

A vintage photograph of a golf course. In the foreground, a dirt path leads through a grassy area. Several people are visible: one person in dark clothing on the left, a person in a light shirt and dark pants in the center, and a group of people on the right, some appearing to be on a golf cart. The middle ground is dominated by a dense line of tall, thin trees. The background shows a hazy, overcast sky. The overall tone is historical and serene.

Early Mount Dora Golf & the Ohio Influence

Donald J. Childs

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Introduction

The story of the origins of the Mount Dora Golf Club is well-known. It is told on a plaque at the club itself:

The Mount Dora Golf Course on Highland Street is a living memorial to Mount Dora's military troops that served in WWII and all veterans and members of the Armed Forces since. The golf course was established in [1945] by a group of veterans returning from Europe and the South Pacific. The men petitioned City Hall for a course to complement the city ball parks, tennis courts, lawn bowling, yacht club and public swimming pool. The city did not have the resources at the time to construct the golf course, but a piece of land on the outskirts of the city bordering Orange County was in tax arrears and this was offered up on a 100 year lease. However, the returning warriors would have to construct the course themselves. These brave men were up for the challenge and immediately enlisted a course designer to assist with carving out the first nine holes on the heavily wooded hilltop using a war surplus bulldozer and a mule. The trees and stumps were pulled out and the levelling began. (Legend has it that the mule died of exhaustion.) (Historical Plaque, Mount Dora Golf Club)

The name of the "course designer" of the original nine-hole layout is left out of this account.

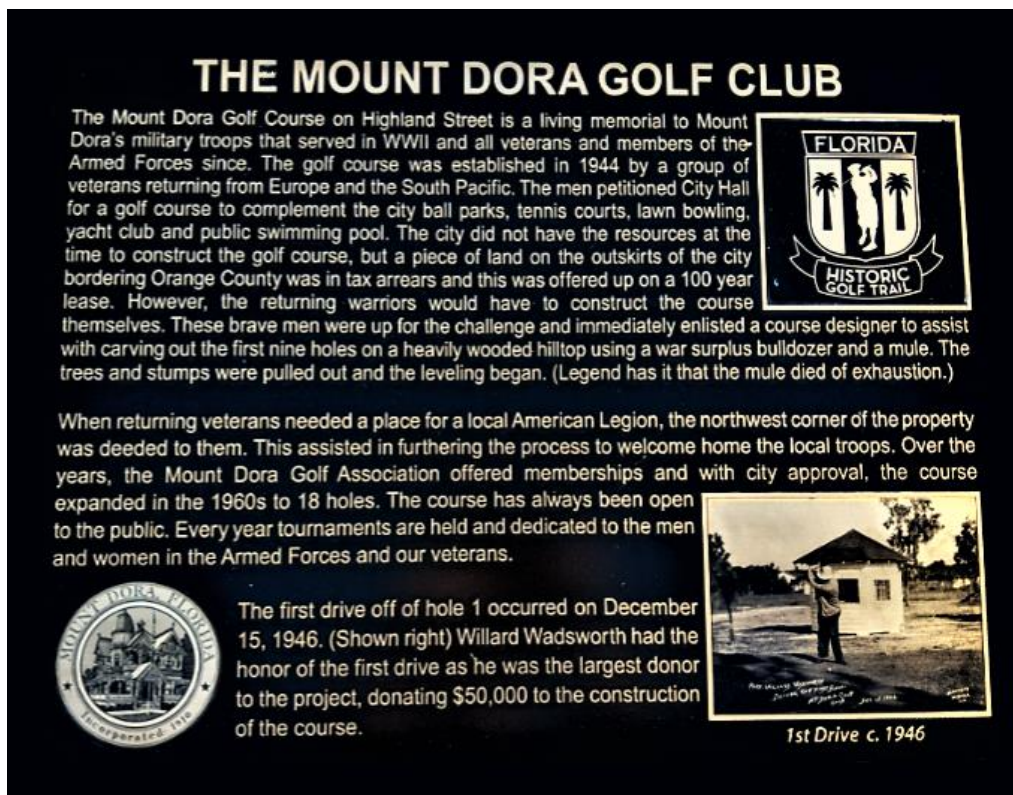


Figure 1 A photograph of the historical plaque at the Mount Dora Golf Club.

But identifying the golf course architect is important, for he is the key to recognizing the untold story of the enduring Ohio influence on the design and construction of both the original nine-hole course laid out in the fall of 1945 and the eighteen-hole

course laid out in the spring of 1958 – the course that we still play today.

It is also important to note that it was not the men returning from Europe and the South Pacific who enlisted the assistance of a course designer; rather, the first architect was hired by a group of local enablers who comprised the original executive committee of the Mount Dora Golf Club.

They agreed with the veterans: “This is to be a community post-war project” (*Mount Dora Topic*, 17 May 1945).

And as we shall see, through the Ohio golf course builder they hired, they ensured that what would initially be called Mount Dora’s “Hilltop Golf Course” would in 1945 become the first course in the United States laid out according to an architectural theory formulated in response to World War II’s impact on the country’s golf industry – a theory that had been formulated that very year by the Ohio architect who would in 1958 enlarge the Mount Dora course to eighteen holes.

Enablers

As we know, when the veterans petitioned the city for a golf course late in 1944 or early in 1945, city council was apparently unable to finance the construction of one, but prominent city figures who were also ardent votaries of the royal and ancient game soon offered the money, the business savvy, and the political know-how necessary to enable the golf course project to go ahead.

It was in the spring of 1945, when the war against Japan was not yet over, that meetings were held by more than a dozen Mount Dorans “interested in the pleasures and healthy exercise of golf and in the progress of our community” to explore the possibility of forming a golf club and building a golf course (*Mount Dora Topic*, 17 May 1945). Also expressing interest in the question were many permanent city residents “who were unable to be present,” as well as a good number of winter residents who had “returned to their northern homes” (*Mount Dora Topic*, 17 May 1945).

In mid-May, a committee was appointed “to draft the charter for the proposed golf association” (*Mount Dora Topic*, 17 May 1945). At the next meeting a week later, a permanent “golf association” was formed (*Mount Dora Topic*, 17 May 1945). William Wadsworth was appointed president of the new “golf association” (the Mount Dora Golf Club) as of 25 May 1945.

On the tenth anniversary of the opening of the Mount Dora Golf Club, the *Orlando Sentinel* identified the main figures behind the selection of the golf course site: it was “Willard Wadsworth, J.M. Turner, J.B. Griswold, Alfred Rehbaum, Harold Overhiser and Harry Backus” who in 1945 “gazed at the city dump along with the open country around it and saw it as the setting for a championship golf course” (*Orlando Sentinel*, 15 March 1956, p. 38). These visionaries constituted the first executive committee of the Mount Dora Golf Club, and they soon proved to be much “more than dreamers, for on Dec. 12 of the same year ground was broken, and twelve months after on Dec. 15, 1946, Mount Dora Golf Club officially opened for play” (*Orlando Sentinel*, 15 March 1956, p. 38).

Before introducing the architect who laid out the nine-hole course in 1945 and the architect who laid out the eighteen-hole course in 1958, I present in the next six sections of this essay brief biographies of the six enablers of post-war Mount Dora golf identified above, reviewing their involvement in golf up to the time of their special contribution to Mount Dora golf after World War II.

Interestingly, as we shall see, one of the six men looking longingly at the city dump in 1945 may have been acting as much on his wife’s behalf as on his own.

Willard Wadsworth

A veteran of World War I, Willard Wadsworth (1881-1959) took the lead in organizing the golf course project advocated by the veterans of World War II.



Figure 2 The mansion of William B. Wadsworth (home of Willard), in Plainfield, New Jersey, circa 1900s.

Wadsworth would make the largest individual donation to the cause – \$50,000 (or about \$750,000 in today's terms) – and he would serve as the first president of Mount Dora's new golf club (an office he would hold until his death in December of 1959).

Willard Wadsworth had been born into a wealthy family in Plainfield, New Jersey, the son of an important stockbroker, William B. Wadsworth, whose office was at 1 Wall Street. When William Wadsworth, who shared his winter home in Mount Dora with his son Willard, died in

the early 1930s, he was the oldest living member of the New York Stock Exchange.



Figure 3 Willard Wadsworth, *Harvard Golf Team, Golf*, vol 8 no 6 (June 1901), p. 408.

Willard attended Harvard University, playing on the university golf team, serving as secretary on the editorial board of the *Harvard Advocate*, and serving as president of the Glee Club.

After graduation, he studied law for several months, but he was then lured away by an inventor to work in manufacturing for five years, at which point he finally yielded to the pressure of family expectations and secured his own seat on the New York Stock Exchange.

When Wadsworth died in 1959, he was up to then the twelfth oldest living member of the New York Stock Exchange.

He left an estate valued at more than \$2,700,00 (or about \$27,000,000 in today's terms).

As a teenager, Wadsworth was one of the first generation of Americans to take up the new game of golf, when the fad for the game began sweeping through the United States in the mid-1890s.

References to his golf results began appearing in newspapers in 1897, when he was just sixteen years old. For the next thirty years we read of tournament results featuring his performances at the Plainfield Country Club, where he often reached the finals of the biggest competitions and won the club championship three times.

Mount Dora became dear to Wadsworth's heart. At the dedication of the clubhouse of the Mount Dora Golf Club to Wadsworth in 1967, in fact, Wadsworth's friend Alfred Rehbaum recalled that "Willard was always interested in the future of Mount Dora" (*Mount Dora Topic*, 13 July 1967).

The city was his home for almost half of each year of his adult life, and it was the place where he could pursue his two favorite avocations each winter: as he wrote in the 1920s to his Harvard classmates, "golf and orange-growing in Florida, both interesting and expensive, are my hobbies" (*Harvard College Class of 1902, Secretary's Sixth Report* [privately printed, 1922], p. 451).

In Mount Dora in the 1950s, he became president of the Mount Dora Gowens Co-operative, and in Mount Dora in the 1940s and 1950s, as we know, he became president of a golf club for the first time in his life.

Wadsworth began spending his winters in Mount Dora in 1913, where his father had purchased a "home on the shores of Lake Beauclaire" (*Mount Dora Topic*, 13 July 1967). But no sooner had he established a pattern of life there than the United States entered World War I and everyone's plans were disrupted. Wadsworth enlisted in the Armed Forces, serving from 1917 to 1918 as an Air Service Officer on Governor's Island, New York. He was discharged in December of 1918, having been promoted to the rank of Major.

Unlike his siblings, Wadsworth never married.

If he was not a determined bachelor, he certainly found it easy to be one, writing as follows in the 1920s to his 1902 Harvard classmates: "While there is no doubt much to be said for the state of blessed singleness, or perhaps single blessedness, I wish to congratulate those of my classmates who have been fortunate in finding helpmates in life. It's too much of a cinch to be single. Tell your children so for me, at any rate your boys" (*Harvard College Class of 1902, Secretary's Sixth Report*, p. 451).

In the spring of 1945, when Wadsworth stood on the present golf course site gazing at the Mount Dora city dump with his five companions, each had his own idea about how to go about building a golf course for the veterans, but Wadsworth was the one who would put his money where his vision was: "The

major factor in the realization of the planning of those visionaries was the purchase by Wadsworth of some 80 acres, including the city dump. Deeded to the city as a gift, they were then leased to the club for 99 years at a nominal rent” (*Orlando Sentinel*, 15 March 1956, p. 38).

