

What is the Oldest Continually Operated Golf Club in America?

By Bob Labbance

Golf has been played in America for a very long time. From Albany, New York to Savannah, Georgia transplanted Europeans have put stick to ball and propelled the spheroids toward distant targets, enjoying competition and camaraderie with their like minded friends for centuries. But where has the game put down roots that have never been broken? Therein lies the rub.

In the mid-1880s it seemed that golf had taken hold for good. Play began outside White Sulphur Springs, West Virginia in 1881 and the Oakhurst Links was formed in 1884. In 1885, Sarasota, Florida was promoted in Scotland by the Florida Mortgage and Investment Company and John Hamilton Gillespie, a Scottish aristocrat, lawyer and member of the Queen's Bodyguard for Scotland established a 12-hole course in town. Unfortunately both these clubs had disappeared a short time later. But in the years that followed, three other clubs were established and they all still exist. But which is the oldest? This is their story—with the Clubs presented in alphabetical order.

Dorset Field Club

According to his niece Constance Harrington, "Uncle Arv was the kind of man who made things happen." Known as A. W. Harrington, the Troy, New York insurance executive was a member of the Laureate Boat Club in town, and as Troy became dirty and crowded in the early 1880s he sought greener pastures for recreation and relaxation with his friends. The Troy and Greenfield Railroad brought passengers to southern Vermont where a trunk of the Rutland line took them north to Manchester Center. There a horse and carriage conveyed them to the green pastures of Dorset.

A group of a dozen Troy men began the pilgrimage in 1881, bringing their fishing tackle, hiking gear and shinny clubs. Shinny was an American version of shinny, a Scottish game that resembled street hockey. One summer, attorney George Harrison brought a cleek he had obtained on a trip to Scotland, and the men passed the golf club from hand to hand, propelling a home made ball across the pastures into a tomato can sunken in the earth. The golfing seed had been planted.

Harrington bought a house on Church Street in Dorset and in his shop began to experiment with the manufacture of golf clubs. He fashioned heads from a variety of woods and created hand-forged irons for his friends, eventually creating several sets that were employed during the summers. Several holes were outlined in 1884, though every year the layout expanded and changed. Finally, on Sunday, September 12, 1886,



Above: Players at Dorset in the 1890s.
Below: A copy of the 1886 map that has been lost.
Right: Dorset's venerable Woodruff Hall.

Harrington plotted a 1,892-yard, nine-hole course across the pastures of the Edgerton, Holley and Sykes farms; and although just a small portion of that course is part of the Dorset Field Club's land today, legend claims that the course and its offspring have been in continual use ever since.





In the 1960s, USGA official John English was intent on determining which golf club was the oldest continually used course in America, and he toured the Dorset grounds with William G.

Barrows, Sr., a process I repeated in 1992 with Barrows' son. At the time of English's investigation, there was little documentation to support the 1886 claim. But by 1974, a map (reproduced on page 14) was revealed that stated the date the course was laid by Harrington "assisted by a crowd of thugs, touts and loafers," and witnessed by Ransom H. Gillett, a Troy attorney and founder who swore to its authenticity. It is impossible to prove the provenance of the map, because the original, along with other seminal Club documents was lost in the 1980s. There are no early newspaper accounts or dated articles of incorporation.

Though the layout was changed multiple times before the turn of the century, Dorset remained a nine-hole course throughout the 1900s. Many times from 1960 on, architect Geoffrey Cornish was brought to the Club to consider additional land for expansion. Finally in 2000, local designer Steve Durkee succeeded in convincing the membership to make the move and Dorset had an 18-hole course of unparalleled beauty. Though the private course retains little early American feel, the golf is supremely enjoyable and the course kept in superb condition. Of the three clubs, Dorset enjoys the most stunning visual setting.

Foxburg Country Club

Cricket matches between the English and the gentlemen of Philadelphia began in 1859, though it was the first tour abroad by an American team that brought Joseph Mickle Fox to the United Kingdom in 1884. Fox represented the Merion Cricket Club, and with the others landed in Liverpool on May 25. Of the 18 matches played it was the encounter on June 7 and 8 in Edinburgh, Scotland that changed American golf forever.



After the game, Fox became fascinated with golf on St. Andrews links and found his way to the golf shop of Old Tom Morris. Morris was a deeply religious man and perhaps it was his knowledge that Fox was a descendant of the English family credited with founding the Quaker religion that enhanced the bond between the two. Old Tom quickly taught Fox the fundamentals of golf and sold him clubs and gutta percha balls to take back to America.

