureland along the Mississippi River had great potential as a golf course: “The club has a magnificent site for the links on the ground sloping to the river on the north side, opposite the N.L.A. S. grounds” (*Ottawa Citizen*, 2 May 1907, p. 11).

The pastureland in question was located behind the residences of Porritt and F.S. Weatherly, the accountant at the Almonte branch of the Bank of Montreal. Their houses were the only two houses on St. Paul Street, which met Martin Street at the latter’s extreme southern end. These houses were visible from the fair grounds of the North Lanark Agricultural Society. In fact, deep in the background of an early twentieth-century photograph of the playing fields and racecourse of the N.L.A.S. grounds, one can

make out the houses of Weatherly and Porritt and see how the pastureland along the river sloped away from them to the south.

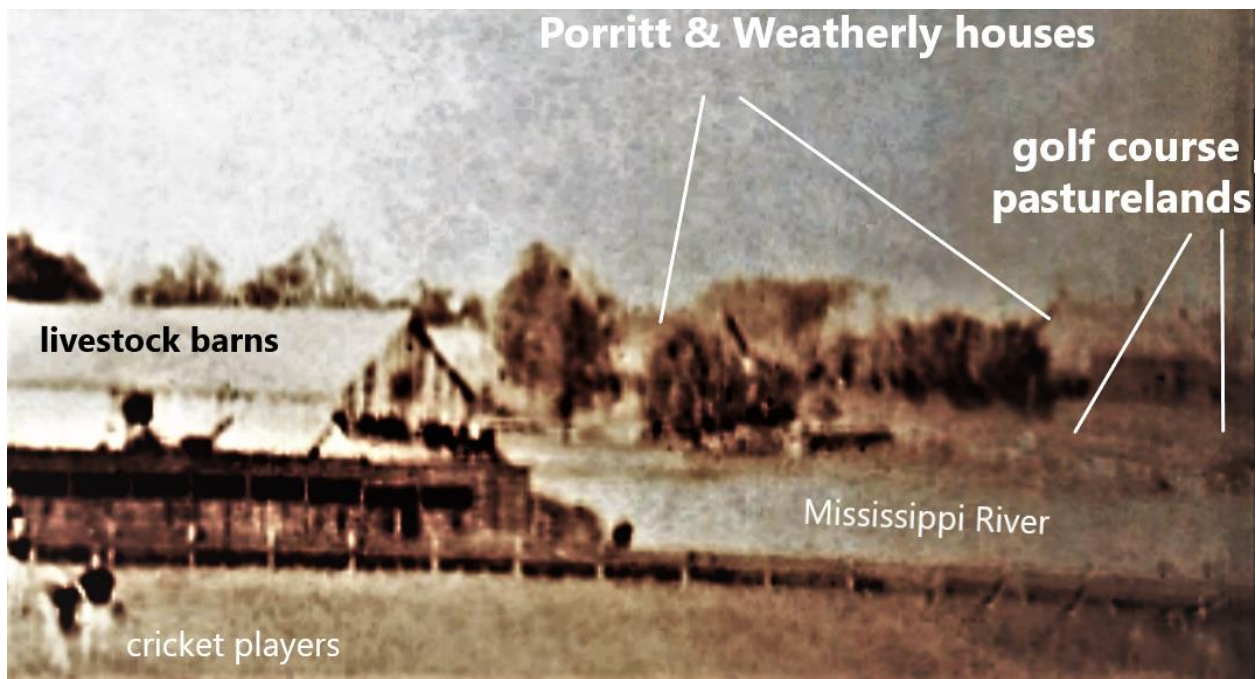


Figure 31 Detail from an early 20th-century photograph of the N.L.A.S. fair grounds. Historic Photo Archive.
<https://almonite.com/our-history/historic-photo-archive/>.

After the golf course was abandoned in the late 1920s, the land in question returned to agricultural use, as we can see below in a 1946 photograph of the area taken from the N.L.A.S. fairgrounds.



Figure 32 Detail from the cover of Farmers' Magazine (November 1946).

Today, houses along Spring Street run through the middle of the old golf course. The only part of it that remains open land today is the area within Meadow Glen Park, which retains the sloping, undulating features of the old pastureland. The photograph below shows the north end of the park looking eastward across it.



Figure 33 The north end of Meadow Glen Park, looking east.

The photograph below shows Meadow Glen Park as one looks across it from south to north.



Figure 34 Meadow Glen Park as seen looking across it from south to north.

This area of the town might have looked much different today if the publisher of the *Almonte Gazette* had been in charge of Almonte's development.

Arguing that the inevitably small memberships of a small town's athletic clubs faced too great a financial burden in each maintaining their own sports facilities, McLeod suggested that the grounds controlled by the Almonte Golf Club should be developed into a town sports centre:

Take the present location of the golf club. The property could be purchased or leased for a term of years. A good cricket crease could be built, tennis courts, bowling lawns, quoit lawns, croquet lawns, traps for the gun club; in fact, provision might be made for every sort of healthy outdoor exercise. In the course of a few years a club house could be erected with boat houses on the riverbank and a landing wharf for canoes, boats and launches. A more delightful location could scarcely be devised. (Almonte Gazette, 7 May 1909, p. 4)

By 1910, in fact, aspects of this vision began to be realized. With Alex Rosamond elected as president of the Almonte Tennis Club in the spring of 1910, after which the annual meetings of the tennis club were combined with those of the golf club, plans to revive the game in Almonte were instituted: "Courts will be built in the golf links near the club house where the ground is especially adapted for clay courts. Work on the building of the courts will be commenced at once and they should be ready for play in a few weeks" (Almonte Gazette, 15 April 1910, p. 8). The Gazette was encouraged:

The whole property has been greatly improved and already visions of the day when Almonte will be able to boast a fine country club open all the year round are glimmering in some minds.... A fine substantial landing dock has been built on the river level below the club house for use of members who come in boats and canoes. A pathway and steps have also been built up the bank leading to the clubhouse.

The tennis courts have been laid and Mr. J. Cullen, the contractor, made a fine job of levelling them. The soil is well suited for the purpose and there will not be better courts anywhere in the Valley than these. They are netted on all four sides. (Almonte Gazette, 27 May 1910, p. 5)

With such promising land to work with in 1907, the Almonte Golf Club would leave nothing to chance: it brought in the region's top golf professional to lay out the new the golf course: George Sargent of the Ottawa Golf Club.

Sargent had just returned to Canada after a winter in England, getting married while he was there, but he went right to Almonte in May, rather than Ottawa. Sargent was not expected to return to Ottawa from Almonte for a month, the *Ottawa Citizen* observing that he “will come to Ottawa in June when the new residence of the professor will be ready for occupation” (2 May 1907, p. 8).

“Professor Sargent,” a tall man, was something of a swashbuckling figure on the golf course, as he strode along in his big, floppy hat. The Ottawa Golf Club looked forward to great tournament wins by him, and their expectations were fulfilled when he won the U. S. Open in 1909 – alas a year after he left Ottawa for New England. Something of his nature can be gleaned from the fact that when the U.S. census was conducted the next spring, Sargent gave as his occupation: “Champion Golfer”!



Figure 35 American Golfer, 2 August 1909, p. 63

Perhaps the Almonte Golf Club had always brought in a golf professional to work on its golf courses. Perhaps we miss the names of the golf professionals who expanded the 1903 golf course and who laid

out the 1906 course on the Kearney farm simply because the newspapers omitted to record their names. One cannot be sure. This time, however, we know all about Sargent's work at Almonte, if for no other reason than that the Ottawa newspapers were full of the story.

The Golf club has a professional from Ottawa laying out the links. (Ottawa Citizen, 2 May 1907, p. 11)

Mr. Sargent has been at Almonte this week laying out and measuring a nine-hole course for the Almonte Golf Club. He is now actively at work on the local links. (Ottawa Citizen, 2 May 1907, p. 8)

New Grounds At Almonte

Mr. Sargent, the Ottawa Golf Club pro, came up yesterday and laid out a course on the new grounds for the local golf club. Men are now engaged in preparing the greens and a week or ten days will suffice to fit them for practice. The new grounds will be better than the old ones, being more convenient and better and more pleasantly situated. (Ottawa Journal, 2 May 1907, p. 8)

Mr. Sargent, Ottawa Golf Club's professional, came up on Monday and laid out the golf links for Almonte club. Mr. Free, the caretaker of the Perth links, is here also putting the greens in shape. It is expected that the links will be ready for next week. (Ottawa Citizen, 4 May 1907, p. 19)

The Almonte newspaper actually talked to Sargent about the course he was designing: "The Ottawa golf club's professional, Mr. Sargent, came up on Monday and laid out the new links on Mr. Porritt's farm on the riverside beyond Mr. Weatherly's. Mr. Sargent was pleased with the location and thinks that Almonte will have one of the prettiest grounds in the district for a golf course" (*Almonte Gazette*, 3 May 1907, p. 1).

A report in the *Almonte Gazette* one year later gives the total yardage of the course, the yardage for each hole, the club's name for each hole, and what the club designated as the bogey score for each hole:

Some of the holes have been lengthened and each now bears a name. The total distance is 1,616 yards, with the bogey 39. Distance, name and bogey are respectively as follows:

No. 1, 195, Sunset, 4;

No. 2, 115, Hill Top, 4;

No. 3, 205, Elm Trees, 5;

No. 4, 242, Equator, 5;

No. 5, 166, Farthest North, 4;

No. 6, 242, The Stumps, 5;

No. 7, 183, The Maple, 4;

No. 8, 75, Lawton, 3;

No. 9, 194, Home, 5.

(Almonte Gazette, 22 May 1908, p. 7)

I have found no photographs of the golf course, and very few descriptions of it, but the names of the golf holes tell us a few things: the second hole ("Hill Top") apparently required a tee shot to an elevated green area. Elm trees presumably figured in play on the third hole; a maple tree presumably figured in play on the seventh. One guesses that tree stumps constituted a hazard on the sixth hole, that the fourth hole ran across the middle of the course as an "equator," and that the fifth hole took golfers to a green at the furthest point north on the course.

The first hole paralleled the river and its green was driveable, but trying to reach it in one shot required a calculation of risk and reward: from the first tee, "the Mississippi lay on the right, and three quarter of the way down, a gully cut athwart the fairway It took a strong-willed golfer to play the ball sensibly to the near side of the gully, and then play safely to the green for two. The temptation was to go all out – to go for the green in one and, of course, the sides of the gully became pock-marked with the shattered dreams of Almonte's golfing gentry" (John Dunn, *Almonte Gazette*, 3 June 1971, p. 2). A topographic map dating from 1927 clearly marks the gully that the first fairway crossed.

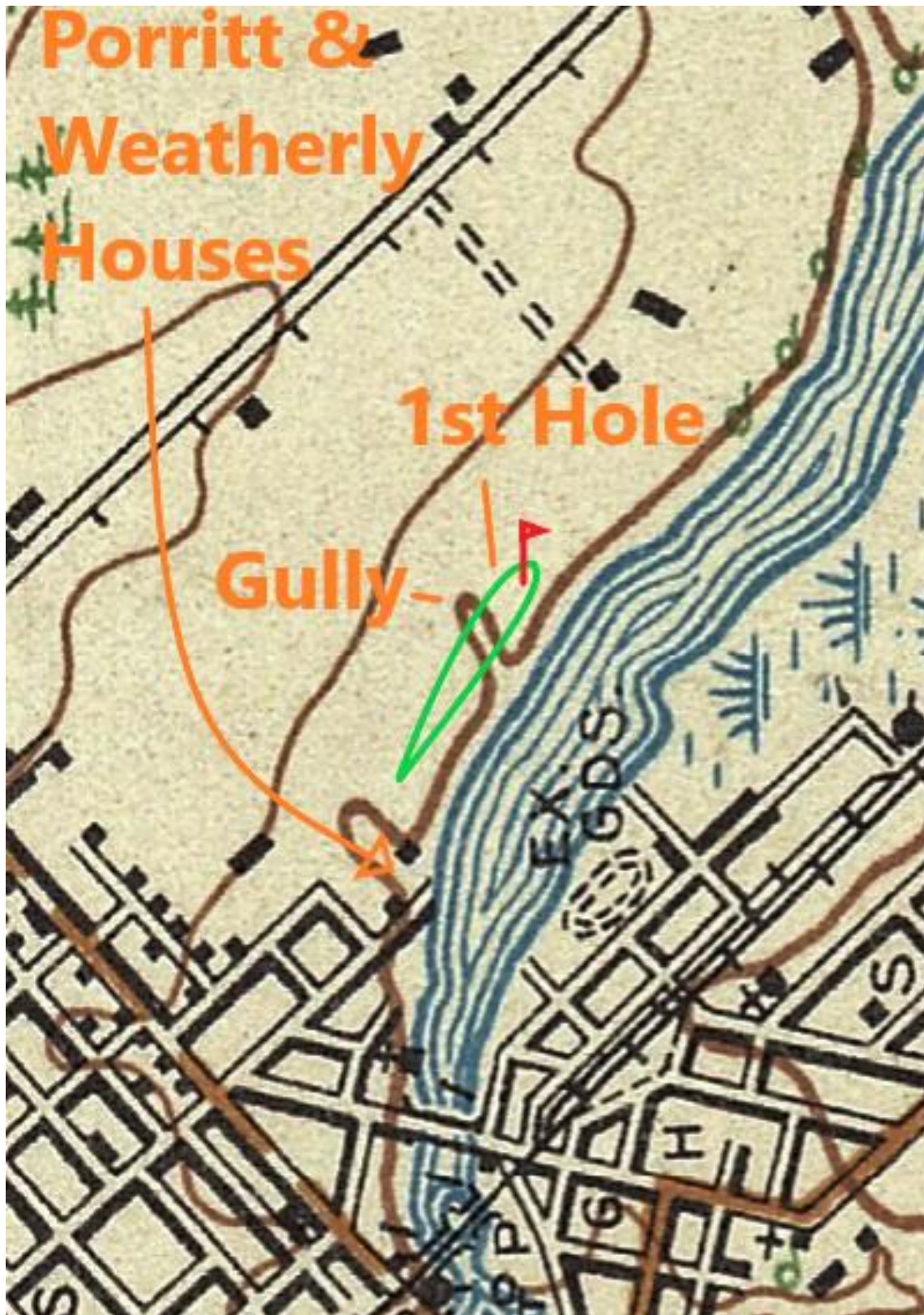


Figure 36 1st hole of 1925 golf course drawn on 1927 topographic map.

Bogey versus Par

The references above to the “bogey” score for each golf hole may be unfamiliar to some.

For the first 500 or so years of golf history, there was no such thing as a par score for a golf hole or for a golf course. The goal of the golfer with regard to any particular hole was not to complete it in a particular number of strokes regarded as the theoretically ideal or normal number. One simply aimed to take as few strokes as possible.

So it was until the 1890s.

