

# MassGolfer

FALL 2000  
www.mgalinks.org

The Massachusetts Golf Association Members' Magazine

## America's Public Links Cradle

The Epic Story Of  
The Birth And Rebirth Of Public Golf In  
Boston's Franklin Park



# America's Public Links Cradle

## Boston's Franklin Park

by Brian DeLacey  
and Maxwell M. Carey

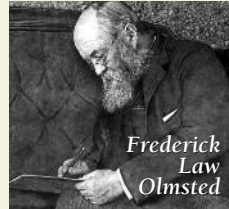
If modern-day scientists were to crack the genetic code for American public links golf, its genome would surely be traced to Franklin Park in Boston. From its earliest days to the present time, these grounds have served as witness to true heroes of the game — those who have made golf accessible to all. Here is the first 110 years of the epic story which continues to unfold to this day.

Background image: Postcard of sheep, which mowed fairways, at Franklin Park, circa 1900.

A Boston Parks Department permit is the first

# The Experiment

"What are you doing?"  
"Measuring off a golf course."  
"A what?"  
"A golf course."  
"What's that?"



**THIS CURIOUS CONFRONTATION — WITH QUERIES BY A policeman and responses by a sporting goods store owner — was recounted four decades after the incident took place in the April 11, 1931 issue of *The Pinehurst Outlook*. The dialogue transpired on an October day in 1890 in a public area of Boston called Franklin Park. That's where George Wright had ventured to test a set of golf clubs his local firm, Wright and Ditson, had recently received.**

The 527-acre Franklin Park, named for Boston native son Ben, was in the midst of being constructed by Frederick Law Olmsted — the father of American landscape architecture and a pre-eminent social activist. Olmsted's mission with this, the crown jewel in the Boston park system's 'Emerald Necklace', was to eternally preserve open 'green space' for the health betterment of urban dwellers.

As for Wright, he was a legendary figure in national and local sporting circles. Among his many exploits, he had been the star of baseball's first professional baseball team, the Cincinnati Red Stockings in 1869. He was elected to the National Baseball Hall of Fame in December, 1937, shortly after his death on August 21 of that year.

The many written and oral accounts differ concerning the events of that October day in 1890, a time when golf was all but unknown to most every American. It is believed that Wright got in some 'holes' before the inquisitive beat cop insisted that a permit from the Boston Parks Department would be necessary for him to continue play.

Just as countless millions of his disciples would experience in future years, Wright's first taste of the game was intoxicating... and so he followed the policeman's advice. The minutes of the December 5, 1890 Parks Department meeting — at which Olmsted was present — record that permits were granted to play golf, in response to a letter from Wright, in Franklin Park "experimentally".

Why an experiment? The park commissioners knew nothing about the game. And Olmsted especially wanted to know what damage might be done to the grounds.

On December 10, 1890, Wright returned to Franklin

step in making public golf accessible.

Park with a party of nascent players. Nine holes were chopped into the frozen ground with an axe and, when two loops were completed, 'it' had begun: A full round of 18 holes of Scotland's so-called 'Royal and Ancient' game had been played with authoritative permission for the first time on American public, municipally-owned land.

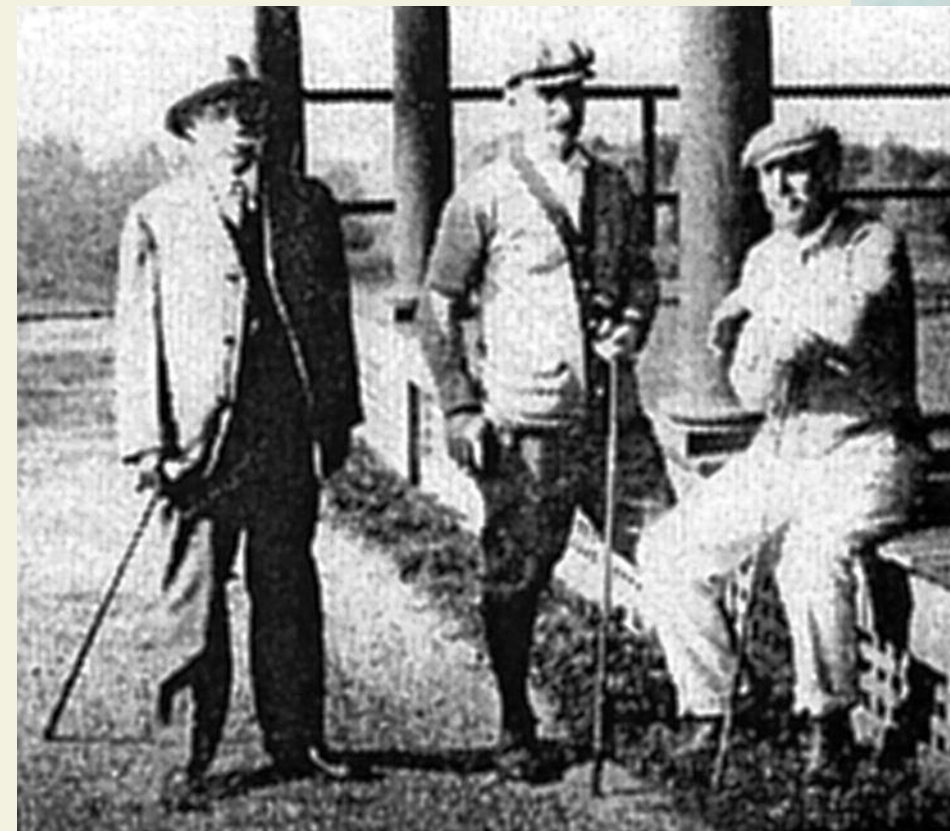
While the game had already been played previously in America, on private and resort layouts, Wright could justifiably claim to be the nation's first public links player. But he could not have dreamed what would transpire here on these grounds, America's public links cradle.

