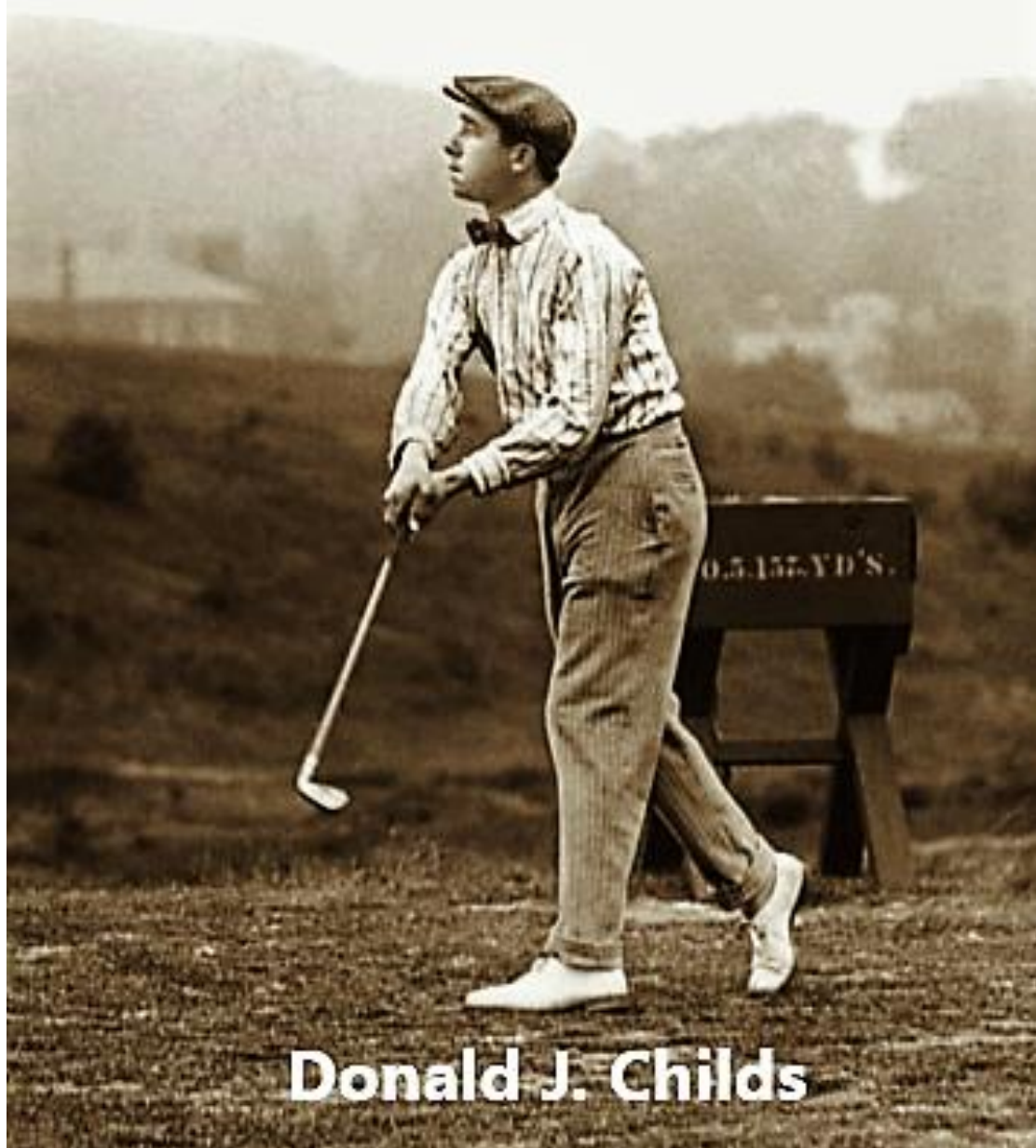


The Earliest Golf Courses of the Country Club of Rochester



Donald J. Childs

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By Donald J. Childs

In advance of the 1896 International Golf Championship at Niagara-on-the-Lake, the Toronto Golf Club's professional Arthur Smith had become the talk of several towns both as a golfer and as an architect.



Figure 1 Arthur Smith (1874-1944). Pittsburgh Daily Post, 1 September 1901, p. 6.

Born in Great Yarmouth, Norfolk, England, in 1874, he had worked as a caddie at the Great Yarmouth Golf Club in the 1880s alongside his older brothers Tom and Harry, and then the three became apprenticed there under golf professionals Tom and George Fernie (brothers of 1883 Open Champion Willie Fernie). Having followed brother Tom to Montreal in 1894 when the latter was hired as the golf professional of the Royal Montreal Golf Club, Arthur was hired as the first golf professional of the Toronto Golf Club early in 1895. That spring, he seems to have laid out Canada's first eighteen-hole golf course for the Toronto club. He also seems to have laid out an eighteen-hole course for the Rosedale Golf Club in June of 1895, a nine-hole course for the Hamilton Golf Club in September of 1895, and an eighteen-hole golf course for the Niagara-on-the-Lake Golf Club in June of 1896 – the course on which that year's International Golf Championship would be contested.

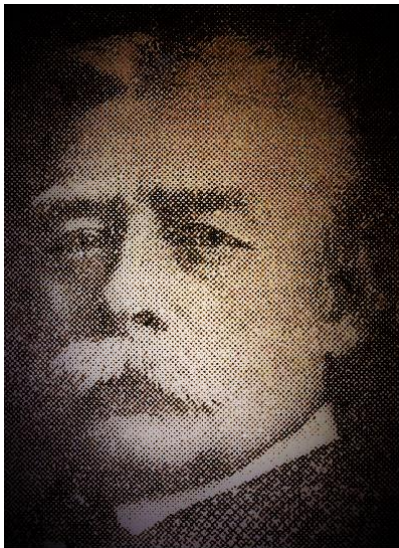


Figure 2 John Harry Stedman (1843-1922).

By 1896, Smith had drawn the special attention of Rochester golfers, particularly the president of Rochester's Thistle Golf Club, John Harry Stedman (1843-1922), who was shopping for a golf professional who would lay out a proper eighteen-hole golf course in Rochester.

In competitions played against the Buffalo Country Club, Rochester golfers had discovered that they far preferred the Buffalo golf course to their own. The Rochester men seem to have complained to Stedman that their golf course was too difficult – the holes were too long, the holes were all the same length, the scores for a round of golf were too high – whereas at the Buffalo course, not only were scores lower, but there was also an interesting and enjoyable mix of long and short holes.

Stedman had published an article in the local newspaper at the beginning of August comparing and contrasting the courses at Rochester, Buffalo, and Shinnecock Hills, his purpose apparently being to explain and justify (and reconcile his members to) the fact that the course record at Rochester was 111, as compared to 88 at Buffalo and 84 at Shinnecock Hills (*Democrat and Chronicle*, 1 August 1896, p. 14). By the end of the month, however, he had not only accepted that the existing golf course was deficient, but he had actually hired someone to build Rochester an eighteen-hole golf course just like the one in Buffalo, and that person was Arthur Smith.

Stedman, president of a local steam heat company (and later the inventor of the streetcar transfer ticket, as well as the fuzzy pipe cleaner still produced today), had been one of Rochester's golf pioneers. In the fall of 1894, he was one of the first persons in Rochester introduced to the game:

Golf was first brought directly to the notice of Rochester people a year ago by the late William S. Kimball, who took several local men down to his links at Nantucket. The autumn months of last year saw the South Park links laid out and called into use by Mr. Kimball, Frederick P. Allan, J.H. Stedman, W.W. Webb, Josiah Anstice, and a few others. These links proving unsatisfactory, when the Country Club took possession of the Bloss-Parsons property on East Avenue, an effort was made to have one laid out on the club grounds. (Democrat and Chronicle, 22 November 1895, p. 15)

The layouts of late 1894 and early 1895 would shock our understanding of what a golf course should be.