Then, as Robert Browning points out in *A History of Golf: The Royal and Ancient Game* (1955; reprinted Pampamoa Press, 2018), the concept of “ground score” was invented. At the golf club in Coventry, England, in 1890, the Club Secretary worked out a score for each hole, and thereby for a complete round of golf on the course, that first-rate golfers would achieve if they made no mistakes: he called it the “ground score.” His purpose was to create a theoretically ideal score that club members could try to match in their individual rounds of golf: providing a form of competition for a single golfer who tried to match this score.

Within a year, the idea of establishing a “ground score” was adopted by the Club Secretary at the golf club in Great Yarmouth, England. There, one of the Club Secretary’s regular playing partners reacted in jocular frustration to his inability to match the “ground score” of the club’s “imaginary” ideal player: “This player of yours is a regular Bogey man!” He was alluding to a song popular in the early 1890s, “Hush! Hush! Hush! Here comes the Bogeyman!” whose lyrics about a mischievous, timorous, hard-to-catch goblin or bogey ran as follows:

Children, have you ever met the Bogeyman before?

No, of course you haven't for

You're much too good, I'm sure;

Don't you be afraid of him if he should visit you,

He's a great big coward, so I'll tell you what to do:

Hush, hush, hush, here comes the Bogeyman,

Don't let him come too close to you,

He'll catch you if he can.

Just pretend that you're a crocodile

And you will find that Bogeyman will run away a mile.

The popularity of the club member's witticism meant that the "ground score" at Great Yarmouth immediately became known as the "Bogey" score, and the practise of establishing a ground score and naming it the Bogey score spread like wildfire as Great Yarmouth club members played other golf courses throughout southern England, taking their term with them. Soon, golfers all across Britain referred to the ideal player whose score they were trying to match as "Mr. Bogey."

The Club Secretary at the military's United Services Club in Gosport added one more element to this practice in 1892. Since all members of this club were required to have a military rank, their opponent could not be a civilian: so golfers at this club replaced "Mr. Bogey" with "Colonel Bogey." The latter was made famous in the "Colonel Bogey March," the British army bandmaster who wrote it having been inspired by a golfer who, rather than warning other golfers of a wayward ball with a shout of "fore," instead loudly whistled two notes: the two notes of the descending musical phrase that begins each line of the "Colonel Bogey March" melody.

By the early 1900s, problems began to emerge regarding Bogey scores. Each club did as it liked in determining its Bogey score. Should there not be universal criteria used to determine Bogey?

In the United States, the Ladies Golf Association began searching in 1893 for a way of applying a standard in the determination of how many strokes it should take to complete a golf hole. This was to be a standard applicable no matter where the golf hole was found – regardless of the golf course, regardless of the country, regardless of the golf club's traditions or wishes. The idea was to determine a proper score for every hole by means of its measured length. The United States Golf Association took up the idea and decided upon its standard in 1911: all holes up to 225 yards in length should take three strokes, all holes between 226 yards and 425 yards should take four strokes, all holes between 426 yards and 600 yards should take five strokes, and any hole longer than 601 yards should take 6 strokes.

In its determination of the number of strokes it should take to play its eighth hole, the Almonte Golf Club happened to agree with the standard that would be set several years later by the USGA. Otherwise, its values were very different. Remarkably, the club established five as the proper score for its third, fourth, sixth, and ninth holes, for each of which the USGA would later determine that the proper score was three. On the remaining four holes, the Almonte club allowed four strokes where the USGA would allow just three.

For its universal standards scores, American golf associations borrowed a term that traders in the stock market used to name the proper or normal value for a stock between the extremes of its high and low prices over time: “par.”

This term had been used in a similar context once before in golf, at the 1870 Open Championship at Prestwick.



Figure 37 "Young" Tom Morris, 1851-75, wearing the Open "championship belt" that he was given to own after winning it four times in a row. The belt was replaced by today's Claret Jug.

A golf writer reporting on the tournament had asked two golf professionals familiar with the twelve-hole golf course what the winning score for the tournament might be. The golfers suggested that a perfect score for a golfer who made no mistakes would be forty-nine. The writer for the first time invoked the stock-exchange metaphor to inform readers that forty-nine strokes would be “par” for the course. In the event, with a score two under the “perfect score” that the writer called “par,” twenty-year-old “Young” Tom Morris won the third of the four Open Championships he won in a row.

Latent here in 1870 was the concept of a “ground score” and the possibility of using the word “par” to indicate it, but nothing came of it.

Despite the American declaration in favour of standard par scores in the early 1900s, golf clubs in Britain and Ireland maintained their use of the term Bogey, and individual golf clubs maintained their traditions of establishing their own Bogey scores according to the whims of the membership. Where club members found a 400-yard hole very difficult to play, for instance, they were free (perhaps in service of nothing more than the vanity of influential club members) to declare its Bogey score to be five, rather than four (as according to the American standard).

Well, in the early 1900s, the scores of the best golfers in the game – both professionals and amateurs – were coming down dramatically. Golf swings were improving as tournament play increased at amateur and professional levels, allowing golfers to learn from each other better swing techniques in general and better swings for particular shots, to say nothing of better strategies for playing golf with the swings and

shots that golfers now had in their arsenal. Furthermore, new golf balls were being hit further and more accurately by the best players.

In the United States, where the practices of golf clubs in converting from their old Bogey scores to the new standard par scores was in flux, reflected in score cards with both a bogey score and a par score listed for each hole, the best golfers regularly began to complete many of the golf holes that were graded with the old Bogey score in one stroke less than that score. So the terms “par” and “Bogey” began to diverge in American golf, as the best American golfers began to use the word “par” in reference to the perfect number of strokes for a hole and the word “Bogey” for one stroke more than the perfect number.

The American amateur champion Walter J. Travis explained his understanding of the two terms in 1902:

Par golf, it may be remarked, is perfect golf, determined according to the distance of the holes and with two strokes allowed on each green, while bogey simply represents the score of a good player who occasionally makes a mistake, not very glaring, but sufficient to make a difference in the round of four or five strokes. Bogey is an elastic quantity, however, so much so, indeed, on some courses, as to furnish no true criterion of the game of the player who now and then beats the Colonel! (Practical Golf, p. 173)

British golfers were understandably upset to learn how the word Bogey was coming to be used: it seemed to mean a score one stroke more than it took an expert American player to complete a hole! By 1914, just before World War I broke out, many British golf writers began to agitate for adoption of the USGA standards for determining the proper number of strokes for golf holes, but the war deferred further work on this idea. So it was not until 1925 that British and Irish golf Unions (as their golf associations are called) agreed to establish Standard Scratch Scores for all golf holes and golf courses.

Course Conditions

Perth greenkeeper Free had come to Almonte at the same time as Sargent, no doubt to discuss the plans for the course with the designer himself: “Mr. Free, caretaker of the Perth-upon-Tay links, also arrived on Monday, and, with local helpers, is putting the grounds in shape, making greens, etc.” (*Almonte Gazette*, 3 May 1907, p. 1). Free apparently told the newspaper that “If the weather holds good the grounds will be ready for use next week” (*Almonte Gazette*, 3 May 1907, p. 1).

The weather at the beginning of May in 1907 was actually colder than usual, but people were nonetheless out on the course as early as Free had predicted they might be: “The golf enthusiasts have started play and the links are well patronized” (*Ottawa Citizen*, 14 May 1907, 15). The newspaper predictions in the spring had proved true: “Golf is the coming game for this season and there are quite a number of new players to get into line” (*Ottawa Citizen*, 23 April 1907, p. 11).

The golf course slowly matured over the course of the spring and summer. By July, we find: “Improvements are being made weekly to the golf grounds, which are now beginning to assume something of the appearance and condition they should possess, and they are daily the mecca of the golfing enthusiasts of the town” (*Almonte Gazette*, 5 July 1907, p. 1).

Although the club leased the land for the golf course from Porritt, it seems that the ultimate owner was another person, who undertook to improve the land for the club: “Mr. Chas. Simpson is clearing the land owned by him along the Mississippi and leased by the golf club. The stumps are being removed and suitable drainage installed” (*Almonte Gazette*, 18 October 1908, p. 1). Did the sixth hole, “The Stumps,” lose its name at this time? With these hazards removed, was its Bogey score reduced from five to four?

There was continuous improvement in the following years. We read in 1909 that “A number of improvements will be made on the Golf Links as soon as the weather permits” (*Almonte Gazette*, 9 April 1909, p. 1). Particular improvements are mentioned in 1911: “Everything is humming over at the golf links this week. The grounds committee are working overtime getting the greens and teeing grounds in condition New tees have been built, the greens fixed up” (*Almonte Gazette*, 28 April 1911, p. 8).

A Golf Hazard

The new golf course of the Almonte Golf Club had certain of the usual hazards and obstructions: a river, a gully, large trees, and so on. But the new golf course also had a particularly unusual course condition, an unnatural hazard perhaps unknown to architect George Sargent.

Golf designers take into consideration the direction of the prevailing wind when laying out a golf course, and no doubt Sargent did so, but it is not known whether he took into account the direction of prevailing gunfire: “There is altogether too much careless shooting in and around Almonte. Not long ago some people playing on the links heard a couple of rifle bullets whizzing through the air entirely too close for comfort” (*Almonte Gazette*, 30 October 1908, p. 9).

Perhaps the Almonte holes where the USGA expected just three strokes to be played, as opposed to the five allowed by the local club, were the holes where players were expected to take extra shots as they played from cover to cover to avoid the hazard of gunfire.

A Ladies' Golf Club

From before the formation of the first golf club in 1902, invitations to the ladies of Almonte to take up the game had been issued by the *Gazette*. And since 1902, the Almonte women who played the game had regularly floated the idea of forming their own club.

But it had never happened.

Once again, then, in 1908, spring brought news that "The ladies talk of organizing" (*Almonte Gazette*, 17 April 1908, p. 11). But things had now changed. There was more enthusiasm among the women who played golf: "Notwithstanding the cold weather there have been quite a few of the more enthusiastic members attending almost daily at the links, and among them a number of ladies" (*Almonte Gazette*, 24 May 1907, p. 1).

As we all know, golfers who play in cold weather are more dedicated to the game than fair-weather golfers. Something was up.

The newspaper ran an announcement:

Ladies' Golf Club

A meeting of the ladies interested in the organization of a ladies' club will be held in the town clerk's office, town hall All who are interested, whether as active or honorary members, are requested to attend. Golf gives promise of booming this summer and there is likely to be a large membership in the ladies' club. (Almonte Gazette, 1 May 1908, p. 7)

Would it finally happen?

Ladies Golf Club

A well-attended meeting of the ladies interested in the organization of a ladies' golf club was held on Monday afternoon, when it was decided to organize and the following officers were appointed: President, Mrs. D.M. Fraser; vice-president, Mrs. Jas. McLeod; secretary, Mrs. Harold Jamieson; treasurer, Miss Hamelin; captain, Mrs. Alex Rosamond; committee for first month, Mrs. H. Conn, Mrs. Lawton and Mrs. H.

Jamieson. The club is composed of active and honorary members, the latter participating only in social features. (Almonte Gazette, 15 May 1908, p. 6)

We recognize the last names of most of the officers of the ladies' club, whose husbands had long been members of the Almonte Golf Club, most of them also having served as officers of the club.

The exceptions are Mrs. D.M. Fraser and Mrs. H. Conn. The latter may have actually lived in Ottawa, residing in Almonte only for a short period while visiting her relatives, a fact that would perhaps account for the odd statement in the newspaper that the committee to which she was appointed would apparently exist for just the "first month." Mrs. Fraser, however, was an important long-term Almonte resident, and we know for certain that, whatever the case with regard to the other officers of the ladies' club, she was definitely not invited to join the Almonte Golf Club by her husband.



Figure 38 Elm Glen, Almonte, circa 1900.

Mrs. Donald McFarlane Fraser lived at "Elm Glen," one of the finest houses in Almonte. Born Caldwell (a daughter of two of the first settlers in Lanark County), Rebecca ("Reba") Fraser was by 1908 the 44-year-

old widow of lawyer-turned-manufacturer D.M. Fraser, who had set up a knitting mill for the manufacture of hosiery in 1893, only to die in the woods north of Renfrew when he accidentally shot himself while deer hunting in 1897, when just 37 years of age. He was wealthy, and he was well-insured, leaving Reba Fraser well-established at “Elm Glen.”



Figure 39 Unidentified family grouping at Elm Glen, which I take to be Reba Fraser (holding the baby), her three children (to this point), her mother, and her sister, in the mid-1890s.

Widowed at 32 years of age, Reba Fraser had four children under the age of six, but she was nonetheless active in the community, especially through St. Andrews Presbyterian Church, where she was the organist and a member of the executive of the Women’s Foreign Ministry Service – the purpose of which, in the unfortunate language of the day, was to support the work of Christian missionaries amongst “women and children of heathen lands” (“Records of the Women’s Foreign Missionary Society” [Toronto: Presbyterian Church in Canada Archives, 1988], p. 1).

Two of Reba’s four children, Isabel and Margo, would become junior members of the Almonte Golf Club.

The ladies' club over which Reba Fraser presided had a successful first year, and organized again in the spring of 1909: "Another of Almonte's many athletic organizations got into line on Saturday afternoon when the Ladies' Golf Club was organized for the summer" (*Almonte Gazette*, 7 May 1909, p. 1).

The list of officers was largely unchanged, but there was a new committee to handle the ladies' traditional role of serving tea to members of the golf club: "the refreshment com. – Mrs. McEwen, Miss Davis, Miss E. Young and Miss A.L. Forgie" (*Almonte Gazette*, 7 May 1909, p. 1). Assuming that one or more of the three unmarried people in question were young women, one suspects that there was a membership of young women paralleling the young men entering the game. Later renamed the "committee on teas," this committee continued for several years to comprise one woman addressed as "Mrs." and two or three other women addressed as "Miss" (*Almonte Gazette*, 22 April 1910, p. 8).

The *Almonte Gazette* had earlier run a cartoon encouraging women to take up the game; now its dream had become reality.



Figure 40 *Almonte Gazette*, 20 July 1906, p. 1

However cumbersome it might seem to present golfers, women's golf dress around 1905-1910 was not far off what was represented in the cartoon.



Figure 41 Gladys Code, Perth golf course, circa 1910.

The photograph to the left shows Gladys Lillian Code at the Perth Golf Club before World War I. She is dressed in typical women's golf attire of the time.

Note, by the way, that the golf bag she holds in front of her carries five or six clubs. This constituted the standard set for both women and men at that time.

In 1898, Gladys Code had been the first woman admitted as a member of the Perth Golf Club. Her name is not recorded, however, among the names of Perth players who later competed against players from the Almonte Golf Club.

Gladys Code trained as a nurse and served overseas during World War I, working at hospitals both in England and France. She resigned in 1917 because of the stress caused by her work.

Before the end of the war, she married British Army Major Hugh Cameron Ferguson. The couple initially lived in Toronto but eventually took up residence in Port Elmsley and played golf in Perth for many years.