## The Ensuing Legacy

**FRANKLIN PARK IS THE PLACE WHERE** the leading figures of golf converge in history: The player who won America's first professional match became the first head professional here; The youngster who ushered the American game to the forefront of the world stage honed his craft here; The world's premier golf architect re-designed the layout here; Today's reigning threat on golf's all-time record book gave a clinic to neighborhood kids here.

But Franklin Park is also the place where countless unsung heroes have championed the public game: America's first female golf professional taught aspiring women here; The inventor of golf's most handy item pioneered minority play here; A band of locals kept the course alive while teaching children here; And numerous Boston mayors, park commissioners, citizens, Massachusetts Golf Association officials and private benefactors have made yeomen efforts to ensure that golf would remain a public game here for more than 100 years.

On a larger scale, Franklin Park has also served as a microcosm of 20th century American life. The rise of a leisure class, world wars, depressions, boom times, immigrants, urban decay and social unrest have all affected golf — and golfers — at Franklin Park. Yet on and off the grass, Franklin Park's people have persevered to score victories over many competitors — classism, racism, sexism and ageism to name a few. To play here today is to witness the future of both public golf and America in the 21st century... and the outlook for both looks promising.



George Wright (seated) posed years after his 1890 golf foray at Franklin Park with two of his pioneering playing partners, Sam Macdonald (left) and C.C. Bell.

## First... The Need for a Missing Link

**IN A SIGNED, TYPE-WRITTEN ACCOUNT OF THAT** December, 1890 day's round, unearthed just last year, Wright recounted: "...all decided they enjoyed the outing and the game of golf was a grand success, and all wished to try it again at some future day." It was as if Wright had played the role of Paul Revere: "*The golfers are coming... the golfers are coming.*"

Indeed, courses were laid out soon at the Hunnewell estate in Wellesley, in 1892, as well as six holes at The Country Club in Brookline, in 1893. "Golf Mad", was the headline in the *Boston Journal* in 1894 about the interest in the game at country clubs. "Golfers are springing up like weeds..."

But while the early 1890s were indeed the dawn of golf's day in America, the game was being played almost exclusively at private clubs. Wright's 'experiment' had succeeded on some levels, but through 1894, the game was not played again in Franklin Park ... nor on any other public course in America.

What was needed was a missing link, someone who would transform the Royal and Ancient game of Scotland — played in the early 1890s by only privileged Americans — into the Revolutionary and Accessible game which could be played by all.

American golf's first visionary figure champions the public game in Boston.

# The Prophet

*"...he believes the greatest defect in the game in America today is the lack of such [public] links, the lack of opportunity for the general public to play."*

THE WRITER IN THIS SEPTEMBER, 1895 ISSUE OF *Golfing* was referring to Willie Campbell who, one month later, would register at the inaugural U.S. Open Championship as being the professional from The Country Club. By the time he would play in both the 1898 and 1899 U.S. Opens, Campbell had taken bold action on the "defect", for in those two championships he registered as its first-ever competitor from a public links golf course — Franklin Park Golf Club.

The story of how the golf 'experiment' would return to Franklin Park is, in large part, the tale of this caddie's son who was born in golf's wellspring, Musselburgh, Scotland. The Honourable Company of Edinburgh Golfers, chartered in 1744 as the world's first known organized golf club, began using the Musselburgh links as both its course and headquarters beginning in 1836. In early golf history, the game's rules, standards and fashions were set by the Honourable Company. (Through the years, the Royal and Ancient Golf Club of St. Andrews, ten years Musselburgh's junior in forming, gradually took over golf's leadership role.)