When Joe Fox returned to the massive family estate in western Pennsylvania he was intent on establishing golf as a summer pastime. In 1885, he plotted a short three-hole course on the lawn and pasture outside his door and enticed villagers to join him. The layout was extended to five holes the next year, but the game proved so popular that more clubs were ordered from Scotland and Fox decided to provide a permanent home for the club.

In 1887, five holes were installed on the current site and John Dunkle was hired for \$15 a year to scythe the fairways. Greens were made of sand and quart tomato cans provided the holes. A long pole with a burlap bag nailed to the end was used to erase footprints after each group's visitation. School children helped pick rocks, many of which were piled in advance of today's seventh green, forming the giant mounds that guard the putting surface. In 1888, the course was expanded to nine holes, and decades later that total was doubled. But 18 holes could not be supported and the original nine-hole course was reinstated, and so remains today on a rolling meadow surrounded by deep woods.

Although the time frame is quite precise, like Dorset, Foxburg has no timely charter or original source document to substantiate its founding. The first mention in the local *Clarion Democrat* newspaper uncovered thus far dates from 1896. If Fox kept a diary it is deep in the family archives of Philadelphia where he spent his winters.

Realizing this gap in its heritage Foxburg turned to founding member Harry R. Harvey in 1947. At the organization of the Club in 1887, Harvey was elected secretary and treasurer, a dual post he retained for 54 years. In 1947, at age 85, Harvey stated in a notarized deposition, "That he was present at the organization of the Foxburg Country Club, Foxburg, Clarion County, Pennsylvania in the year 1887...that in the year 1885 the said Joseph M. Fox built a short golf course on the



Above: Is Joseph Mickle Fox the father of golf in America? Below left: Harry R. Harvey (center) was at the founding of Foxburg and played regularly for more than 70 years.



Above: The original stone tee boxes are still intact. Below: Harvey and friends at the unveiling of the historic marker.

Mansion grounds near Foxburg...that in the year 1887 the said Joseph Fox offered the present site of the Foxburg Country Club links, rent free, and that golf has been played continuously on said links (enlarged from time to time) until the present time...that five holes were in play in the year 1887 and in the year 1888 the course was enlarged to nine holes." In a 1954 interview in the *Pittsburgh Post*, Harvey added, "I started playing golf in 1884 with young Joseph Fox when he brought a set of golf sticks home with him from Scotland and laid out a course around his father's summer home here. We started the club

in 1887, using a cow pasture, which we mowed ourselves with a scythe."

Several other senior residents also signed depositions that were notarized to support Harvey's statement. H. J. Crawford echoed his account; and as a traveling salesman of the era C. H. Adams added, "In 1888 I made the territory adjacent to Foxburg every 30 days...I passed a field on which a game new to me was being played. This I found to be the game of golf, and on several occasions I stopped to watch the players." C.A. Miller swore that "he attended Clarion State Normal School during the years 1887 and 1888 and made frequent trips on the narrow gauge railroad which passed the golf grounds of the Foxburg Country Club...and that during the spring vacation of 1888 he played golf on the Foxburg Country Club course with Mr. A. J. Dixon of Philadelphia."

Far and away, Foxburg retains more of its original nature than Dorset or St. Andrews. The Club still occupies the original golfing grounds, though expanded and improved by dedicated greenkeepers, and unlike the other two venerable courses, is open to daily fee play by the public. Together with the Hall of Fame it's a pilgrimage every appreciator of golf history must make.



St. Andrew's Golf Club

Thanks to the work of GCS members Peter Landau and Brian Sipro, as well as their predecessors as historians and curators at the Club, St. Andrew's history is well documented and preserved. And unlike Dorset and Foxburg, the supporting documentation of their legacy is clear and irrefutable.

Though we revere John Reid as the father of golf in America and the founder of St. Andrew's, the story begins with his friend and fellow native of Dunfermline, Scotland Robert Lockhart. Employed by Sweetser, Pembroke & Co., Lockhart made frequent trips to Scotland importing the fine linens manufactured there. He enjoyed procuring other items not previously available in America, and at one time in the mid-1880s he arrived at John Reid's house with lawn tennis racquets and tennis balls. They built a grass court on Reid's front lawn and established a tennis club, but the idea withered when Lockhart discovered the game had found its way to America a few years previous.

But in the late summer of 1887, Lockhart arrived at the golf shop of Old Tom Morris where he would allow the St. Andrews professional to direct him in the purchase of golf clubs and balls that were shipped back to America. Lockhart's son Sydney vividly recalls the day they were delivered. "I remember distinctly the morning that they arrived and the fun we had opening the box. There were some highly polished woods and a few shiny irons, together with two dozen gutta percha golf balls all packed in sawdust. One by one my father took out the clubs and explained their uses."

