

Dunn

One of golf's 'royal' families, the remarkable Dunns created a rich legacy of achievements that continue to shape the game.



John D. Dunn's patented one-piece driver.



Clockwise from top:
Isabella May Gourlay Dunn,
Seymour Dunn,
Willie Dunn Jr.,
and Thomas Dunn.

With this issue, we begin a three-part series in which golf historian and collector Richard McDonough explores the contributions of this extraordinary family of golfing pioneers. Part II will largely explore the career of John Duncan Dunn.— Editor

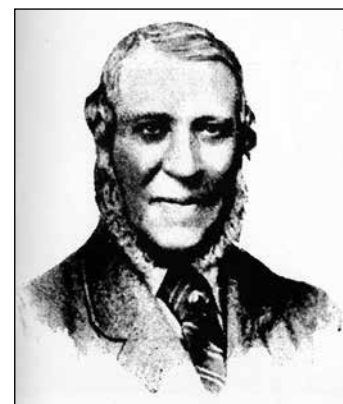
By Richard A. McDonough

In terms of genetic golf ancestry, few could surpass the dynasty and pedigree of the Dunn family. Multi-talented innovators and inventors, the Dunns were widely traveled, perhaps contributing more than any other family to the growth, expansion, and development of golf both internationally and in America. Through their innovations and business enterprises they influenced numerous facets of the game. They were tournament champions, clubmakers extraordinaire, ball makers, inventors, innovators, instructors, prolific authors, course designers, "Keepers of the Green" or club professionals, and ambassadors of the game.

In order to understand and appreciate the character and complexity of the Dunn family one needs to begin with a pair of talented golfing twins.

Jamie and Willie, the twins

The Dunn family story begins with his grandfather, Willie Dunn (1821-78) and his twin brother, Jamie (1821-71), who played legendary matches with heavy wagering, against golf's patriarch, Tom Morris and his partner, featherball maker Allan Robertson. In their youth, they were apprenticed to the Gourlays in Bruntsfield where they were



DUNN FAMILY PATRIARCHS,
Jamie, left, and Willie. The two
were twins.



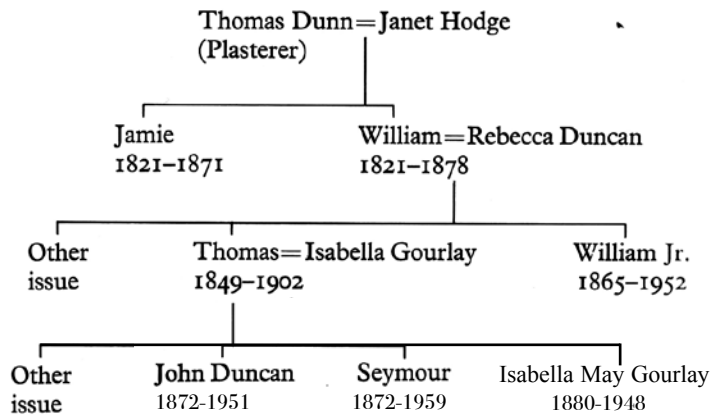
GRAND GOLF TOURNAMENT BY PROFESSIONAL PLAYERS shows some of the top players of the day assembled for a tournament at the Leith Links, Edinburgh on May 17, 1867. In the top photo from left are: Andrew Strath, Dave Park, Bob Kirk, Jamie Anderson, Jamie Dunn, Willie Dow, Willie Dunn, A. Greig, Tom Morris, Tom Morris Jr., and George Morris (Tom Sr.'s brother.) The bottom photo shows the players in a different setting, but for the same event. Jamie Dunn appears at far left. Willie Dunn is the uppermost figure at the center of the photo.

schooled in making both featherballs and long nose clubs. In that era, clubmakers rarely competed in tournaments so the twins' golfing success at the highest levels was quite unique. The brothers left Scotland to pursue international careers, a trend that would continue with their descendants.

Their golfing, club making and professional skills were employed at a variety of golf clubs: Blackheath, near London (1851-1865); in Scotland at Leith Thistle Club (1869-71); Musselburgh (1871); and later North Berwick.

Jamie never married and had no children. Willie Dunn had two sons, Thomas, and 18 years later, Willie Dunn Jr. Both were destined to play important roles in golf's future.