Wearing long dresses (according to the fashion of the day), as in the cartoon and photograph above, and no doubt accompanied by caddies as well, women staged their own competitions on the Almonte golf course, as in the case of the 1910 handicap competition "for a prize presented by Mrs. Alex Rosamond, president of the club" (*Almonte Gazette*, 5 August 1910, p. 8).

Mary Rosamond had been elected president of the ladies' club in the spring of 1910. One of the responsibilities of the president was to arrange for prizes to be awarded at club competitions, and it was understood that the president would often donate such prizes herself.



Figure 42 Mary Eleanor (Cotton) Rosamond, circa 1907, perhaps with daughter Kathleen.

Born Mary Eleanor Cotton, daughter of a distinguished Canadian military officer, William Henry Cotton (promoted to the rank of Brigadier-General in 1907), she had married Alex Rosamond in the fall of 1902.

She immediately began having children: Kathleen (1904), Norah (1907), and Mary (1910). One more girl would be born, Dorothy, completing the family.

Mary Rosamond had served as the ladies' club Golf Captain in 1909, which implies that she was one of the best golfers among the women members at the club. She did not compete in the tournament for which she offered the prize in August of 1910, however, perhaps preferring to avoid a conflict even worse than the one that Reba Fraser had faced just a few weeks earlier, as we shall see shortly.

Still, seven of the club's approximately one dozen women members competed for the Rosamond prize:

The ladies' golf club held a handicap competition last Saturday afternoon Miss Etta Young was the winner with a net score of 97 for eighteen holes. The scores were:

	Gross	Handicap	Net
Miss E Young	107	10	97
Mrs. Buckham	106	0	106
Mrs. Jamieson	118	12	106
Mis McArthur	121	10	111
Miss E. Greig	135	12	123
Mrs. Kirkland	129	4	125
Mrs. Cole	168	20	148

(*Almonte Gazette*, 5 August 1910, p. 8)

That gross score of 168 by Mrs. Cole, by the way, is the highest recorded score ever made on the Almonte Golf club. Congratulations to Mrs. Cole, who must have won the tournament's award for "Most Honest Golfer"!

There were also other ladies' competitions at the Almonte Golf Club typical of the various sorts of club competitions held in those days.

For instance, "Miss [Marjorie] Grant [of Perth] ... presented a trophy to the ladies' golf club as a prize to be awarded in an approaching and chipping competition" (*Almonte Gazette*, 17 June 1910, p. 5). The competition was staged over nine holes, apparently requiring an approach shot and putts on each of the golf course's nine greens. Eight women competed in the contest, the lowest score being 36, made by Mrs. Fraser, who preferred not to be declared the winner, allowing the runner-up Mrs. Kirkland to take home the trophy: "The prize was a very handsome silver-mounted perfume holder" (*Almonte Gazette*, 24 June 1910, p. 5).

Reba Fraser declined to be declared the winner of the prize because of what she perceived to be a conflict of interest: she was a personal friend of the woman who had donated the prize, Marjorie Grant, who often stayed with Reba Fraser at Elm Glen.

By 1910, the Almonte Golf Club's matches against Perth comprised not just matches between men, but also matches between mixed pairs of men and women, as well as matches between women, as the following list of competitors in such matches played at the Almonte Golf Club shows (Almonters only are listed):

Mr. Buckham and Mrs. Jamieson lost

Mr. Pollock and Mrs. Metcalfe lost

Dr. Kelly and Miss Grant lost

Mr. P.A. Greig and Mrs. Fraser lost

Mr. Harold Jamieson and Mrs. Buckham tied

Miss Eleanor Greig lost

Mrs. Metcalfe lost

Miss E. Young lost

Mrs. Buckham lost

In the afternoon tea was served by the Almonte ladies at the club house. (Almonte Gazette, 17 June 1910, p. 5).

Almonte golfers (both men and women), on average, were simply not as good as Perth Golfers. Almonte golfers were all relatively new to the game. When one of the better Almonte golfers was matched against a merely average Perth player, Almonters occasionally scored victories in such matches. But I found no record of the Almonte Golf Club ever winning a team competition.

Regardless of their golfing abilities, however, Almonte women faced a burden on match day not shared by the men: Almonte's ladies had to see to the tea.

The ladies might be fainting from the heat, but their obligation to serve tea remained, as we can see from a club competition in 1911: "A match for the ladies is being arranged for Saturday afternoon, at which six golf balls, kindly donated by Mr. W. Thoburn, M.P., will be competed for. The handicaps will be posted at the club-house" (*Almonte Gazette*, 19 May 1911, p. 1). Alas, the ladies won no golf balls that day:

Golf Matches and Tea

Mr. Wm. Thoburn, M.P., generously donated a dozen golf balls as prizes to be competed for by the members, half-a-dozen for the ladies and half-a-dozen for the men. The competition was arranged for Saturday afternoon Owing to the heat the ladies were unable to complete their competition. Tea was served by the ladies at the close of the first round. (Almonte Gazette, 28 May 1911, p, 4).

A photograph of an outdoor event of this sort at the Perth golf club in 1908 may suggest what the ladies at Almonte were expected to put on for club members. The entertainment was described as a "picnic," but I suspect that it was actually one of the regular teas put on by ladies at all such golf clubs in the early decades of the twentieth century.



Figure 43 From "Perth Remembered." http://www.perthremembered.com/?page_id=81

The Almonte ladies would generally "put on teas" on a pre-announced schedule of Saturdays throughout the golf season, whether or not a tournament was scheduled for the Saturday in question. These teas were part of the rhythm of the social life of every golf club in those days.

When the ladies' competition that had been disrupted by the heat was re-run a few days later, presumably after the weather had improved, "Mrs. Buckham won Mr. Thoburn's prize" (*Almonte Gazette*, 2 June 1911, p. 1).

There is no doubt that Mrs. Gideon Buckham, born Elizabeth Lauder, was one of the best women golfers of the Almonte Golf Club. In partnership with Harold Jamieson, she was the only woman to earn any points in the 1910 match against Perth.

In the 1910 ladies' handicap competition, she was marked as the "scratch" golfer, playing off a handicap of 0.

Note that there was no universally recognized handicap system in the early 1900s. At a club like Almonte's, usually the best golfers would be designated as the "scratch" players in the club's handicap tournaments. These players would be accorded a handicap of 0. All other players would be accorded a handicap relative to the expectation of how much higher their scores would be in comparison to the scores of the so-called "scratch" players.

Marked as the scratch player, Mrs. Buckham duly shot the lowest gross score in 1910. She had done so the year before, as well: "The preliminary round of the ladies' tournament was played, Mrs. Buckham making the best score with 106 for 18 holes" (*Almonte Gazette*, 15 July 1909, p. 4).

A House! A House! A Clubhouse for My Course!

Given that all its other business was in suspended animation during 1907 until the question of its new grounds was resolved, the Almonte Golf Club moved remarkably quickly to build itself a clubhouse after the visit by Sargent and Free during the first week of May.

The *Ottawa Journal* reported in the middle of May that “the club has let the contract for a new and commodious club house, which will be erected at once on the riverside beyond Mr. Weatherly’s residence” (18 May 1907, p. 15).

The local newspaper offered further details: “The contract for the new clubhouse has been let to Mr. Donaldson and the work is being rushed forward and it is expected to be completed by Friday and ready for occupation on that day. The clubhouse is of the bungalow style of architecture, fifteen feet square with projecting roof all around it” (*Almonte Gazette*, 24 May 1907, p. 1).

Such a building hardly sounds “commodious.” Perhaps the roof projecting around all four sides allowed for a verandah, which would have effectively doubled the size of the building’s usable floor space in good weather.

The proprietor of the *Almonte Gazette*, James McLeod, who as we know was perhaps the biggest promoter of golf in the town, seems not to have been much enamored of the plans for the little building. Before the contract had even been let for the construction of the clubhouse, he wrote: “Speaking of attractions for the 24th of May, why not back the Canadian navy in behind the island and let them bombard the golf club house?” (*Almonte Gazette*, 1 April 1910, p. 4).

If his complaint was that the clubhouse would be too small, surely a small clubhouse was better than no clubhouse at all.

Furthermore, there was continual improvement of the area around the clubhouse, as McLeod’s own newspaper noted:

A fine substantial landing dock has been built on the river level below the club house for use of members who come in boats and canoes. A pathway and steps have also been built up the bank leading to the clubhouse.

The tennis courts have been laid and Mr. J. Cullen, the contractor, made a fine job of levelling them. The soil is well suited for the purpose and there will not be better courts anywhere in the Valley than these. They are netted on all four sides. (Almonte Gazette, 27 May 1910, p. 5)

The photograph below represents a greatly enlarged detail from an early twentieth-century photograph that looks south-east across the Front Bridge in the direction of the pasturelands along the Mississippi River where the golf course was laid out.



Figure 44 Detail from Image 00038, Historic Photo Archive, <https://almonte.com/our-history/historic-photo-archive/nggallery/page/8>

In the background of the photograph, one can make out on the right side an image of a square, light-coloured building with a roof projecting out over each side. This building would seem to be the fifteen-foot square clubhouse of the Almonte Golf Club.

Just as indicated in the passages above, this building is located “on the riverside,” its roof projects out over its walls, and leading up to it from the Mississippi River seem to be steps.

And right at the edge of the photograph there may even be a hint of the wharf to which these steps descended.

The undated photograph below (perhaps from the mid-twentieth century) appears to have been taken from the area where the clubhouse was located, providing the view from this location back across the Mississippi River toward the N.L.A.S. grounds.

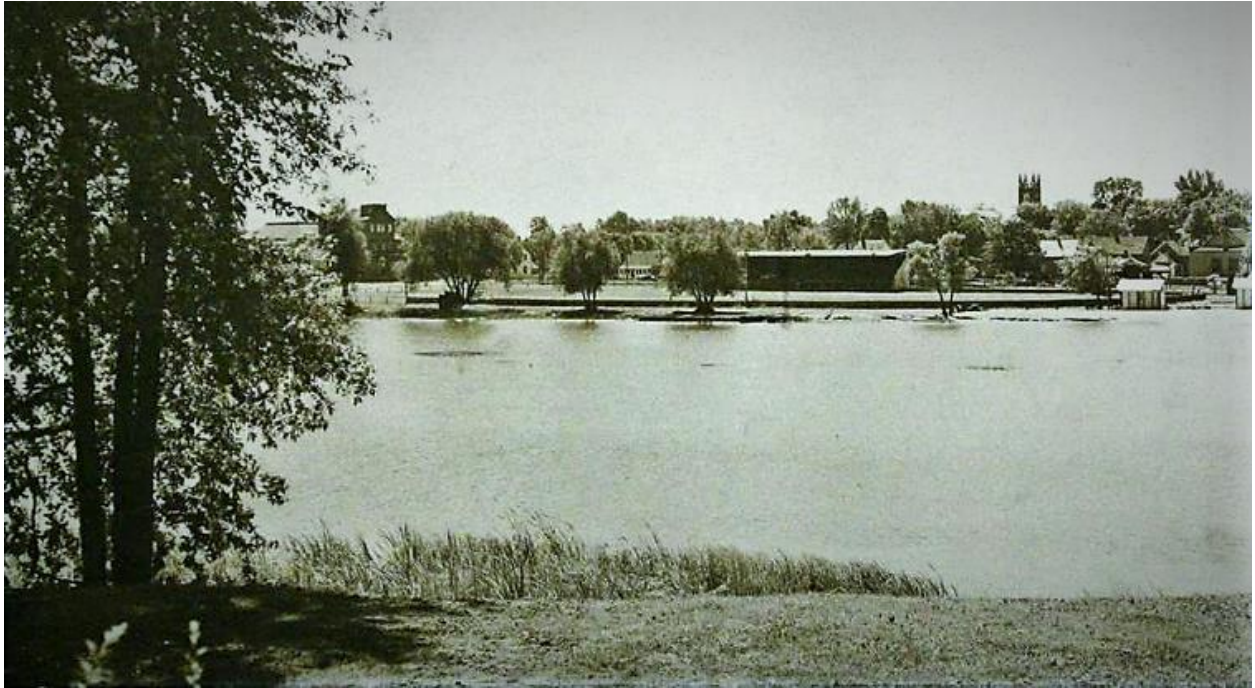


Figure 45 View from the golf course grounds in the vicinity of the clubhouse of the N.L.A.S. grounds.

Over the next several years, the clubhouse began to attract to it sufficient numbers of people for one of the people who owned the property on which the golf course was laid out to consider building a road into it. In 1910, one of the councillors reported to Almonte Town Council that “Mr. Simpson is talking of building a road into his property, the golf links, and would like to know what the town was going to do about allowing boat houses on the ends of the street there” (*Almonte Gazette*, 10 June 1910, p. 4).

In time, the little clubhouse might have developed into a grander building accommodating a country club.

Location, Location, Location

An unanticipated advantage derived from the location of the Almonte Golf Club's new golf course was the fact that it provided a living advertisement for the game.

The open river and the open space of the N.L.A.S. fair ground's playing field and racetrack provided an unimpeded view of the sloping hillside where the course was laid out. Add to this scene the colourful dress of the women who played the game, and the eyes of town residents were naturally drawn to the golf course: "During the past fine days the golf links have been freely patronized, and seen from the town presented quite an animated scene. A good number of ladies are taking up the game" (*Almonte Gazette*, 31 May 1907, p. 1).

Also adding to the animated spectacle, as seen from town, was the commingling of well-dressed men and women, on the one hand, with farmer Little's ill-mannered horse and Porritt's sometimes ill-mannered cows, on the other.

Furthermore, there was occasional interaction between them that town residents might witness. Publisher McLeod made journalistic hay when he was told of a confrontation on the Almonte links between golfer and cow:

New Golf Rule Wanted

In playing golf, situations arise from time to time which call for special ruling, and which can only be pronounced upon by experts in the game, and even then the result is not always satisfactory. Only a few weeks ago a case arose in a match in which [British Open Champion James] Braid was one of the players. He played a ball which landed in a tree within the grounds and lodged there. Such a thing had never been known to occur before, and that feature of the match has been passed down to golfing posterity as an unique one. Now Almonte Golf Club is only in its swaddling clothes and yet one of its members had an experience the other day which is even more unique in that it is much less liable to repetition than that which happened to Champion Braid. Mr. Meredith, of the Sterling Bank, made a pretty drive from No. 2 tee and his ball landed within a short distance of the green, and if he entertained visions of a score of three for the hole he was quite justified in doing so. But near

where the ball had dropped was a young heifer quietly ruminating – probably wondering why the grass didn't grow – and when she saw the white sphere she immediately possessed herself of it, and made off with it and was half way across the field before the caddy succeeded in making her disgorge. Now the question is where that ball should have been played from? Was the player entitled to replace the ball where it had lain? Could that young cow be considered "in the game" and be penalized for interfering with a ball that did not belong to her? Perhaps some of the Perth-upon-Tay or Poonahmalee veterans can give expert ruling in this case. (Almonte Gazette, 31 May 1907, p. 8).