When the golf course was ready for play at the end of 1946, it is no wonder that Willard Wadsworth was the one accorded the honor of striking the first tee-shot.



Figure 4 65-year-old Willard Wadsworth strikes the first shot on the first tee of the new nine-hole golf course of the Mount Dora Golf Club 15 December 1946.

And Wadsworth continued to give .

Ten years after his tee-shot heard round the city, we read that “Buildings donated by Wadsworth have risen to form a practical and attractive plant” for the maintenance of the club and the course (*Orlando Sentinel*, 15 March 1956, p. 38). In an appearance before city council in 1956, Rehbaum pointed out that, in addition to paying for the land that he had deeded back to the city, Wadsworth had donated the

thousands of dollars that paid for these new buildings even though the Mount Dora Golf Club was operating “in the black” (*Mount Dora Topic*, 8 March 1956).



Figure 5 Willard Wadsworth, circa late 1950s.

Of course, Wadsworth presided over the expansion of the golf course from nine holes to eighteen holes between 1958 and 1959.

Sadly, however, he died 14 December 1959, after a brief illness, just a month after the new eighteen-hole layout officially opened for play.

The *Mount Dora Topic* announced that “The patron of the Mount Dora golf course, William Wadsworth, has trod its fairways for the last time” (17 December 1959). It is not known whether he got to play the new course.

Long remembered as the “benefactor of our golf course until his death December 14, 1959,” he became the focus of donations to the “Willard Wadsworth memorial fund” in 1965 as the Mount

Dora Golf Club sought to raise funds for the enlargement of its clubhouse (*Mount Dora Topic*, 17 December 1959; 11 March 1965).

Three of Wadsworth’s relatives read about the fund, sent “a letter of appreciation for honors to Willard Wadsworth,” and “each sent a check” as a donation to the project (*Mount Dora Topic*, 15 July 1965).

Almost six years after his death, the dearly departed Willard Wadsworth was still raising funds for the Mount Dora Golf Club.

Alfred Rehbaum

One of the Wadsworth group of organizers mentioned above, Alfred William Rehbaum, Sr (1895-1974), already had experience of starting a new golf club from scratch.



Figure 6 Alfred Rehbaum, *Orlando Sentinel*, 15 September 1939, p. 8.

In 1915, as a twenty-year-old, Alfred Rehbaum had arrived in Mount Dora to work for one of the city's founders, J.P. Donnelly. He had been hired to manage Donnelly's hardware store. Rehbaum was so successful that he later bought the store and added to it an undertaking business.

Many years later, comic-strip artist Mel Graff composed a poetic tribute to Rehbaum for the *Orlando Sentinel*:

*Hardware merchant,
undertaker;
buy a saw
or meet your maker.*

(*Orlando Sentinel*, 8 October 1997, p. 3)



Figure 7 Postcard showing the 2nd hole of the Lake County Country Club, circa late 1920s.

Perhaps a poem about Rehbaum's service to the local golf community would also have been appropriate, for in the summer of 1920 (twenty-five years before his visit to the city dump with Wadsworth), "at an enthusiastic meeting of more than one hundred citizens of Mount Dora,

Eustis and Tavares, the Lake County Country Club was organized with ... Alfred Rehbaum of Mount Dora [as] secretary and treasurer" (*Tampa Tribune*, 22 July 1920, p. 6).

Rehbaum was also a director of the Mount Dora chamber of commerce and no doubt played a significant role in inaugurating “the first annual event to be sponsored by the Mount Dora chamber of commerce” in April of 1927. It was “held at the St. Andrews course at Mount Plymouth” (*Tampa Tribune*, 26 February 1927, p. 14). Two more tournaments were staged by the Mount Dora chamber of commerce at this Mount Plymouth course at the end of 1927 and beginning of 1928, with the president of the chamber of commerce calling “attention to the fact that both the Heim [cup] event as well as the chamber of commerce shield tournament ... are open to all golfers of Lake County [Country Club]” (*Orlando Evening Star*, 25 December 1927).



Figure 8 Tournament play on the St. Andrews course of the Mount Plymouth Country Club, circa 1927. The combined clubhouse and 150-room hotel of the country club is visible in the background.

The St. Andrews course of the Mount Plymouth Country Club had been laid out in the fall of 1925 by “W.D. Clark, premier golf architect of Chicago,” for the Mount Plymouth Corporation, which planned to develop a community around four eighteen-hole golf courses. Nine holes were cleared for construction at the end of the year, eighteen holes were ready for seeding early the next year, and play was scheduled for the fall of 1926 (*Miami Herald*, 21 February 1926, p. 21). But the real estate crash of 1926

meant that only one of the four golf courses was built, and only the great hotel at the centre of the development materialized, and almost none of the planned houses.

Harold Overhiser



Figure 9 Harold Overhiser, *Orlando Sentinel*, 15 November 1951, p. 5.

Harold Overhiser (1900-1978), who had arrived in Mount Dora from Camden, New Jersey, on his honeymoon in 1920 and never left (taking a job in the city's utilities department and working there until his retirement as utilities superintendent in 1964), was a participant in what a newspaper called the Mount Dora "golf program" of 1927 and 1928, when a Mount Dora Golf Association was formed (*Orlando Sentinel*, 9 October 1927, p. 35).

Initiated in 1927, the Mount Dora "golf program" had involved two tournaments in its first year: "Last March, Mount Dora conducted two tournaments, one at Lake County Club and the other at Mount Plymouth"; for the winter of 1927-28, "the Mount Dora program will start in December this year, with frequent tournaments during the season" (*Orlando Sentinel*, 9 October 1927, p. 35).

This golf program was initiated by the Mount Dora chamber of commerce, which was the likely source of information published in an *Orlando Sentinel* article in the fall of 1927 about golf in Mount Dora:

Tourists and winter visitors to Mount Dora this coming season will have ample opportunity to gratify their appetite for golf if they happen to be of the golf bug family.

Mount Dora offers a golden opportunity for the golfer. With Clermont planning to open a course this fall, there will be five fine courses within a short distance of the city.

The fine St. Andrews course at Mount Plymouth is in Lake County and special arrangements have been made to secure accommodations there for Mount Dora golfers. The course is but ten minute's drive over a concrete highway from Mount Dora.

The Lake County Country Club course numbers many Mount Dora golfers in its membership. The course is about four miles from Mount Dora.

*The course at Howey is a nine-hole affair but is very sporty and quite scenic. Silver Lake course at Leesburg is another nine-hole course and is patronized by a wide following of golfers. (*Orlando Sentinel*, 9 October 1927, p. 35)*

But the golf program itself was probably run by the Mount Dora Golf Association. We can certainly see from the following newspaper item that the golf program of 1928 was the responsibility of this association:

The "ringer tournament" conducted by the Mount Dora Golfer's Association during the past summer [1928] will come to a close on Thursday, November 1.

The tournament has attracted much interest among the golfers and while the field [of contenders] was very large several weeks ago, the fact that some of the boys [and girls!] have been spotting birdies to their scores has caused the race to narrow down. There are about twenty who are still in the running for the prizes that have been offered by Mount Dora merchants.

At the close of the week ending last Saturday, George Malone was in the forefront of the race with a net 65 for his 18 hole effort. Frank Heath was close on his heels with a 66.... Mrs. Hazel Heath is showing some good scores with a 74. Other scores posted ... [include] Harold Overhiser 80. (Orlando Sentinel, 22 October 1928, p. 6)

Overhiser no doubt attended the Mount Dora Golf Association banquet held during its 1928 season:

Mount Dora Golf Association members and their wives and sweethearts are to gather around the banquet table at the Villa Dora Monday evening, after which will be a post prandial in which golf will be the sole topic of discussion.

Announcement of the plan for holding a big get-together banquet was made by the President Thomas H. Cooley of the golfer's association. The food will be free to members, the affair being sponsored by the association. (Miami Herald, 16 September 1928, p. 21)

The banquet was in fact delayed for a week by a hurricane:

Mount Dora golfers, members of the Mount Dora Golf Association, will gather around the banquet table Monday evening, September 24, and discuss hazards, bunkers, holes in one, traveling in the rough, etc., while partaking of a sumptuous spread The banquet was to have been staged last Monday but, because of the hurricane, was postponed for one week. President Tom Cooley, of the golfer's association, declares that the delay will only serve to add zest and interest to the program that is planned for the gathering. (Orlando Sentinel, 21 September 1928, p. 2)

But for all the enthusiasm evident in the talk about its banquet at the end of 1928, the Mount Dora Golf Association seems not to have lasted more than two or three years, for there is no mention of it in the newspapers after the conclusion of its "ringers tournament" at the beginning of November 1928.

It may be that the special access granted to Mount Dora golfers by the Mount Plymouth Country Club made the latter's St. Andrews course the de facto Mount Dora golf course throughout the 1930s. The completion of the new concrete "Sanford-Mount Dora highway" made the Mount Plymouth golf course easily accessible to local golfers, and so we read that at the beginning of 1927 "many Mount Dora

golfers are already taking advantage of the close proximity of this course to make use of special privileges extended to them by the Mount Plymouth Management” (*Orlando Sentinel*, 10 February 1927, p. 11). These special privileges were extended even further in 1929:

The chamber of commerce has been advised that the Mount Plymouth Country Club will keep the golf course open for the use of the Mount Dora golfers and that D.W. Heath has been secured to look after the course and club house.

The Mount Plymouth Company ... states that the course will be maintained in perfect playing condition all summer and the hope is expressed that the Mount Dora golfers will make use of it.

There are about 25 players in Mount Dora who are affiliated with the Mount Plymouth Country Club. (Orlando Evening Star, 16 April 1929, p. 8).



Figure 10 A postcard showing an aerial view of the Mount Plymouth Country Club, circa 1930.

J.B. Griswold



Figure 11 John B. Griswold, Orlando Sentinel, 26 June 1964, p. 35.

John B. Griswold was another of those 1945 enablers of the veterans' golf vision for Mount Dora.

After several years with the Dow Chemical Company in Midland, Michigan, during the years of World War I, Griswold and his wife moved from the latter's hometown of Jefferson, Ohio, to Mount Dora.

Griswold was playing golf locally by the late 1920s and began to play competitively in 1930: "Although a newcomer to the ranks of tournament golf, John B. Griswold out-stroked a field of 30 to win the Heim trophy tourney at the local links this week" (*Tampa Tribune*, 11 January 1930, p. 13).

In Mount Dora, he became the city council's jack-of-all-trades: "he served the city ... in many capacities – town clerk, treasurer, tax collector and assessor, to mention a few" (*Orlando Sentinel*, 26 June 1964, p. 35). As "an organizer of the Mount Dora Golf Club," he was its "founding secretary-treasurer" (*Orlando Sentinel*, 26 June 1964, p. 35).

I suspect that as Town Clerk in 1944 and 1945, with intimate knowledge of the city's taxes, Griswold was probably the one who came up with the creative idea of leasing to the Mount Dora Golf Club the land at the city's outskirts on which so many back-taxes were owed.