In a field across East Avenue (also known as Brighton Road), which ran in front of the clubhouse, there were nine holes averaging 350 yards each, "making a total distance of something less than two miles" – that is, about 3,150 yards (*Democrat and Chronicle*, 5 July 1895, p. 8). A little bit below the average length for nine-hole courses today, this was one of the longest nine-hole courses in North America at that time. More interesting to today's golfer is the fact that instead of "erecting 'bunkers' of earth and sod," Rochester's first golfers had "bunkers and hazards built of fence rails" (*Democrat and Chronicle*, 14 November 1895, p. 15).

Yet one ought not to be shocked by such golf architecture in the mid-1890s. A few years later, for instance, the early American golf club manufacturing company Wright & Ditson published advice on building a golf course that recommended precisely this sort of architectural strategy for land that had no natural hazards: "Where nature, by some oversight, has forgotten to provide hazards or bunkers, they should be built by man"; try "wooden hurdles with sloping sides" (although "the ball often strikes them

and bounds over on the other side”); or try “building hedges of branches, such as are used in hurdles of steeple-chasing” (although “the ball is apt to be lost in them or creep into such a nook as to be unplayable”) (*Guide to American Golf* [Wright & Ditson, 1895; second edition 1897], pp. 29-35).



Figure 3 Alexander H. Findlay (1866 - 1942), circa 1887.

The Wright & Ditson guide was probably the work of its golf expert, Alexander H. Findlay, a Scotsman who had immigrated to Omaha in 1887 and laid out the first golf course in the state shortly thereafter. Hired by Wright & Ditson in the mid-1890s to take charge of its efforts to promote the game, Findlay laid out dozens of courses in Florida and the Northeast before the turn of the century.

And he did work in Rochester, too.

Upon conclusion of a golf lecture before “a large crowd in Rochester” on 15 February 1901 (“After the lecture, some of the golf enthusiasts, who were greatly pleased with the address, gave Findlay a complimentary dinner”), Findlay was prevailed upon to recommend improvements for the

city’s Genesee Valley golf course (*Minneapolis Journal*, 29 April 1901, p. 8; *Boston Evening Transcript*, 23 February 1901, p. 23).

His plans were described in detail in the local newspaper, and it is clear that as late as 1901 he was still using the rail fences recommended as hazards by the Wright & Ditson guide:

Commencing today, five men will place in position on the links fourteen bunkers. This idea was the result of a consultation with golf expert Alex Findlay on his flying visit to Rochester last winter. At that time there was too much snow on the ground to permit Findlay and his friends to inspect the course, but from diagrams of it, he was of the opinion that it would be well to have some bunkers [in those days, the word “bunkers” could mean any hazard, from sand traps to gullies to ditches to fences].

That question settled, the matter of placing the bunkers came up, and after many struggles with a map of the course, fourteen of them were located in places that seemed to be satisfactory to all concerned....

There are to be fourteen bunkers. The longer holes will have two in some instances, and at least two of the short holes will not have any.

There will be a bunker about ninety yards from the teeing ground at the first hole. The other bunkers will be placed about sixty yards from the teeing ground of their respective holes, and

they will be about 100 yards apart when two are placed on the same hole. [Findlay followed the precepts of Tom Dunn and his younger brother, Willie Dunn, jr., who built a fairway-wide cross-bunker for the drive to carry and then built a second fairway-wide bunker for the second shot to carry.]

In the lower portion of the field, which is sometimes overflowed, they will be made of rails, and elsewhere will be constructed of dirt thrown up in the proper shape and covered over with sod. (Democrat and Chronicle [Rochester], 7 May 1901, p. 13)

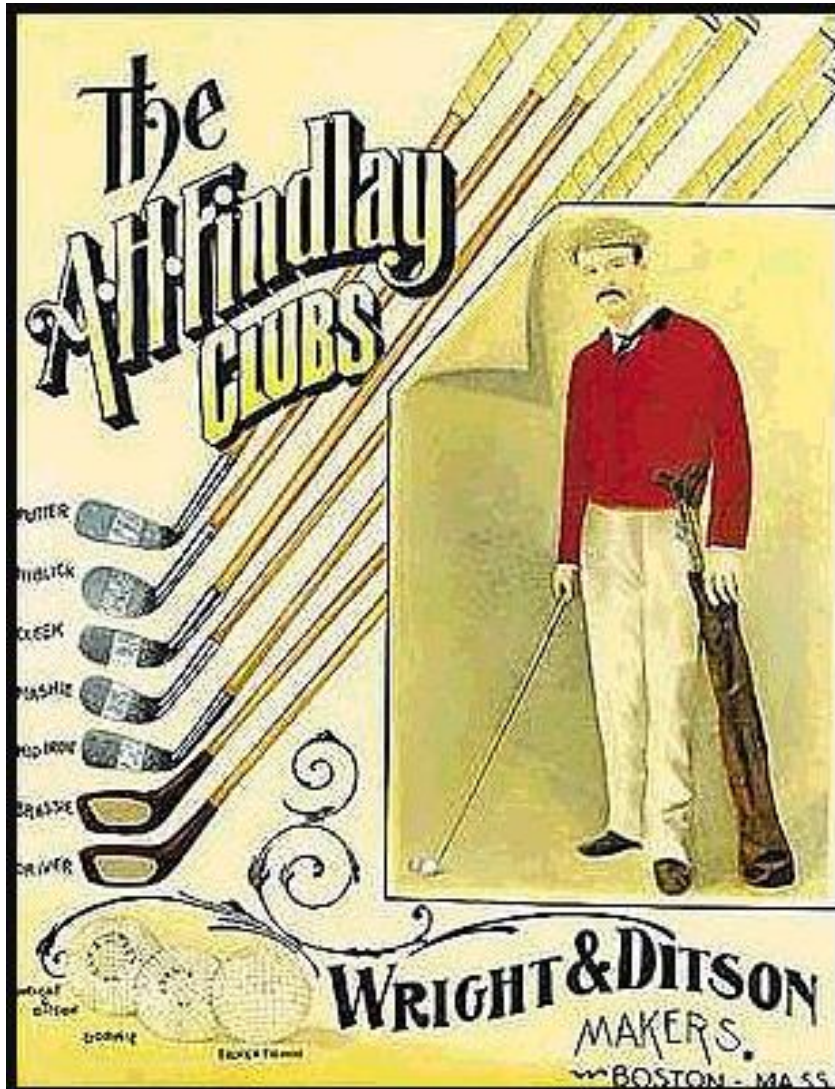


Figure 4 A turn-of-the-century advertisement by Wright & Ditson featuring the image of Alex H. Findlay. See for example *Golf* [New York], vol 6 no 9 (March 1900), p. 131.

Findlay's grandchildren claim that he was associated with an early layout at the Country Club of Rochester.

Given the information above about his use of artificially constructed fences as obstacles for golf courses on relatively featureless land, one wonders if he was the one who laid out the 3,150-yard course in the spring of 1895 with fence-rail hazards.

Fortunately, Rochester golfers would not have to face fence-rail hazards for long.

At the end of the summer of 1895, at the inaugural International Golf Championship at Niagara-on-the-Lake, two things taught Stedman that the

understanding of golf prevailing in Rochester at that time was primitive. On the one hand, he learned what golf could be by following hole-by-hole what Willie Dunn, jr., declared to be the best golf match yet played in North America: the championship final between Canada's best amateur golfer, Andrew Whyte Smith, and America's best amateur golfer, Charles Blair MacDonald. On the other hand, he saw

on the two nine-hole links laid out on the Fort Mississauga and Fort George commons the nature and variety of hazards prevailing on a state-of-the-art golf course in 1895. He returned home determined that Rochester golfers should have two things: a proper golf course and instruction in the art of the proper golf swing.