The Dunn Family Tree



The Grand Match – 1849

Money matches between professionals in the mid-1800s were high-stakes affairs, often associated by considerable side bets and vociferous partisan crowds. Businessmen might put up the stakes which would be worth many thousands of dollars today.

Allan Robertson, often called “The Unde-feated” because he never lost an important match, bested Willie Dunn at St. Andrews in July 1843 in a competition that was arranged for 20 rounds over 10 days. Allan won by two matches and one hole to play. A newspaper article described the two players – *Allan is an artiste – Dunny is a genius.*

In 1849 he partnered with Tom Morris against the Dunn twins. The match was legendary since the stakes were £400, a princely sum (about \$70,000 in today's money), and was played over three courses, each accompanied by raucous crowds. The first was won by the Dunns on their home turf at Mussel-

burgh by 13 and 12. The return was on the Old Course where they narrowly lost. The final 36-hole match was at North Berwick, a neutral site. The Dunns built a four-shot lead with eight to play. In a remarkable run, Old Tom and Allan squared the match with two to play. On the 35th hole, the Dunn's put their second shot behind a large boulder, a kerbstone in some reports. The match referee would not allow them to remove the stone. The Dunns gamely attempted to extricate the ball but failed, losing that hole and the final, for a two-hole defeat.

The heavy wagering included 20-to-1 odds against Old Tom and Allan at one point, when their cause looked hopeless. That kind of prize money surely would go a long way toward solidifying their golf business of clubs and balls, not to mention their increasing stature as a near-unbeatable match play pair. The Dunns, however, came as close as anyone to doing so.



ALLAN ROBERTSON AND TOM MORRIS, illustrated by Thomas Hodge in 1889 and printed in Horace Hutchinson's *Golf, the Badminton Library*, 1890.

Thomas Dunn (1849-1902) was raised in Blackheath where he was apprenticed to his father and later lived in Leith. He followed in his father's footsteps returning to the London area to become Keeper of the Green at Wimbledon Golf Club in 1870 and remained there for 11 years. Although he was an excellent clubmaker, his obsession was golf course design and is credited with over 130 courses. His career took him to North Berwick (1881-89), then to England at Tooting Bec (1889-94), Bournemouth (1894-1899) and Hager Hill (1901).

Thomas was an excellent golf instructor whose students included Arthur J. Balfour (Prime Minister 1902-05) and William E. Gladstone (Prime Minister 1868-1894). He suffered health problems which led him to winter in Biarritz, France in 1887 where he laid out a course. He returned to France in 1888 and spent three years designing numerous courses on the continent. Around the winter of 1899/1900, after several family members had established themselves in America, Thomas traveled to Florida for health reasons.

He was employed by a New York company, the Oriental and Manhattan Hotel Group, to supervise its Florida golf courses under the direction of his son John Duncan who was employed by the Florida West Coast Railroad Line. Thomas stayed in America for only six months before returning to England.

Thomas married Isabella Gour-



THOMAS DUNN

lay, whose father, John Gourlay, was head of the world's largest ball making company. The two had five children. Three were born while the family resided at Wimbledon – John Duncan (1872), William Gourlay (1874) and Isabella May Gourlay (1880). Two later siblings, Seymour (1882) and Eleanor Norah (1886), were born while the family resided in North Berwick.

Each of the five siblings exemplified the family golf traditions through various endeavors: course design, instruction, tournament play, and such creative innovations designing and introducing ladies' tees for the first time in America. Although Seymour was 10 years younger than John Duncan the two brothers were close and collaborated on numerous highly successful projects utilizing complimentary skills.



Isabella May Gourlay Dunn (1880-1948), the daughter of Thomas Dunn and Isabella May Gourlay Dunn, was called "Queenie." She learned the game early from her mother and married Willie Webb, a clubmaker who worked for her father. Webb was a founding member of the British PGA in 1902. The two moved to Boston in 1915 when Webb was offered a position at Brae Burn Country Club. Queenie wrote a golf instruction column, managed the Wentworth Hall GC in the White Mountains of New Hampshire, and served briefly as golf coach at Wellesley College in Massachusetts. She is credited with being the originator of women's tees after a visit to the Aiken GC in South Carolina. In the late 1910s she designed a golf course near Reno, Nev. and another near Lake Tahoe. Like her father, Thomas, Queenie would also work for her brother, John Duncan, to manage hotel golf operations but in California instead of Florida. She would also direct a large indoor golf school in Pasadena, Calif.