J.M. Turner

J.M. Turner (1897-1972) and his wife Lena (1894-1984) came to Mount Dora in 1923 from New Richmond, Indiana, where “he was engaged in the auto finishing business for years” (*Orlando Sentinel*, 2 October 1927, p. 42).



Figure 12 J.M. Turner, *Orlando Sentinel*, 12 February 1953, p. 4.

In Mount Dora, he opened an auto painting shop, which became known as Turner’s Paint and Body Shop. His first shop was so small that it could handle just one vehicle at a time, but so successful was his business that in 1927 he built a new plant on North Donnelly Street that would “permit of half a dozen cars to be under work at one time,” and that would also include “a department for the cleaning, greasing, etc., of cars, all of the work to be done by experts” (*Orlando Sentinel*, 2 October 1927, p. 42). He ran this business for forty years until his retirement in 1963.

Known in Mount Dora as Meurice, Jesse Meurice Turner had been born in New Town, Indiana, in 1897. As a self-employed twenty-year-old, he registered for the U.S. military draft in 1917 and enlisted on 1 June 1918 in the Great Lakes Naval Training Station. He was discharged 27 March 1919 at the rank of Quarter Master second class, and he remained in the U.S. Naval Reserve Force. At forty-four years of age in February of 1942, during World War II, he again registered for the draft.

Interested in a variety of sports, Turner was in the late 1920s and early 1930s the manager of the Mount Dora Vikings, the city’s semi-professional basketball team (*Orlando Evening Star*, 28 September 1928, p. 11). The team became “semi-pro champions of Florida in 1929” (*Orlando Sentinel*, 3 November 1929, p. 3).

Serving on the original executive committee of the Mount Dora Golf Club, he was cited in the *Mount Dora Topic* in March of 1946 regarding the progress of construction: “Turner reported that water had been turned on and everything was coming along nicely” (21 March 1946). But the club needed donations of grass: “the Mount Dora Golf Club needs Bermuda and Centipede grass for their greens and fairways. The club will appreciate receiving quantities of both kinds” (*Mount Dora Topic*, 21 March 1946).

He was also interested in municipal politics and community service. In 1948, he was the City Fire Commissioner, and from the 1940s to the early 1950s, he was a member of city council, becoming its

president (or chairman of the board) in 1951 as its “senior member” (*Tampa Tribune*, 13 January 1951, p. 12).

Turner retired from city council in 1952, however, and polished his golf game, meeting Harold Overhiser in the final of the 1952 Director’s Cup competition at the Mount Dora Golf Club:

Harold [Bantam Ben] Overhiser copped the Director’s Cup Class “A” Championship in a 1 up thriller over J.M. Turner. Before the victor could claim the crown, he had to go 21 holes in a match that could have gone either way with the breaks. All square at the end of 18, the 19th and 20th holes were halved in par figures. The champion’s par four on the third extra hole won over Turner’s bogey five. Both players completed the regulation 18 in identical 82 cards. (Orlando Sentinel, 24 January 1952, p. 5)

Turner remained a director of the Mount Dora Golf Club throughout the 1950s.

Most importantly, “J.M. Turner, representing the golf club,” successfully managed the club’s presentation to a city council meeting at the beginning of 1958 such that “the Mount Dora City Council unanimously voted to match funds up to \$5,000 that may be raised by Mount Dora’s Hilltop Golf Course for expansion from a nine-hole to an 18-hole course” (*Orlando Sentinel*, 6 March 1958, p. 8).

And in addition to deploying his political know-how before city council, Turner was instrumental in the actual construction of the new course alongside greenkeeper Walter A. Morris and President Willard Wadsworth: “Club members certainly owe a vote of thanks to Wadsworth, J.M. Turner and Walter Morris, who have constantly worked and supervised the job, bringing a dream of an 18-hole course to reality” (*Orlando Sentinel*, 8 November 1959, p. 81).

Backus (Mr and Mrs)

Harry Else Backus (1892-1965) attended the Sheffield Scientific School of Yale University from 1913 to 1915. He then enlisted as a Private in the Quartermaster Detachment, 1st Corps School, of the Army. He was soon promoted to sergeant and then Master Engineer. Born in Pennsylvania, he lived in Philadelphia before going to Yale and for a few years after the war, but he came to reside permanently in Mount Dora in 1920. There, he married Clara Belle Baker; the couple had one child, George Baker Backus (born in 1923).

Harry Backus seems to have been independently wealthy. In every federal census taken during his residence in Mount Dora, he indicated that he had no job. But he owned prime land around Mount Dora in the 1920s that was ripe for subdivision, he owned yachts and power boats, and the ‘best’ of Miami society turned out when a party was held in honor of Mr. and Mrs. Backus:

The long procession of cars which aroused so much curiosity as it wound its way through downtown [Miami] traffic late Tuesday afternoon was not conveying the attendants of a wedding or a funeral to a point of destination, as many people thought, but was taking the members of the Miami Beach winter colony to the Edwin Raynor party which he was giving for his house guests, Mr. and Mrs. Harry E. Backus of Mount Dora, Fla. (Miami Herald, 16 December 1937, p. 12)

By the time of the 1945 Florida census, when he was 53 years old, Harry Backus seems to have grown tired of saying that he had no job: he now indicated that he was “retired.”

During the 1920s, Backus was a noted Mount Dora yachtsman who was invited to compete in prestigious sailing regattas around Florida along with some of the wealthiest yacht owners in the United States.

He was also very interested in motorboats, and he was a member of the Mount Dora Power Boat Association (*Mount Dora Topic*, 17 June 1926). In 1927, he entered his Mount Dora hydroplane “Se-Me-Go” in the Mississippi Valley Power Boat Association’s regatta on Lake Hopatcong, New Jersey (*The Paterson Evening News* [New Jersey], 27 July 1927, p. 19).

Backus maintained his interest in motorboat racing until at least the late 1940s, serving as pit manager for a racing team in 1949.

He can be seen below in a 1923 photograph of his new state-of-the-art runabout built by the Dachel-Carter Boat company, with a scrips E4 engine (capable of 24 miles per hour).



Figure 13 Harry Backus operating his runabout in 1923. *The Rudder*, ed. Thomas Fleming Day, vol. 39 no 10 (October 1923), p. 13.

During World War II, Backus returned to national service on bigger boats yet: he joined the Coast Guard.

Harry Backus was certainly also a golfer, capable of shooting in the mid-70s on the Mount Dora nine-hole course, and he was a dedicated member of the club's executive committee for years. In 1960, he would lead the committee in charge of "the improvement of the golf course" (*Orlando Sentinel*, 15 May 1960, p. 12).

Harry, however, was not the best golfer in the Backus family.

That honor went to Mrs. Harry Backus: Clara Belle (sometimes "Bell") Backus, whose last name was Baker when she was born into a prominent Illinois family in 1894.

Clara Backus made it to the semifinals of the 1927 "state golf championships" played "over the 18-hole route of the St. Andrews course" at Mount Plymouth. During this tournament, she participated in the "organization of a Florida State Woman's Golf Association," of which she would become "vice-president" in the early 1930s (*Orlando Sentinel*, 27 April 1927, p. 1; *Orlando Evening Star*, 14 March 1931, p. 1).

She regularly participated in the state championship, reaching the semifinals again in 1929. And as late as 1937, she was one of the 63 qualifiers for the state championship played at the Pensacola Country Club. After her practice round, she was described as one of the "golfers who will bear watching"; she was still regarded as "capable of giving the favorites plenty to worry about" (*Pensacola News Journal*, 7 April 1937, p. 6). The predictions proved correct, as she made it to the quarterfinals of the match-play event. The four beaten quarterfinalists then played off to determine fifth place, Clara Backus proving victorious (*Pensacola News Journal*, 11 April 1937, p. 10).

Of course, she was a stalwart of the Mount Dora Golf Club's women's teams. In 1951, she won the women's handicap tournament at Mount Dora (*Orlando Sentinel*, 17 November 1951, p. 19). In 1953, at 58 years of age, she was still shooting scores in the low 90s on the nine-hole Mount Dora course (*Orlando Sentinel*, 22 January 1953, p. 5).

A graduate of the Academy of Sweet Briar College, Virginia, Clara Belle Backus was also a competitive yachtswoman, a crack bowler, and a top horticulturalist (who lectured on how to exhibit at horticulture competitions).

Additionally, her prodigious tarpon fishing exploits were reported in the newspapers in the early 1930s. In 1932, for instance, "Mrs. Harry E. Backus ... won second place in the women's class ... tarpon tourney" in Boca Grande, landing "35 during her week's stay" (*The New-Press* [Fort Myers, Florida], 23 June 1933, p. 2).



Figure 14 Mount Vernon Cemetery, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.

Clara Backus died in 1979. She is buried with her husband in a vault in Mount Vernon Cemetery, Philadelphia.

Given that Clara Backus was so much more interested in golf than her husband Harry, when the latter gazed at the city dump in 1945 dreaming of a championship golf course, he may have been dreaming less on behalf of himself and more on behalf of his wife.

Indeed, in her own right, Clara Belle Backus seems to have been regarded as one of the club's founders:

Nearly 200 members of the Mount Dora golf Club celebrated the 26th anniversary of the club's founding with a big bash.

And present were some of the original founders, still members. Outgoing prexy Buck Sadler presented blazers bearing the club crest to Carl Graves, Armer Johnson, Tom Kelly, Jack Groves, Harold Overhiser, Al Rehbaum, Sr., and Howard Simpson.

Invited but unable to attend was Mrs. Harry Backus. (Orlando Sentinel, 12 March 1970, p. 11)

The First Architect



Figure 15 Clifford Lewis Deming (1908-1992) demonstrates his invention for sweeping greens. Golfdom, vol 26 no 8 (August 1952), p. 29.

As the founding executive committee of the Mount Dora Golf Club, dreamers Willard, Rehbaum, Overhiser, Griswold, Turner, and Backus were charged with the responsibility of finding an architect who could build the golf course that they had imagined when they looked at the city dump.

As we know, the story told on the Mount Dora Golf Club's historical plaque mentions an architect, but it does not identify him.

He is seen in the photo to the left.

He was a thirty-seven-year-old man from Solon, Ohio, a winter resident of Mount Dora for a decade by 1945, and a greenkeeper at Ohio's Aurora Country Club: his name was Clifford Lewis Deming (1908-1992).

Cliff Deming

When the question arose as to who might assess the city dump, and the land surrounding it, regarding this area's suitability for golf, ready-to-hand was Cliff Deming. The *Mount Dora Topic* explains that "Deming was called as consulting Golf Engineer in connection with the proposed new municipal golf course" (3 January 1946). He not only planned the layout, but he also supervised the construction by the World War II veterans: "Deming is at present building Mount Dora a new golf course on Route 441 in the southeast section of the town" (*Mount Dora Topic*, 3 January 1946).

The aerial photograph below shows Deming's layout in the late 1940s.



Figure 16 Late 1940s aerial photograph of what was then known as the Hilltop Golf Course of the Mount Dora Golf Club.

The left side of the above photograph, where today's fifth, sixth, seventh, sixteenth and fifteenth holes are located, suggests how thickly forested the site was before the bulldozer and mule were set to work clearing it.



Figure 17 Cliff Deming, *Golfdom*, vol 26 no 8 (August 1952), p. 29.