Campbell grew up a caddie before becoming one of Scotland's greatest match play competitors during the late 1800s. Emigrating to America in April, 1894, he served as the first professional at The Country Club. He extended the rudimentary six holes there to nine and, in a May 15, 1894 match dedicating the layout, defeated Willie Davis, the professional at Rhode Island's Newport Country

Club. The Country Club's trailblazing golf advocate Laurence Curtis declared, in the same September 1895 issue of *Golfing*, that the 18-hole match "...was the first real golf any of us had ever seen."

But by the time that magazine was issued, Campbell had already started lobbying the Boston Parks Department for a public links — of the type so prevalent in his homeland — for Franklin Park. *Golfing* reported that "...great influence is being brought to bear by prominent players to carry out the ideas which Campbell has so much at heart."

In December, 1895, a Boston delegation visited the first public links in America — opened just that year — in Van Cortlandt Park in the Bronx borough of New York City. In early 1896, an enlightened Parks Department authorized Campbell to convert part of Olmsted's 334-acre Country Meadow section



Willie Campbell, with daughter Mary, at Franklin Park, circa 1896. [Note Refectory in the background, possibly under construction.]

of Franklin Park into a nine hole links. The December 24, 1896 minutes for the Parks Department note that it had: "Opened golf links at Franklin Park October 26, under the charge of Willie Campbell, as green keeper, who has been paid three dollars per day out of the proceeds of the sale of tickets." Golf entrepreneur Campbell charged 12 1/2 cents a round.

With Campbell at the helm, public golf in Franklin Park boomed in its embryonic years. The March 12, 1899 *New York Times* lamented poor overall conditions (including the lack of a "competent professional") at the

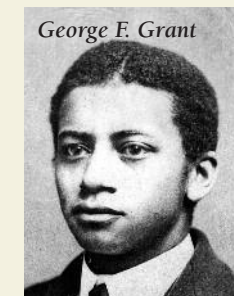
Van Cortlandt Park links, but noted that "...Boston has had an excellent one for two or three years in Franklin Park, and its excellence is due largely to the fact that Willie Campbell has charge of the links."

In 1900, more than 40,000 rounds (defined as nine holes) were played at Franklin Park in a season of seven-and-a-half months. Campbell's vision was being realized, yet he had other revolutionary ideas to make the game even more accessible — such as a public schoolboy tournament and the six-hole 'beginner's course' which would open in 1901. Sadly, he did not see either of these innovations come to pass. On November 25, 1900, after years of failing health, 38-year-old Willie Campbell died.

## A More Serious Defect

ALTHOUGH WILLIE CAMPBELL, PUBLIC LINKS 'MISSING LINK', worked diligently on America's golf defect, another more serious problem — in American society at large — needed resolution before access to public courses for all golfers became a reality. An early player at Franklin Park, who likely knew Campbell, exemplified the situation.

George Franklin Grant, the first African-American Harvard Dental School graduate in 1870, had a thriving Boston dental practice. As a budding player, he looked for a better manner of teeing up a golf ball than the historical method of forming mounds of dirt, on which balls were propped. On December 12, 1899 an application was submitted to the U.S. Patent Office in Boston. "Be it known that I, George F. Grant, of Boston... have invented the Golf-Tee."



But, as a person of color at that time, Grant could wedge his tee into Franklin Park's turf only after all white players had gone off or during off-peak hours. Perhaps the first African-American public links player, Grant died in 1910, before full equality on these grounds was realized.

## The Matron Saint

UPON WILLIE CAMPBELL'S DEATH, THE PARKS DEPARTMENT assumed management of the course, which was then opened to the public for play free of charge. Campbell's 36-year-old widow Georgina, who had for years assisted her husband teaching women, was contracted as the new golf professional. She was the first woman professional in America, quite possibly the world.

But by 1900, 29 private courses were open within 12 miles of Boston. Well-to-do players gravitated into these clubs and, by 1907, play at Franklin Park fell to less than half the total rounds at Willie's death.

Some felt public links golf was a passing fad. Others recalled the words of public golf prophet Willie Campbell from 1895: "The present players in America began late in life and it is to the now youthful sons of gentlemen and to the caddies that we must look to compete in the future with the golfers of the old country."

Willie had envisioned a young, working class player — a caddie as he himself had begun — beating the 'old guard' and popularizing American public golf. That prophesied player was one of Georgina's 16,532 customers in 1907.



## AMERICA'S PUBLIC LINKS CRADLE

*"...the greatest defect in the game... is the lack of such public links..."*

Attributed to Willie Campbell, 1895



Background image: Franklin Park Golf Links, circa 1899 — it is believed the two walkers are Georgina and Mary Campbell.

A caddie who loved playing at Franklin Park sparks the public's interest in golf.