So much for the Almonte Golf Club's advertisement promising caddies that the work was easy!

Club Competitions

Perhaps the most important thing for establishing proper golf culture at a club is not so much a clubhouse as a programme of competitions, both within the club and with other clubs, such as we have seen in regard to matches involving members of the ladies' club in competitions among themselves and as members of teams competing against Perth.

Within the club, there were regular competitions for prizes announced by the newspaper: "On Saturday next a competition will take place for a prize offered by President Alex Rosamond"; "It was announced that Mr. Thoburn had offered suitable prizes, which will be competed for during the summer" (*Almonte Gazette*, 5 July 1907, p. 1; 9 April 1909, p. 1)

The 1907 club competition for the Rosamond prize was a "bogey competition" (*Ottawa Journal*, 5 July 1907, p. 6). As we know, a bogey score in those days was a score for a hole similar to what we call par today, so this competition was to be decided by gross score, not by the net score produced after the player's handicap had been deducted.

But there were also handicap competitions. Although we read in 1908 that "the preliminary rounds for the handicap competition were played," there was no mention in the newspapers of the match committee that would have determined handicaps until 1909, when we read of the club members appointed to that year's "match committee – Dr. J.T. Kirkland, Dr. J. K. Kelly, Mr. A.G. Rosamond" (*Almonte Gazette*, 10 July 1908, p. 7; 9 April 1909, p. 1).

In the 1911 handicap competition, when "Mr. Wm. Thoburn, M.P., generously donated a dozen golf balls as prizes to be competed for by the members, half-a-dozen for the ladies and half-a-dozen for the men," the newspaper's report of the event shows us the number of players involved in the men's competition and the handicaps they were awarded by the match committee (*Almonte Gazette*, 28 May 1911, p. 4).

	<i>Score</i>	<i>Handicap</i>	<i>Net</i>
<i>F. Winton</i>	82	0	82
<i>G. Buckham</i>	84	0	84
<i>P.A. Greig</i>	88	4	84

<i>H. Jamieson</i>	<i>97</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>95</i>
<i>Lumsden</i>	<i>104</i>	<i>8</i>	<i>96</i>
<i>W.C. Pollock</i>	<i>106</i>	<i>4</i>	<i>102</i>
<i>A.J. Hollyer</i>	<i>108</i>	<i>4</i>	<i>104</i>
<i>Jas. McLeod</i>	<i>119</i>	<i>8</i>	<i>111</i>

(Almonte Gazette, 28 May 1911, p, 4).

Honorary President William Thoburn was not reported as having played in any tournaments after the 1906 season, but he was a great supporter of the club's tournament competitions: "Mr. Wm. Thoburn, M.P., who since his election to the Dominion House has been most generous in the encouragement of sport, has made two further presentations this week – a gold medal to the golf club and a handsome silver cup to the rifle association. The medal will be made a trophy for the monthly handicap competitions of the golf club" (*Almonte Gazette*, 27 August 1909, p. 4).

According this gold medal extra prestige, the club made the first competition for it a 27-hole contest. In 1910, the gold medal was made even more important: "The competition for the gold medal presented by Wm Thoburn, M.P., ... represents the championship of the Almonte Golf Club" (*Almonte Gazette*, 4 November 1910, p. 6). Furthermore, the competition for the Thoburn medal would now take place over 36 holes.

Competitions with Other Clubs

The golf club in Perth was one of the Almonte Golf Club's greatest allies when it came to golf course construction, and it was also its most regular opponent in inter-club competitions.

Eager to display its new 1907 layout, the Almonte Golf Club arranged for home-and-away competitive matches with Perth, the first at Perth at the end of July: "half a dozen Almonte golfers drove to Perth and enjoyed a game with the county players on the Links -o'-Tay. The greens were in splendid shape and a keen contest was the result, the Perthites winning out by six points.... A return game will be played on the Almonte links shortly" (*Almonte Gazette*, 26 July 1907, p. 4). At the end of August: "A team from Perth played a match with a local team ... and won out by 11 to 9" (*Ottawa Citizen*, 28 August 1907, p. 10). Perhaps utilizing home-course advantage, or perhaps having become more proficient at the game, or both, Almonte players put up a much better fight in the second match.

The relationship with golf clubs at Perth and Smith Falls was important to the Almonte Golf Club, so we find it sending players to each club to help with the Canada Day holiday celebrations: "Almonte Golfers will play in Perth and Smith Falls on July 1st" (*Almonte Gazette*, 2 July 1909, p. 8).

Having lent its golf professional George Sargent to the Almonte Golf Club for the laying out of its new links, the Ottawa Golf Club was well aware of the new golf club on the block and had it in mind to play competitive matches with Almonte: "A strong club has been organized at Almonte and the members of the Ottawa club expect to have the pleasure of testing their skill on the new links this summer" (*Ottawa Citizen*, 2 May 1907, p. 8). It seems that no matches were arranged before the summer of 1908, when the Ottawa club invited the Almonte club to play on the Ottawa golf course: "An invitation has been received from the Ottawa Golf Club for a game in Ottawa Saturday. All those who will be able to go to Ottawa Saturday should notify the secretary, the president, or the captain before Friday noon, at the latest" (*Almonte Gazette*, 17 July 1908, p. 1).

Alas, bad weather frustrated everyone's plans, but the small-town club's awareness of the huge odds against its success in matches with Ottawa, as well as the intrepid spirit with which the club approached the challenge, is indicated by the language of the newspaper report: "Owing to the unpropitious appearance of the elements, the crusade of the Almonte Golf Club to Ottawa on Saturday has been postponed" (*Almonte Gazette*, 24 July 1908, p. 5).

Still, we learn that six weeks later “Several members of the Almonte Golf Club spent Labor Day on the Ottawa links” (*Almonte Gazette*, 11 September 1908, p. 1). Whether the visit of the Almonte players was for a competition, or whether it was for something more like a reconnaissance mission by freelancing Almonte golfers, is not clear.

The fact is that small clubs like Almonte’s, with perhaps 30 senior men players, could not hope to compete against the Ottawa Golf Club, which drew its senior men’s team from more than 400 members, so for a competition with Ottawa in 1911 Almonte drafted as recruits several of the best players from its neighboring clubs in Perth and Smiths Falls:

A Lanark county golf team composed of Messrs. McEwen and Code of Perth, Messrs. H. Jamieson, G. Buckham, W.C. Pollock and Alex Rosamond of Almonte, and Messrs. [illegible] and Henderson of Smiths Falls went to Ottawa on Saturday and played a match with an Ottawa team with results most favorable to the city exponents. An Ottawa team will play a match in Almonte shortly. (Almonte Gazette, 1 September 1911, p. 6)

Almonte was not alone in being dominated by the Ottawa Golf Club of 1911. In the week that followed its triumph over Almonte, the Ottawa Golf Club defeated Royal Montreal by a score of 16 matches to 7, and it defeated the Lambton Golf Club of Toronto by a score of 22 matches to 12.

Handicaps

In a 1909 club competition, “Mr. Alex Rosamond was top man with 91 net” (*Almonte Gazette*, 2 July 1909, p. 8). Since Club Golf Captain Rosamond was regularly one of the players accorded a handicap of 0 in club competitions, we might suppose (if we take his 91 as not an atypical score for him) that the club’s best players tended on average to score in the high 80s and low 90s.

Of course such players could at times score much lower, as in the case of Harold Jamieson, who was also accorded a handicap of 0 but established the nine-hole record score of 38 in 1907.

The following item indicates the handicaps of most of the club’s gentlemen members in 1909:

Golf Tournament

The following is the draw of the handicap tournament for the golf balls offered by the president, Mr. H. Jamieson. Three prizes are offered. The handicap follows the name of each player:

Mr. Henshaw 0 vs. [Mr. W.] Cumming 9

G.S. Rosamond 6 vs. Mr. Carroll 10

S.C. McLeod 6 vs. P.A. Greig 10

Dr. Kirkland 3 vs. Mr. Buckham 6

Mr. Donaldson 14 vs. Mr. H. Jamieson 0

Mr. Lundy 10 vs. Dr. Kelly 0

Mr. A.G. Rosamond 0 vs. Mr. Von Iffland 0

Mr. Arch. Rosamond 18 vs. Mr. Johnston 4

Mr. J. McLeod 10 vs. Mr. W.C. Pollock 9

This competition will be played on or before Saturday afternoon, July 17th. Signed score cards must be returned to Dr. Kirkland, chairman of the match committee.

(Almonte Gazette, 15 July 1909, p. 1).

Just how wildly inaccurate the handicap system of those days could be is shown by the results of tournament play later the same year:

The golf tournament of Saturday last was productive of some remarkably good golf. Mr. G. Buckham, who won first prize, established a new record for nine holes of 37 as follows: 5, 2, 5, 4, 3, 5, 5, 4, 4. His second round was 42, making a total of 79. Dr. Kelly played two 40's, making 80. The scores were:

	<i>Gross</i>	<i>Handicap</i>	<i>Net</i>
<i>G. Buckham</i>	79	0	79
<i>Dr. Kelly</i>	80	0	80
<i>Arch. Rosamond</i>	102	19	88
<i>H.W. Lundy</i>	98	10	88
<i>G.S. Rosamond</i>	97	6	91
<i>R.L. Von Iffland</i>	98	0	98
<i>S.C. McLeod</i>	100	6	94
<i>P.A. Greig</i>	105	10	95
<i>H.Y. Carroll</i>	111	10	101

(Almonte Gazette, 23 July 1909, p. 8)

Buckham and Von Iffland are both marked as “scratch” players by the match committee and so each is accorded a handicap of 0, yet the former shoots 79 and the latter shoots 98 – an astonishing difference of 19 strokes, the kind of difference that a proper handicap system would later be designed to minimize. (Sadly, two months later, young Von Iffland, accountant at Almonte’s Bank of Montreal branch and “an enthusiastic member of the golf club and one of the club’s strongest players,” died of typhoid fever, just a week before he was to be married [*Almonte Gazette*, 17 September 1909, p. 5].)

Records

Also important in establishing a golf club's culture is a keeping of course records, if for no other reason than to maintain a story of the club's history, and a sense that each year of club competitions and each player's tournament win or record-setting performance have all contributed to it.



Figure 46 Thomas Alfred Code.

After a couple of months of play on the new Sargent course, we learn that a Perth player had established a course record: “Mr. W.P. McEwen and Mr. T.A. Code of Perth visited Almonte on Saturday, and tried the new golf links. Mr. Code made the round in 40, a record for the links” (*Ottawa Citizen*, 19 June 1907, p. 9). These two men were, respectively, vice-president and president of the Perth Golf Club, perhaps investigating the links where their teams would soon play matches. Code had been one of the seven “men of note” who joined Captain Matheson in founding the first Perth Golf Club in 1890. McEwen was a former resident of Almonte, associated with James McLeod when the *Almonte Gazette* was established. His exploits on behalf of the Perth Golf Club (such as setting that club's course record) were regularly recounted in the *Almonte Gazette*.

After Code's course record, it was matched by an Almonte member: “So far Dr. Kelly holds the local championship with a score of 40, but the Doctor is likely to hear from some of the other enthusiasts before long” (*Almonte Gazette*, 5 July 1907, p. 1). Sure enough, a month later, “Mr. Harry Jamieson broke the record at the golf links, making the round in 38” (*Ottawa Citizen*, 15 August 1907, p. 12). It would be Jamieson and Mrs. Buckham who made the only point against Perth in the 1910 mixed pairs competition recorded above.

The local newspaper kept track of this quest to reduce the course record: “The links are in fine shape now and the enthusiasts are found in a daily effort to lower the record for the course. So far this year 38 is the best round recorded” (*Almonte Gazette*, 27 May 1910, p. 5).

And of course the newspaper also kept an eye on the record for the best 18-hole score: “Mr. G. Buckham established a new record for eighteen holes on the local course a few days ago, with a 7[6] –

37 out 39 in" (*Almonte Gazette*, 1 July 1910, p. 8). Gideon Buckham also held the record for the best 36-hole score: "The competition for the golf medal presented by Wm Thoburn, M.P., which represents the championship of the Almonte Golf Club, was completed on Saturday last, Mr. G. Buckham being the winner with a score of 166 for 36 holes. This is a record which will likely stand for some time" (*Almonte Gazette*, 4 November 1910, p. 6).

Mr. Buckham was the best male golfer and Mrs. Buckham was the best female golfer. Why did the Almonte Golf Club not put them out as a team in the mixed-pairs competition against Perth? Nothing could have gone wrong with a husband-and-wife team, could it?

An interesting hole-in-one was recorded, and it contributed to club history in an interesting way:

Mr. T. Lawton made a record drive on the Almonte golf links on Thursday last, one that is not likely to be duplicated. He drove for No. 8 hole which is a short one, only 77 yards, and sent the ball well into the air, and it dropped directly into the hole and remained there. Similar results have been obtained from "running up" shots, but we think Mr. Lawton has made a record that will be his for many-a-day. (Almonte Gazette, 4 October 1907, p. 1)

The next year, when the Almonte Golf Club gave each of its holes a name, Lawton's feat became an enduring aspect of club history when the eighth hole was named after him: Lawton.

A Black is Back

Perhaps the greatest golf match in the history of the Almonte Golf Club occurred when a team from Rivermead Golf and Country Club visited the golf course in 1911, during the first year of the Rivermead club's existence.

It was not just that Almonte did not lose: "Last Saturday afternoon a friendly match was played on the links here between an octet of [the] Rivermead Club of Ottawa and a similar number of Almonte golfers, the result being an even break" (*Almonte Gazette*, 12 October 1911, p. 7).



Figure 47 Wee Davie Black, as he looked around the time of his visit to Almonte, *Ottawa Citizen*, 13 August 1913, p. 8

Making a bigger impact on the Almonte club members was the play of the Rivermead club's golf professional, Davie Black – the brother of the Royal Montreal pro James Black who had probably laid out the 1902 course nine years before:

A feature of the game was the playing of Mr. Black, who is the professional coach of the Rivermead club. In the forenoon, just for fun, he made one round of nine holes in 33, and another in 34. In the afternoon he played in almost as good form. (Almonte Gazette, 12 October 1911, p. 7).

Black's scores of 33 for nine holes and 67 for eighteen holes were never matched, let alone beaten.

And Black may have been single-handedly responsible for the first galleries of any consequence ever to follow a golfer around the links of Almonte:

His play was a marvel to some of the younger local players, and he was accompanied by a number of these as the play went on, and he good-naturedly gave the youngsters many pointers about playing the game. (Almonte Gazette, 12 October 1911, p. 7).

Davie Black would win the Canadian PGA championship in 1913, and he would then win it three times in a row in the early 1920s.

Non-Gendered Junior Golf

A fortunate aspect of the Almonte Golf Club's small membership was an apparently (and perhaps accidentally) progressive behaviour with regard to gender: girls and boys competed against each other.