Hardly was construction begun in December of 1945 when the local newspaper told Mount Dora residents that an amazing transformation of the property was underway: with “the bulldozer now at work on Mount Dora’s new golf course, fairways 1,2,3, [and] 4, as well as the practice fairway, are all dug up and being cleared of brush and stumps. Go out and see what overseer Cliff Deming has done” (*Mount Dora Topic*, 20 December 1945).

Deming knew that he was working on something special and proudly told the local newspaper as much a few weeks later: “Deming, who has built and maintained many golf courses during twenty years of golf experience, says that the nine-hole Mount Dora layout will be one of the most scenic courses in Central

Florida” (*Mount Dora Topic*, 3 January 1946).

By the middle of March, the newspaper reported that “Cliff Deming, in charge of construction, is pleased with the progress made on the golf course” and expects to have “all construction work and grading of the greens completed” such that the course “by the end of the week will be ready for seeding” (*Mount Dora Topic*, 14 March 1949).

Deming made his way down to Mount Dora from the Aurora Country Club by the second week of November in 1946 to put the finishing touches on the golf course before Willard Wadsworth would hit the first tee shot a month later.

When first discussing the golf course layout in December of 1945, the local newspaper had explained that Deming had been for “many years a winter resident of Mount Dora,” but many readers knew that fact already (*Mount Dora Topic*, 3 January 1946).

Deming was well-known as an organizer of youth sports locally. He had first come down to Mount Dora from Ohio at the beginning of 1936 for an event staged by the Boy Scouts. Assistant Scout Master Deming was in charge of the “games” (*Mount Dora Topic*, 32 January 1936).

On his return to Mount Dora in 1937, he pursued another of his passions (in which he also involved the young people of Mount Dora): in the second race of the season on Lake Dora for the eighteen-foot yachts, Skipper Deming took out local high-school student Buster Battle as his crewman and sailed Aero to victory.

Of course, he was also working again with the local boy scouts again, helping, for instance, at a fundraising dinner in the winter of 1938. Deming would be honored in Ohio in the 1960s for his lifelong volunteering for the Boy Scouts, and he would later be appointed “Troop Commander” (*Akron Beacon Journal*, 29 January 1961, p. 19; 25 July 1968, p. 7).

So well known in Mount Dora was the Scout Master from Ohio after he had spent just his third winter in the city that when he got married in Maine in the spring of 1938, the *Mount Dora Topic* gave a detailed account of “the wedding of Miss Esther Smith of Bridgton, Maine, to Clifford Lewis Deming of Solon, Ohio” (19 May 1938). They were honorary Mount Dorans.

By the late 1930s, Deming probably became known to Harry Backus through their mutual love of yachting. And so, as the gang of six Mount Dorans gazed over the dump site, Griswold encouraging Wadsworth to buy it, and Wadsworth indicating that before he did any such thing, he would need assurance that it was a suitable site for a championship golf course, Backus was probably the one who informed him that a golf course designer was dwelling among them.

Deming was in 1945 the greenkeeper at the Aurora Country Club of Aurora, Ohio.

Born in Cleveland, Ohio, in 1908, Deming began his greenkeeping career as a seventeen-year-old at the Grantwood Country Club (also called the Grantwood Golf Club) in Solon, Ohio, a city that is now a suburb of Cleveland, Ohio. Brought into play between 1924 and 1925, the golf course was located about fifteen miles from Cleveland Heights where Deming was living with his parents and two brothers in the early 1920s.

The new club was ambitious, hiring the best people it could find.

On the one hand, as club pro, young assistant professional “Bob Shave, champion professional of the Cleveland district” – who was “Seeking a job where he [could] be the boss professional himself” – was

hired in January of 1925 (*The Fremont Messenger* [Fremont, Ohio], 24 January 1925, p. 6; *Akron Beacon Journal*, 16 December 1924, p. 26). And on the other hand, one of the youngest men on the greenkeeping crew, young Cliff Deming, would soon be promoted to the position of head greenkeeper, a position he maintained until 1938, when he was hired away by the Aurora Country Club.



Figure 18 The signature hole of the Aurora Country Club, Aurora, Ohio, which returned to nature in 2012.

Deming worked for the better part of a decade maintaining the excellent golf course of the Aurora Country Club.

It had been laid out in the late 1920s by William Herbert (“Bert”) Way, an English golf professional who had come to the United States in 1896 and finished second in the 1899 U.S. Open, but who was less interested in playing

competitive golf than in serving as a club professional (primarily at clubs in Michigan and Ohio) and in designing golf courses, such as the famous south course at Firestone Country Club in Akron, Ohio.

Deming became a well-known and widely respected greenkeeping superintendent who was a favorite of the editors of *Golfdom: the Business Journal of Golf*. Articles and items written by him or written about him appeared in the magazine between the mid-1940s and the late 1950s.

The titles of some of the *Golfdom* articles in question indicate the high regard for his advice that prevailed amongst golf course superintendents: “Cliff Deming Gives You Two Ideas” (*Golfdom*, vol 26 no 8 [August 1952], p. 29); “Streamline the Course and Correct ‘Delicate’ Greens” (*Golfdom*, vol 27 no 3 [March 1953], p. 92); “Modernized Drainage, Scald-Proof Bent are Great Assets” (*Golfdom*, vol 31 no 3 [March 1957], p. 106).

In the spring of 1946, just after Deming had returned to the Aurora Country Club from his design and construction work in Mount Dora, *Golfdom* featured an item that presented his observations about what constituted a greenkeeper’s ideal maintenance buildings and offices. Deming’s example was his own building at the Aurora Country Club:

THIS BUILDING IS COURSE WORK AID

This maintenance equipment garage, workshop, and office of Cliff Deming, supt., Aurora (O.) CC is a definite factor in efficient course maintenance work. It's located between the 9th and 11th holes and screened from play and view. Central location and its own roadway facilitates receipt and distribution of supplies, equipment and maintenance personnel.

The building is 20 ft. by 50 ft. All machinery is stored under cover when out of use. A third of the building is partitioned off for comfortable, and inexpensive heating in the winter. Equipment includes a mower sharpener, drill press and other tools enabling Deming's staff to do most of the sharpening, repairing and painting required. The shop has a wooden floor which Deming says is preferable to concrete, being warmer. A large workbench with good light and a tool board aid work. Roomy storage is provided for chemicals and other smaller supplies. Oil storage is in the garage. Deming says the building has far more than paid for its cost by its service during the 13 years it has been erected.



Figure 19 Golfdom, vol 20 no 10 (fall 1946), p. 68

As of 1943, Deming worked at Aurora Country Club for a new man, Harold Paddock, Sr., who became the new owner that year.

Paddock was a nationally renowned golf course architect. By 1945, he had a quarter of a century of work as a golf course architect behind him, with over 150 layouts to his credit. Most of these golf courses were in the American Midwest.

Although Paddock had not designed the golf course of the Aurora Country Club, he was intent on putting his architectural stamp on a property that would become his pride and joy. So, as the two men worked closely together on the Aurora golf course, there can be little doubt that Deming became thoroughly familiar with Paddock's thinking about golf course architecture.

The owner who was an architect and the greenkeeper who was a golf course builder will have had regular conversations about best practices in design and maintenance.

Fortunately, we can gain insight into what would have been top of mind for the two of them in 1945 (just before Deming laid out the Mount Dora course) because that summer Paddock published in

Golfdom a brief manifesto explaining how golf courses should be designed in the wake of World War II – a manifesto whose animating ideas he must have discussed with Deming:

What has the war taught us about golf course design that will be valuable to us in the course that will be created after the war?

You can be absolutely certain that we have been reminded plenty and painfully in wartime years of the relation between course design and maintenance costs....

Labor won't be as cheap as it was before the war. But whatever labor we can get we will need to use efficiently. The increased popularity of the game is going to call for first class golf at low cost....

This will mean that courses will have to be designed to fit the faster and cheaper machine maintenance without sacrificing the visual and playing charm we are now inclined to believe is associated with a lot of manual maintenance work.

The first place we must look for this opportunity of economy is to the greens. There's where your greatest maintenance cost is.

Why are greens so large? Is it because a large green allows more latitude in design, while [designing] a smaller green that is a valid test of skill is usually a rather difficult architectural problem?...

Smaller greens can also be an important factor in offsetting yardage. The great yardage doesn't make much of a handicap to the better pros. The only people the long yardage really beats are the club members who have to pay the heavy taxes on the acreage before they ever step on the first tee....

Again, you come back to the smaller greens as a primary feature of the entertaining and testing course. Accuracy, rather than superlative power, is made the distinguishing feature of a course that isn't burdened with the heavy maintenance bills of larger greens.

Mowing, watering expense, fertilization, and weed treatment costs of courses that can be shorter, yet exacting, because of smaller greens, not only will be lighter to carry, but the work will be better and easier done.

*(Harold Paddock, Sr, "Small Greens Will Feature Course Architecture," *Golfdom*, vol 19 no 7 [July 1945], pp. 24, 92)*

We find in Paddock's short essay the outlines of the architectural strategy that Deming would deploy in his Mount Dora layout.

Those who have played the Mount Dora golf course will see in the greens that Deming designed back in December of 1945 (today's first, second, fourth, eighth, fourteenth, fifteenth, seventeenth, and ninth greens) that he deployed the "small-greens" architectural philosophy that Paddock had articulated just months before.

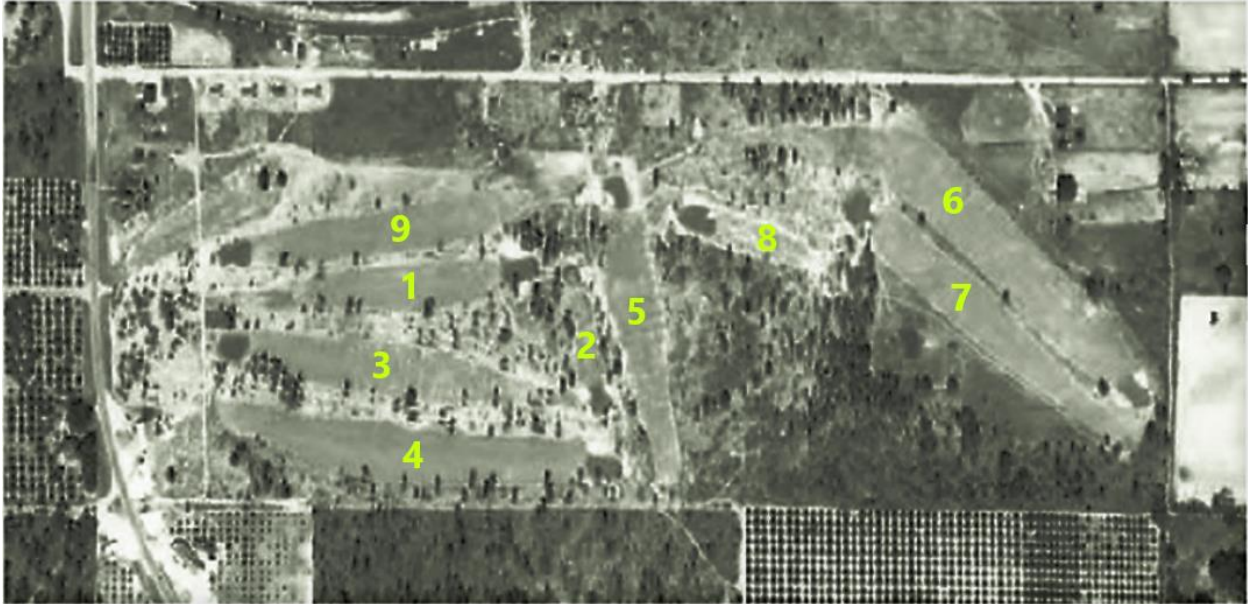


Figure 20 1947 aerial photograph (University of Florida Digital Archives) of the Mount Dora Golf Club's nine-hole golf course. Note that the tee for the 1946 3rd hole was located where today's 4th green is found, and the 1946 3rd green became today's 2nd green; the 1946 2nd hole has become today's 11th (but the 1946 green and tee are now reversed); the 1946 6th green has become today's 15th green; the 1946 7th hole tee off on today's 16th tee and proceeded to today's 14th green. The 1946 1st, 4th, and 9th holes are the same today. The 1946 5th hole is virtually the same as today's 8th. The 1946 8th hole is virtually the same as today's 17th.