Source for Isabella Dunn information and photo courtesy Doctors of the Game, 2016, by Billy Detlaff.



CLEEK MARK used by Thomas Dunn while at Bournemouth. The "...& Son" likely refers to John Duncan Dunn.

Willie Dunn Jr. (1865-1952) was born in Blackheath in 1865. He learned club making, course design, club management, instruction, and tournament play from both his father and older brother while they resided in Leith and later as an assistant to Thomas at both Wimbledon and North Berwick. In 1886 he became the head pro at Westward Ho!. He accompanied his brother to Biarritz, France where, in 1888, he met William Henry Vanderbilt, a multi-millionaire who was intrigued by golf.



WILLIE DUNN JR. (Also shown at right.)

In 1893 Vanderbilt sponsored Willie Jr. to travel to the Newport Golf Club in Rhode Island to teach the game. Afterward, Willie Jr. returned to Biarritz, but the following year emigrated to America to become the head pro at Ardsley Casino Club in Dobbs Ferry, N.Y. He laid out the course, built a club making shop, and sold clubs to the public at a time when they were scarce but in high demand.

In his youth in Scotland, Willie Jr. competed against the likes of Willie Park Jr., and Ben Sayers and played in The Open three times.

Willie Jr was a skilled clubmaker and competitive tournament golfer (winner of the first, unofficial, U.S. Open in 1894 at Shinnecock Hills Golf Club, Long Island and second in the 1895 U.S. Open at Newport Golf Club, two venues with which he was intimately familiar).

In the mid-1890s American golf was still in its infancy and with his Scottish upbringing, skilled club making, and course design talents Willie Jr.'s services were quite marketable. Ultimately, he designed dozens of golf courses, including Apawamis in Rye, N.Y. and Shinnecock Hills, (earlier Willie Davis, commonly credited as the first golf professional in North America, had designed 12 holes and Willie Jr. expanded the course to 18 holes and served as

the professional there in 1894-95).

He was hired to manage the golf businesses of The Bridgeport Gun Implement Co. (BGI) in 1897 and shortly thereafter MacGregor in Dayton, Ohio. He imparted a high level of expertise in club design, production techniques, metallurgy, and imposed standards of high quality. BGI's top-quality clubs bore the mark "Dunn Selected" with a similar unique mark for MacGregor.



An innovator, Willie Jr. filed for several patents, including the very rare and unique gutta percha golf ball named the "Stars and Stripes." (One of these sold for over \$30,000 at a modern auction.)

To quote Pete Georgiady, "Willie Dunn was one of the most influential people in the first quarter century of American golf as a competitor, course designer, and marketer." (*North American Club Makers*, 1998) ¶

(Part II of The Dunn Family next issue of *The Golf* – "John Duncan Dunn - A Force in American Golf.")

BALLS AND CLUBS made by Willie Dunn Jr. are quite collectible. The Stars and Stripes ball at right often sells for many thousands of dollars. "Dunn Selected" clubs below left were sold through BGI, and the niblick below right was made during his time as head pro at the Ardsley Casino Club in Dobbs Ferry, N.Y.





John Duncan Dunn

Multifaceted Dunn had enormous influence on early golf in America

The second in a three-part series about the Dunn family focuses on John Duncan Dunn. The Duns are considered golf's "royalty" due to their extensive contributions and influence on golf during the late 1800s and early 20th century when the game was experiencing exponential growth.

By Dick McDonough

Most serious golf collectors associate the mention of the one-piece driver or brassie with John Duncan Dunn (1872-1951). While surely the one-piece club was a unique invention, this one item alone falls short of conveying the diverse talents of this "Renaissance" man as well as his unique contributions to early golf in the U.S. and abroad.

Family lineage

John Duncan Dunn was born in 1872 in Wimbledon, England, where his father, Thomas, a Scot, served as Keeper of the Green. In his youth Dunn frequently moved with his family as Thomas assumed professional positions at North Berwick, Scotland (1881-89); in England at Tooting Bec (1889-94) and Bournemouth (1894-1899); as well as a stint in Biarritz, France during the winter of 1887. Like his father, Dunn would travel extensively and move often.