And so, back in Rochester, he founded a golf club, and then he hired a golf professional.

“The Thistle Club of Rochester” was born 28 September 1895 (*Democratic Chronicle* [Rochester], 29 September 1895, p. 15). Stedman was elected president. Apparently, “The golf fever had been steadily spreading during the late summer months, but not till after the international tournament at Niagara-on-the-Lake ... did it become epidemic”: the “enthusiastic report” brought back by spectators at the event was said to be “the provoking cause” (*Democrat and Chronicle* [Rochester], 22 November 1895, p. 15).

The golf professional hired shortly afterwards was Thomas Gourlay, a “a well-known Scottish professional golfer” (*Courier and Argus* [Dundee, Scotland], 12 August 1897, p. 4).

Born in St Andrews in 1857, Gourlay learned how to play golf on the “Old Course.” He played in the 1885 Open championship at St. Andrews, but by the late 1880s he was the greenkeeper at Royal Wimbledon in London (where he will have met future Country Club of Rochester golf professional Alfred Ricketts). In 1890 he was appointed “as professional and green man” at the new nine-hole golf course laid out at Llandrindod Wells in Radnorshire, Wales, by the Royal Wimbledon golf professional Alexander Patrick (*Field*, no 1963 [9 August 1890], p. 212). By the fall, however, he had been hired at the new Bowden Golf Club near Altrincham, England: “The council of the club have recently engaged T. Gourlay, formerly of St. Andrews and latterly of Wimbledon, as professional and greenkeeper, and under his care the new and enlarged course opened in September has largely improved” (*Field*, no 1977 [15 November 1890, p. 736). Gourlay set the course record the following summer. In the spring of 1894, “The committee of the [Didsbury] Golf Club ... engaged Gourlay, late of Bowden, as greenkeeper,” but just over a year later he was off to Rochester (*Golf* [London], vol 7 no 182 [9 March 1894], p. 412).

By November of 1895, Gourlay had laid out a new nine-hole course to replace the unsophisticated layout that had done service at the beginning of 1895: “There are ten men at work on the links of the Country Club at present, getting the ground in better condition. They are erecting ‘bunkers’ of earth and sod, which will be a great improvement over the old bunkers and hazards built of fence rails” (*Democrat and Chronicle* [Rochester], 14 November 1895, p. 15). As can be seen on the scorecard produced below, the golf course comprised nine holes ranging in length from 215 to 400 yards.

| THISTLE GOLF CLUB. | | | | |
|--------------------------------|--------------|------------------|-----------|-----------|
| Opponent | Date | | | |
| | 1st Round. | | 2d Round. | |
| | Holes..... | Self..... | Opponent. | Self..... |
| Opponent. | | | | |
| Hummock, 237 | 1 | | | |
| Waterloo, 400 | 2 | | | |
| Meadow-lark, 387 ... | 3 | | | |
| The Hub, 255 | 4 | | | |
| Stonewall, 237 | 5 | | | |
| The Hickory, 269 | 6 | | | |
| Blue-point, 343 | 7 | | | |
| Apple tree, 215 | 8 | | | |
| Homestead, 295 | 9 | | | |
| 2,640 | T'tl. | | | |
| Total for 18 holes—Self | | | | |
| Signature, | | Opponent. | | |

Figure 5 Democrat and Chronicle [Rochester], 10 May 1896, p. 15. Image modified and enhanced.

Like the original 3,150-yard nine-hole course with fence-rail hazards laid out in the spring, Gourlay's layout used the field across Brighton Road in front of the clubhouse, but it also used a field to the side of the clubhouse: "The result is that [a] links with nine holes, covering some thirty acres, occupies the property on both sides of East Avenue [or Brighton Road] in front and rear of the club house" (*Democrat and Chronicle* [Rochester], 22 November 1895, p. 15). Gourlay touted his achievement and promised an even better course if more money were spent upon it:

Mr. Gourly [sic], the "greens keeper," said yesterday to a Democrat and Chronicle representative: "Rochester golfers have what may be made one of the best links that I have ever driven a ball over. As it is, few equal it, but the judicious expenditure of a little money in constructing more bunkers and thereby increasing the difficulties of play would be a great

advantage. Especially is a bunker needed to guard the home hole.” (Democrat and Chronicle [Rochester], 22 November 1895, p. 15)

Play commenced at a tee in front of the clubhouse (the latter is seen below from the first tee).

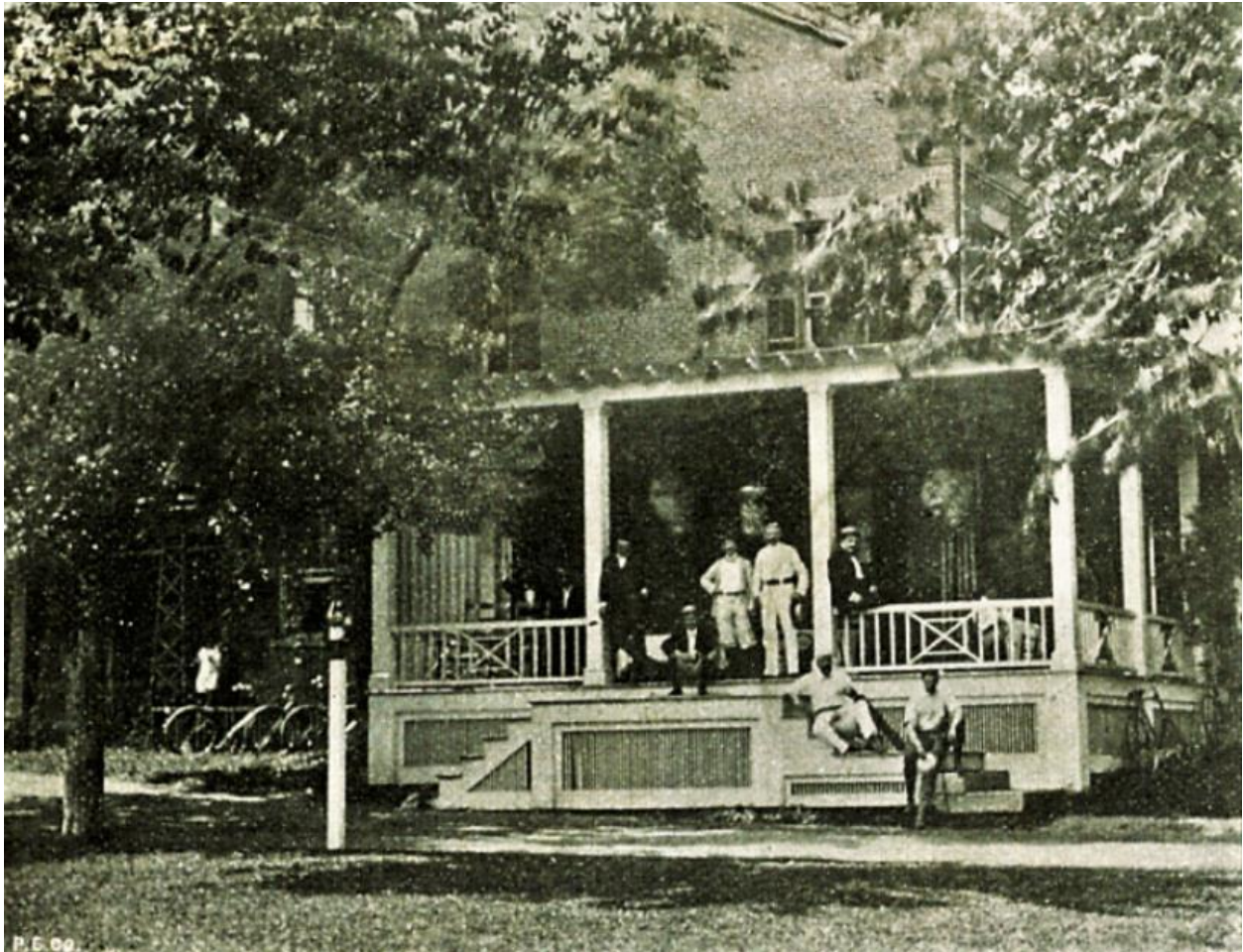


Figure 6 View from the first tee of the clubhouse of the Country Club of Rochester (used from 1895 to 1902).