In the light of Paddock's 1945 essay about scarce and expensive labor following World War II, leading to his conclusion that golf architects must build smaller greens to lower maintenance costs, one can see that the donation of labor by the World War II veterans (as well as the Army's donation of a surplus bulldozer and mule) was essential in enabling Deming's work.

Just as interestingly, one can see that the golf course of the Mount Dora Golf club is not just a living monument to the work of these veterans; it is also a living example of Deming's implementation – for the first time – of an architectural philosophy worked out by his Ohio boss Harold Paddock in response to the impact of World War II on the golf industry in the United States.

Of course, virtually all of the other greens on Mount Dora's present eighteen-hole course (built in 1958-59) are also relatively small.

Why is that?


Well, it is because the design for the new eighteen-hole course, and the ten extra greens that this design required, was drawn up by none other than Harold Paddock, Sr.

But that is a story for a later chapter.

The scorecard for the Deming golf course is shown below.

**MOUNT DORA
Golf Club**

MOUNT DORA, FLORIDA



"Midst Central Florida's Wonderland of
Lakes and Hills"

**PLEASE
REPLACE
DIVOTS**

Hole	Yards	Men's Par	Matches		Ladies' Par
			We	They	
1	328	4			4
2	138	4			3
3	360	4			5
4	410	4			5
5	327	4			4
6	555	5			6
7	374	4			5
8	166	3			3
9	398	4			5
Out	3056	36			40

Scorer: _____

Attest: _____

Date: _____

Figure 21 An early scorecard for the Mount Dora nine-hole golf course.

After his work at Mount Dora, Deming remained a fixture at golf courses in Ohio, working as a greenkeeper at various notable golf clubs, helping to found new clubs (in which he served as secretary or director), and continuing to build new golf courses throughout the 1950s and 1960s. The Demings retired to Eustis in the 1970s, but in their advanced old age they moved back to Esther Deming's hometown in Maine, where Cliff Deming died in 1992.

The First Golf Professional

Deming's most important contribution to Mount Dora golf culture would seem to have been the most obvious one: his design of the original nine-hole golf course. But he likely made a second contribution that was almost as important as the first: he seems to have recommended Stan Kuznik to the executive committee of the Mount Dora Golf Club as the best candidate for the new club's head pro position.

Kuznik, well-known to Deming as the long-time club pro of the Aurora Country Club, was invited to Mount Dora for a personal interview with President Willard Wadsworth – an interview that took place not long after Wadsworth had hit the first tee shot at the club's opening ceremony.

Within a month, Wadsworth was regularly playing golf with his new club pro on the Deming course.

Stan Kuznik

Stanley J. Kuznik (1912-1982) had been the club pro at the Aurora Country Club since 1931. Widely respected amongst his peers, he was elected the secretary-treasurer of the Northern Ohio PGA in the early 1950s.



Figure 22 "Stanley Kuznik (right), pro at the Mount Dora Golf Club, discusses a course problem with his greensman, Walter Morris" (Orlando Sentinel, 15 March 1956, p. 38.

Teaching a generation of Mount Dorans how to golf, Kuznik was the Mount Dora club pro for 14 seasons, from the late fall of 1946 to the spring of 1960, working with architects and greenkeepers alike to bring into play both the original nine-hole course and the later eighteen-hole course.

Kuznik's parents had been born in Slovenia, then part of Yugoslavia, but emigrated to Cleveland in the early 1900s, where the father worked as a gas man in a steel mill. Their son Stanley was born in Ohio in 1912. Leaving high school after just three years, Kuznik entered the work force as a laborer in a sewing machine factory.

By the early 1930s, however, he was the golf professional at the Aurora Country Club. By 1940, Kuznik was both the club's golf professional and its manager.

In 1943, however, first-generation American Kuznik enlisted for military service "for the duration of World War II, plus six months, subject to the President or otherwise according to law." Such was the language of the enlistment form, and it would seem that the army hung onto Kuznik for as long as it could, for it was not until the spring of 1946 that Kuznik was "out of [the]

army" and back "to Aurora (O) CC as pro" (*Golfdom*, vol 20 no 5 [May 1946], p. 12).

Kuznik immediately became very popular amongst Mount Dora golfers. He regularly attracted "a gallery of interested spectators" when he played the Hilltop Golf Course during his first season at the club; and

no wonder, for he rewarded one of these galleries that spring with a 310-yard drive on the uphill 374-yard seventh hole (*Mount Dora Topic*, 20 March 1947, p. 1).



Figure 23 38-year-old Stanley Kuznik at Mount Dora Golf Club. *Orlando Sentinel*, 15 November 1951, p. 5.

Kuznik was an excellent instructor. By 1950, he was giving an average of 700 golf lessons per year in Ohio (*Mount Dora Topic*, 16 March 1950).

In Mount Dora, he was often asked for lessons on the very day he arrived at the course in the fall, as well as on the last day he spent at the course before returning to Ohio in the spring. He loved it: he was described by the local newspaper as the “ever smiling golf professional,” and as having a “never failing good nature” (*Mount Dora Topic*, 1 September 1955; 19 March 1950).

Known as a “man of wide acquaintance,” with “many friends,” Kuznik was also a media savvy golf professional determined to promote the game both in Ohio and in Mount Dora (*Mount Dora Topic*, 25 November 1954).

In Ohio, he regularly spoke to meetings of Kiwanis Clubs and Jaycees, often in tandem with Harold Paddock. They two of them were fond of showing golf films:

Harold Paddock, golf professional and owner of the Aurora Country Club and the Moreland Hills Country Club, both near Cleveland, will speak at the Jaycees annual golf banquet Friday night He will be accompanied by Stanley Kuznik, secretary treasurer of the Northern Ohio Professional Golfers’ Assn., who will also speak. Films will be shown. (The Tribune [Warren, Ohio], 1 October 1952, p. 2)

A film titled “All-Star Golf” is to highlight Aurora Kiwanis activities tonight Pro Stanley Kuznik of Aurora Country Club will answer questions after the 40-minute film. (Akron Beacon Journal, 24 April 1961, p. 6)

Harold Paddock and Stan Kuznik of the Aurora Country Club will give a preview of the Cleveland Open Golf Tournament to be held here in June when the Kiwanis Club meets at 8 tonight They will show movie highlights of golf meets. (Akron Beacon Journal, 27 March 1967, p. 49)

In Mount Dora, Kuznik wrote a column called "Tee Talk" for the *Mount Dora Topic* in the 1940s and 1950s, and in the mid-1950s he acted as a golf correspondent about Mount Dora golf affairs for the *Orlando Sentinel*.

From 1946 to 1960, Kuznik served at the Aurora Country Club until mid-fall, when he and his wife Grace and their beloved dog travelled to Mount Dora to assume his winter duties (arriving anytime between mid-October and the first week of December), when he would organize a full schedule of fall and winter tournaments for the club. He and Grace and the dog would return to Ohio in the spring, usually at the end of March. (Although her husband was consumed by golf, and although her own life moved according to the game's seasons, "Grace Kuznik never hit a golf ball in her life" [*Mount Dora Topic*, 16 March 1950].)

Willard Wadsworth had personally conducted an interview with Kuznik before the latter met with the executive committee of the Mount Dora Golf Club and "won the job easily" (*Mount Dora Topic*, 16 March 1950). Wadsworth had been in receipt of a letter "recommending him for the position and giving him an advance glimpse of his character" (*Mount Dora Topic*, 16 March 1950). This letter had presumably come from Kuznik's Ohio employer, Harold Paddock, Sr, who would have had to work out an arrangement with Wadsworth about the sharing of Kuznik's services.

Paddock must have been intrigued by the way Mount Dora had become a magnet for both his head greenkeeper and his club pro.

He had to have a look!

And so, we learn from Kuznik's column "Tee Talk" in the spring of 1947 (during the first season of play on the Deming course and during Kuznik's first season as Mount Dora club pro) that "Harold Paddock, Sr, of Cleveland, Ohio, nationally known architect and builder of nearly two hundred golf courses in this country, visited the course this week" (*Mount Dora Topic*, 20 March 1947). Paddock very much approved of what Deming had done: "he remarked he thought the Mount Dora Golf Club had the finest and best laid out nine-hole course in the state and the greens were as nice as any he had seen in Florida" (*Mount Dora Topic*, 20 March 1947).

Paddock presumably found in the Hilltop Golf Course the fulfilment of his vision for post-World War II golf courses that he had articulated in his 1945 *Golfdom* essay.

Paddock so much liked what he found in Mount Dora – both in terms of the golf course and in terms of the quality of life in the city – that he and his wife Pauline made the city their winter home for at least the next twelve years.

The Second Architect

When the *Orlando Sentinel* published an article in 1956 celebrating the tenth anniversary of the opening of the Mount Dora Golf Club, it observed that “traffic during the winter months on the fairways and greens laid out by the golf course architect, Cliff Deming, has become somewhat congested” (*Orlando Sentinel*, 15 March 1956, p. 38).

Deming’s design had been an important factor in “the club’s increasing popularity,” but the fact that there were only nine holes meant that the overcrowding problem would only become worse, leading to talk in the mid-1950s that the club must expand its course to eighteen holes (*Orlando Sentinel*, 15 March 1956, p. 38).

By the early months of 1956, in fact, crowding on the course had “generated several proposals for expanding the course to 18 holes” (*Orlando Sentinel*, 15 March 1956, p. 38). Initially, it was not thought possible to build an eighteen-hole course on the 80 acres of land that Wadsworth had deeded to the city: “as the club’s lease covers only sufficient unused land to provide an additional three holes, acquisition of an additional 35 to 40 acres would be necessary for such an expansion” (*Orlando Sentinel*, 15 March 1956, p. 38).