# The Champion

*"I was so wrapped up in the game, however, I just couldn't let it alone... Franklin Park was a public course and we could go there and play unmolested."*

IN HIS AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL BOOK, *A GAME OF GOLF*, Francis Ouimet reminisced about the three hole links layout he and his older brother Wilfred had built in the cow pasture behind his parent's modest Brookline home. Situated right across the street from The Country Club, where both boys caddied, Francis also would occasionally sneak a few holes in there before a greenskeeper would drive him away.

A few holes here, a few holes there didn't satisfy Ouimet's "wrapped up" passion for the game. He

Ouimet's primary goal was to qualify for the U.S. Amateur Championship. But to enter, he had to belong to a recognized golf club. In 1910, he paid for a junior membership at Woodland Golf Club in Newton, where his game was refined by Charles 'Chay' Burgess, another one of Scotland's (from Montrose) fine expatriate professional golfers.

In 1913, shortly after winning his first of six MGA State Amateurs, Ouimet realized his dream by qualifying for the U.S. Amateur; he then used up all his vacation time at his job to travel to Garden City, New York, where he was eliminated early.

That September, the U.S. Open was being contested at The Country Club. Thankfully, Ouimet's employer was Wright and Ditson. Years earlier, the Ouimet boys had acquired their first golf club there in exchange for 36 golf balls. Francis would later say that George Wright "...did as much toward developing the game of golf in this country as any man."

Wright's greatest gift was to approve of giving Ouimet additional vacation time so he could enter the 1913 Open. The 20-year-old caddie defeated the British 'old guard' — Harry Vardon and Ted Ray — in a play-off, becoming the first amateur and second native-born American to win the title.

American golf writer Herbert Warren Wind later wrote about Ouimet: "Here was a person all of America, not just golfing America, could understand — the boy from 'the wrong side' of the street, the ex-caddie, the kid who worked during his summer vacations from high school — America's ideas of the American hero. Overnight the non-wealthy American lost his antagonism toward golf. He had been wrong, he felt, in tagging it a society sport. After all, the Open Champion was a fine, clean-cut American boy from the same walk of life as himself."

Wind also noted the victory's impact: "Less than 350,000 played golf in 1913. Ten years later there were 2,000,000 golfers in the country. During this decade, and largely because of the game's increasingly democratic base, the quality of American players improved. Slowly but surely they caught up with the best British amateurs and professionals — and then passed them. By 1923 golf was a game Americans played better than any other people in the world."

And Willie Campbell had foretold it all.

Ouimet secured his primary goal by winning the 1914 U.S. Amateur. When he won it again in 1931, the former caddie paid tribute to his formative days at Franklin Park by returning there to be honored. By then, much due to the "democratic" golf revolution he had ignited, the golf course had changed.

## The Master's Plan

GOLF GROWTH WOULD TAKE A DETOUR AT FRANKLIN PARK due to World War I. The June 1917 issue of *The American Golfer* noted "...probably the most senseless thing which has been done in the name of patriotism was that of ploughing up six of the nine holes of the municipal golf course at Franklin Park... so that it could be used for raising crops."

The grounds were reseeded in 1920 and play resumed — in spades. In the 1921 MGA State Amateur, an amazing total of five players from Scarborough Golf Club — Franklin Park's new 'inner club' — qualified for the match play field of 32, including George Aulbach who advanced to the semi-finals. These clubmates had a mutual mission.

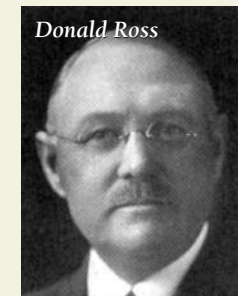
For almost three decades the nine hole Franklin Park links remained the only public golf facility in Boston. Players wanted improvement and expansion. Aulbach would say: "We want to bring the Royal and Ancient pastime within the reach of everybody."

At the annual meeting of the Massachusetts Golf Association on January 20, 1922, MGA president Barton Stevenson noted he had just returned from a USGA meeting in Chicago, which was building its *tenth* municipal course. Stevenson who had already corresponded with Boston Mayor James Michael Curley, formed a committee at this meeting to urge the mayor to "...further develop the municipal golf course." Francis Ouimet, who was serving his first term on the MGA executive committee in 1922, added his considerable weight to the pleas of the new legions of public golfers.

Like the prior efforts of Wright and Campbell, the MGA's voices were heard. The April 1922 *Golf Illustrated* noted: "The MGA committee recently had its conference... with... Chairman Shea of the city's Parks Department... [who] was able to tell the committee that ... the city [would] go ahead on the extension of the municipal course to eighteen holes under the superintendency of Donald J. Ross (who volunteered his services)..."

Ross, who arrived from Scotland in 1899 and who won the inaugural MGA State Open in 1905, became history's master golf course architect. His new 18-hole Franklin Park gem opened April 24, 1923. A no fee course since the city took it over in 1900, players now purchased annual permits for 10 dollars or a daily round for one dollar. In that first year, \$19,683 was collected from 8,695 permits and 36,505 rounds were played. Revenues exceeded expenses.