The first hint that the Almonte Golf Club actually had junior members comes in 1909 through a peculiar reference in the local newspaper to "Mr. Thomas Knight, Almonte's juvenile golf enthusiast," who, unfortunately, "has departed from our midst, neglecting to leave a forwarding address" (*Almonte Gazette*, 14 May 1909, p. 1). Knight seems to have been the only junior member during the 1908 season.



Figure 48 Morris McFarlane, 1912-13 high-school photo.

By 1910, however, it is clear that the Almonte Golf Club had a vigorous junior golfer programme:

There was a competition on the golf links last Saturday afternoon open to the junior members of the club. The best scores were turned in by John Hollyer and Margaret Hollyer, but on their retiring, the prize, a golf club offered by Mr. Hollyer, was awarded to Morris McFarlane. The scores, which were remarkably good for 18 holes, were as follows:

	Gross	Handicap	Net
John Hollyer	95	scratch	95
Margaret Hollyer	107	12	95
M. McFarlane	120	10	110
C. Saddington	123	10	113
Frank Pollock	126	10	116
Isabel Fraser	128	12	116
R. Jamieson	125	6	119

(*Almonte Gazette*, 29 September 1910, p. 8)

The same junior golfers held a second competition the same day.



Figure 49 Margo Fraser, high-school photograph 1912-13.

Because handicaps were adjusted after each contest, the handicap of Isabel Fraser, daughter of former ladies' club president Reba Fraser, went from 12 to 15 over the lunch hour. Her afternoon performance happened to improve by ten strokes, mind you, so her handicap would have been revised downward before the next competition even more dramatically than it had just been revised upward.

Performances by all of the club's novice golfers varied so much in the early years of the club that results were almost never in accord with what their handicaps might have suggested.

Another of former president Reba Fraser's daughters, Margo Fraser, entered competition in the afternoon round. But for some reason she submitted "no card." Had she exceeded the infamous score of Mrs. Code?

The great Bobby Jones submitted no scorecard after his first ever round at St. Andrews because he had produced a terrible score, yet he later went on to win the Open Championship there, so one hopes that Margo Fraser

also managed to overcome her setback and eventually, like Jones, be named Champion Golfer of the Year (among the juniors at Almonte).

The *Almonte Gazette* provided full results of the event:

The junior members of the golf club held a second competition on Saturday last for a golf club presented by Mrs. Alex Rosamond, which was won by Raymond Jamieson. The scores were not as low as in the previous competition, but they were still very good.

	Gross	Handicap	Net
R. Jamieson	110	12	98
Isabel Fraser	118	15	103
John Hollyer	104	0	104
M. McFarlane	115	10	105

<i>C. Saddington</i>	<i>121</i>	<i>15</i>	<i>106</i>
<i>Margaret Hollyer</i>	<i>122</i>	<i>10</i>	<i>112</i>
<i>Margo Fraser</i>	<i>No card.</i>		

(Almonte Gazette, 30 September 1910, p. 2)



Figure 50 Raymond Jamieson, high-school photograph, 1912-13.

There was one more junior tournament that fall:

Another junior golf competition of 18 holes for a prize presented by Dr. Lynch was held on Saturday afternoon, with the following results:

	<i>Gross</i>	<i>Handicap</i>	<i>Net</i>
<i>R. Jamieson</i>	<i>103</i>	<i>9</i>	<i>94</i>
<i>Chas. Saddington</i>	<i>111</i>	<i>12</i>	<i>99</i>
<i>Isabel Fraser</i>	<i>115</i>	<i>12</i>	<i>103</i>
<i>M. Hollyer</i>	<i>110</i>	<i>7</i>	<i>103</i>
<i>John Hollyer</i>	<i>99</i>	<i>plus 4</i>	<i>103</i>
<i>M. McFarlane</i>	<i>117</i>	<i>9</i>	<i>108</i>
<i>Frank Pollock</i>	<i>123</i>	<i>12</i>	<i>111</i>

The prize was awarded to Charlie Saddington, Raymond Jamieson, who had already won a prize this season, generously retiring in his favour. (Almonte Gazette, 14 October 1910, p. 2)

Good for first-place winner Jamieson for sharing the wealth and allowing another to take home the prize, just as the Hollyer kids had done in a previous competition.

Years of Growth and Stability

Just as in 1906 the golf season extended as late as possible into the fall, so it did in 1907. Nearing the end of October, the *Gazette* observes: “Golf still retains its hold upon the affections of the members of the club here, fifteen of whom were on the links on Saturday afternoon” (18 October 1907, p. 1). In the following years, golfers could be seen across the river playing golf well into December.

The fact that a total of 15 golfers playing on the course all at once on a Saturday afternoon in the fall of 1907 struck the writer as a good number reminds us of how small the golf population of small-town Canada was in the early 1900s, and how precarious the existence of an organization like the Almonte Golf Club was.

In December of 1907, the Almonte Golf Club called its first-ever end-of-year meeting to assess its situation:

There was a good attendance in the town clerk’s office last evening of the members of the golf club to wind up affairs for the season. A detailed statement of assets and liabilities was presented by the treasurer. Owing to the fact that the club acquired new grounds last season and also erected a clubhouse, the expenses were somewhat heavy. A considerable sum was also expended in putting greens in condition.

After some discussion it was decided to make an assessment on the members in order that next year the club will not have such a heavy burden with which to begin the season. A meeting will be called later, when officers for next year will be elected [T]he prospects for another year are looked upon by the members of the club as unusually bright. (Ottawa Journal, 19 December 1907, p. 7)

Since 1902, the Almonte Golf Club had talked the talk of a “bright” future; by 1907, it was beginning to walk the walk. But infusions of money beyond what was produced from membership fees was required to do it.

Beginning in 1908, the Almonte Golf Club entered a new phase of its history. It began to behave with a casual confidence that golf had finally established itself as one of Almonte’s sports. The club and the course were here to stay: “The golf links are being put into shape and a week or two will see the game in

full swing. There is an enthusiasm over the game this season that has been somewhat lacking in past years and which augurs well for the success of the club" (*Almonte Gazette*, 17 April 1908, p. 11).

By 1909, the budget was in good shape: "The golf club held its annual meeting. There was a good attendance of enthusiastic golfers. The secretary's report showed a fine improvement in finances The club is now on a stronger footing, and has bright prospects of increased membership" (*Almonte Gazette*, 9 April 1909, p. 1).

The Game of Golf.

Oh, the streets are full of golfers,
And the trains are full of clubs,
There are golf balls whizzing fiercely
through the air;
You may find yourself a bunker
Or a hazard of the green,
For the game of golf is raging every-
where.

Are you very often stymied?
Are you dormy every day?
This is Dutch to you, I very much
suspect,
For the great, outstanding virtue
In this ancient king of games
Is that golf is both a game—and dia-
lect.

So be sure you learn to speak it
'Ere you start to play the game,
Or with nibbick and with cleek
you'll make a botch;
When you're ten down on the Cap-
tain,
Or have foozled at the tee,
You may save your reputation, talk-
ing Scotch.

When the last braw Scot's departed
And the Kail-yard's broken down,
When Heather-Dew no longer heads
the drinks,
You may find destructive trace
Of a great historic race
On a visit to the Almonte Golf Club's
links.

Figure 51 *Almonte Gazette*, 8 May 1908, p. 4.

Apparently confident that readers were familiar with the game played by several dozen of Almonte's gentry on the hillside across the river, the *Gazette* published on its front page a humorous poem about Almonte's golfers.

Another sign of the club's confidence in its future was provided by its naming of its golf holes: Sunset, Hill Top, Elm Trees, Equator, Farthest North, The Stumps, The Maple, Lawton, and Home.

Members of the club who had played golf at the Royal Montreal Golf Club or the Ottawa Golf Club, not to mention members who had played golf in New York or Britain, knew that all proper golf clubs gave each of their holes its own name, and they knew that "Home" was often the name given to the last hole. In 1908, the Almonte Golf Club did the same.

McLeod's newspaper exuded this confidence on behalf of the club: "Golf is booming in Almonte just now, and the players are enjoying themselves greatly"; "If you want to be in it this summer, you must play golf" (*Almonte Gazette*, 10 July 1908, p. 7; 23 April 1909, p. 1).

Beyond Golf Ground Bounds

The Almonte Golf Club also began to act confidently beyond the bounds of its grounds. It was listed as a donor to the local hospital, for instance, and it staged entertainments to raise funds for the golf club:

Miss [Lucy] Webling, who will appear in the Golf Club entertainment on Monday evening, has had a long and enviable career, having created the role of "Little Lord Fauntleroy" [in the late 1880s] at the age of 8, and played it 540 times at Terry's Theatre, London, since when she has supported all the leading English actors, and will be remembered more recently for her beautiful conception of "Mimi" in Dickens' "Tale of Two Cities." (Almonte Gazette, 10 November 1911, p. 8)

Because of the Almonte Golf Club, a big star was coming to a small town.



Figure 52 Lucy Webling, early 1890s.

Lucy Webling had been known as "England's most beautiful child," so Almonters greeted her "with a good house" – if for no other reason than to see what the former child star looked like now that she had turned 30 (*Boys' School Herald* [(Indiana), 16 January 1937, p. 1])!

The *Gazette's* anonymous reviewer suggested that "The golf club, under whose auspices the concert was given, are to be congratulated on the high standard of the entertainment and the pleasure it gave ... The suggestion has been made that the golf club repeat the effort a little later on, and give Almonters another entertainment of the same high order" (*Almonte Gazette*, 17 November 1911, p. 8).

The golf club also seems to have made efforts to enhance the value of its honorary or social membership by outfitting the clubhouse with staff and facilities that could cater to social functions.

When the daughter of former ladies' club member Mrs. H. Conn (then resident in Ottawa) was to be married in 1914, "Mrs. George Graves," their old friend in Almonte, "gave a luncheon ... at the Golf Club for Miss Conn" (*Almonte Gazette*, 4 September 1914, p. 1).

One presumes that by the summer of 1914 there had been some additions to the club's original clubhouse – a fifteen-foot square bungalow.

Membership Fees and Categories

As the Almonte Golf Club hit its stride, there was an attempt to broaden the membership base: “A non-resident membership fee is to be established for out-of-town members who wish to enjoy the privileges of the Club and it is expected that several from Carleton Place will become enrolled” (*Almonte Gazette*, 27 May 1910, p. 5).

Between 1908 and 1911, mind you, the annual membership fee had increased five-fold: it went from \$2 per year to \$10 per year. At that rate, not every doctor who might want to play golf could afford to do so. Dr Kirkland and Dr Kelly remained club members, but another town doctor, John F. Hanly, said to his brother in 1920: “I have never joined a curling club or a golf club since I came to Almonte. I was not able to afford it” (“Dr. Hanly I Presume” <https://lindaseccaspina.wordpress.com/2018/10/22/dr-hanly-i-presume-since-i-have-been-in-almonte-i-have-not-averaged-1500-00-a-year/>).

The \$10 per year membership fee for senior men that was in place by 1911 was higher than the fee that Perth was charging that year. It was not until 1915 that at Perth “The yearly fee (to include the charge for lockers) for regular members was raised to ten dollars,” and even then the club clearly felt that such a high fee would have to be justified to its members: “These increases are rendered necessary to pay [for] material improvements on the grounds this season, and for keeping them in better condition” (*Almonte Gazette*, 9 April 1915, p. 3).

In such a context, it is surprising to read that in 1912, several years before the rise of Perth’s membership fee to \$10, the Almonte Golf Club debated an even more extraordinary rise: “The senior membership fee was left at \$10, though some present were in favor of \$15” (*Almonte Gazette*, 19 April 1912, p. 1).

One wonders what accounts for the upward momentum in membership fees at Almonte. Was there a plan to invest money in improvements and better maintenance, as there would be at Perth in 1915?

Were the club’s finances unsound?

Was there an interest in using a higher membership fee for social purposes? Were some members interested in excluding a certain class of potential members by pricing membership beyond their means?

Membership of the Almonte Golf Club was certainly confined to the well-to-do of Almonte. In its account of a break-in at the clubhouse, the newspaper published by McLeod affirmed the club's confidence that its playground and its privileges deserved protection:

On Tuesday the three boys who had been taken into custody for breaking into the golf clubhouse and purloining some of the utensils wherewith the gawlfers are wont to disport themselves appeared before Police Magistrate Smith. One ... was called upon to pay the price of one golf ball, fifty cents, and was given six months' suspended sentence. The two other cases were adjourned The socialistic idea of common rights in property so far as the golf club and the caddied are concerned must be stamped out. (Almonte Gazette, 30 April 1909, p. 1).

The writer has tongue in cheek, but the sense of "us-versus-them" that suffuses the writing seems real enough: there is a great gulf fixed between the caddies and the caddied.

For all the debate in 1912 about whether to increase the membership fee by 50% from \$10 to \$15, the club in the end decided to make a clear effort to attract new members, for it decided to offer a special rate of \$5 for new members (*Almonte Gazette*, 19 April 1912, p. 1). It also approved a special membership category for out-of-town residents: "A request was presented from a number from Carleton Place who desire to become members, and the request was granted, the fee being fixed at \$2.50" (*Almonte Gazette*, 19 April 1912, p. 1).

Perhaps the outreach to Carleton Place paid off, for we later read that "A number of golf-lovers came over from Carleton Place one day last week, and enjoyed a game on the links here" (*Almonte Gazette*, 25 October 1912, p. 1).

But then, in 1914, just two years after debating a potential 50% increase of the membership fee to \$15 per year, the Almonte Golf Club actually reduced fees for men by 50% to \$5 per year, holding fees at \$2.50 for "ladies and out-of-town members" (*Almonte Gazette*, 24 April 1914, p. 4).

Such volatility in the membership fees for men, who constituted the majority of the club's members, surely indicates that the club was troubled by financial difficulties and was not quite sure how best to address them.

Whither the News?

As of 1912, news about activity at the golf course virtually disappears from the *Almonte Gazette*.

There is no news of the Almonte Golf Club's annual meeting of gentlemen members in 1912 or 1913. Yet the organization of the ladies' golf club is noticed each spring.

In fact, there is more news of the club's annual meetings in the *Ottawa Journal* than the *Almonte Gazette*. But there is no coverage in either the Almonte or Ottawa newspapers of tournaments, either within the club or between clubs.

Had publisher McLeod fallen out with the club?

He had not fallen out of love with golf, as his continued publishing of stories about the world of golf elsewhere shows at this time. He was certainly wholeheartedly supportive of the club a few years later, for he was named to the managing committee of 1914 and 1915.

One wonders whether interest in golf was beginning to peter out again.

Withering News in 1915

Still, in 1915, the last thing one would have expected was that 1915 would be the club's last year.