The first hole proceeded right of the clubhouse seen above to a green not visible from the verandah.

The second hole reversed the direction of play, paralleling the first fairway and returning toward the road passing in front of the clubhouse.

As can be seen on the map below, the Gourlay layout required that two shots be played across this road. After the tee shot on the second hole, one had to play across the road to reach the field where the original course had been laid out in the spring of 1895; similarly, on the ninth hole, one had to play back across this road from the field in question to reach the final green beside the clubhouse. (Note that roads were regarded as proper “natural” hazards of the day.)

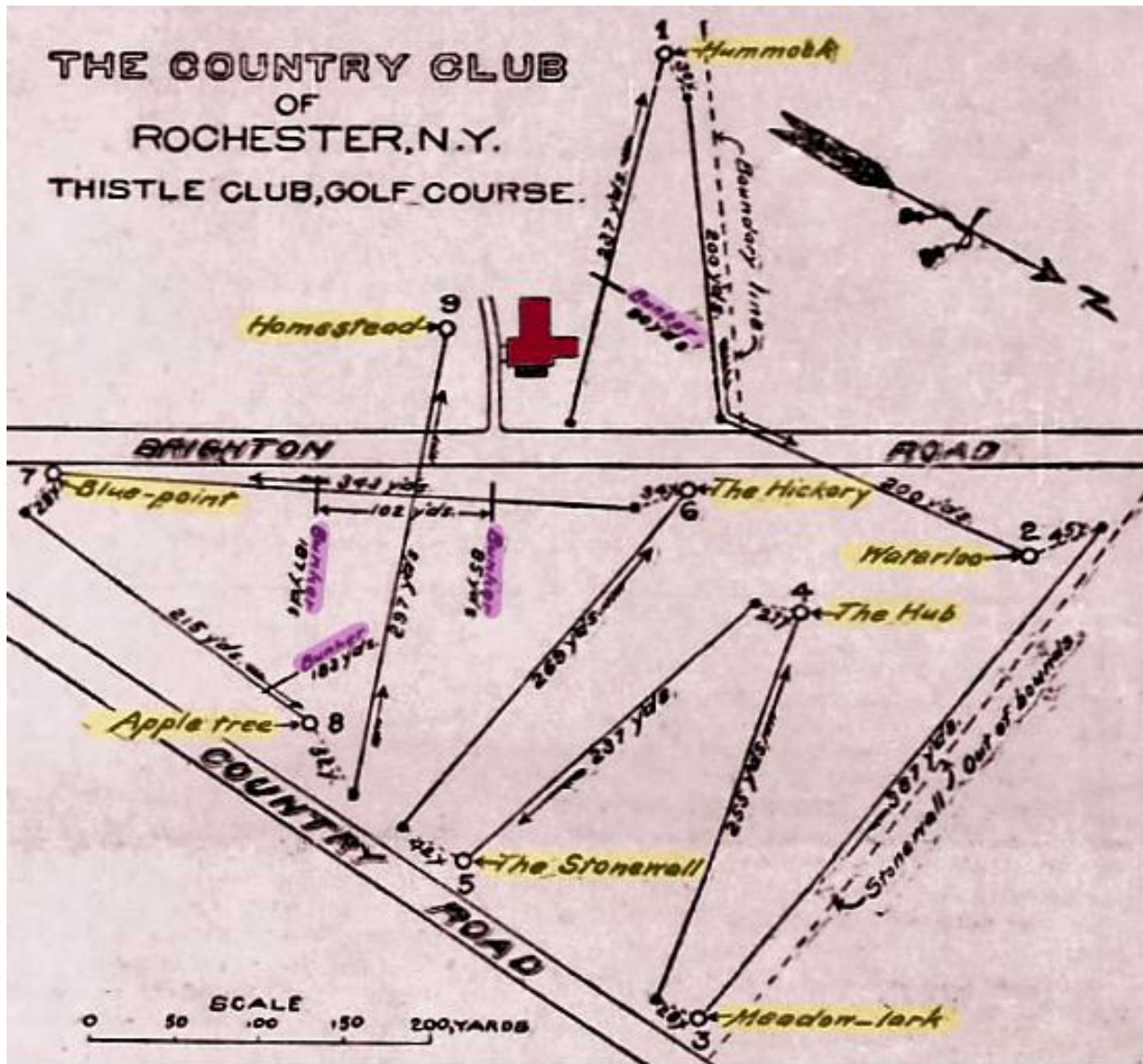


Figure 7 Democrat and Chronicle, 10 May 1896, p. 15.

Gourlay's ten-man crew built four fairway-wide cross-bunkers (the label "bunker" is highlighted in purple on the map above), but not the one that he wanted for the ninth hole. Gourlay also referred to "embankments and ditches which have been constructed in different parts of the field," and he indicated that he had used "fences," "trees," and "the East Avenue roadbed" as hazards "to increase the difficulties of making a round and thus call a player's skill into use" (*Democrat and Chronicle* [Rochester], 22 November 1895, p. 15). The seventh and ninth fairways crossed each other, leading the newspaper to report: "The course doubles upon itself, but this is not felt to be a serious defect" (*Democrat and Chronicle* [Rochester], 22 November 1895, p. 15).

Gourlay left the Country Club of Rochester at the end of the 1895 season and moved on to Baltusrol, leaving the Thistle Golf Club without a professional until early in May of 1896. And much work remained to be done on the golf course he had laid out. In fact, the work was not regarded as complete until Rochester welcomed rivals from Buffalo to a competition in July of 1896:

The first match of the season on the grounds of the Country Club will take place on Saturday when the golf team of the Buffalo club will meet the representatives of the Thistle Golf Club of this city. Work on the links of the Thistle Golf club has been going on for many weeks and the whole new course will probably be in first class condition for the tournament on Saturday....

The visitors will certainly find a course of unusual perfection in the one on the Country Club grounds, and the entire length of it, [excepting] perhaps a hundred yards, will be in view from the piazza of the Country Club house. (Democrat and Chronicle [Rochester], 9 July 1896, p. 15)

The person supervising this work on the Gourlay layout was the golf professional hired in May.

Since Gourlay had left Rochester for Baltusrol in the fall, the question of who would succeed him had hung in the air. Indeed, the Thistle Golf Club was still discussing the “very important” matter of “the engagement of a greens-keeper” at a club meeting called by Stedman at the end of April the next year (*Democrat and Chronicle*, 22 April 1896, p. 1). Only in May of 1896 was it announced that a new man had been found:

Thistle Golf Club’s Professional

David Honeyman, from St Andrews, has been engaged as the professional for the Thistle Club for the season.

This means that he will be the professional greens-keeper of the Thistle Club’s course at the Country Club’s grounds.

He will also instruct members in the game. (Democrat and Chronicle, 5 May 1896, p. 5)

Like Gourlay, David Honeyman was from St Andrews and, again like Gourlay, he learned his golf on the Old Course. His greenkeeping lineage was impeccable. He was the son of Old Tom Morris’s long-time assistant, David Honeyman, sr., who has by some historians come to be regarded as the co-greenkeeper of St. Andrews in those days (given how often Old Tom was away laying out other courses and competing in professional matches).



Figure 8 David Honeyman, sr. (1836-1903), at St Andrews, late 1800s.