Dunn's family lineage and the golfing environment in which he was raised led to the development of a first-class skill set. It certainly also motivated him to be his own man.

He was educated in both England and Scotland and aspired to a medical career but instead joined the family golf business.

In 1892 Dunn, and his younger brother, William Gourlay Dunn, established a club making business in Mitcham, England at The Prince's Golf Club. While there they received two British patents for a round sole concave face lofted and an oval shaft. When their father, Thomas, moved to Bournemouth in 1894 they left to join him at his newly formed club-making business "Tom Dunn & Son." The reference to "Son" was likely Dunn, 22 at the time. Young Dunn quickly assumed overall responsibility for the club

making business as his father devoted most of his time to course design. Dunn proved a fast study and a talented and proficient clubmaker, as evidenced by the British patent he received in 1894, at the age of 22, for a 'one piece' club made from a single piece of wood.

The sportsman

An exceptional athlete, Dunn was a proficient swimmer, yachtsman, strong runner, marksman, and competed at the national level in both roller skating (Great Britain champion) and rugby.

He mastered the bagpipes as a teenager in the London Scottish Pipe Band and later in his career in 1898 performed for U.S. President William McKinley.



IRON (niblick), was made when Dunn ran the British Golf Co.

The clubmaker

Dunn is reported to have made a five-month trip to the U.S. in 1895. It was likely an exploratory journey to spend time with his uncle, Willie Dunn Jr., who was making clubs at a shop in Ardsley, N.Y. and importing significant quantities from his brother's (Thomas) business in England. In all likelihood, clubheads were made in Scotland and sent to England. These clubs bear Willie Jr.'s name and the stamp MADE IN SCOTLAND above a small eagle, symbolic of America. Dunn was already overseeing and managing the English side of that business, so this trip allowed him to explore American business opportunities with his uncle.

He apparently liked the opportunities he saw, as two years later, in March 1897, Dunn emigrated to the U.S. to join his uncle at Ardsley C.C. as assistant professional and to assemble clubs imported from England at his uncle's retail store in New York City. Before long, the enterprising young Dunn opened his own golf business on 42nd street in Manhattan, which remained open from 1898 to 1904.

In the late 1890s major sporting goods companies realized that golf equipment and goods represented a significant new business opportunity. The three largest new market entrants were: A.G. Spalding and Bros. (Spalding) with a manufacturing plant in Chicopee, Mass.; Bridgeport Gun

Implement Co. (BGI), Bridgeport, Conn.; and Crawford McGregor and Canby Co. (McGregor), Dayton, Ohio.

The expertise of Dunn and Willie Jr. in club design, club making, metallurgy, and production techniques positioned them to play a crucial role with all three companies.

In 1897 BGI hired Willie Jr. to manage and oversee its new golf business. Dunn replaced him a year later and wasted no time introducing high-quality workmanship, his one-piece driver (patented in the U.K. but not U.S.), the patented fork-spliced woods, and irons marked "Dunn Selected." He also began an aggressive marketing campaign.

Early BGI catalogues featured his 36-page article, "Revised Elementary Instruction to Beginners," intended to attract players – and create a larger market – to this growing sport, still new in the U.S.

That same year Dunn managed the golf business at Overman Wheel Co. (Overman) in Chicopee, Mass., which, coincidentally, was the site of Spalding's golf production facilities. Overman had merged with The Victor Co., which sold a line of clubs through Sears Roebuck & Co. bearing the stamp "Victor" or "The Victor."

In 1898, when Dunn assumed golf management at BGI and Overman, Willie Jr. relocated to join McGregor in Ohio as its club designer and adviser on modification of production techniques from shaping shoe lasts to turning wood for clubheads and hickory shafts. Because McGregor began to manufacture, advertise, and market Dunn's one-piece club under his uncle's auspices, it is likely that Dunn also shared his expertise with McGregor.

It is not entirely clear what motivated BGI, which had a reputation for quality and excellence, to exit the golf club business in 1904 and sell its golf business to B.A.M. Co. in New Jersey. However, that same year, Dunn closed his store in New York City and returned to London as the managing director of British Golf Company, Ltd. (BGC). He brought with him the advanced manufacturing techniques he had developed in the U.S., in particular drop forged heads, which had been roundly criticized throughout the U.K. He remained with BGC for several years which mass produced clubs for wholesale. BGC was the exclusive provider for several unique British patent clubs.