In the spring of 1957, the Mount Dora chamber of commerce unanimously resolved “That the Mount Dora Golf club needs an 18-hole course,” and it “sent such a resolution to the club and to its pro, Stanley Kuznik”:

The resolution points out that ... the C of C feels it is feasible to expand eastward prior to construction of [the new] Hwy. 441 in order to secure passage through that road when it is built. It recommends that the club consider the purchase of additional land to the east of the course for future establishment of an additional nine holes and that the purchase be made prior to the construction of the highway. (Orlando Sentinel, 22 March 1957, p. 7)

Kuznik did his part. A week later, when interviewed the day before he was to return to Ohio, he emphasized that the clock was ticking on this plan for expansion:

Stan is hoping that something will be done about the recent Chamber of Commerce resolution urging the golf club to purchase additional land to the east of the present property, in order to have an added nine holes before the new Hwy. 441 cuts through the area. If the course is completed before then, access will be provided under or over it for local golfers. (Orlando Sentinel, 28 March 1957, p. 15)

No such land was purchased, however, and so, club members sadly concluded that they were effectively limited to a nine-hole course.

But they had not taken into account the genius of the golf architect residing among them, the one who had foreseen in 1945 the advisability in post-World War II golf course construction of designing relatively short golf courses with relatively small greens: Harold Paddock.

He would find a way to fit eighteen holes into eighty acres.

Harold Paddock, Sr



Figure 24 Harold DeWolf Paddock, Sr (1888-1969), in Kenneth Lowell Hopkins, *Cleveland Area Golf Courses* (Charlston, S.C.: Arcadia Publishing, 2004), p. 36.

Harold Paddock turned his thoughts to the problem of expanding the Hilltop Golf Course during his 1957-58 winter stay in Mount Dora, and he soon came up with a plan: “Harold Paddock, a nationally known golf course architect, drew plans for the enlarged course which will not require the purchase of additional land. Paddock has designed a 6,145 yard, 72-par course to fit into the 80 acres of city property available” (*Orlando Sentinel*, 24 April 1958, p. 8).

Harold DeWolf Paddock, Sr, was born in San Diego, California, in 1888, went to Michigan State University, but became most closely associated with Ohio.

From his youth, he was passionately interested in sports: “Paddock was a professional hockey and baseball player and golfer in his younger

days” (*Fremont-Messenger* [Fremont, Ohio], 23 April 1969, p. 2).

He was a natural athlete – and both a bit of a show-off and a bit of a showman.

In Cleveland in 1913, for instance, he took up tennis just before the city championship and won the doubles competition with his partner: “Paddock had never had a racket in his hands three weeks before the tournament opened,” but with “a lot of nerve and undeveloped aptitude for the game,” he “put up a wonderful exposition” (*Hartford Courant* [Connecticut], 24 July 1913, p. 19). The story of this feat was carried in newspapers across the United States.

So, too, was the story of an exceptional round of golf that he played in 1931. The United Press distributed the following account:

Golfer Plays Night Round

Harold Paddock Shooting by Moonlight Cards 38 on First Nine

Cleveland, Oct. 24 – (U.P.) – Night golf, aided only by the light of a pale moon, was played successfully here last night by Harold Paddock, president of the Moreland Hills Country Club, who scored a 38, three over par, on the first nine holes.

A jest in the clubhouse started the demonstration, Paddock contending to several cronies that if one suppressed his hooks and slices, night golf was a simple matter.

Paddock proved his point by managing to stay out of the bunkers. Friends held white handkerchiefs behind the cup for his approach shots. (Detroit Free Press, 25 October 1931, p. 19)

Paddock had come to Ohio from California in the late 1800s when his father died. After her husband's death, Harold's young mother had returned to her hometown of Cleveland with her only son. She supported the two of them by working as a manufacturer of toilet items.

Paddock was a good student and earned his way into Michigan State University.

Immediately after graduation, however, he became a professional baseball player in the Eastern League (which ran from 1892 to 1912, when it became the International League). In his early twenties at the time, Paddock was obviously a highly skilled baseball player, for the league he was playing in had been since the 1890s "one of the three strongest minor leagues and the longest-lasting league in the top tier of the minors" (https://www.baseball-reference.com/bullpen/International_League).

While playing professional baseball in Cleveland, Paddock was living in the home of his mother and his stepfather, along with his grandmother. In 1914, however, twenty-six-year-old Harold married twenty-year-old Pauline Timberlake. At the time, Paddock recorded on the marriage certificate that his job was that of a "manager." Three years later, however, when he registered for the World War I draft in 1917, he indicated that he was a self-employed salesman.

He also indicated that he was responsible at that time for three dependents: his wife, his mother, and his grandmother.

Soon, however, Harry Paddock had two more dependents, as he and Pauline had two children: a daughter Patricia (born 1919) and a son Harold, Jr (born 1920). The latter was a future Ohio State Amateur Golf Champion (1948, 1950), US Walker Cup team member (1951, when he was ranked the sixth best amateur in the United States), and professional golfer.



Figure 25 Harold Paddock, Jr (1920-200), Dayton Daily News, 16 July 1950, p. 7.

Stanley Kuznik would later describe Harold Paddock, Jr, as “a fellow born with a golf stick in his fist” (*Mount Dora Topic*, 8 March 1956).

Harold, Jr, visited Mount Dora frequently and played a great deal of golf at the Hilltop Golf course. In the late 1940s and early 1950s, he would set the course record several times.

Upon the conclusion of World War I, shortly after his son’s birth, Harold Paddock, Sr, turned his knowledge of golf into an architectural career.

One of the first Cleveland area golf courses that he designed and built was an eighteen-hole course for the Grantwood Country Club in Solon, Ohio, where seventeen-year-old Cliff Deming was hired to help with the construction and greenkeeping.

Shortly after laying out the Grantwood golf course, Paddock got the break of a lifetime.



Figure 26 Harold D. Paddock, Sr. The News Journal (Wilmington, Delaware), 8 April 1926, p. 14.

In the spring of 1926, thirty-eight-year-old Paddock was given an extraordinary platform, in a series of articles commissioned by the *Akron Beacon Journal*, to announce his architectural vision, to explain his principles and practices, and to outline the areas in which he had special expertise.

These articles, which would appear in newspapers right across the United States in April and May of 1926, appeared under the heading: “Golf: Development – Architectural—Construction, by Harold D. Paddock, Golf Architect.”

The photograph seen to the left generally accompanied these articles.

The editor of the *Akron Beacon Journal* explained why Paddock had been chosen to write the articles in question:

After mature consideration, we have selected an outstanding figure in the golf course architecture and construction field to write a series of articles embracing interesting news and information relative to GOLF from an unusual point of view.

Mr. Harold D. Paddock, Cleveland, the golf architect selected, is well-qualified from every single angle to write the series. Having designed and constructed a number of public, semi-public, real estate, and private courses; having assisted in the promotion and financing of several golf

operations; having handled individually the complete units of designing, [and] constructing, the hydraulic and drainage engineering of courses; having the finest bent grass nurseries in the country, conducted solely for clients; having set a world's record for building a national tournament course in 63 working days; consequently, we feel we have selected a man well equipped to surrender information of considerable interest to our many readers. (3 April 1926, p. 16)

Paddock wrote a total of twelve articles, their topics being listed in advance:

1. "Golf, the National Pastime." 2. "Types of Courses, the Pay-Play and Realty Course." 3. "The Public Course and Varied Development." 4. "Does Distance Establish the Superior course?" 5. "Can Private Clubs Avoid Red Ink?" 6. "Golf Architecture." 7. "The Dual Golf Hole." 8. "Cost of Construction." 9. "The Value of the Green Section of the U.S. Golf Association." 10 "Financing." 11. "Course Maintenance and Relation to Architecture." 12. "General Resume of Golf." (Harrisburg Telegraph [Pennsylvania], 2 April 1926, p. 17)

These articles are well-written and engaging, making obvious Paddock's conviction that golf was the sport of the future:

Right here I want to predict that within the next decade every city with a population of 5,000, or over, will have one or more public golf courses. Public recreational facilities are being installed every day, such as playgrounds, baths, municipal tennis courts, ball diamonds, etc., and the next recreation to be placed in this curriculum will be golf. (Harrisburg Telegraph [Pennsylvania], 1 April 1926, p. 19).

The twelve essays demonstrate a comprehensive understanding of golf course architecture, both in terms of design theory and in terms of best practices regarding construction and maintenance. They highlight the importance of artistic sensibility in golf architecture, and yet they also emphasize the importance of careful calculation of expenses in the hiring of an architect, the building of a course, and the maintenance costs associated with various architectural features.

Above all, they make obvious Paddock's passion for designing golf courses, and his determination to promote the game.

These 1926 articles no doubt helped to establish Paddock as among the foremost of America's young golf architects. And they also allowed Paddock to articulate a vision for golf course design that he carried with him right up to his expansion of the Mount Dora golf course to eighteen holes in 1958. Notable is his consistent determination in the essays of 1926, his 1945 essay on post-World War II golf course construction in *Golfdom*, and his 1958 design for the Hilltop Golf Course to promote the building of relatively short courses made interesting by small-green architecture calling for strategic decisions from golfers of all levels of ability:

Length is a quality in a golf course that cannot be ignored; however, courses of approximately 6,000 yards that possess an abundance of sporty features are frequently quite interesting, and truly less irksome than those loaded with par-five holes – to add an additional 300 to 600 yards as apparently the only motive.... The predominant feature holes on most courses are the one-shotters. Why not more of them? Eliminate two or three of the par fives and add some interesting and beautiful par threes and you will then be directing operations toward satisfaction and economy. (Akron Beacon Journal, 7 April 1926, p. 23)

When a course approximates 6,000 to 6,300 yards, it is questionable if exceeding that length is commendable. I fear it would be advisable to increase the difficulty of the individual holes by other methods than adding length.... Add a few more one-shotters. They serve a dual purpose: economy of maintenance and exceptional beauty. The course should be laid out with a view to calling for the use of all the shots in the bag. Variety means added interest: call for placement shots to exhibit the golfer's skill; a blind shot excites and stimulates the mind; each hole should be a challenge. (Akron Beacon Journal, 10 April 1926, p. 19)

It took eighteen months for work on Paddock's new eighteen-hole Mount Dora layout to be completed.

The work began in April of 1958:

Work started yesterday [23 April 1958] to add nine holes to the Hilltop Golf Course, making it more attractive to both year-round residents, winter residents, and visitors.... The first hole is to remain as at present, and the 18th will take over the present practice fairway and green. All property available will be used and the results will be an attractive and challenging course. Paddock has arranged the new course so that summer players who find the holes down hill into the valley too much in hot weather will be able to get in stimulating play without going down into the low-lying areas. (Orlando Sentinel, 24 April 1958, p. 8).

Virtually all of the new holes had been laid out during the summer and fall of 1958, such that when Stan Kuznik arrived at the end of November, Irma Lauben, the *Orlando Sentinel* correspondent who wrote a column called "Data on Dora," reported that the club pro "had been out to see a couple of the new greens and says that they are in wonderful shape" (*Orlando Sentinel*, 30 November 1958, p. 24).



Figure 27 Irma Lauben, *Orlando Sentinel*, 30 November 1958, p. 24.

Lauben later reported that "In spite of all the work that has been done, the nine-hole course has been open to club members continuously" (*Orlando Sentinel*, 8 November 1959, p. 81).

Clearly, although some of the new fairways were laid across old fairways, most of the Cliff Deming greens had been kept as they were originally laid out and were integrated into Paddock's design. For Paddock, economy in construction costs was as important as economy in the use of available acreage. But the fact that members continued to play the old holes "made the

work of completing the new nine holes even more difficult” (*Orlando Sentinel*, 8 November 1959, p. 81).