The annual general meeting was as optimistic as ever:

At a meeting held on Friday last the golf club was reorganized for the coming season. The officers elected are as follows: President, Mr. S.J. Plunkett; vice-president, Dr. J.T. Kirkland; sec-treas., Mr. P.S. Stevenson; committee – Messrs. W.C. Pollock, Mayor Jamieson and James McLeod. The fees will be the same as last year. The committee were instructed to proceed at once in preparation of the grounds for play, and to attend to other necessary details. There is fair promise of a good membership and a pleasant summer's sport. An invitation is extended to any from Carleton Place, Pakenham or other outside points to join. (Almonte Gazette, 16 April 1915, p. 1)

At this meeting, furthermore, "The treasurer reported a small surplus on hand" (*Ottawa Journal*, 14 April 1915, p. 13).

Plans for course improvements were announced: "It is intended to do some work on both the greens and the tees this year" (*Ottawa Journal*, 20 April 1915, p. 11). And the plans seem to have been implemented: "the greens have been rolled and greatly improved during the last ten days" (*Ottawa Journal*, 19 May 1915, p. 5).

Perhaps extending an invitation for people to join the club "from Carleton Place, Pakenham or other outside points" was an ominous sign. Perhaps it was a "hail Mary" pass, another indication of financial constraints arising from an insufficient membership base. In 1915, the Perth golf club also seems to have been trawling for members further afield, publicizing a \$4 annual fee for "transient" members (*Almonte Gazette*, 9 April 1915, p. 3).

One suspects that with the commencement of World War I in August of 1914, the Almonte and Perth golf clubs both suffered a significant drop in membership as a number of people left these small towns to contribute to the war effort, as members of the Canadian Expeditionary Force, as managers of industries essential to production of war materials, as employees of expanding government departments organizing a country at war, and so on.

Club finances would have suffered significantly.

And just when finances could not have been more precarious, there is bad news: “As Mr. Little talks of ploughing up a portion of the ground formerly used by the club, a re-arrangement of the course has been necessary, and has resulted in a lengthening of holes and improvements in several respects” (*Almonte Gazette*, 14 May 1915, p. 1). Mr. Little’s horse had kicked poor Harry Porritt in the abdomen many years ago; now Harry Porritt had gone to war and Mr. Little himself kicked the club in the gut, so to speak, by imposing on it an expensive re-design of its course just when the club’s finances would probably been most strained.

In defense of farmer Little, mind you, one should note that in support of the war effort, the federal government encouraged greater food production from farmers. In the years to come, even golf clubs were encouraged to devote areas of their unused land to the production of food crops, with even the most exclusive clubs such as Royal Ottawa doing so.

Royal Ottawa members were even encouraged to devote spare time to hoeing the club’s vegetable plots.

Amid the Almonte Golf Club’s usual optimism about the start of the golf year (“The greens have been rolled and put into good condition and the course is also in good shape, and the devotees of the game are looking forward to an enjoyable season”), there were signs of stress: “The golf links will be ready for play on Monday, and as many as possible are asked to turn out. Several prizes will be offered, particulars of which will be made known on Monday” (*Almonte Gazette*, 21 May 1915, p. 1). In the past, when Honorary President William Thoburn or club President Alex Rosamond offered such prizes for a competition, the fact was known well ahead of play, formal entries were required ahead of time so that handicaps could be calculated, and the prizes were announced in the newspaper. In 1915, however, it seems that such golf club events came together only at the last minute, if at all.

As far as the post-war future of the Almonte Golf Club was concerned, perhaps the writing was on the wall as of the end of April, when the *Almonte Gazette* published an item from the *Carleton Place Herald*:

A Golf Club, with an ideal club house, is among the immediate possibilities in this town. The old Patterson farm, latterly the Spiers’ farm, is the location – an ideal golf grounds, with all the coveted hazards, whilst the old stone dwelling, with a minimum of expenditure, will make a model club house. (Almonte Gazette, 30 April 1915, p. 5)



Figure 53 Early 1900s photograph of the farmhouse that became the clubhouse of the new Carleton Place Golf Club (now the Mississippi Golf Club).

By mid-June, the *Almonte Gazette* could report the consummation of the Carleton Place plans:

At a meeting held last Friday evening, the Carleton Place Golf Club was organized Work will be commenced at once to get the grounds in shape. The old Spiers farm on the Appleton Road has been purchased from Mr. Burgess and the antique stone dwelling will be converted into an ideal club house and the new organization starts out under the most favorable auspices. (18 June 1915)

Not so the auspices for the future of the Almonte Golf Club: there would be a new golf course just six miles south of the Almonte town centre. So much for the plan to recruit new members to the Almonte Golf Club from Carleton Place: the problem would be keeping members of the local club from defecting to the new club, which would have a longer, more-interesting course and a better, truly commodious clubhouse.

Still, when *Canadian Golfer Magazine* introduced its readers to that new Carleton Place golf club in September of 1915, it also referred to the Almonte Golf Club with no hint that it might shortly

disappear. In fact, after providing up-to-date information about the Carleton Place club officers, after describing each of the nine holes, and after explaining the nature of the clubhouse, it concluded: "The membership to commence with is forty-five, most of them new players who have never handled a club, but they are all looking forward in anticipation to the time when they will be efficient players, and able to give a good match to the players of Almonte, Perth and Smith Falls" (*Canadian Golfer*, vol 1 no 5 [September 1915]. P. 306). No one that the editor of *Canadian Golfer* contacted at the Carleton Place club, many of whom had in recent years taken up out-of-town memberships at the Almonte Golf Club, was able to give him any hint in September of 1915 that the neighboring club might have been on its last legs.

In 1916, Almonte Golf Club was still clearly known to the editor of that year's *American Annual Golf Guide*. But he listed it simply alongside the Royal Ottawa Golf Club and the Niagara-on-the-Lake Golf Club (as well as dozens of other clubs in Canada and the United States) as one of the clubs from whose secretaries "No Information [Was] Furnished" (p. 320).

There is an ambiguous reference to Almonte golfers in 1917, when "Some of the Almonte golf players called on friends Saturday on their way up to the C.P. golf links" (*Almonte Gazette*, 1 June 1917, p. 5). Is this an indication that the future match anticipated by *Canadian Golfer* between the Carleton Place Golf Club and the Almonte Golf Club actually took place, or is it an indication that Almonte golfers had abandoned their own golf club and golf course and become members of the Carleton Place Golf Club?

After this vague 1917 reference to "Almonte golf players," however, I can find no further reference to Almonte golfers until 1925.

O Captain! My Captain!

For every year on record between 1906 and 1914, Alex Rosamond was either club president, vice-president, or captain. He also occasionally did double-duty on the ground selection committee and on the management committee. He offered prizes for golf competitions. He played in the club tournaments and he was a stalwart representative of the club in matches against Perth, Ottawa, and Rivermead.

Is it a coincidence that activity at the Almonte Golf Club seems to have virtually stopped when golf captain Alex Rosamond left Almonte in the summer of 1914 and enlisted as a private in the British Army?

Born in Almonte in 1873, Alexander George Rosamond was educated at the local schools in Almonte and at Trinity College in Port Hope. At school, he developed a passion for sport. He knew, however, that he was destined for an important role in the management of the family's mills in Almonte, so to continue his education he went to Yorkshire College in Leeds, England.

Yorkshire College is today known as Leeds University, but 130 years ago it was an institution with a special interest in textiles. Rosamond enrolled in Yorkshire College in 1892 to study everything that could be learned about the science of fabrics. He was the first resident student at the school's famous Lyddon Hall, where a residential wing had just been added. Rosamond became the hard-playing captain of the College's football team, and he returned home to Ottawa temporarily hobbled by a leg injury suffered in his last game.

Back in Almonte, he took a position as managing director in the Rosamond Woolen Company, but most of his spare time was spent at sports. He had been a cricket star before leaving for Yorkshire and he returned to the town's team as soon as he got back, being elected Captain of the Almonte Cricket Club in 1897. He was a member of the Almonte Tennis Club and the Almonte Curling Club for as long as he lived in Almonte, and he held various offices on the executive committees of these clubs. He also served many years on the board of directors of the Almonte Lacrosse Club.

Rosamond loved the outdoor life generally. He led fishing parties to the Magnanasippi Reserve in Quebec, where he was a member of its sportsmen's club. Yet he was also interested in the arts. As a young man, he accompanied his mother to New York to explore the culture of that most cosmopolitan of cities, and he regularly visited Ottawa to attend the theatre. In Almonte in 1904, to raise money for the local hospital, he performed one of the leading roles in an amateur production of "Turn Him Out."



Figure 54 Mary Eleanor Cotton, early 1900s.

In 1902, Alexander George Rosamond married Mary Eleanor Cotton.

As we know, she was the daughter of Brigadier-General Cotton (soon to be appointed Inspector-General of the Canadian Forces). Her family's military tradition was a long one. On her father's side, an ancestor who died in the War of 1812 was an aid to General Isaac Brock. On her mother's side, an ancestor served alongside General Wolfe at Quebec. The Cottons' military traditions dovetailed with similar traditions in Rosamond's own family, and so we find Rosamond himself enlisting in the 42nd Lanark and Renfrew militia regiment, where he was appointed lieutenant.

In August of 1914, when World War I broke out, Rosamond joined the committee organizing Red Cross Work in Ottawa and the Ottawa Valley in aid of Canada's war effort.

Perhaps inspired by the news of the British nation mobilizing for war, Rosamond determined that he must enlist in the British Army. He might have been a captain of industry, as well as captain of the golf club, but he knew that he had found a bigger common cause than any local cause, so he sailed for England to volunteer. Given his militia training in Canada, as well as his education and social standing, Rosamond would have qualified for a commission as an officer. Yet his plan was to enlist as a private in the 1st Sportsman's Battalion of the Royal Fusiliers. Well-known sport personalities of the day such as Jerry Delaney, England's lightweight boxing champion, had done so, along with a host of footballers, rugby players, stars of track and field, county cricketers, golfers, and so on. Famous adventurers and travellers had also enlisted in it. Rosamond was drawn to this battalion because of his own sportsman's inclinations, but he was also too old for any other: "Lord Kitchener ... is by degrees raising the age up to which he accepts recruits. It has now risen to 38 Only one exception – that of the 'Sportsman's Battalion' – has yet been made in favour of older men" (*Guardian*, 5 November 1914, p. 6).



Too Old at Forty!

Not at all! The Sportsman Battalions of the Royal Fusiliers accept the right men up to 45.

The Right Men? Yes, the physically fit Sportsman, be he cricketer, golfer, country gentleman—all are welcome.

What are the Sportsman Battalions? They consist of men in their prime drawn from the upper and middle classes, commanded by Colonel Viscount Maitland and Colonel A. de B. V. Paget, now in training at Hornechurch, Essex. Uniform, etc., immediately upon enrolment. Usual pay and allowances.

CHIEF RECRUITING OFFICER—
E. CUNLIFFE OWEN,
Hotel Cecil, Strand, W.C.2.—W

Figure 55 Observer (London), 17 January 1915, p. 12.

In a well-publicized event in London in the fall of 1914, the new recruits of the Sportsman's Battalion mustered in civilian clothes at Hyde Park and stood at attention for their first inspection.

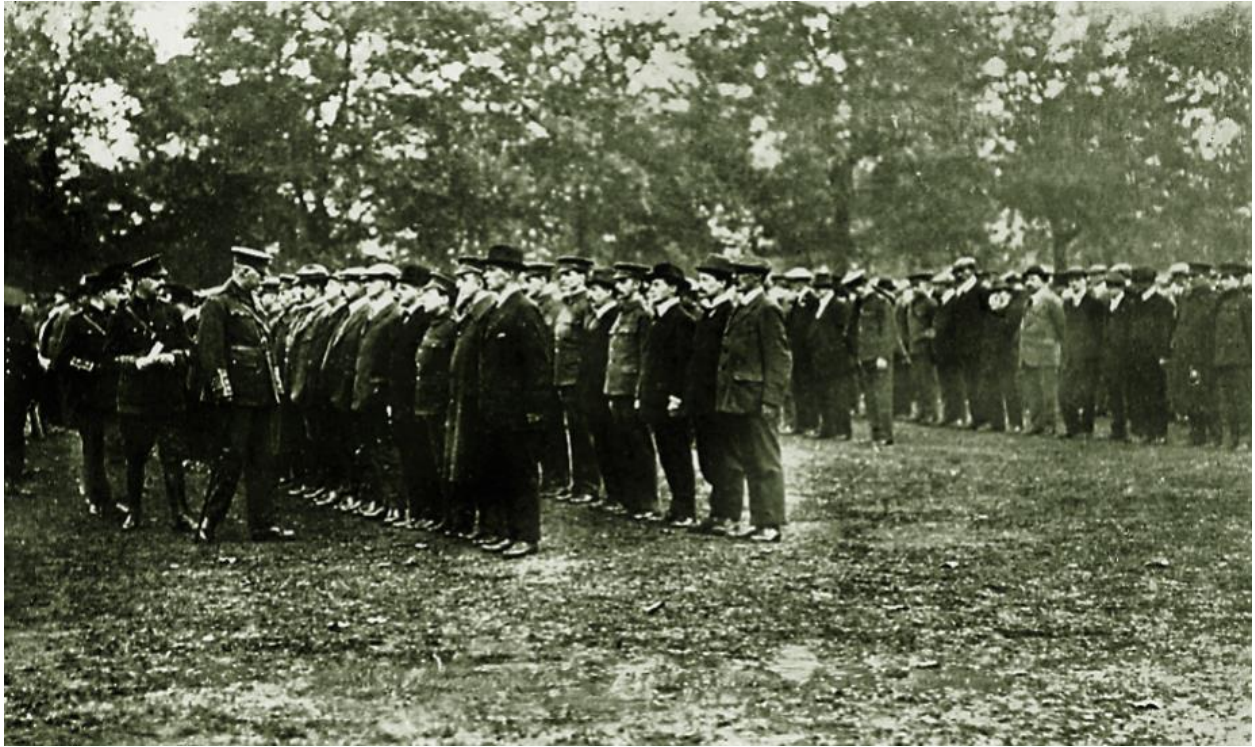


Figure 56 Fred W. Ward, The 23rd (Service) Battalion Royal Fusiliers (First Sportsman's): A Record of Its Services in the Great War, 1914-1919 (London: Sidgwick and Jackson), 1920, p. 21.

Transformed by new uniforms and white gloves, the new recruits marched out of Hyde Park.



Figure 57 Ward, The 23rd (Service) Battalion, p. 29.

The fame of the Sportsman's Battalion was such that crowds lined the streets of London to cheer these volunteers as the newest of Britain's soldiers marched from Hyde Park to their train station.



Figure 58 The Sportsman's Battalion marches through London to entrain for Hornichurch in October of 1914.