The businessman

It didn't take long for the adherents of this new sport, golf, to discover the wonders of winter golf in Florida. The Sunshine State's infrastructure was already growing thanks to two tycoons who understood early the state's potential for tourism and development.

Around the turn of the century, Henry M. Flagler, a partner of John D. Rockefeller, and Henry Plant, a highly successful businessman, constructed railroad lines, Flagler along the east coast, and Plant along the west. They built first-class resort hotels along their routes and added golf



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COURSES THROUGHOUT THE SEASON.
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	Ocala - J. S. PEARSON

*For particulars apply to JOHN DUNCAN DUNN, Manager, Florida
Golf Association, until January 1, 1901, at 17 West 43d Street;
after that, Tampa Bay Hotel, Tampa, Florida.*

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BELLEAIR

courses to attract northerners looking for a winter sojourn. Top-notch golf professionals were hired to oversee the golfing arrangements at the resort hotels.

In 1900 Dunn was employed by the Florida West Coast Railroad as "golfer-in-chief" to oversee winter golf at the chain of hotels owned by the railway, which in turn were staffed by such renowned professionals as James Foulis in Tampa, Laurie Auchterlonie in Belleview, and Willie Marshall in Kissimmee.

Like Plant, who hired Dunn, Flagler wanted a high-profile Scot professional for his Florida East Coast Railroad. He hired Alex Findlay, whom many consider the pioneer or "Johnny Appleseed" of American golf. Flagler built grandiose hotels in St. Augustine (Ponce de Leon, Cordova, and Alcazar), Jacksonville (Continental), Palm Beach (Royal Poinciana and Breakers) and Miami (Royal Palm) usually accompanied by offerings of golf amenities.

Golf promotion

Dunn excelled at promoting his various business enterprises. Within months of his arrival in America he placed ads in golf periodicals (September 1897) that extolled the

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merits of his one-piece driver, referred to clubs imported from his father's business in Bournemouth, England, and highlighted a photo of his workshop in Ardsley. He placed a series of ads for BGI, when it was in its heyday, as well as full-page ads promoting west coast Florida hotels and the golf courses he managed.

Although Dunn and his uncle shared common enterprises and workshops, their ads seem to always have been done independently of one another. Perhaps the most notable of Dunn's ads was one for BGI that bore the headline "Puir Auld Scotland," expressing the sentiment that Scotland has lost most of her golf trade in America due to the advent of BGI's high quality golf clubs. Quite a statement from a Scot who had just emigrated two years earlier and was still selling clubs made by his family business in England.

Founder of indoor golf schools

In 1900 Dunn and his younger brother, Seymour, established the world's first indoor golf school at Bournemouth, England. The instructional material he had written for beginning golfers in the early BGI catalogues was adapted to the new enterprise. Under Dunn's auspices, New York City's Wanamaker Department Store became the largest and most popular indoor golf school in the world with 24 instructors and up to 150 lessons daily. Alex Findlay, too, had a close association with Wanamaker. Dunn's affiliation with Wanamaker ended in 1918 when he enlisted in a Scottish regiment for World War I.

The golf course designer

Dunn played a hand in designing or co-designing some of America's crown jewel courses as well as numerous European standouts. The early exposure to golf course design through his father and, later, his uncle would become invaluable.

Course design and construction were primitive around the turn of the twentieth century. Often the course designer laid out a plan, perhaps placed some markers and instructions,

"Puir Auld Scotland"
has lost most of her golf trade in America since the advent of "B. G. I." Golf Clubs.
Some golfers still insist upon having the imported article, accepting loose heads, warped shafts, and heads made of unacclimated woods as necessary evils, but the great army of skilful players are fast learning that "B. G. I." Clubs have all the fine qualities necessary to good playing, and are not led astray by foreign labels.

B. G. I. Clubs
are the best American-made Clubs.

In fine playing points they have reached a state of the highest possible perfection.

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San Francisco, 425-427 Market St.
Washington, 707 Pennsylvania Ave.
Brooklyn, Fred's Lower & Co.