The new course was opened for play in November of 1959. A view of the new fifth hole appears below.



Figure 28 Postcard showing the new Paddock-designed fifth hole of the Mount Dora Golf Club circa 1959. The same tee-box hosts the red tees today.

Lauben was invited by President Willard Wadsworth to tour the course in November of 1959:

It's been a long wait – over 18 months – but Mount Dora's Hilltop Golf Course was scheduled to offer players the use of 18 holes this weekend, rounding out the nine holes which have served the club so well since December 1946.

The many skeptics will be amazed as they go over the course – the club had only 87 acres for the 18 holes – and find that the plans drawn up by nationally famous golf course architect Harold Paddock have materialized into one of the loveliest courses in this area. Set amidst rolling country to the south of the city, the course will be a challenge to all players. Many winter visitors who are members will have trouble recognizing the old course.

Willard Wadsworth invited me on a tour of the course. It is in fine condition, and the greens old and new are in fine shape. Club members owe a vote of thanks to Wadsworth, J.M. Turner and

Walter Morris, who have constantly worked and supervised the job, bringing a dream of an 18-hole course to reality....

I only saw one hole that is uphill all the way. Though I didn't walk the course, it seems to me that it is more attractive with the additional nine holes and will be a greater challenge to the topflight golfers without spoiling the enjoyment of the dubs and mid-way club members.

For sheer beauty, I honestly believe it will be hard to beat. (Orlando Sentinel, 8 November 1959, p. 81)

Below, on the 1947 aerial photograph of the Cliff Deming nine-hole Hilltop Golf Course, I have indicated the relationship between the holes on the Deming and Paddock courses.

Note first a comparison of the Deming and Paddock holes on the hilltop section of the golf course.

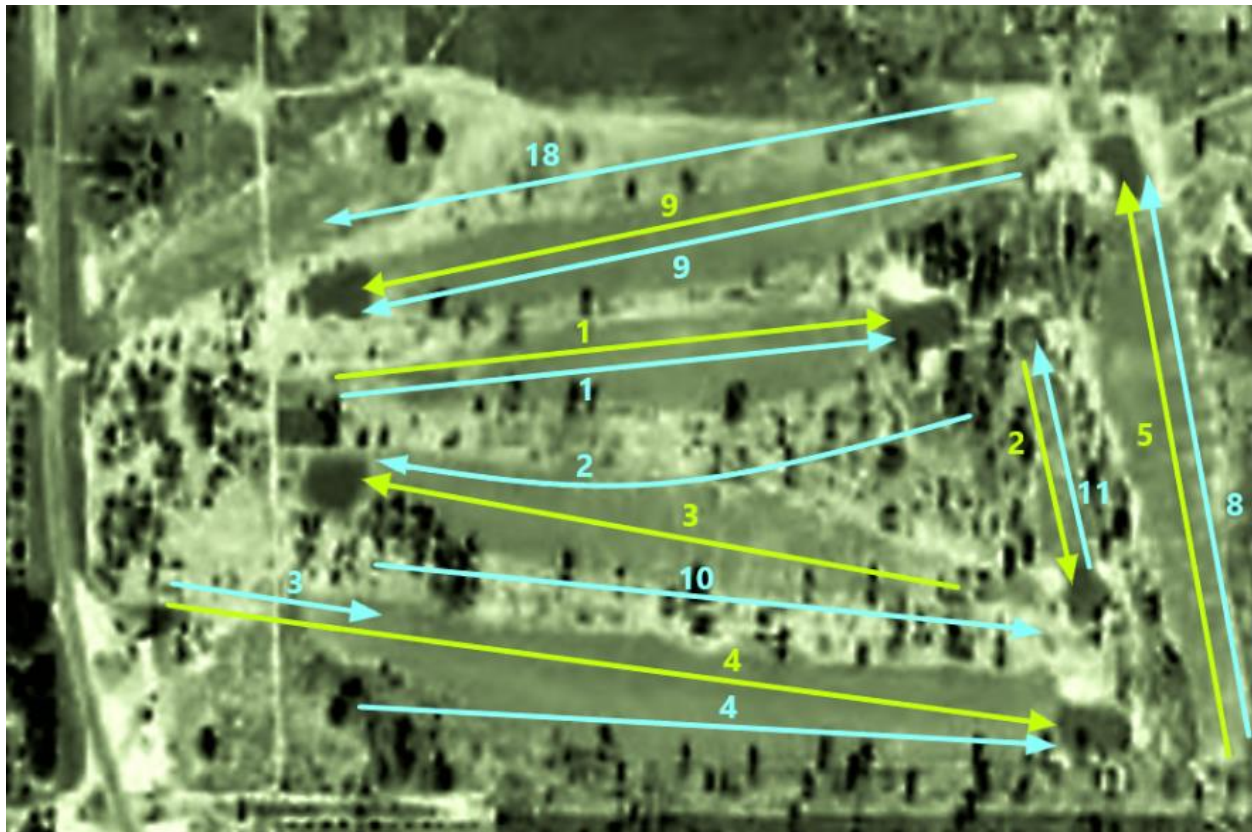


Figure 29 On the 1947 aerial photograph from the University of Florida Digital Archives I have drawn the 1945-46 Deming holes in yellow and the 1958-59 Paddock holes in blue.

Paddock retained Deming's first hole as his own first hole. He reversed the direction of Deming's second hole and made it the eleventh hole. He turned Deming's third hole into two holes: a new tee close to the first green became the tee of the second hole, which ran to Deming's third green (which became today's second green); a new tee beside Deming's third green (now the second green) ran to a new green, Paddock's tenth. Deming's fourth hole was divided into two: the first part of the fairway became

Paddock's third hole; a new tee was added to make a shorter fourth hole. Deming's fifth hole became Paddock's eighth hole, Deming's ninth hole remained Paddock's ninth hole. Paddock used the practice range and the practice green of Deming's day to make the eighteenth hole.

Note now a comparison of the Deming and Paddock holes in the valley section of the golf course.

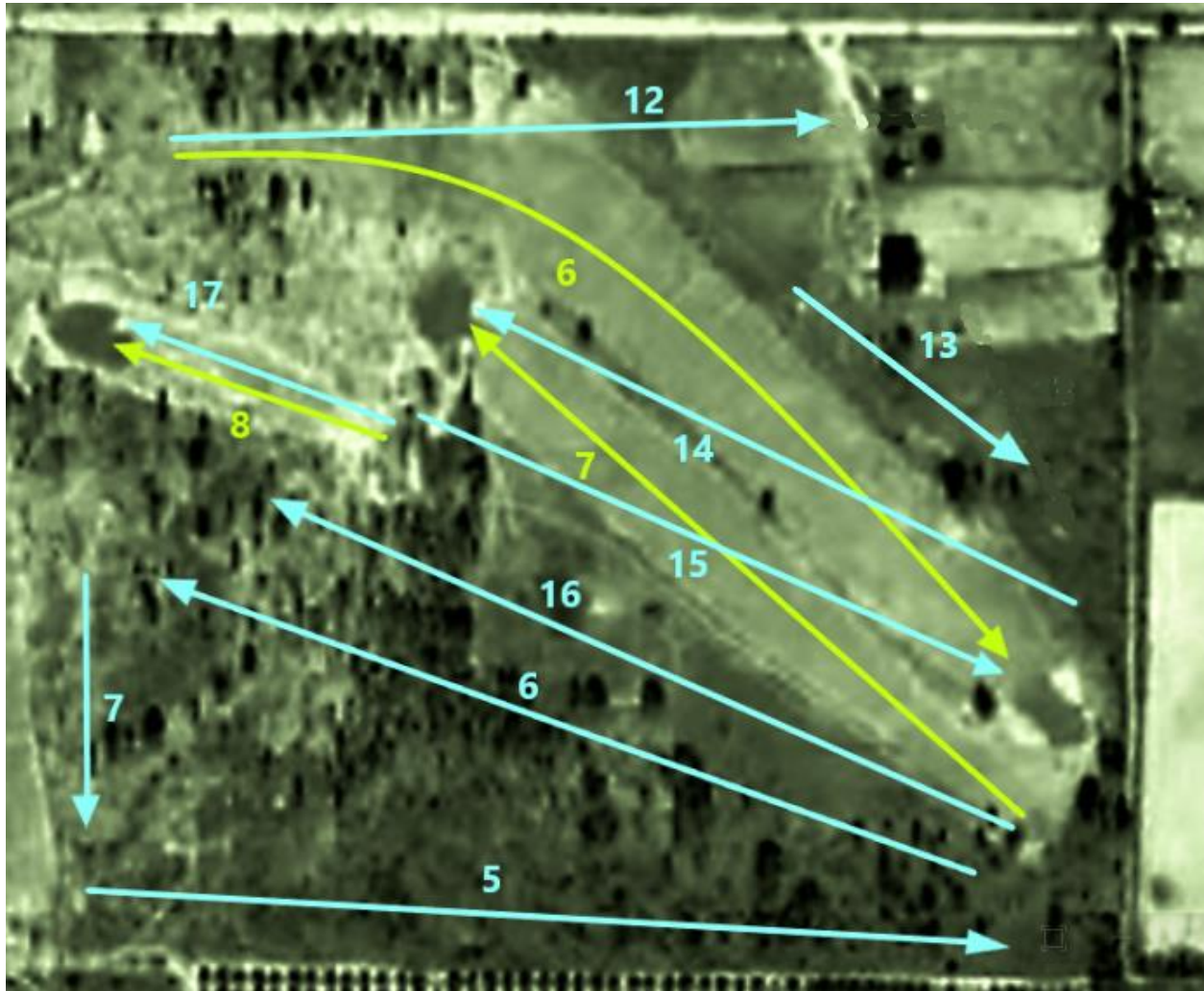


Figure 30 On the 1947 aerial photograph from the University of Florida Digital Archives, I have drawn the 1945-46 Deming holes in yellow and the 1958-59 Paddock holes in blue.

Deming's sixth hole was largely eliminated, although its tee and green were re-purposed: Paddock used the tee for his twelfth hole, and he used the green for his fifteenth green. Paddock built a new green for his twelfth hole, and he built a new par-three hole as the thirteenth. From a new tee beside the thirteenth green, Paddock ran his fourteenth fairway up to Deming's old seventh green, which became today's fourteenth green. Paddock built a new tee beside his fourteenth green (Deming's old seventh green) and ran a fairway down to Deming's old sixth green, which became today's fifteenth green.

Deming's eighth hole and Paddock's seventeenth hole remained the same. Paddock's fifth, sixth, seventh and sixteenth holes involved entirely new construction of tees, fairways, and greens.

Paddock wrote in one of his 1926 essays that the golf course architect should supervise construction:

The architect should never submit specifications and then not supervise the construction. No one can interpret the ideas and ideals of the designer like he or his superintendent. A resourceful designer can save a club hundreds of dollars by selecting proper green locations. The economy of construction is directly affiliated and inherently related to its design (The News Journal [Wilmington, Delaware], 8 April 1926, p. 14)

Fortunately, Paddock was able to supervise much of the work at Mount Dora before he was hospitalized in July of 1959 by a devastating car accident in Ohio.