By Ouimet's 1931 victory lunch at Franklin Park's Refectory building, rounds surged to 75,000 a year. More significantly, the other 'more serious defect', the one Dr. George Grant encountered, had — on these grounds at least — been addressed.



Donald Ross



On September 16, 1931, Francis Ouimet (second from right) was feted at Franklin Park. His playing partners: Mayor James Michael Curley (right); seven time MGA State Amateur champion Fred Wright, Jr. (left); and businessman Chauncey Williams.

soon discovered a personal paradise three streetcar transfers away in Boston — Franklin Park. On one trip there at age of 13, a Saturday in 1907, he played 54 holes, something at the time he could not do elsewhere. Georgina Campbell, who continued to give lessons until about 1909 before serving as Franklin Park matron until 1926, surely would have welcomed the lad on one or more of his visits.

## AMERICA'S PUBLIC LINKS CRADLE

**"We want to bring the Royal and Ancient pastime within the reach of everybody."**

Franklin Park Member George Aulbach, 1921



The Refectory, opened in 1896, featured concessions and, later, a golf shop and lockers.

Background image: Postcard, circa 1913, of the 'Golf Links at Franklin Park'.

A handful of local players protect the public game, and life, at Franklin Park.

# The Patrons

*"In 1939, there were 5,209 golf facilities in the United States. Fewer than 20 were open to blacks."*

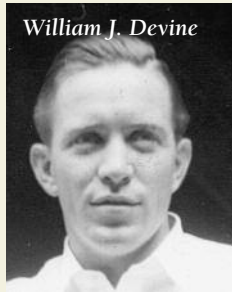
**THIS STARK STATISTIC, FROM THE BOOK *UNEVEN LIES* — *The Heroic Story of African-Americans in Golf*, written by Pete McDaniel, underscores America's largest unresolved social condition which overlaid the country's golf scene in many ways: A Supreme Court decision was needed to desegregate public golf courses in Atlanta in 1955; A 'Caucasian only clause' in the PGA existed until 1961; The Masters did not invite its first black player until 1975.**

Al Hayes was 19 years old in 1941 when he moved to Boston from Florida, a state where he caddied but, as an African-American, could not play anywhere. At Franklin Park he played immediately — unrestricted. Hayes recalls today that, "It was like a United Nations. We had blacks, whites, Chinese, Indians, you name it, all in the same club...

type of the times, white kids, like Bobby Lieberman, caddied for black men, like Al Hayes. Lieberman would later compete as one of two New England qualifiers for the 1966 U.S. Public Links Championship. "He's still got my swing," laughs Hayes today.

Social, ethnic-based golf organizations did exist. Hayes and George Lyons, who moved to Boston in 1952, became original members of one — the Boston Pro-Am Golf Association. The club was founded in 1953 by Paul Washington, professional at Stow Acres Country Club — originally a black-owned course. As the four-time winner (1928-31) of the then-named Negro National Golf Championship, Washington was one of a group of black heroic equivalents to Francis Ouimet in the eyes of the growing minority golf circles. He played at Franklin Park often, and his influence there remains through Hayes and Lyons, who continue to play, and work, there today.

Franklin Park remained not only inclusive, but busy through the mid-1960s. When Billy Devine, who played there often growing up, became Parks Department commissioner in 1964, the course counted 440 members and 44,384 rounds. Devine funded major improvements to the course, including an enlarged clubhouse. But he never saw it. He died in January of 1967; when the clubhouse was dedicated that August, Mayor John Collins re-named the historic layout, William J. Devine Memorial Golf Course.



William J. Devine

Devine's death was the first tragedy for Franklin Park in America's watershed year of 1967. A crush of economic and social pressures, along with political preferences, fanned the flames that would burn whatever racial goodwill had existed in Boston's neighborhoods. On June 4, 1,700 police mobilized in Franklin Park to quell the city's disturbances. Ironically, the name 'Franklin Park', synonymous with harmony, became associated with discord.

City funding and political interest in the neighborhood waned. Those who could afford to, mostly whites, left. Abandoned by the city government, Franklin Park, including the golf course, was no longer maintained by city workers. There were 600 workers in the Park in 1959, only three by 1969.

Play at the golf course followed this downward spiral. In 1967, 32,600 rounds were played. In 1968, 16,951. In 1970, less than 14,000.

Franklin Park's public links needed a new generation of protectors, in the mold of its forefathers.