As a young amateur in the spring of 1875, David Honeyman, jr., was a member at St. Andrews of the Rose Golf Club, comprising writers, clerks, drapers, and so on – young men who did not want to play with the working-class men of the Mechanics Club but who were not yet eligible for membership of the venerable Thistle Golf Club of St. Andrews. Other members of the Rose Golf Club included A.W. Smith (Canada’s best golfer from 1882-1901), Davie Strath, Jamie Anderson, Willie Fernie, and Young Tom Morris (who had died at Christmas). Until late in the 1870s, David Honeyman retained his amateur status and, along with his brother John, represented the St. Andrews club in matches against other Scottish golf clubs. In 1880, he was on the same St. Andrews team with George Fernie in a match

against a team from Carnoustie. By 1882, however, he had become a golf professional (alongside George Fernie) at the Leven Golf Club of Scotland.

Honeyman arrived in the United States, where he would spend the rest of his life, in the fall of 1895. Having no appointment yet at an American club, he engaged to play for \$100 at Christmas, 1895, at Lakewood, New Jersey, against the local golf professional: “a professional golf match will be played on the Lakewood links, on Christmas day, between Willie Norton, of the local club, and David Honeyman, of the St. Andrews Club, Scotland” (*Vogue* [New York], vol 6 no 26 [26 December 1895], p. iv). Alas, Honeyman lost 5 and 4, but he was not without resources for much longer, as we know, for the fact that he was available for appointment to an established golf club became known to Stedman.

Yet Honeyman’s tenure at the Country Club of Rochester was not much longer than Gourlay’s: hired in May, Honeyman completed the Gourlay course by July, and then he was replaced at the end of August by the Toronto Golf Club golf professional, Arthur Smith.

This high turnover-rate in the appointment of golf professionals in Rochester is not surprising or unusual. Golf was booming in the United States from the mid-1890s onward, with dozens and dozens of new golf courses being laid out each year, and dozens and dozens of new golf professionals arriving from Scotland and England each year. And so, there were lots of positions from which golf professionals

could choose, and there were lots of golf professionals from which clubs could choose. In the 1890s and early 1900s, golf professionals were moving from club-to-club in what seems in retrospect to have been a game of musical chairs: few sitting in one pro shop in the fall of the year were not sitting in a different pro shop in the spring of the next year.

Stedman seems to have secured the services of Arthur Smith on a short-term basis: he would work at Rochester for just the fall of 1896; by the spring of 1897, he was back as usual at the Toronto Golf Club (which had already loaned its golf professional to other golf clubs – Rosedale, Hamilton, Niagara-on-the-Lake – for short periods). News of Smith’s hiring by Stedman emerged at the 1896 International Golf Championship at Niagara-on-the-Lake, where his name was in the news because of the professional competition to be held in conjunction with the amateur tournaments.

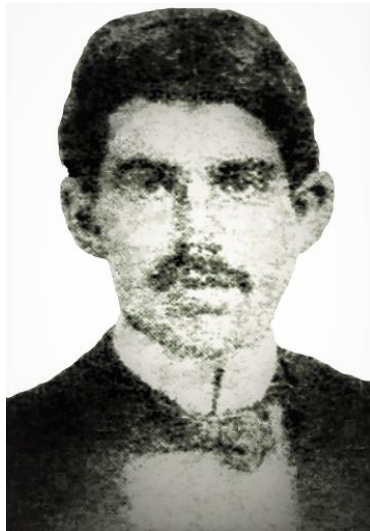


Figure 9 Tom Smith (1873-1967).
Pittsburgh Weekly Gazette, 10
February 1902, p. 7.

Arthur and Tom Smith had committed to the tournament from the beginning. And 1896 U.S. Open Champion James Foulis of Chicago had also entered, but he was unable to play, so the Smith brothers ended up facing two other U.S. professionals: “Tomorrow, the big professional match will be played, for a purse of \$200 cash, between William Tucker of St. Andrews [Yonkers, New York] and H.W. Rawlins of Utica [New York], and Arthur Smith of Toronto and [Tom] Smith, the Montreal crack. Betting stands about even on Rawlins and the Montreal man” (*Chicago Tribune*, 5 September 1896, p. 7).

There had been a professional exhibition match at the 1895 tournament (“Foulis, of Chicago, easily beat Tucker, of the St. Andrews Club” [*Montreal Daily Herald*, 7 September 1895, p. 2]), but the prospect of serious competition among four accomplished professionals at the 1896 tournament led local golf enthusiasts to expect that they would witness the best golf every played in the area:

There is considerable excitement over the professional match, which will occupy the whole of tomorrow. William Tucker of St. Andrews and Harry Rawlins of Utica, the two best men in the Eastern States, came to Niagara thirsting for revenge on Foulis of Chicago, who had entered but who finds it impossible to be present owing to the Chicago tournament, which begins on Monday. Against Tucker and Rawlins will be arrayed Arthur Smith of Toronto and [Tom] Smith of Montreal. (Buffalo Courier, 5 September 1896, p. 6)

The *Buffalo Courier* observed: “On form, Rawlins or Tucker should win, but Arthur Smith has been doing the links in good style and should have a good chance” (*Buffalo Courier*, 4 September 1896, p. 6). Two days before the contest, “Tucker of St. Andrews went around the links ... in ninety-five” and he declared himself “as confident of receiving the prize as are the two favorites [Horace Rawlins and Tom Smith]” (*Chicago Tribune*, 5 September 1896, p. 7). Recalling that a week before this contest was to take place, “Arthur Smith went round the course in the remarkable scores of 81 and 88,” the *Buffalo Courier* alerted readers (particularly those of a betting disposition) to the prospects of the Toronto golf professional: “there is a strong feeling that Arthur Smith may surprise people, as he has been making some wonderful scores for the Niagara links” (*Buffalo Courier*, 30 August 1896, p. 16; 5 September 1896, p. 6).



Figure 10 Arthur Smith plays a shot when winning the Western Open in 1905. *Cincinnati Enquirer*, 30 June 1905, p. 7.

But, alas, Arthur Smith made a costly mistake before play had even begun. Although Tucker, Rawlins, and Tom Smith had shown up early in Niagara-on-the-Lake for a day or two of practise on a golf course that was new to them, Arthur Smith came to Niagara-on-the-Lake only on the morning of the event. The problem was not that he lacked experience on the course: he had played it many times and he was in good form. The problem was that he decided to travel to Niagara-on-the-Lake by ferry: this decision would lead to his undoing.

The weather on the day of the contest was miserable, there being “a disagreeable, drizzling, chilly rain”; consequently, “the links were in bad condition, and nearly all the greens were muddy”; and so, “none of the players felt like playing” (*Chicago Tribune*, 6 September 1896, p. 6). But people had turned out expecting to see a great contest, and so the match went ahead, and “A large number of spectators followed the players despite the rain,” witnessing what the *Democrat and Chronicle* called “great golf play by professionals” (6 September 1896, p. 15).

The bad weather, however, had made the ferry crossing from Toronto to Niagara-on-the-Lake one of the worst of the season, and it cost Arthur Smith his chance of first prize:

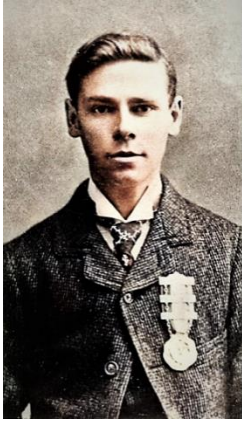


Figure 11 Horace Rawlins, 1895, wearing his USGA medal.

In the morning, H. Rawlins ... and Arthur Smith of Toronto started the ball rolling.

Smith arrived this morning from Toronto and when the game opened, he was in bad form. He came by water, and the lake was rough. Smith was seasick, and it was no surprise that he was defeated.