The Lockharts lived on the outskirts of New York City and adjourned to what is now Riverside Drive on a bright Sunday morning for a demonstration. "Father teed up the first little white ball and, selecting one of the long wooden clubs, dispatched it down the meadow. He tried all the clubs, and then we boys were permitted to drive some balls too." If Old Tom had informed Lockhart that Joseph Fox had been to see him three years earlier, perhaps the game would have gone no further. Instead, Lockhart turned the clubs over to Reid who was determined to get others interested in the new activity.

The first game of golf among Reid and his cronies occurred on February 22, 1888, in a cow pasture across the street from Reid's home in Yonkers-on-the-Hudson. Reid and John B. Upham demonstrated while Henry Tallmadge and three others looked on—all were intrigued by the possibilities. Occasional forays resulted but it wasn't until the fall that interest warranted the establishment of a formal organization.

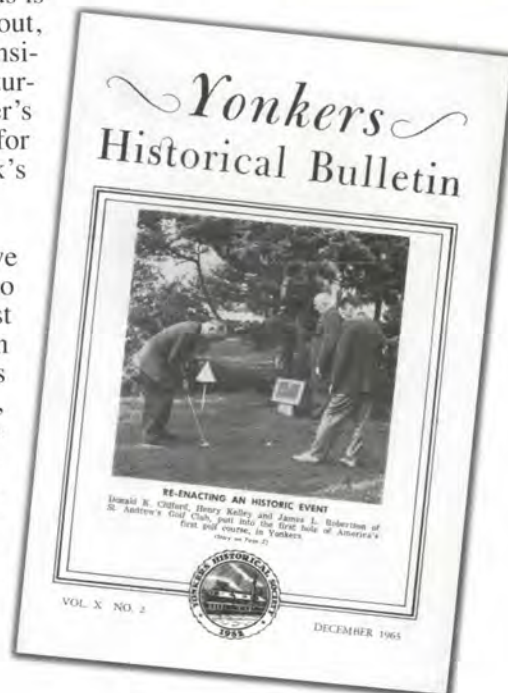
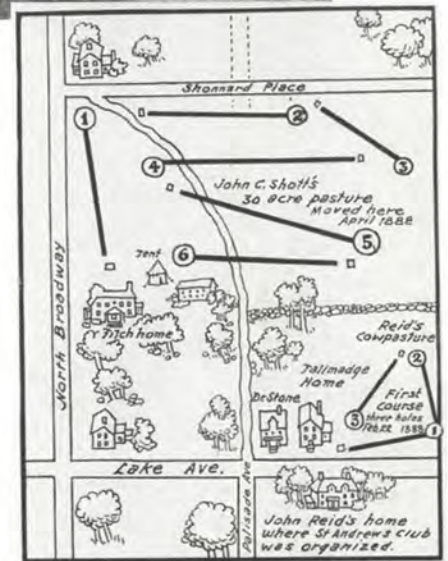
On Wednesday, November 14, 1888, Reid was joined by Tallmadge, Upham, Harry Holbrook and Kingman Putnam for a fivesome on the golf grounds before retiring to Reid's house for the customary après-golf activities. Reid was a Scot in every sense of the word and the appropriate dinner, libations and loudly-sung Scottish ballads were part of every evening. But on this particular night, Reid had another item on his docket, even before dinner was served. Reid wished to formalize their gathering by establishing what he believed was the first golf club in America.



After Reid was unanimously elected president, Upham was chosen as secretary and treasurer, and in his hand the minute book was written. Eight tenets were entered that day, the last stating, "The meeting then adjourned and partook of a very enjoyable supper by the hospitality of Mr. Reid when the future prospects were discussed and long prosperity of the club was drunk." When the new members were sufficiently lubricated, Mrs. Reid struck up the piano and the Scottish ballads began.

St. Andrew's is a wonderful place today. The clubhouse is filled with mementos from the past—be they one-of-a-kind photos, John Reid's red coat, a piece of the original apple tree or trophies from the earliest days. Several moves from the original site landed the club on a varied piece of terrain with considerable movement on nearly every hole. Jack Nicklaus is most responsible for today's layout, though it was installed with a sensitivity to an earlier time in architectural history. It's an excellent member's course and can also be fine tuned for competitive play in New York's sophisticated Met Region.