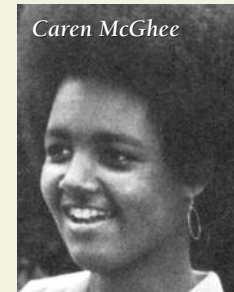
## A Loss Of Innocence

**THE FRANKLIN PARK GOLFERS ASSOCIATION AROSE OUT OF** the chaos begun in 1967. Former Boston Pro-Am members Hayes and Lyons enlisted a handful of neighborhood regulars who vowed that public golf at Franklin Park would not die; Lyons became the FPGAs golf professional.

It was a case of 'Catch 22': Less city money for upkeep had resulted in lower membership... the city argued that upkeep was not warranted if membership was falling. So, FPGA members began maintaining the course, volunteering their funds and time. Hayes remembers, "I used my lawn mower. George would cut the greens with his walker mower. The rough was four feet high and there were only four sandtraps. We played a few holes — one through four, maybe five and six, followed by eighteen."

There were countless personal stories of Franklin Park's loss of innocence. One was a forlorn Jerry Burke — grandson by intermarriage of both Smiley Callahan and William Burke, and godson of Billy Devine — who reluctantly closed down his family's Refectory business in November, 1971 because of the harsh economic reality.

Another was a penultimate American minority of her time — young, female, black. Growing up, Caren McGhee's playground was Franklin Park. That's where her grandfather, former club champion Henry Mason, taught the child the game in the harmonious early 1960s. While later facing racism elsewhere, Caren and her family were always treated as equals by all at Franklin Park. Then came the turmoil; effectively there was no longer a golf course for the talented upstart to play. Moving on to Ponkapoag Municipal Golf Course in Canton, Caren became its 1969 women's club champion, at age 14, and she successfully defended her title each of the next three years.



Caren McGhee

In 1972, with the guidance of her father, Andy McGhee, her mentor, professional golfer Paul Harney, and Doreen Mowatt of the Women's Golf Association of Massachusetts, who urged her to enter competitions, Caren won the WGAM State Junior Championship. She is believed to be the first African-American to capture *any* state golf association title.

Come 1975, the golf course had 53 members, 4,497 rounds, and a \$40,000 deficit. The city made its decision. The February 17, 1976 edition of *The Boston Globe* reported that the Franklin Park links "...is a goner".

But the FPGA was still a club; collectively, it had the same sort of stubborn, singular vision as Willie Campbell. Lyons says today, "The thinking was to keep the course open until money could be secured for its restoration."

They also didn't want to lose another Caren McGhee.

*"The thinking was to keep the course open until money could be secured for its restoration."*

George Lyons



The Boston Pro-Am Golf Association — the forerunner of the Franklin Park Golf Association — in 1954. Al Hayes is in the back row, at far left; George Lyons is in the front row, second from the right; and Paul Washington is in the front row, in the middle.

we played together for years with no problems."

The harmonious environment is largely credited to the 'new course's' management, including Eddie 'Smiley' Callahan, golf professional from 1922-43, and William Burke, patriarch of the family which ran the Refectory's concessions from 1922-71.

In one common, yet telling, role reversal of a stereo-



The bucolic Scarborough Bridge and Scarborough Pond as depicted in a postcard, circa 1908.

Olmsted's open green spaces are preserved for public golf... and the public good.

# The Rebirth

*"The golf course had a constituency. If there hadn't been... who knows what could have happened."*

**RICHARD HEATH, FORMER EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF** the Franklin Park Coalition, a citizen's group which worked to protect Frederick Law Olmsted's entire 527-acre Franklin Park — including its zoo, its picnic tables, et al. — recently acknowledged one of the Coalition's most pro-active members: The Franklin Park Golfers Association.

Throughout the 1970s and into the 1980s, crime and vandalism were rampant throughout Franklin

ment. He began working with the tireless and persistent FPGA, Franklin Park Coalition and other community activists — and the revival began.

McCoy first got an irrigation project in place, then contracts were put out to rebuild the golf course. The majority of the funding for the restoration would come from sympathetic Mayor Ray Flynn's "Rebuilding Boston" program — with a total of \$1.3 million filtering to the golf course.

In 1982, the City of Boston leased George Wright Golf Course — which it had opened in 1937, and suitably named for the nation's first public links player — to the Massachusetts Golf Association, the same organization which had petitioned Mayor Curley in 1922 to enhance and expand the city's municipal golf courses.

The MGA retained golf course owner/manager Bill Flynn, whose firm meticulously restored, and then operated, George Wright. With that success, the MGA, Flynn, and course architect Phil Wogan — whose father Skip Wogan had worked for Donald Ross — turned their attention to the reconstruction of the William J. Devine course.

## Opening The Doors

**"THE REOPENING OF THE GOLF COURSE AT FRANKLIN Park,"** pronounced *The Boston Globe*, "is an occasion that goes far beyond the game of golf or its public availability. This occasion signifies the restoration of the city's best, and perhaps most beautiful, recreational area."