The first hole, on the first drive, Smith sent the sphere over the fence to the left of the links and got a bad lie in the long grass. It took him eight strokes to do the first hole, and Rawlins did it in four. (Chicago Tribune, 6 September 1896, p. 6)

The Toronto man played the next eight holes in two strokes less than Rawlins, but “Smith could not recover the lost ground at the start and was two behind on the first nine. The second nine holes were played faultlessly by both, the strokes being forty-two each” (*Chicago Tribune*, 6 September 1896, p. 6).

Willie Tucker became the talk of the tournament:

Tucker was in grand form and made the first nine in forty. He avoided all bad lies and created a sensation by his phenomenal plays



Figure 12 William H. Tucker, circa 1900.

The afternoon round was started with only four strokes between all the players, and it was anybody's game. Tucker and "Tom" Smith began the round and Tucker again put up a grand game. Tucker did the first nine in forty-two, while Smith took forty-six. On the second nine Tucker's work was uniform throughout. He made the first six in the nominal score of four strokes each, winning out in forty, a new record for the Niagara links. Tom Smith played well but took forty-four to do the first nine holes and finished in ninety. Arthur Smith redeemed his morning form by beating Rawlins by one stroke, finishing in eighty-five, while Rawlins took eighty-six. (Chicago Tribune, 6 September 1896, p. 6)

Tucker won easily: he shot 168, Rawlins shot 174, Arthur Smith shot 175, and Tom Smith shot 178. But everyone recognized that if Arthur Smith had not been suffering from wobbly legs and an indisposition

of stomach as he began play, the contest between him and Tucker would have been close: “Arthur Smith ... showed himself a player of the highest ability and can be looked for in the future” (*Ottawa Daily Citizen*, 7 September 1896, p. 3).

Reports of Arthur Smith’s good play also noted that “He has been engaged by the Rochester Club” (*Ottawa Daily Citizen*, 7 September 1896, p. 3).

Smith was certainly on site at Rochester in the fall, as we can see from an account of “the annual handicap tournament of the Thistle Golf Club” at the beginning of November: “as this is one of the most important events of the season, it is probable that the attendance will be large. A. Smith, the new greens-keeper, will give an exhibition” (*Democrat and Chronicle* [Rochester], 3 November 1896, p. 15).

He had been brought to Rochester to create the Country Club’s first eighteen-hole golf course, and it seems that implicit in his mandate was the requirement to create some shorter holes.

As noted above, a few weeks before hiring Smith, Stedman seems to have faced grumbles from club members who had played against the Buffalo Country Club at the end of July. A week after the Buffalo match, we find him publishing an article in the *Democrat and Chronicle* in which he observes that “the unexpected shortness of these [Buffalo] links was rather a handicap to the local team which played the Bisons on Saturday last” (*Democrat and Chronicle* [Rochester], 1 August 1896, p. 14).

Since all golfers were playing the same holes, it is not clear how a short hole *per se* could have favoured the Buffalo team, but we can read between the lines to see that Stedman felt somewhat defensive about the lack of short holes on his own golf course. Recall that the nine-hole Gourlay course had no hole shorter than 215 yards – that is, no hole that could be reached with the initial drive, for, as Stedman acknowledged, “the maximum length of a drive varies between 175 and 200 yards for the best performers” (*Democrat and Chronicle* [Rochester], 1 August 1896, p. 1).

At Rochester, in other words, there were no holes that a golfer could expect to complete in three strokes.

By contrast, the Buffalo golf course had eleven holes that were well under 200 yards in length – that is, eleven holes potentially reachable with the initial drive! Ignoring eight of these holes, Stedman concentrated his criticism on Buffalo’s three shortest holes: “A study of the [scorecard] ... will show that in the three short links [holes] of 71, 89, and 95 yards, the Buffalo club has a great advantage in placing the course record lower than” at Rochester (*Democrat and Chronicle*, 1 August 1896, p. 1).

Accepting that the Country Club needed a new layout, and apparently having acceded to members who wanted an easier course with shorter holes than Gourlay had designed, Stedman presumably communicated to Smith that it would be good if the new layout had some shorter holes than before.

Smith was certainly not expected to make an eighteen-hole course comprising long holes exclusively. After all, he was more or less confined to the same space in which Gourlay had laid out nine holes. To make his eighteen-hole course, Smith added only about 1,300 yards to the original nine-hole course (as can be seen below from the scorecard for his layout that was published in the *Democrat and Chronicle*) but he divided several of the original holes in half to make two short holes out of long ones.

The following is the course by names of holes, numbers of yards between each and the number of holes:

| Out. | Yds. | No. | In. | Yds. | No. |
|-------------|------|-----|-------------|------|-----|
| Punch Bowl | 237 | 1 | Apple Tree | 190 | 10 |
| The Slope | 190 | 2 | Road Side | 251 | 11 |
| Waterloo | 183 | 3 | The Elm | 124 | 12 |
| The Rocks | 146 | 4 | The Angle | 126 | 13 |
| Meadow Lark | 352 | 5 | Sahara | 229 | 14 |
| The Crest | 230 | 6 | The Orchard | 301 | 15 |
| Stone Wall | 238 | 7 | Grape Vine | 154 | 16 |
| Hickory | 278 | 8 | The Lane | 237 | 17 |
| Half Way | 226 | 9 | Homestead | 213 | 18 |

Total yards in course, 3,900.

Figure 13 Democrat and Chronicle [Rochester], 5 August 1897, p. 11.

Smith kept the (renamed) first hole the same. The long second hole was made into two: one on the clubhouse side of Brighton Road (or East Avenue); the other, on the other side. The third hole (“Meadow-lark”) became the new fifth (still called “Meadow Lark”). The fifth (called “Stonewall”) became the new seventh (still called “Stone Wall”). And the sixth (called “The Hickory”) became the new eighth (still called “Hickory”). The original ninth hole, “Homestead,” seems to have become the new eighteenth, also called “Homestead,” having been shortened from 295 yards to 213 yards.

Smith did not introduce any holes that were as short as the three that Stedman had criticized at Buffalo, but he introduced seven holes measuring less than 200 yards – holes potentially driveable in one stroke.

Yet perhaps Smith's most important contribution to Rochester golf culture was his introduction of the concept of Bogey: "The Bogey score of this course is seventy" (*Democrat and Chronicle*, 2 October 1897, p. 18). This is the first time the word "Bogey" appears in the *Democrat and Chronicle* as a description of a golf score.

Although the concept of par had been invented in 1870, it had languished virtually unknown and unused from 1870 to the mid-1890s, mentioned only occasionally in a newspaper or golf journal by a small minority of golf's *cognoscenti* in Scotland and England. Par came out of the shadows only after the invention of the figure named Colonel Bogey in 1891.

Defined by Horace G. Hutchinson as "A phantom who is credited with a certain score for each hole, against which score each player is competing," Colonel Bogey was a device allowing match-play competition simultaneously by a large field of contestants over a single round of golf: the winner was the person who won the most holes from, or (more usually) lost the fewest holes to, "the Colonel," whose score was based on what each golf club's best player was able to score when playing his best game (*Golfing* [London: George Routledge & Sons, 1893], p. 114). Since very few club players anywhere in the world in the 1890s could shoot par scores, the Bogey score of a golf course was generally set between four and ten strokes above par, so, although very few were interested in par scores for their own sake, they began to be calculated in aid of a golf club's interest in establishing a score for Colonel Bogey on its golf course! (I discuss these historical developments in detail in *Ottawa Golf and the Bogey Man: How the Ottawa Golf Club became the First to Bring Colonel Bogey to North America*, which is on my website at donaldjchilids.ca)

As at Toronto, Rosedale, Hamilton, and Niagara-on-the-Lake, Smith conceived the golf holes he laid out at Rochester in relation to Colonel Bogey's abilities. Not as good as a professional golfer, but the equal of a golf club's best players, Colonel Bogey could drive about 170 yards and hit a fairway wood or iron about 150 yards. And achieving such distances required a good roll-out of the ball. If there were hazards at the limit of Colonel Bogey's ability to carry his drives and fairway shots, he was understood to lay up before the hazards. The Niagara-on-the-Lake Golf Club's explanation of the architectural principle behind its 1896 golf course reveals the intention of a design conceived according to the principles of what was understood to be Bogey golf in the mid-1890s:

The length of the holes has been so arranged that a fair drive, followed by a good brassy, cleek, or iron play, is required to reach the green in the proper number of strokes.