Figure 31 "Though severely injured, Harry Paddock, 71, Aurora, O., golf course builder, managed to crawl out of this automobile, which caught fire last night on the Sandusky River Bridge of the Ohio turnpike. The car was demolished. Paddock is in Memorial Hospital." *The New-Messenger, (Fremont, Ohio), 17 July 1959, p. 1.*

Paddock's cap had blown off his head and out his Cadillac's window. It must have been a prized hat:

Paddock stopped his 1957 Cadillac sedan when his cap blew off his head and he was attempting to back up to retrieve it, according to the turnpike patrol. The 1955 Dodge station wagon operated by [Jack] McKernan rammed the rear of the other vehicle with a force sufficient to make a concave curve of the trunk, nearly up to the back window. The front of the station wagon was caved in. The Cadillac came to a halt broadside to the pavement against the north rail of the bridge. (The News-Messenger [(Fremont, Ohio), 17 July 1959, p. 1)

McKernan was thrown out his car but survived; “Paddock, though in shock, was able to crawl out of his car”; he had “third degree burns of both legs and arms, possible spinal fracture and shock” (*The News-Messenger* [(Fremont, Ohio), 17 July 1959, p. 1])

The one was charged with stopping on the roadway; the other, with failure to stop.

Paddock was still incapacitated by his multiple severe injuries when his new course at Mount Dora was officially opened in November of 1959, so he missed the ceremonies. But he ultimately recovered from these injuries and continued to build golf courses. He also continued to run the two golf courses that he owned in Aurora until just months before he died in 1969 at eighty-one years of age.

Conclusion

Today, the golf course of the Mount Dora Golf Club remains famous for its shortness and its small greens.

The majority of visitors to the course who post reviews of the layout on various internet sites say that the golf course is fun to play, with the small, elevated greens posing an interesting and difficult challenge – a challenge belied by the length of the holes indicated on the scorecard.

But few of these visitors – and, indeed, few of the club’s members today – know that the size of the greens and the length of the course are a testament to “a community post-war project” (*Mount Dora Topic*, 17 May 1945).

Veterans returning from Europe and the South Pacific petitioned the city for a public golf course; in the wake of the city’s inability to finance such a project, a committee of golf enthusiasts that comprised many veterans of World War I stepped up to organize a golf association and to acquire a suitable site for a golf course; a winter resident animated by the “small-greens and short-course” architectural philosophy articulated by his Ohio employer in response to World War II’s impact on the golf industry designed and built the original layout; constraints of space required that the same design philosophy be employed in the expansion of the course to eighteen holes.

I hope that for some, knowledge of this history will increase the pleasure that is always available from a round of golf at the Mount Dora Golf Club.

Appendix I: “Pappy” Paddock and the End of Aurora CC

Paddock owned two golf courses in Aurora, Ohio, but the one that was closest to his heart was the Aurora Country Club, and he had not even designed it.

This was the club that was so important to the early years of the Mount Dora Golf Club: it was where the first designer of the Hilltop Golf Course, Cliff Deming, worked as greenkeeper for Paddock; it was where the first club pro of the Mount Dora Golf Club, Stanley Kuznik, spent his summers before his winter season in Mount Dora; and it was where Paddock’s golf architecture business was centered.

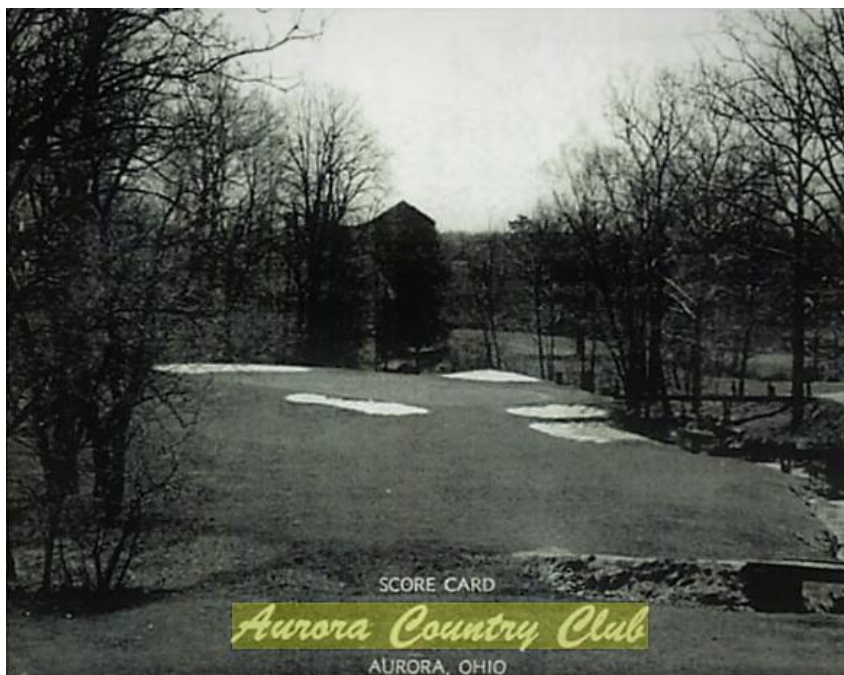


Figure 32 Scorecard cover of the Aurora Country Club in 1969.

But nothing lasts for ever, and neither Paddock nor the Aurora Country Club did. Paddock died in the summer of 1969, months after selling the Aurora Country Club’s golf course. The club and the course continued for another forty years or so, but the club began to struggle financially. In 2012, the 194 acres of the golf course was purchased by the city of Aurora in order to turn it into a nature preserve:

returned to nature were the extensive woodlands, meadows, and wetlands through which eighteen fairways had been laid out for ninety years.

In 2019, in acknowledgement of the one-time landowner’s former standing in the community, the nature preserve was renamed the Paddock River Preserve: “The former site of the Aurora Country Club was renamed in October 2019 as a tribute to ‘Pappy’ Paddock, who designed several golf courses in northern Ohio ... [and] bought the local course ... in 1943 during World War II” (*Aurora Advocate*, 9 November 2019).

Present at the ceremony in the fall of 2019 was Paddock’s grandson, Harold Paddock III.



Figure 33 Left to right: Harold Paddock III, former Aurora mayor Lynn McGill, Mayor Womer Benjamin, 21 October 2019. Aurora Advocate, 9 November 2019.

Appendix II: Mount Dora's "Baby Links"

By the late 1920s, Mount Dora golfers seem to have been distributed between the Mount Plymouth Country Club and the Lake County Country Club. The chamber of commerce and the Mount Dora Golf Association had done their best to cater to the golfing needs of winter residents and tourists by organizing tournaments at local golf courses, especially the St. Andrews course of the Mount Plymouth Country Club.

Nonetheless, it is clear that by 1929, there was a need for golf facilities in Mount Dora itself:

Mount Dora to Have Miniature 18-Hole Course

Construction Started on "Baby Links" in City

Mount Dora, Dec. 14 – Keeping pace with leading tourist centers of the state, Mount Dora is to have a miniature course in the heart of the city, work having started upon the project this week.

The 18-hole course, to be known as "Baby Links," will be one of the finest in Central Florida and is patterned after the one at Ormond Beach. It is being built at the corner of Alexander Street and Fourth Avenue, a block from the Lakeside Inn and Yacht Club, and less than a block from the post office.

The course is being built by Frank P. Reed of Mt. Vernon, Illinois, and Arthur Lockwood of Connecticut. The layout will include a miniature clubhouse with caddy quarters at the corner of Alexander and Fourth. A concrete and cable fence will be built along the Atlantic Coast Line depot property, while on the Alexander and Fourth Avenue sides of the Baby Links there will be attractively painted benches for spectators and players.

An overhead system of night illumination will be provided so that players may enjoy the sport evenings. (Orlando Sentinel, 15 December 1929, p. 21)

Miniature golf courses of the sort described above were all the rage in the late 1920s and early 1930s. In 1930, Michigan's *Escabana Daily Press* marvelled that "Chicago has 65 of these courses in operation now and many more building. Milwaukee has about 40 in use and still adding new ones" (*Escabana Daily Press*, 16 May 1930, p. 11). In August of 1930, the US "Commerce Department estimated that of the 25,000 mini-golf courses in the country, more than half had been built since January" (*New York Times*, August 1930).

A "Baby Links" was also called a "Tom Thumb course":

A Tom Thumb course is either a 9- or 18-hole pitching or putting course where a mashie, mashie niblick, and putter are the only necessary weapons.... The courses are clever in design, with traps, water holes and tricky greens that make a real test of skill in pitching to the pin.... It

is real golf on a small scale and helps the golf 'nuts' keep their mashies and putters hot 24 hours of the day. (Escabana Daily Press, 16 May 1930, p. 11)

In fact, these miniature golf courses were not far off the mini-golf facilities that remain popular today. The putting surfaces, however, tended to be made of sand, rather than artificial turf, and the obstacles were relatively crude and unsophisticated: upright poles, ramps, walls, and so on.



Figure 34 Tom Thumb course, Forest Park, Noblesville, Indiana, circa 1930.

We read accounts of how attractive these miniature golf courses were to municipal governments and hotels: city councils appreciated that “Vacant lots, which have been the dumping place for orphaned flivvers and obnoxious appearing weeds and ... cans, are being utilized for the Tom Thumb or ‘Baby Links’ courses”; “Many hotels are adding them as a feature of their attractions for travellers” (*Escabana Daily Press*, 16 May 1930, p. 11).

And private entrepreneurs could make a killing with them, even during the Great Depression of the 1930s. Mount Dora’s former president of the chamber of commerce in the late 1920s, Frank H. Heath (who had moved to Marquette, Wisconsin) recalled that “Florida and other southern states went golf mad the past two years and these Tom Thumb courses came into existence like magic A man named Binker made one at Mount Dora at a cost of about \$11, 200. That course was in use morning until midnight and Binker took in from \$100 to \$135 a day regularly” (*Escabana Daily Press*, 16 May 1930, p. 11).

Two weeks after construction of these Baby Links was announced, Eustis followed its neighbor's lead:

Rounding out a system of recreation facilities which already compares with cities many times the size of Eustis, an 18-hole miniature golf course is being built at the corner of MacDonald and Eustis streets, in the heart of the city, opposite the grounds of the Fountain Inn Hotel, work upon the project nearly being completed.... To be known as "Country, Club, Junior," the links have been built in a unique layout, carrying out the rustic style of architecture, and when completed will present an unusual and attractive appearance. Flood lights will be installed for the pleasure of night players. (Orlando Sentinel, 29 December 1929, p. 2)

The long-term fate of Mount Dora's Baby Links is not clear. We read in the *Mount Dora Topic* in January of 1930 that "contests on the baby Golf links continue popular" (24 January 1930, p. 3). But Binks seems to have sold his Tom Thumb course shortly afterwards: we read that in February of 1930 the "Baby golf links changed hands" in "Mount Dora" (*Palm Beach Post*, 10 February 1930, p. 14).



Figure 35 Sunset Park, Mount Dora.

Formerly the site of the Baby Links, and then known as Child Park or Child's Park (after this land's later owner, Stanton McClelland Child, deeded it to the city), since 2013 the area bounded by Alexander Street, Fourth Avenue, and the railway tracks has been known as "Sunset Park" – Child's own name for the park.

Unfortunately, pitching and putting are no longer allowed.