BELLAIRE GOLF COURSE, FLORIDA from a c. 1920s postcard. It was built for, and originally known as, the Belleview Biltmore Hotel Course.

and then moved on, leaving the final layout and construction to crews of workers who did most of the construction by hand. Course construction was not mechanized. Accordingly, over time the original layouts were frequently significantly modified, improved, lengthened, and in many cases did not survive – often falling victim to economic hardship such as The Great Depression.

Some of Dunn's most impressive golf course design work was done in partnership with Walter Travis. In 1899 they collaborated on the Ekwanok Country Club course in Manchester, Vt. Dunn recounted visualizing the 200-acre property as perfectly suited for a Scottish-style layout. The course was completed in less than a year by a crew of 42 workers. Dunn and Travis collaborated again in 1900, adding nine holes and redesigning nine at Essex County Club, Manchester by the Sea, Mass. In 1922 they redesigned Cape Arundel Golf Club in Kennebunkport, Maine.

While "golfer-in-chief" for the Florida West Coast Railroad, Dunn not only promoted golf at its hotels he is credited with designing courses for many of them, among them the Belleview Biltmore Hotel (later known as the Bellaire Country Club), and others located in Kissimmee, Tampa Bay, Ocala, and Winter Park. Most no longer exist and only Winter Park currently identifies him as the original designer.

DeAthleet, a Dutch weekly magazine, reported that at the age of 21 Dunn was in Holland offering golf lessons. He was one of the first golf architects in the Netherlands establishing the first nine holes at The Hague Golf Club, now Koninklijke Haagsche, as well as five other courses between 1894 and 1910. Around 1904 he moved to France for three years and built both Hendaye GC and Hardelot GC where he was secretary/ manager/professional until 1907.

Beginning in 1900 Dunn designed five golf courses in New York, but only one, Quaker Ridge, remains. Dunn designed its initial nine holes, then called the "Golf Links," in 1915. It has since been redesigned numerous times by renowned golf architects, notably A.W. Tillinghast, and consistently ranks among America's finest courses.

When Dunn settled in California during the 1920s, he de-

signed 11 club courses: Atascaadero, Catalina Island, Idyllwild, Lake Elsinore, Lake Norconian, Los Serranos Lake, Parkridge, Peter Pan, Rio Hondo, Santa Ana, Brockway. Some, such as Catalina, involved redesign and four no longer exist.

The author

Dunn was a prolific writer of golf articles, reporter of tournament results, travel guides, golf columns, and “How To” pamphlets.

Many of his writings involved sharing and imparting his knowledge of the game in the form of instruction, often with a promotional element. For instance, while serving as “golfer-in-chief” for the Florida railroad line he wrote an 11-page article in the February 1900 issue of *The Outing*, titled “Winter Golf in Southern Sunshine,” which described dozens of southern golf destinations.

In the article he mentions that he had to choose between two travel routes. Unsurprisingly, he chose the West Coast route with whose hotels he was associated. He noted in passing that his father, Tom Dunn, was in Tampa, “now in full golfing control.” His father was experiencing health issues and spent that season in Tampa, also employed by the hotel chain.

Dunn was later criticized for omitting Pinehurst in the article, which was curious since at the time, his cousin, John Dunn Tucker, was in the process of adding nine holes to the Pinehurst Number One course.

Several of Dunn’s articles reveal his scholarly side. In 1904 he authored four magazine articles for *Golf* about British golf patents for clubs and balls. His in-depth examination and explanations of dozens of club patents, each accompanied by illustration, make it clear that his club making expertise was based on extensive research, and an understanding and application of the most creative and innovative principles of his era.

While most clubmakers learned their trade through an apprenticeship, as did Dunn, he went well beyond what he could learn in a shop to study new techniques and innovations that others were bringing to the golf business. His zest for learning from the patent filings of others surely contributed to his own creativity as well as the high quality of the clubs he produced.

Hickory collectors and clubmakers will enjoy two of his detailed articles published in the January and February issues of *Golf* (NY) in 1902 describing in considerable detail the art of making a driver or brassie head and how to properly shaft clubs. The articles were reprinted in GCS



JOHN DUNCAN DUNN, as he appeared later in life. Courtesy of Ron Whitten.

Bulletins 56 and 57, 1980.