Mistakes in driving are especially punished, but the “tee” stroke being well played, the ball is either on the putting greens or lying in good ground for the next stroke. (Democrat and Chronicle [Rochester], 26 August 1896, p. 15)

Upon the completion of his work at Rochester, Arthur Smith had become the Johnny Appleseed of Bogey layouts around Lake Ontario – disseminating knowledge of Colonel Bogey to Toronto, Rosedale, Niagara-on-the-Lake, Hamilton, and Rochester.

Like Gourlay, however, Arthur Smith did not stay at Rochester to see the building of his golf course through to completion. He returned to the Toronto Golf Club, as it had probably been understood all along that he would. Unlike Gourlay, however, Smith himself arranged for his replacement: arriving at the Country Club of Rochester late in April of 1897 would be his older brother, Harry W. Smith.

Arthur Smith probably arranged the contract between the Country Club of Rochester and his brother, for the latter arrived in Halifax in April of 1897 indicating that his future was set: when he crossed the border into the United States, he informed immigration authorities that his occupation was that of a “Prof. Golf Teacher” and that his destination was the “Rochester Golf Club”; his last permanent residence had been “Great Yarmouth,” and he intended to stay in the United States permanently.

| | | | | | | | | | |
|--|--|----------------------------|--------------------------------------|--|----------------------|-------------------------------------|------------|----------------------------------|-------|
| 20 - <i>Laurentian</i> | | <i>Liverpool</i> | | <i>Halifax</i> | | Date <i>Apr 25. 1897</i> | | Serial No. <i>56-5</i> | |
| MANIFEST | | Part of | | Given name | | Accompanied by | | | |
| Facility name | | SMITH | | HARRY. W. | | | | | |
| 530 | | | | | | | | | |
| C.I.V. No. | Place and date of issue | Section and subdivision | | Quit a country charged | | E.P. No. | | P.V. No. | |
| Place of birth (town, country, etc.) | | Age | Yrs. | Sex | M. | <input checked="" type="radio"/> S. | Occupation | Prof. | Read |
| Language or exemption | | Race | Nationality | Last permanent residence (town, country, etc.) | | W. | | D. | Write |
| Name and address of nearest relative or friend in country whence alien came | | <i>English</i> | | <i>England</i> | | <i>Great Yarmouth</i> | | | |
| Ever in U.S. | From | To | Where | | Passage paid by | | | | |
| <i>No</i> | | | | | <i>Self</i> | | | | |
| Destination, and name and complete address of relative or friend to join there | | | | | | | | | |
| <i>Rochester N.Y.</i> | | <i>Rochester Golf Club</i> | | | | | | | |
| Money shown | Ever arrested and deported, or excluded from admission | | Purpose in coming and time remaining | | | | | | |
| <i>65.00</i> | <i>No</i> | | <i>Prof</i> | | | | | | |
| Head tax states | Height | Complexion | Hair | Eyes | Distinguishing marks | | | | |
| <i>4900</i> | Ft. In. | | | | | | | | |
| Sex and date of landing, and name of steamship | | | | | | | | Can. Im. Identification card No. | |

Figure 14 United States immigration card for Harry W. Smith.

In the spring of 1897, Harry Smith's first job at what he called the "Rochester Golf Club" was to put the finishing touches on his brother's new layout and to bring into play the Country Club's first eighteen-hole golf course.

Less than a month after he arrived, the local newspaper reports indirectly on his progress in this regard: "The Thistle Golf Club team defeated the Toronto Golf Club team ... on the links of the Country Club. There was a good attendance, fine weather, and the greenskeeper had the links in fine condition" (*Democrat and Chronicle* [Rochester], 23 May 1897], p. 15).

And the report at the height of the summer was similar: "The links are in exceptionally good shape this season" (*Democrat and Chronicle* [Rochester], 17 July 1897, p. 15).

Harry Smith's second job would have been to help the club's handicap committee understand the Bogey score that his brother had accorded the layout. In the following newspaper item, some of the unusual English idioms suggest that we can perhaps hear Harry Smith's own voice in the newspaper's explanation of the concept of Bogey:

Handicaps in golf are figured from a Bogey score. Colonel Bogey is an imaginary opponent, and is a first-class player, being able to make the links in as few strokes as possible, barring miracles. The Bogey score of this course is 70, and if a man gets a handicap of twenty, it means that with good consistent golf (as he plays it), he should do the course in ninety. If he plays better than he usually does, he would come – when his handicap is taken from his gross score – below the seventy, and the man doing his best work, considering his previous play, will be the lowest in net score. (Democrat and Chronicle [Rochester], 2 October 1897, p. 18)

Since the glowing reports on the state of the golf course quoted above would have been provided to the newspaper by the club's secretary, one presumes that the Country Club of Rochester was quite happy with Harry Smith's work. Yet Smith did not stay at Rochester for the 1898 season. Instead, he went to the Hamilton Golf Club and was replaced at Rochester by the golf professional who would serve at the Country Club of Rochester for many years and make Rochester his home until his death in the early 1930s: Alfred Henry Ricketts (For the story of his life and times, especially at the Country Club of Rochester, see the chapter "The Last Architect: Alfred Ricketts" in my essay *Ottawa's First Golf Course* on my website at donaldjchilds.ca).

These changes of position seem to have occurred only at the beginning of the 1898 season.



Figure 15 Harry W. Smith, 1901, Portage Golf Club, Akron, Ohio. Akron Beacon Journal, 22 June 1950, p. 41.

On the one hand, we read in *Golf* (New York) that Ricketts was at Albany until the end of April of 1898: “Much to the regret of all members of the club, A. Ricketts, the professional, leaves at the end of the month for Rochester to take charge of the golf club there. Albany’s loss is Rochester’s gain, for in him they get one of the most painstaking and obliging men in the business, a clever instructor, and a corking good player” (*Golf* [New York], vol 2 no 4 [April 1898], p. 45).

On the other hand, in an article about the Smith brothers Tom and Arthur, the Montreal *Herald* reported in June of 1898 that another brother, Harry, had “lately taken the position of professional to the Hamilton Golf Club” (*Herald* [Montreal], 17 June 1898), p. 6).

It may well be that Rochester had not wanted to lose Smith anymore than Albany had wanted to lose Ricketts and that just as Rochester had apparently lured Ricketts away from Albany, so Hamilton had lured Smith away from Rochester to serve as the young club’s first full-time golf professional.



Figure 16 Harry Roy Sweny. Keep Your Eye on the Ball (Albany, New York: James B. Lyon), p. 11.

Ricketts had come to the Ottawa Golf Club in March of 1893 from Royal Wimbledon and promptly introduced members to Bogey competition (the first such competition ever played in North America), but he left Ottawa in the fall of 1895 and became the golf professional at the Albany Country Club for the 1896 and 1897 seasons. In addition to redesigning the golf course, which he “much improved,” he immediately introduced Colonel Bogey to the club members (*Official Golf Guide for 1899*, p. 205).