The official "reopening" (for the FPGA, it had never entirely closed) of the course came July 31, 1989; the following day Chi-Chi Rodriguez gave a free golf clinic to hundreds of children. Two years later, the *Globe* reported that "...not only has the course been restored — groomed and greened as finely as any in New England — but a notable social achievement has been realized as well."

Many Franklin Park advocates — the FPGA, Franklin Park Coalition, Mayor Flynn, Bob McCoy and other Parks Department officials, the MGA, Bill Flynn, and numerous others — collectively share the credit for this achievement.

George Lyons put history in perspective in 1998: "Remember that full access to the game of golf didn't, and still doesn't, come automatically. What is realized these days is the result of efforts made by people who fought for years to open the doors of golf. There are still doors to be opened."

Today, doors are still being opened at Franklin Park, especially for the new generation of Caren McGhees.

## Accessible To All Again

**"I DON'T WANT TO BE THE BEST BLACK GOLFER EVER,** I want to be the best *golfer* ever." During the U.S. Junior Amateur Championship at Wollaston Golf Club in 1992, 16-year-old Tiger Woods — the best player ever to emerge from a public links background — gave a clinic at William J. Devine to a melting pot of youth. Tiger's ethnic make-up is 1/4 black, 1/4 Chinese, 1/4 Thai, 1/8 American Indian, and 1/8 white. Yet his message was that color, race, wealth, or religion simply don't matter in golf... or life.

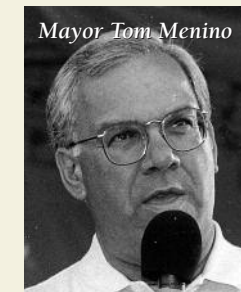
Today, Franklin Park has rediscovered its innocence, once again offering a bridge of accessibility to all — signified by Scarboro Bridge, the course logo. Most significantly, this is a safe haven for children who have access to the far-reaching Boston Junior Golf Program. Mayor Tom Menino, an avid golfer who plays on the city's two municipal courses, proudly notes, "Our Junior Golf Program offers events throughout the year designed for all levels of ability. It is fun, accessible, and free."

Among this program's components: The free, five day MGA ForeKids Clinics have attracted 650 youth aged 7-17 annually since 1993... the Parks Department Caddie/Scholar Program has offered youth aged 14-18 an intensive seven-week golf program, along with tutoring in essential high school subjects, since 1996... year-round golf instruction is available after school in 12 of 19 Boston middle schools... and the Mayor's Cup Junior Golf Tournament allows kids to compete for 'Boston's Best'.

Outside support is critical. The MGA (which staged its State Public Links Championship here in August) also works year-round with youngsters in continuing education programs. Philanthropists Diddy and John Cullinane founded Black & White Boston Coming Together which helps fund the Caddie/Scholar Program. The Country Club donated 300 Ryder Cup tickets which were auctioned off to establish a \$600,000 endowment for Boston's Youth Sports Legacy Fund, 50% of which is pegged for the Junior Golf Program.

This story started, and continues, with people understanding the vision of open space and golf's role therein. When the new 10,000 square foot clubhouse was opened in 1998, *The Boston Globe* noted, "Mayor Tom Menino's administration takes a strong historical view of the park system. That was evident at the ribbon-cutting Wednesday, where Parks commissioner Justine Liff cited an 1890 letter from George Wright seeking a permit for "the privilege to play in Franklin Park the game of Golf."

This privilege is accessible to all again at Franklin Park. ■

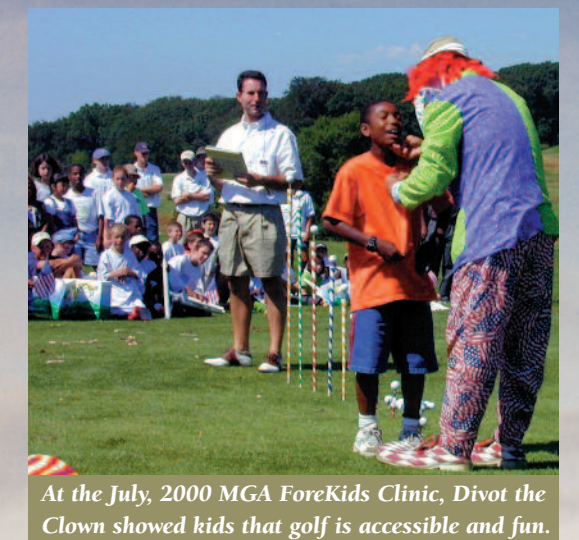


Mayor Tom Menino

## AMERICA'S PUBLIC LINKS CRADLE

*"...not only has the course been restored... a notable social achievement has been realized..."*

*The Boston Globe, 1991*



At the July, 2000 MGA ForeKids Clinic, Divot the Clown showed kids that golf is accessible and fun.