These are the facts as best we know them in May 2007. Who should be considered the oldest continually operated golf course in America? It is an issue that has been debated for at least 50 years, or ever since John English of the USGA got interested in the supporting documentation. In some ways I have just retraced his steps at these three terrific, and very different courses, and presented much of the same evidence that he uncovered. You make the call.



Top: The most famous picture in American golf history can be firmly dated due to the construction of Judge Theodore Fitch's house in the background. Above: H.B. Martin's depiction of the first two layouts near John Reid's house. Middle: Robert Lockhart brought the clubs that the founders used. Left: Recreating early golf for St. Andrew's 75th anniversary.

Playing with Hickory

Western Pennsylvania: Cradle of Golf in America

By Kevin Mendik

Western Pennsylvania is not often thought of as one of the cradles of American golf, but it should be. Oakhurst Links, St. Andrews in New York and the Dorset Field Club usually come to mind. However, just an hour north of Pittsburgh and Oakmont's lightning fast greens and USGA torturous rough lays the oldest continuously operating golf club in the United States: the Foxburg CC. The club was organized in 1887 on the present golfing grounds. Inside the clubhouse are several rooms which constitute the American Golf Hall of Fame (see inside front cover). This museum of golf history alone is worth the trip even if Oakmont isn't on the agenda. It includes numerous clubs and balls and many other fascinating items. Among the club collection is one club each from all six generations of McEwans, from 1770 to 1930. An antique Provost street lamp stands in the front of the clubhouse. It was given to the club by the city of St. Andrews, Scotland's Lord Mayor Provost and Town Clerk.

The Foxburg course, set on a hillside 300 feet above the Allegheny River, is one of few in the country that still has the concrete forms that used to hold the sand and water for making tees. There are several terrific cross bunkers, small and steep greens and plenty of up and down. Foxburg CC is a community in itself, with period homes lining the entrance drive.

A quick trip down the Allegheny River (preferably in a wooden canoe), and sixteen years later in time and along comes club founder and course architect H.C. Fownes with his vision at Oakmont. Unfortunately for the golf world, Oakmont was Mr. Fownes' single design. The site of this year's U.S. Open is listed on the National Register of Historic Places, which is a challenge considering the modern setup demanded by today's USGA. However, the course and certainly the clubhouse exude history.

Out on the course, virtually all the trees have been removed to give the course back its historic landscape. For its first 60 or so years, the course had remained largely treeless. But they gradually began to change the character of the course. They became the cause of the most bitter and divisive dispute in the club's history. The club's status as a National Historic Landmark included its golf course, a primary contributing feature being the historic landscape which was originally treeless. By the early 1990s with a pending U.S. Women's Open (1992) and U.S. Open (1994) on the way, a decision was made to begin removing the trees. This was no simple matter and involved considerable nighttime tree work in stealth mode. By

dawn, no trace of the removed tree or trees would remain. This went on until basically, it was discovered by those who preferred their trees to remain. In 1995, it was brought to a vote and there was a tie, so the cutting continued and today's golf landscape was as Mr. Fownes intended it to be. A motto today among like minded members regarding trees: "If it grows, it goes."

The grand clubhouse was designed and built in 1904 by Edward Stotz, a prominent architect who planned over 900 structures. He was responsible for the first fire proof school in Pittsburgh. Inside the clubhouse one is constantly reminded of the history of great competition that has occurred here. Twenty National Championships have been held at Oakmont, including seven previous U.S. Opens, more than any other course. Along with the extraordinary historical displays, the casual elegance is everywhere; shorts are allowed, jackets are not required, and it is not uncommon to see folks walking through carrying chilled mugs of beer. There are not only walls, but entire rooms dedicated to various past champions. Large aerial photos show the progression of trees onto the course and reveal the landscape before 1-76 cut its swath along the existing rail corridor.

There is a beautiful portrait of Mr. Fownes who would be amused that the pool is being covered up for the Open by the Media Center. The family had left the club in the late 1940s when the trend for many golf clubs was to add other sporting and social functions. Over the decades, more and more golf clubs have morphed into country clubs, and Oakmont is no exception, with tennis and paddle tennis courts, along with a fitness center. The pool was built in the early 1950s but the Fownes family saw it coming, and being golf purists, left the club. Even though the club boasts wonderful facilities other than the golf course, it is unlikely that many of today's members join for the pool and tennis.

One of the most interesting and unique displays of old clubs is in the grille room. The lattice-work is made up of hickory and early pyratone coated steel shaft clubs (left). Most are playable, and they are not fixed in place; but don't even think about it.