The club’s best player, Harry Roy Sweny (a high finisher in U.S. Amateur Championships, an inventor of new golf club designs, an author of a guide to playing golf, and a designer of a golf course in the Adirondacks), was so impressed by what he learned of Colonel Bogey that he immediately commissioned a trophy to be awarded in his name: “The ‘Colonel Bogey’ trophy offered by Harry Roy Sweny for the lowest score made by any

member [of the Albany Country Club] by the last of November will be awarded on Thanksgiving Day” (*Boston Evening Transcript*, 17 October 1896, p. 7).

Perhaps not surprisingly, the first thing that Ricketts did at Rochester was to organize a Bogey competition. Whereas at Ottawa, after the announcement in May of 1893 that there would be a new method of play that season called Bogey competition, it had taken virtually the whole season to prepare members for the competition itself in November, at Rochester, because the Smith brothers had previously introduced club members to the concept of Colonel Bogey and the idea of proper Bogey scores for each hole, Ricketts was able to introduce Bogey competition in the first tournament of the year:

The first handicap of the season was played by the Country Club of Rochester on the home grounds yesterday afternoon. It was by a new style of play to the Rochester men, being hole play, a handicap match [by] hole.

In it, every man plays, not against the man he is playing with, or to see in how few strokes he can make the eighteen holes, but against Colonel Bogey, an imaginary opponent, who is supposed to play perfect golf, and the player’s ambition is to win holes from him by making the holes in as few strokes as the Colonel is supposed to take. Of course, that would be impossible for the ordinary player, so every man is allowed a certain number of strokes, according to his ability as a golfer, which strokes he is allowed to take off his score at specified holes, giving him a chance with his allowance to down the Colonel. (Democrat and Chronicle [Rochester], 8 May 1898, p. 19)

Although Ottawa’s first Bogey competition was probably somewhat botched by inaccurate and inequitable handicapping, the result of Rochester’s first competition was quite typical of results produced at English golf clubs at this time: “The Colonel held his own against the thirty men who tried their fortune against him yesterday, beating them from three to seventeen holes in the round.... The new style will, it is thought, become popular as the season advances” (*Democrat and Chronicle*, 8 May 1898, p. 19).

Rochester’s first Bogey competition at the beginning of May of 1898 had been played on a new golf course designed by Ricketts: “The new links are rapidly being toned and will be in fine shape for the game between Toronto and the local club on the 21st of this month [May]” (*Democrat and Chronicle*, 8 May 1898, p. 19).

The scorecard for the new layout appeared in the local newspaper, as shown below.

| No. | Holes. | Yards. | Bogey Score. |
|--------------------|-------------------|--------------|--------------|
| 1. | Horse Shoe..... | 237 | 4 |
| 2. | Big Tree..... | 190 | 4 |
| 3. | Blue Point..... | 457 | 6 |
| 4. | Quarter Pole..... | 239 | 4 |
| 5. | Flag Staff..... | 263 | 4 |
| 6. | Roadside | 182 | 4 |
| 7. | Meadow Lark..... | 352 | 5 |
| 8. | Crest..... | 230 | 4 |
| 9. | Stonewall..... | 238 | 4 |
| 10. | Apple Tree..... | 120 | 3 |
| 11. | Corner..... | 152 | 3 |
| 12. | Cross Road..... | 230 | 4 |
| 13. | Orchard.. .. | 340 | 5 |
| 14. | Onkerft | 98 | 3 |
| 15. | Mid-field | 301 | 5 |
| 16. | Grape Vine | 213 | 4 |
| 17. | The Lane | 322 | 5 |
| 18. | All Over..... | 228 | 4 |
| Total... .. | | 4,404 | 75 |

Figure 17 Democrat and Chronicle [Rochester], 30 June 1898, p. 12.

From the Smith course, Ricketts kept the first hole dating back to Gourlay, renaming it “Horse Shoe.” And he kept the second hole, renaming it “Big Tree.” Smith’s fifth to seventh holes were unchanged as they became Ricketts’ seventh to ninth holes.” Ricketts shortened the tenth, “Apple Tree,” by 70 yards. He lengthened the fifteenth, “The Orchard,” by 39 yards, and he made it his thirteenth (with the same name). Smith’s sixteenth to eighteenth holes were retained as Ricketts’ sixteenth to eighteenth, “Grape Vine” lengthened by 62 yards, “The Lane” lengthened by 85 yards, “Homestead” (renamed “All Over”) lengthened by 15 yards.

The only known image of Alfred Ricketts shows him on Rochester’s seventeenth hole. This hole was named “The Lane” both on the Smith layout and on Ricketts’ own redesigned layout, and so the image is called “Driving the Lane.” Seen below, this image seems to be a sketch drawn from a photograph, a

technique used by newspapers in the 1890s and early 1900s as an alternative to the more difficult and costly technology at that time of publishing photographs themselves.



Figure 18 Alfred Ricketts "Driving the Lane," Democrat and Chronicle [Rochester], 28 October 1923, p. 38.

Overall, Ricketts lengthened the eighteen-hole Smith course by 504 yards and increased the Bogey score by five strokes.

Incidentally, club members initially chafed at this Bogey score. They regarded it as practically unachievable: none of them could break 80 on the course. But shortly after having completed the new layout, having nominated its Bogey score as 75, Ricketts went round the course in 74 – one less than Bogey (*Democrat and Chronicle* [Rochester], 30 June 1898, p. 12).

So much for that!

By the end of the nineteenth century, then, Thomas Gourlay, David Honeyman, Arthur Smith, Harry W. Smith, and Alfred Ricketts had combined to create an eighteen-hole golf course for the Country Club of

Rochester. This course would endure until the spring of 1904, when it was replaced on the same property by a nine-hole course.

Ricketts had been succeeded at the Country Club of Rochester in September of 1903 by former U.S. Open champion Willie Smith, who was in turn succeeded in March of 1904 by James Mackie, a “young St. Andrews golfer” who was then “in the employ of Mr. Tom Morris” (*Dundee Evening Telegraph*, 22 March 1904, p. 2; *Dundee Courier*, 5 March 1904, p. 8). Old Tom had occasionally deputized Mackie to lay out courses on his behalf for golf clubs in Scotland, and it seems to have been Mackie who was responsible for the new nine-hole course at the Country Club of Rochester: “The new professional of the club, James Mackie, who comes from the famous St. Andrews links of Scotland, has arrived and taken charge of the work of making the links ready for the summer. Considerable work remains to be done and at present the members are confined to a short course of ten holes” (*Democrat and Chronicle*, 10 April 1904, p. 23). The new course was ready by the end of May:

Will Open Its New Course Tomorrow

Rochester Country Club Will Hold Handicap Tournament of Nine Holes on Brighton Links

A club handicap tournament will be played over the new nine-hole course of the Rochester Country Club tomorrow afternoon....

The links are in excellent condition and are considered quite “sporty.”

The course is 3,150 yards long for the nine holes, which compares very favorably with the longest courses in the country.

The bunkers have been placed. (Democrat and Chronicle, 29 May 1904, p. 23)

This nine-hole course would serve the club until Donald J. Ross designed a new eighteen-hole course at the beginning of May in 1913.

But although the first eighteen-hole golf course of the Country Club of Rochester was gone, it was not forgotten.

It was by means of the original eighteen-hole course that the Smith brothers and Alfred Ricketts had introduced and established Bogey culture at the Country Club of Rochester, and they did so well before the concept of par arrived in the city. Thereby, Ricketts and the Smith brothers significantly contributed to the development of a young Rochester boy who would eventually win eleven Major championships, second all-time only to Tiger Woods and Jack Nicklaus, for Ricketts’ early caddie and subsequent pupil, Walter Hagen, learned to play golf on this early eighteen-hole layout. And whereas the somewhat younger Bobby Jones would later hone his game by playing against an opponent he called “Old Man

Par,” Hagen honed his own game by playing at the Country Club of Rochester against par’s late nineteenth-century and early twentieth-century precursor, Colonel Bogey, who did the club’s original eighteen-hole course in 75.