The Game of Golf and The Printed Word 1566-1985 (1987) by Richard E. Donovan and Joseph S. Murdoch, lists six works by Dunn. Three are relatively short instructional works. His lengthier books were written post-1916, presumably after his hectic schedule had settled down. Principle titles are: *The A.B.C.'s of Golf* (1916), *Intimate Golf Talks* (1920), and *Natural Golf: A book of fundamental instruction which shows the golfer how to develop his own natural style* (1931).

PGA charter member

When the PGA was formed in the spring of 1916, 35 charter members were in attendance, including Dunn as a representative of Rodman Wanamaker who offered to donate \$2,500 and a trophy to initiate a PGA Champion-

ship. Curiously, the generous offer was not immediately accepted until Wanamaker sweetened the deal by adding a cup, a gold medal to the winner, a silver medal to the runner-up, and bronze medals to winners of the qualifying rounds. That the Wanamaker Cup continues as The PGA Championship trophy today may be in part thanks to Dunn’s crucial support.

Golf professional

Dunn served as golf professional at Ardsley CC, and Hardelot GC in France, and in 1919 was recruited by the co-founder of the Los Angeles Country Club (LACC), Edward B. Tufts, to become its golf professional. While there he devoted time to lessons, conducted golf schools in Los Angeles, and pioneered the use of silent movie footage to analyze a player’s golf swing. In 1921 he ended his position at LACC.

Marriage

In 1900 Dunn travelled to California to explore the state’s golf potential and reported on professional golf tournaments. He met H. Gaylord Wilshire, a prominent, wealthy and successful businessman and land developer. (Wilshire Boulevard in Los Angeles is named after him.) Wilshire introduced Dunn to his adopted daughter, Norah. According to a report in the Bridgeport Standard (Conn.) Dunn and Norah were engaged within two weeks. The article noted, “*She brings her husband a handsome dowry.*”

Dunn and Norah were married for 50 years and had one child, Monica Dunn Fernandez (1906-1999).

The couple were interred in Forest Lawn Memorial Park, Glendale, Calif. ¶

Seymour Dunn

golf teacher, club maker

This is the third and final in a series of articles about the Dunn family and their enormous influence for over a century on virtually all facets of the game of golf.

By Richard McDonough

Initially as a collector of antique golf clubs, I became fascinated by the leading role John Duncan Dunn played in the development of the golf club business in America when golf was in its infancy in the 1890s. As I researched and explored his background and career it became apparent that, based on the achievements of his forefathers and siblings, he was genetically predisposed to play such a role. His story followed my first article (*The Golf*, Spring 2019) about his grandfather, father and uncle all of whom devoted their lives, careers and families to golf course design, club-making, innovation, instruction, and expanding the reach and popularity of golf on an international basis.

Seymour Gourlay Dunn, the fifth of six children, was born on March 11, 1882 in North Berwick to Thomas Dunn and Isabella Gourlay, daughter of John Gourlay the famous feather ball maker. Seymour described his mother as, “the greatest woman golfer of her day.” Thomas’s passion was golf course design and he is credited with over 130 courses. He provided golf instruction to two Prime Ministers, was an excellent clubmaker, and served as Keeper of the Green at several courses.

Seymour was 10 years younger than his brother, John Duncan Dunn, but their lives and career were intertwined and bore a great deal in common. John first visited America in 1895 and emigrated in 1897. That same year Seymour, just 15, visited America for several months. Apparently, he studied at The Lawrenceville School in New Jersey where



SEYMOUR DUNN'S shop in Lake Placid, N.Y.

the precocious youngster laid out a nine-hole course. There are reports that the two brothers spent time working together with their Uncle Willie Dunn Jr., the golf professional at Ardley Casino Club in New York. Willie Jr. was considered by many the leading course designer, clubmaker, instructor, and golf professional of that era.

Given Seymour’s exposure to all things golf by his father, uncle, and older brother, it is perhaps no surprise that he came to excel in the same pursuits. Like other family members, he, too, had a wanderlust.

At the age of 17 he was appointed professional at the Society Golf de Paris which led him to design the Belgian courses of Royal Ostend GC (1903), Royal Golf Club de Belgique (1906), and Royal Zoute GC (1909). He also laid out a course in France for The Rothschild Estate (1908) and in Italy for King Emmanuel (1909). Interestingly his brother, John, was living in France and designing courses in Europe during the same period, 1904-1907.