The Sportsman's Battalion was regularly mentioned in the Canadian news:

One of the unique organizations is the Sportsman's Battalion of the Royal Fusiliers, which is now a complete infantry unit in the regular forces. The battalion is up to war strength and is remarkable in many ways. It has colours distinct from the regiment of which it is a part. It was organized through the efforts of a woman, Mrs. Cunliffe-Owen, [who] carried through the idea from the start, and the cost of the organization was privately borne. Every member of the battalion is an athlete or sportsman, and many of the members enjoy civil distinction of some importance. (Ottawa Citizen, 4 December 1914, p. 8)

Newspapers represented the Sportsman's Battalion as potentially a special force: "Much is expected from this squad of soldiers, which now is being put through drills, because of the fact that all the men are athletes and able to endure much physical strain" (*Victoria Daily Times*, 27 January 1915, p. 7).

The fame of the battalion only increased when word of its egalitarian ethos spread:

With the formation of the Sportsman's Battalion, it will be admitted quite a new type of man was brought into the British Army....

To begin with, it was cosmopolitan. Practically every grade of life was represented, from the peer to the peasant; class distinctions were swept away, every man turned to and pulled his bit. To illustrate what is meant one hut of thirty men at Hornichurch may be mentioned....



Figure 59 Photograph of the huts at Hornichurch. Ward, p. 31.

In this hut the first bed was occupied by the brother of a peer. The second was occupied by the man who formerly drove his motor-car. Both had enlisted at the same time at the Hotel Cecil, had passed the doctor at the same time at St. Paul's Churchyard, and had drawn their service money when they signed their papers. Other beds in this hut were occupied by a mechanical engineer, an old Blundell School boy, planters, a mine overseer from Scotland, a man in possession of a flying pilot's certificate secured in France, a photographer, a poultry farmer, an old sea dog who had rounded Cape Horn on no fewer than nine occasions, a man who had hunted seals, "with more patches on his trousers than he could count," as he described it himself, a bank clerk, and so on....



Figure 60 Inside the Hornichurch huts. Ward, p. 31.

It must not be thought that this hut was an exceptional one. Every hut was practically the same, and every hut was jealous of its reputation. Scrubbing day was on Saturdays as a rule, and it was then that the "un-char-lady" side of various men came out. They were handling brooms, scrubbing-brushes, and squeegees for the first time in their lives, but they stuck it, and, with practice making perfect, it was surprising to what a pitch of cleanliness things eventually got.

Even church parade has been dodged on a Sunday morning in order that three pals might unite in an effort to get the stoves blacked, the knives and forks polished, and a sheen put on the tea-pails.

One may smile about these things now when in civilian life again, but it was all very real at the time. The First Sportsman's were not coddled; no man thought twice about getting in a terrible mess when domestic duties had to be performed. The only kick came when the hut windows had to be cleaned with old newspapers. The man who had forgotten to wash the old cloths or buy new ones came in for a terrible time.

Rivalry, perfectly friendly in character, was great If we were digging trenches "somewhere in Essex," our particular sector had to be completed quicker and be more finished in character than any other. Jobs were done at the double if it were thought

to be necessary; if any man developed a tendency to take a rest at too frequent intervals—well, he was ticked off in the most approved fashion. It all made for the good of the whole. The N.C.O. in charge had an easy time, he hadn't to drive a man. All he had to do was to see that in over-eagerness his working party did not take risks.

(Ward, pp. 17-19)

Rosamond counted every day that he spent in the 1st Sportsman's Battalion, writing on his Canadian attestation form that he served "243 days in [the] Fusiliers" (World War I Attestation paper). He left the battalion only because he was persuaded by Canadian authorities of the need for qualified officers in the Canadian Expeditionary Force. Rosamond finally accepted a transfer from the Sportsman's Battalion to the Canadian army and was gazetted a lieutenant in the Princess Patricia Canadian Light Infantry (P.P.C.L.I.) on 16 June 1915.

He was one of the oldest lieutenants in his regiment.

Rosamond served the rest of his war at the front lines in France from the end of 1915 to September of 1916. As explained by his fellow P.P.C.L.I. officer Lieutenant Ralph Hodder-Williams, early in September of 1916, Rosamond declined an opportunity to be reassigned from the trenches of France back to England:

Lieut. Rosamond ("Rosie) left an important business in Canada at the outbreak of war to go to England and enlist in the Sportsman's Battalion (Royal Fusiliers). After receiving his commission in the Patricia's he rapidly became one of their most valuable and best-loved officers. A few days before his death in action, although one of the oldest officers serving in the Regiment, he unhesitatingly declined the offer of a staff appointment which would have taken him back to England. (Ralph Hodder-Williams, Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry, 1914-1919 [Toronto: Hodder and Stoughton, 1923], vol 1: pp. 177-78)

Rosamond was therefore near the front lines in France with the P.P.C.L.I. on September 15th, 1916, as Canadian troops awaited the command to go over the top of the forward trenches at 6:00 a.m. in the first assault of the Battle of the Somme. But the P.P.C.L.I. had recently been in action and so were not scheduled to participate in the battle that day.



Figure 61 Lieutenant A.G. Rosamond, Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry.

But Canadian Corps Commander General Byng decided that early Allied successes in the morning attacks presented him with an opportunity to assault the German trenches guarding the village of Courcellette. He anticipated that the German troops would be in disarray. So Byng hastily improvised a battle plan that was only ever partially and imperfectly communicated to the two P.P.C.L.I. Companies that he launched into battle at 6:00 p.m. that day.

Advancing to an appointed position near the German trenches in front of Courcellette, Rosamond and the 3rd Company that he was commanding lost their way in a landscape devoid of the particular landmark that was understood to mark their destination: it had been obliterated in morning bombardment by the British. Consequently, these Canadian troops passed their stopping point, crossed into enemy territory, and ended up in the bombarded remains of a portion of the German trenches damaged in that morning's bombardment. Not aware of their mistake, Rosamond and the soldiers he commanded were astonished to encounter a large

number of German soldiers.

The Germans had been bombarded relentlessly in the morning by a British barrage, they were cut off from retreat to good trenches by the damage from that barrage, and they were now lying about in shell-holes, thoroughly demoralized. Hodder-Williams explains what he saw next:

Hardly a shot was fired on either side. The Germans, lustily counselled to surrender by the advancing companies, were quick to throw up their hands, and some seventy-five prisoners were hurriedly passed to the rear. For a moment No. 1 and No. 3

Companies [the latter led by Rosamond] resembled nothing so much as a Canadian football crowd in the delirium of a close finish. Next minute they were the players again, away like a pack of forwards after the ball. Taking a communication trench in their stride, they arrived at their first objective with scarcely a man down. It was 6:15 P.M. (p. 165)

Perhaps Rosamond had noticed how the spirit of his old Sportsman's Battalion had emerged in this cheering by his new Company of the Princess Patricia's. But there was little time for much reflection of that sort, for it was 6:15 P.M. and the Company's next advance was ordered to start at 6:30 P.M.

Alex Rosamond had fifteen minutes left to live:

The second advance proved a very much more serious undertaking than the first. The companies could move only very slowly over ground which was all shell-craters and was raked by rifle fire and particularly by a machine gun from the right flank near the village. No. 3, on the right, caught the full force of this enfilade fire which swept the whole ... hillside, and No. 1 suffered almost as severely. Lieutenant Rosamond and his Company-Sergeant-Major were killed at the very outset. (p. 167)



Figure 62 A depiction of the Battle of Courcelette at 6:30 pm, 15 September 1916.

Rosamond lies where he fell. He has no known grave. Instead, we find his name on the Vimy monument.



Figure 63 Canadian Vimy Memorial.

Upon enlisting in the army, Rosamond had made his will, as soldiers were advised to do. Rosamond's impression of the Canadian soldiers that he met in Britain and France, however, prompted him to add a codicil to his will while he was overseas:

I instruct my executors to erect, in some promising place in the Town of Almonte, a permanent memorial to all those who lost their lives in the present war who were from the Town of Almonte, Township of Ramsay, and surrounding district. (Almonte Gazette, 14 September 1923, p. 1)



Figure 64 "The Volunteer," before placement on the monument.

Canada's most internationally famous sculptor of that era, Dr. R. Tait McKenzie, a native of Almonte, was commissioned to design the monument. The town of Almonte set aside the required land for it.

Moved by the story behind the commission, McKenzie returned to his home town for the first time in thirty years to undertake his work.

The monument is called "The Volunteer," and although the Rosamond family asked that the figure depicted on the monument not be made in a photographic likeness of Alex Rosamond, so that the figure would represent all volunteers, the consensus is that Tait nonetheless made Rosamond "The Volunteer."

There are forty-eight names inscribed alphabetically on the monument, which sits in downtown Almonte, and Rosamond's name falls where it should in that alphabetical order.

Rosamond's fellow member of the Almonte Golf Club, William Thoburn, once again mayor of Almonte, proclaimed a special day for the dedication of the monument in September of 1923, seven years after Rosamond's death.

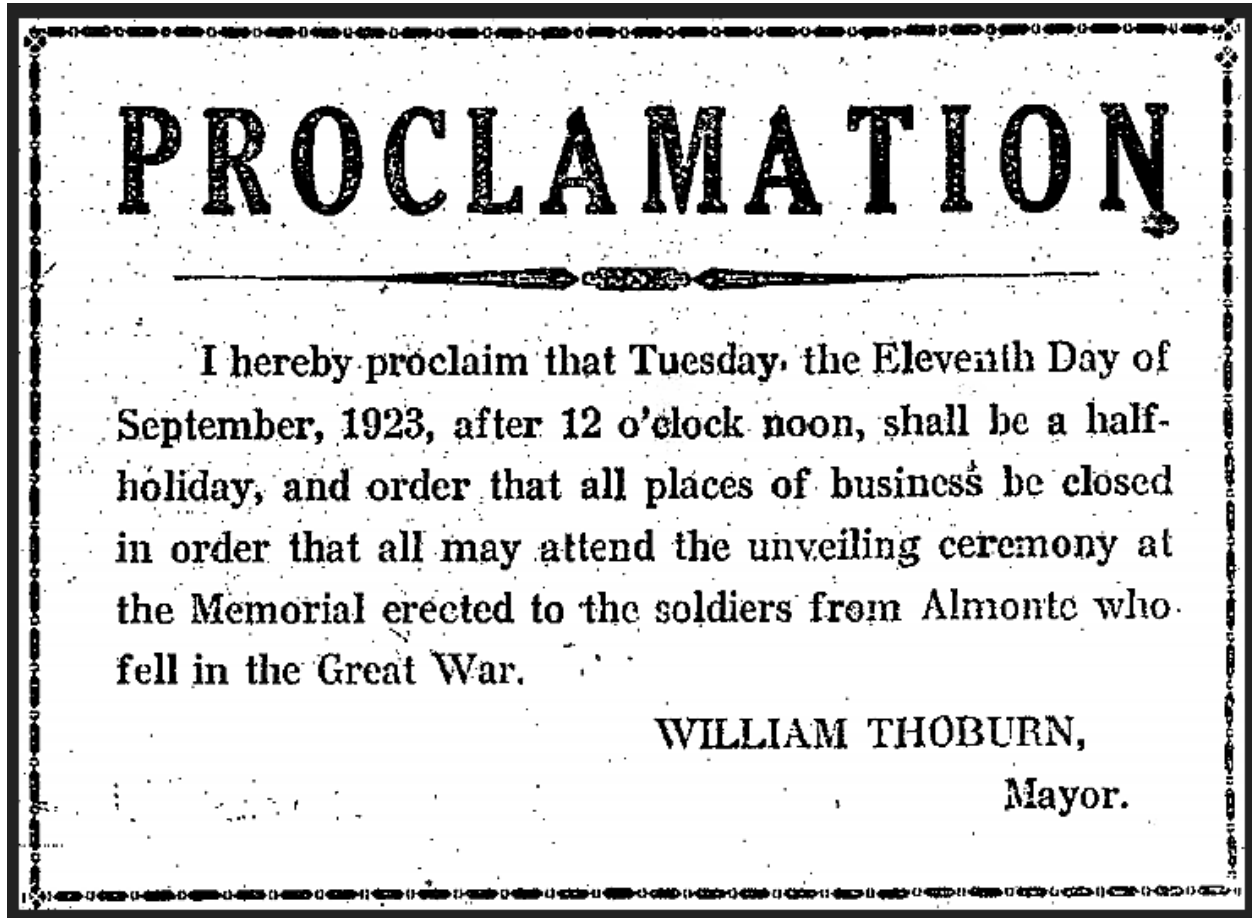


Figure 65 Almonte Gazette, 7 September 1923, p. 1.

Mayor Thoburn presided over the event and spoke as follows about his friend Alex Rosamond:

We meet here today to do honor to our departed heroes. It is said that when a good man passes away others take his place. In the passing away of the late Alex Rosamond, the Town of Almonte lost a man whose value to the town, had his life been spared, cannot be estimated. As head of one of the best manufacturing establishments in Canada, he was cut off in the prime of life and his loss was a sad one to the town. Having been in partnership with him in a manufacturing business in Almonte, I had every opportunity of knowing his sterling worth. It was a pleasure to do business with such a man.

Upon declaration of war being made, the late Alexander G. Rosamond caused the Company of which he was managing director and one of the largest shareholders to contribute ten thousand dollars to the Patriotic Fund.

Upon the First Contingent's leaving here, he paid the premium on a One Thousand Dollar Life Insurance Policy for each member thereof. (Almonte Gazette, 14 September 1923, p. 1)

After reviewing Rosamond's military service, ending with his death at Courcellette, Mayor Thoburn "called upon Mrs. Alex G. Rosamond to unveil the statue, which she did, hoisting the flag to half mast. Then the guard of honour presented arms, and the Last Post was sounded Rev W .H. Green, Rector of St. Paul's Church, of which the late Lieut. Rosamond was a member, read the dedicatory prayer, followed by a minute of silent prayer" (*Almonte Gazette*, 14 September 1923, p. 1).



Figure 66 Dedication of "The Volunteer," Almonte, 11 September 1923.

At the conclusion of the ceremony, "the band struck up 'O Canada,' and heads were bared as wreaths were laid upon the monument. The school children led the way, and after them came representatives of the different societies in town, and the relatives and representatives of the dead soldiers, and last of all

Mrs. Alex G. Rosamond and her four daughters, and Mrs. James Rosamond, the mother of the late Lieut. Rosamond" (*Almonte Gazette*, 14 September 1923, p. 1).

Ethel O'Neil McKenzie, moved both by the statue that her husband had created and by the story of Rosamond that had inspired him, published a poem about the haunting figure on the monument:

The Volunteer

*He watches – in a little northern town
Through winter cold and parching summer heat
Where quiet folk go simply up and down
O'er stony bridge and narrow crooked street.
He guards – alone – alert, with clenched hand
In readiness with his young manhood's might
To spring to action at a word's command
Uphold his honour and defend his right.*

*He watches – while the children leave their play
To lay their garlands clustered at his feet
Zinnias and asters from home gardens gay
In little hands held close and warm and sweet.
He smiles – he leans – and every winsome maid
Feels in her heart this joyous chivalry
And lads look starry-eyed and unafraid
To grow to manhood strong and brave as he.*

*He watches. Oh, ye men with him who fell!
Mighty of valour, bold, unflinching free!
Here, in this place, your spirits seem to dwell
Drawn to the home of your mortality.
He waits! Nor shall his vigil be in vain
Men like to him shall ever pay the price
Shun all dishonor, scorn the thought of pain
And make the great immortal sacrifice!*

The Almonte Golf Club's Last Hurrah

The Almonte Golf Club was resuscitated for a second time in 1925, and once again old members were the key to the new venture, not least among them Mary Rosamond.