Tiger Woods regales children at his 1992 William J. Devine clinic. Golf professional George Lyons looks on at left; FPGA member Rudy Cabral, Sr. leans on the red shag bag in background.

Park, and the city considered 'development' — including concrete, low-cost housing on the Country Meadow, site of the golf course. A 1979 *Boston Globe* article noted, "Golfers are doing the best they can to keep bad elements out of their area." But by 1983, the FPGA was down to four playable holes.

The city, further constrained by the 1982 budget-cutting Proposition 21/2, virtually abandoned Franklin Park. To the rescue came Bob McCoy who, when he was appointed Parks Department commissioner in 1982, became the highest ranking African-American ever in City of Boston govern-



# The P.S.

*A postscript potpourri of loose ends, esoterica, and where-are-they-nows? on golf and golfers through the years at Boston's Franklin Park.*

**GEORGE WRIGHT WOULD BECOME A MEMBER** of Wollaston Golf Club; the club's course was originally located in North Quincy, at the present President's Golf Course. One of Wollaston's history books suggests Wright played first on Crescent Beach in Revere, although newspaper accounts of the time reported that outing happened in 1891, *after* his first Franklin Park foray.

In October, 1999, while meeting with Wright's grandson, George Wright II, author Brian DeLacey unearthed the hand-typed letter detailing George Wright's recollections of his first golf outing. Wright also engineered the first United States visit of Ouimet's future foe Harry Vardon, who played an exhibition match at Wollaston in April, 1900.

Frederick Law Olmsted, who died in 1903, was actually ambivalent about golf in Franklin Park; his two sons, who worked for his firm, tried to curtail its play there as late as 1910.

Prior to his post at Franklin Park, Willie Campbell had also served as the first professional at Essex County Club and Myopia Hunt Club. He also designed the original layout at Oakley Country Club, which Donald Ross redesigned as his first American project.

The first eight MGA State Opens, 1905-12, were won by Ross (twice) and his brother Alex.

George F. Grant, who lived in Arlington Heights and also played golf in the surrounding meadowlands there, never earned a penny for his golf tee invention. At the time of his death in 1910, most players still formed mounds of dirt.

Georgina Campbell regularly shot 9-hole rounds in the mid-40s, considered an excellent score for women as well as men at the time.

In 1909, Francis Ouimet won the Boston Schoolboy Tournament at Wollaston; he also won his first MGA State Amateur there in 1913.

The United Golfers Association (UGA), the nation's first black golf organization, conducted the Negro National Golf Championships. A UGA

founder, Robert Hawkins, was owner of Mapledale Country Club in Stow, one of the country's first two African-American-owned courses. The 1928 Championship, won by Paul Washington, was contested at Mapledale. Today, the public facility there is known as Stow Acres Country Club.

The inaugural MGA State Public Links Championship was contested in 1952.

Billy Devine's brother Frank was a club champion at Franklin Park — for many years a tournament was played there in his name.

In 1972, Caren McGhee picketed with neighborhood women to protest the deplorable conditions at Franklin Park. That year, she won the WGAM Mowatt Trophy, named for Doreen Mowatt. Caren went on to play two years on the University of Arizona golf team. Her father, Andy McGhee, still plays William J. Devine regularly today, and he urges parents to stay involved with their children. Members of the McGhee and Paul Harney families remain best of friends to this day.

Burke family brothers — Jerry, Eddie and Billy — bought Doyle's Cafe in Jamaica Plain, near Franklin Park, in 1971. With a melting pot clientele similar to that of William J. Devine, Doyle's won *Boston Magazine's* award for 'Best Neighborhood Bar' for so many years, that it is now in that magazine's Hall of Fame.

Bobby Lieberman — a sales representative for a Boston liquor distributor (a major client of his is Doyle's) — still warmly embraces former mentor Al Hayes when he plays at William J. Devine.

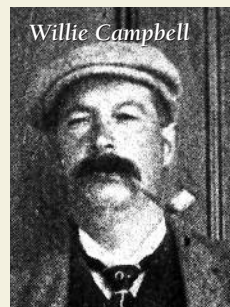
The Refectory was razed to the ground, without warning by the city, on Easter weekend in 1976.

The 108-year combined tenure of Al Hayes and George Lyons at Franklin Park surpasses the age of the course itself.

The Boston Parks Department recorded 40,000 rounds of golf at William J. Devine in 1999.

According to the National Golf Foundation, 90% of all new-built courses today in the United States are public facilities.

In 1998, Bob Lamprey, grandson of Willie and Georgina Campbell and son of Mary Campbell, laid a headstone at his grandfather's burial plot in Boston's Forest Hills Cemetery. The inscription: 'Willie Campbell — Golfer'. ▲



Willie Campbell

*Brian DeLacey, founder of LearningFuture, Inc., spent two years researching material for this article.*