In 1900 Seymour and John founded the world’s first indoor golf school at Bournemouth, England. It served as a model for future such instructional academies as they would both go on to develop additional schools that could accommodate dozens of students and instructors, including, in 1929, Seymour’s school at Madison Square Garden, considered the world’s largest indoor golf school complete with an 18-hole pitch and putt course, practice nets and 30 instructors.

In 1904 Seymour moved to Northern Ireland to become the head professional at Royal County Down, now generally considered as one of the finest golf courses in the world. While there he made improvements to the course originally laid out by Old Tom Morris in 1889, and later renovated by Harry Vardon in 1908, and Harry Colt in 1926.

Seymour emigrated to America in 1907, worked with his uncle Willie Jr. on course design, including the Van Cortland Park golf course in the Bronx, and then became head pro at Wykagyl Golf Club in New Rochelle, N.Y.



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In 1909 he laid out the Links Course at Lake Placid, N.Y. where he served as golf professional and architect.

The Lake Placid Club Handbook of 1914 describes how the members retained Alex H. Findlay for the princely sum of \$15,000 to design a course which Findlay claimed would “be the most attractive golf course in the world.” Laid out in 1910 The Mountain Course was redesigned in 1931 by Alister MacKenzie. Today the Crowne Plaza Resort and Golf Club owns and operates the historic Lake Placid courses, well worth considering for a golf destination holiday.

Seymour designed or reworked numerous golf courses in New York: The Antlers, AuSable Valley, Cazenovia, Chautauqua-Lake Course, Craig Wood, Lake Placid-Links Course, Lake Placid-Pristine Nine Course, Lafayette, Livingston, Locust Hill, Saranac Inn (considered his masterpiece), Schroon Lake Municipal, Ticonderoga, and Tuscarora. In addition to the European courses mentioned earlier he designed two courses in Mississippi: Laurel Country Club and Duncan Park Golf Club, as well as two courses in New Jersey: Beacon Hill and Fort Monmouth.

Through his club-making apprenticeships with his father Tom, uncle Willie Jr., and brother John, Seymour had first-hand access to the finest clubmakers of the day. He wasted no time in starting his own golf club business. In 1910 he opened a golf shop or club making business in Lake Placid with 10 employees and used assembly line techniques (which John had employed and perfected) to create matched sets of clubs which he sold by mail order. His clubs bore a large crest with a crown in the center and a ribbon below with the words “Vi et Arte,” (By Strength and Skill).

His instructional books strongly emphasized the importance of using correctly fitted golf clubs. His book, *Golf Fundamentals* (1922), provided a list of 14 measurements, charts, and criteria that needed to be considered by a pro-

spective club purchaser when submitting an order. The book provided the information and an order form to purchase customized clubs directly from Seymour’s shop. In his words, “SEYMOUR DUNN is acknowledged by leading authorities as the best club-maker in the world.”

While Seymour achieved success in his course design, club making business, and instructional schools he is perhaps best remembered for his literary contributions to golf instruction. His seminal book, *Golf Fundamentals-Orthodoxy of Style*, emphasized the mechanical aspects of the swing using scientific and mathematical terminology. Some 452 photographs were used to depict or correct a faulty swing. He pioneered the use of an imaginary line to show the correct swing plane, which was adopted by Ben Hogan decades later in golf’s all-time best seller, *Five Lessons-The Modern Fundamentals of Golf* (1957). (Hogan’s choice of the title *Modern Fundamentals* is interesting). During the 1920s many golf champions such as Walter Hagen, Jim Barnes, Gene Sarazen, and Joe Kirkwood used the concepts described in Seymour’s book.

Seymour Dunn’s other instructional book, *Standardized Golf Instructions* (1934), was followed by a major departure from the world of golf instruction – *The Complete Golf Joke Book* (1953). ¶

(See *The Golf Extra* edition on the GHS website for additional photos related to Seymour Dunn.)

Author’s Note: My research into the remarkable Dunn family has led to a great admiration for how much the family worked together. While young, they shared their know-how with one another and often teamed together to innovate and found new business enterprises. Yet, it appears that once they established their careers a distance between them was also established. Both John and Seymour wrote extensively yet never is there acknowledgement of one another in books or articles. Seymour’s book contained a full page genealogy but it does not mention his older brother, John. A similar pattern existed in their marketing ads for golf clubs – no cross selling. Was this just a matter of independence or was there more to it?