After her husband's enlistment in the Royal Fusiliers, she participated in Almonte activities designed to raise funds for war-related charities. In 1915, she hosted a "Lilac Tea" at her home in support of the Sewing Committee of the Daughters of the Empire, a charity event that included "a putting competition and clock golf on the lawn" (*Almonte Gazette*, 21 May 1915, p. 1).

Did the Rosamonds maintain a putting green at Pinehurst? The lawns could easily have hosted one.



Figure 67 Pinehurst lawns. Could there be a putting green on the level lawn in the middle of the photograph?

Clock golf was popular from the 1890s to the 1920s, both at popular resorts and at private homes. It involved competitors taking turns trying to hole golf balls on a putting green. Players took turns trying to hole putts from positions laid out on the green in a circle around the hole. At the circumference of this circle were placed numbers from 1 to 12, representing the twelve hours on a clockface. Players took turns putting from each number, the winner being the one who accomplished the circuit of twelve "hours" in the fewest strokes.



Figure 68 Clock golf is played at the Royal Palms Hotel of Miami, Florida, circa 1905.

Eventually, however, like many wives of officers and soldiers, alike, Mary Rosamond sailed to England to spend time with her husband whenever he was on leave. She lived at the Manor House in Sandgate, Kent.

Her husband's death was absolutely devastating, of course, yet it added to a long list of bereavements of other important family members. A brother had died in the South African War (or Boer War) in 1900. A month or two before World War I began, she lost her father, Brigadier-General Cotton, and in 1915, two of her brothers died in France.



Figure 69 Archibald Rosamond.

Upon her return to Almonte, Mary Rosamond remained an important figure in the town. Honoring her husband's legacy, she retained ownership of the Rosamond Woolen Company, and as such was the town's major employer. She did not manage the company herself, however, preferring instead that her brother-in-law Archibald Rosamond should preside over its affairs.

Eventually, however, as she entered her 70s, she retired from business and the active life of travel that she maintained. She sold Pinehurst and its 16 acres of land in 1946, retaining only a lodge on the property that had been designed by

one of her sons-in-law. She sold her interests in the Mills in 1948 and moved to Montreal, where she lived with her sisters. She died in 1950.

One wonders if she saw the 1925 revival of the golf club as another way of honoring Alex Rosamond's memory. He seems implicitly to have been associated with golf in the public mind, for when the *Ottawa Journal* announced his death, it mentioned just two things about his personal life: "He was president of the Rosamond Woolen Co., and a member of the Royal Ottawa Golf Club" (22 September 1916, p. 1). *Canadian Golfer* magazine also announced his death (vol. 2 no. 12 [April 1917], p. 649).

A former president of the Ladies' Golf Club, fifteen years before, Mary Rosamond lent her name to those who tried to revive the Almonte Golf Club in 1925. Similarly, the names of a number of other important and influential Almonte citizens were foregrounded as honorary members of the revived golf club, among them: William Thoburn, two representatives of the next generation of Rosamonds, and the riding's M.L.A.

At least half of the officers elected at the 1925 meeting to resuscitate the Almonte Golf Club had been members of the club in the years before the war: Percy Greg, Billy Pollock, Dr. Kelly, Dr. Kirkland, and Raymond Jamieson.

But there was a new name, that of the person elected treasurer: J.J. Benson, new president of the Almonte branch of the Bank of Montreal. Despite the fact that he had only arrived in town the year before, the new treasurer played an important role in the final iteration of the Almonte Golf Club.

It turns out that early in 1925, a number of people had set out across Almonte to gauge interest in resuscitating the golf club one more time. Perhaps they were tired of the trip to Carleton Place to play golf, or perhaps they were nostalgic for the simpler days spent on the Almonte golf course before the war.

Or they might have been inspired by the large number of stories in the Ottawa newspapers about how Ottawa's two pre-war golf clubs, Royal Ottawa and Rivermead, were being supplemented by new golf clubs and new golf courses. There was the new course built between 1919 and 1921 for the Ottawa Hunt and Motor Club. Then there was the new course being built for the Chaudière Golf Club, beginning in 1923. And from the summer of 1923 to the spring of 1924, the Ottawa newspapers were also full of items about the Hillcrest Golf and Country Club, which was to be laid out by Stanley Thompson (although it never in fact materialized).

The *Almonte Gazette* says that one person more than any other was responsible for the revival of the town's club: "J.J. Benson ... has been the life and soul of the movement to resuscitate the Almonte golf Club" (19 June 1925, p. 1).

John Joseph ("Jack") Benson was the manager of the local branch of the Bank of Montreal, having entered the banking business in Chatham, New Brunswick, 36 years before. He had since been in Picton, Lindsay, Kitchener, and, most recently, Fenelon Falls. Arriving in town in January of 1924, Benson immediately became active in Almonte civic, religious, and sporting life. He was appointed to the hospital board and he was appointed to the board of management of the Presbyterian church. He joined Almonte sportsmen on a trip to the Magnanasippi Fish and Game Preserve in Quebec. He fit in perfectly with the sporting gentry of Almonte and made his home in the town until his retirement in the mid-1930s.

Perhaps his first sporting love was curling. He served a year as vice-president of the Curling Club and then served as president for many years. He obviously loved golf, too, but he was not very good at it: he scored 48 on the short Almonte course *after* his handicap had been deducted from his gross score.

In the spring of 1925, the headline in the *Almonte Gazette* read: "Golf Club For Almonte Gets Fine Support" (22 May 1925, p. 1). The story shows that work on reviving the golf club had been underway for some weeks:

A golf club was launched for the Town of Almonte on Tuesday evening in the Council Chamber. An informal committee made a canvass of the town prior to the meeting and they had succeeded in having several hundred subscribed with which to work.

The old golf course can be secured and also some additional ground. The newly formed organization has already secured an experienced man to put the course in condition and [it] is expected that play will commence inside two weeks.

The meeting held in Council Chamber was most enthusiastic. There are many persons in town who have some knowledge of the game and many others just as anxious to learn so that the club should have a successful year. (Almonte Gazette, 22 May 1925, p. 1).

In his zeal, Benson seems to have been the new Porritt: a potential membership list had been compiled; the owner of the old golf course land had been approached about its availability; a greenkeeper had already been lined up to do the necessary work.

Renovating a golf course that seems to have been neglected for about ten years, the greenkeeper must have done amazing work:

Play has begun over the Almonte golf course. It is a beautiful course and is already being much used by a number of the local devotees of the royal and ancient game.

The course has been thoroughly cleared of the long grass and the greens, as a result of favorable weather conditions, are in splendid shape. (Almonte Gazette, 19 June 1925, p. 1).

A similar report emerges in July: "The greens of the Almonte Golf Club are in excellent condition" (21 July 1925, p. 1).

It is clear from its earliest meeting that year that the Almonte Golf Club had been determined to hit the ground running: it named a "Managing Committee," a "Greens Committee," and a "Match Committee" (*Almonte Gazette*, 22 May 1925, p. 1). As in the old days, it aimed to do all the things a proper golf club does.

The revived Almonte Golf Club anticipated inter-club matches: "it is probable that there will be competitions later on with clubs in other places and the Almonte club in its first year wants to do as well as possible with the more experienced opponents" (*Almonte Gazette*, 19 June 1925, p. 1). Consequently, the newspaper said, "The lady members are specially invited to begin practice at once" (*Almonte Gazette*, 19 June 1925, p. 1).

So much for the progressive Almonte Golf Club!

It staged a handicap tournament within the club in July, nineteen men taking part: "The first handicap match of the Almonte Golf Club was held on Wednesday afternoon and evening and was favored by a large turn out of members. Keen interest was taken in the contest.... Some good scores were turned in, particularly by the new devotees of the game, many of whom have become enthusiastic followers of the sport" (*Almonte Gazette*, 21 July 1925, p. 1).

The event was such a success that the club announced in a press release that it would soon hold another tournament and that it hoped that it would be non-gendered: "It is stated that the club intends holding another tourney shortly, as this last affair passed off so well. An endeavor will be made to have all the lady players take part" (*Almonte Gazette*, 21 July 1925, p. 1).

Faced with low membership numbers, the club once again proposed to resort to a non-gendered solution.

Hurray for the progressive Almonte Golf Club!



Figure 70 Thorpe Kelly, 1950s.

Were caddies available at this version of the golf club?

There was no advertisement for caddies in the *Almonte Gazette*, as there had been when the golf club was first founded at the beginning of the century.

Dr. Kelly retained the services of his son Thorpe as his personal caddie (John Dunn, *Almonte Gazette*, 2 June 1971, p. 2). Whether this caddying arrangement was simply a pleasure that father and son enjoyed, or was a necessity imposed by a lack of other caddies, is not clear.

As in the old days, the *Gazette* was one of the golf club's biggest supporters: "The club is a decided asset to Almonte. The members of the club, so the *Gazette* has been told, hope to receive adequate support from the citizens of Almonte. New members are always welcome" (*Almonte Gazette*, 21 July 1925, p. 1).

Things were looking good: the newspaper suggests that Benson was "thoroughly satisfied with the prospects" of the game's thriving in Almonte (*Almonte Gazette*, 19 June 1925, p. 1).

Yet bank manager and club treasurer Benson was apparently worried about the cost of that year's construction and maintenance work: "Expenses in the inaugural year are heavy. The cost of caretaking has been great and a special one-horse mowing machine had to be purchased. However, when all the membership fees are paid up the club will be in a fine financial condition" (*Almonte Gazette*, 19 June 1925, p. 1).



Figure 71 A one-horse-drawn mower circa 1930.

After the July handicap tournament at the club, and its announcement of its intention soon to hold another such tournament in which women members would be included, there was no more news about golf in the *Gazette*.

There was, however, an announcement in the newspaper's "Coming Events" section that showed the club was still trying to address the heavy costs of putting the golf course back into shape: "Golf Club Dance and Euchre on Wednesday, Nov. 11. Euchre in Council Chamber. 8 p.m. to 11 p.m. Admission 50c. Dance in Town Hall. Admission 75c, including refreshments. Musical Aces of Perth will furnish the music" (*Almonte Gazette*, 6 November 1925, p. 1)

Perhaps dance and euchre did not quite match the appeal of Lucy Webling, but they probably combined well enough for the purpose of raising funds for the golf club.

In 1926, almost all the same officers were re-elected, with J.J. Benson remaining treasurer.

As always, the information in the newspaper was extremely positive. On the one hand, "The canvass for members ... was very satisfactory and as a result the membership will be nearly double that of last year" (*Almonte Gazette*, 30 April 1926, p. 1). On the other hand, "The old golf course, beautifully situated on the Mississippi River, was secured last year together with additional land and well laid out in a nine-hole

course" (*Almonte Gazette*, 30 April 1926, p. 1). Again, "An experienced man has been engaged to keep the course and greens in good condition" (*Almonte Gazette*, 30 April 1926, p. 1).

It seems that nothing was amiss and that nothing could go wrong.

Yet there was no other news of the golf club in the *Gazette* for the rest of the year: nothing about tournaments, course conditions, fund raising events.

The very last item about the last of the three iterations of the Almonte Golf Club came in the spring of 1927, with an item about the election of club officers. We learn that 1926 had been "a very successful season" (*Almonte Gazette*, 22 April 1927, p. 1).

Still, there is again a sign that new members are desired – and perhaps needed?

The last paragraph ever written about the club while it was still in existence was the following: "To encourage new members, the Club decided to revise the fee for first year members *viz.* Ladies, \$3; and Gents, \$7. Student's Fee; Ladies \$2.50; Gents, \$5.00" (*Almonte Gazette*, 22 April 1927, p. 1).

Conclusion

What caused the final failure of the twice-revived Almonte Golf Club?

Perhaps the land where the final golf course was laid out was simply no longer available and the cost of building a new course elsewhere was prohibitive. The land's owner may have declined to renew the lease, re-dedicating the land to agricultural purposes. Or perhaps the owner decided to sell the land to someone else, who was not interested in having a golf course on it, as had happened in the case of the course laid out on the Kearney farm in 1906.

Did the ability of Almonte golfers outgrow the golf course?

By the late 1920s, the 1,600-yard golf course laid out by Sargent in 1907 was very short relative to the average length of nine-hole courses then being built. A short course is not a problem for beginners or for casual golfers playing the game for social reasons, but it cannot sustain the interest of serious, competitive golfers.

The Carleton Place golf course was well over 2,000 yards when it was originally laid out by James ("Jimmy") Newman in 1915. And by 1925, the Mississippi Golf Club, as it was now called, had purchased more land to lengthen its course. By then, golf balls were flying further; steel shafts that would hit the ball further had been officially approved: by its plans for expansion, the Mississippi Golf Club was keeping up with the times.

By 1927, had Almonte golfers who had taken up memberships at other golf clubs after the lapsing of the Almonte Golf Club before World War I decided that travel to other golf courses was not the inconvenience it had been before the war? By the mid-1920s, improved transportation in the form of better roads and cheaper, more reliable automobiles had made more golf courses more accessible to Almonters. Golfers in Almonte may have determined the fate of golf in Almonte by simply deciding to drive elsewhere for their golf.

Were members of the Almonte Golf Club perhaps too determined to maintain a club of Almonte gentry?

Was the collapse of the club in 1903 a result of its inability to address the resentment of Almonters who wished to preserve their right to use the commons where the golf course had been laid out? The Almonte Golf Club certainly never took up Harry Colt's suggestion of organizing a working-class golf club that could also use the golf course.

Back in 1912, was the proposal by some club members to increase the membership fee by 50% at least in part an expression of a desire to exclude from the club people who could afford to pay \$10 per annum, but not \$15?

In July of 1925, there were 19 men on the golf course at the same time for that month's handicap competition – not quite five foursomes. Membership was said to have doubled in 1926, meaning that a similar handicap competition might have seen as many as 40 men (or ten foursomes) on the course at the same time. It seems certain that the golf course could have accommodated several thousand more rounds of golf per year than its small membership actually played on it.

Would not an option for non-members to have paid-as-they-played have made the golf club more financially viable?

The Almonte Golf Club had built its first golf course on common land in the vicinity of the high school, but the club never got to the point where it allowed the common person on its golf course – other than as a caddy, a member of the grounds crew, or as a builder. It had survived for as long as it did only because it was regarded as a common cause by a sufficient number of the local gentry.

When it passed out of existence at the end of 1927, there would be no third resuscitation: the Almonte Golf Club had become a lost cause.