Most of the greens are original and although Mr. Fownes would be pleased with how well



the course has retained its original conditions, he would certainly feel trepidation when standing over a downhill put on a green stimping at 13. Fortunately for us, the sun was out and the rough was dry. Unfortunately for us the sun was out and the greens were hard and fast. Many a great shot hit the greens, but few held. Our group combined for one shot all day that hit the green and actually bit and checked back. The bunkers are graceful, deep and challenging. However, they were actually preferable than the rough, although I enjoyed only a handful of bunkers all day. That is due mostly to the fact that unless the ball landed in them on the fly, the rough would grab it and not let go. Considering that seascape-like fairways repelled many a drive hit down



The author makes a remarkable bunker recovery.

the middle, anytime we gazed across the course, much of what we saw were players and caddies wandering the rough in search of balls.

By the end of the day, however, the head on my trusted Hagen Iron Man had come a bit loose, given that any time I landed in the rough, I reached for it. By the last few holes, I used Mr. Hagen's concave wedge. Now banned for almost three quarters of a century, the club is great for U.S. Open rough, not to mention wet bunkers. The strategy at Oakmont for normal golfers (if we hickory players can be considered normal) is simple: get in the rough, get out the wedge. At the other end of the club spectrum, unlike Tiger, I had no qualms about reaching for the driver on the par three eighth hole, which plays at 288 from the tips. We played it at a modest 244, but my Tom Auchterlonie driver was the easy choice, although I am primarily an iron player. The newly refurbished club (thanks to Mr. Jensen) struck the ball pure, sounded great and my next shot was with the putter. I promptly putted it off the green and back in went the flag. I managed to make par, but not for lack of trying to mess it up. On the tenth hole, a wonderful downhill par four, all four of us hit the green from considerable distances, but none of our shots held. The steeply sloped green even repelled one of our next shots when the ball failed to reach the required ridge.

Not only are the greens fast, but they have terrific movement, with many putts breaking two or three times. My seasoned caddie, having evaluated a downhill 20-footer remarked simply: "it could go either way." For those who care, I was most pleased with one particular stat: I never four-putted.

Editor's Note: Randy Jensen has written a fabulous new book titled Playing Hickory Golf with chapters on the modern history of the game, how to select clubs and repair them, how to find a hickory swing, the mental game, some of his favorite hickory experiences, hickory tournament results and resources and contacts. Here is a brief excerpt.

Resetting a Hickory Shaft

This is one of the most common repairs performed on a hickory club and one that is essential in ensuring the long life of your hickory shaft. Virtually all original hickory shafted irons have had the heads work loose over time, and the few that are still tight should be reset anyway if you plan to play them because repeated play will loosen them as well. Hitting a head that is just very slightly loose will put a lot of additional pressure on the shaft tip, which is already a structurally weak point, and will sooner or later break the tip. Just hope you are not hitting over water when this happens!

All hickory clubs are pinned just below the top of the hosel and generally the pin runs parallel to your shot direction. Some pins are very difficult to see and you may try carefully scraping away some surface oxidation with a razor blade to reveal the pin's location. Look down from the top of the hosel with the club laying face down on a bench. You can also try heating the hosel to see if any smoke may reveal the pin opening—use wetted tissue around the shaft to prevent burning the wood. A magnifying glass may help.

If worse comes to worse and you have no idea where that pin is, you can find the likeliest location and tap that position with a 1/8" punch and small hammer. If you are correct, the tap will break loose the pin so you can spot it. You obviously may have to try several locations. Don't hit too hard or the hosel could be badly damaged. Slight dings will be filed away when the new pin is installed.

Once the pin is located, use your 1/8" punch and hammer the pin until it protrudes out the other side, then pull it out with vice grips. Normally the shaft will just fall out at this point. You will be re-installing the shaft the exact same way it came out, so I wrap a piece of masking tape around the bottom of the shaft and mark "top" and use arrows to point to the pin location on each side so I can get the shaft back in exactly as it came out.

Some heads still fit tight and a mild blow along the top edge of the club with a rubber hammer will knock the head right off. Of course, if the head was epoxied in place recently, you will need to use a torch applied to the hosel in a rotating fashion, to melt the epoxy to remove the head. Use a wetted tissue or toilet paper to protect the wood just above the hosel. Once the head is off, you clean out the inside of the clubhead with a round file.

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The American Golf Hall of Fame

Foxburg, Pennsylvania



In the 1950s, awareness developed that the Foxburg Country Club was the oldest continually operated golf course in America (see cover story). Much of the research to authenticate that belief was conducted by Mrs. Marcellin C. Adams, who not only uncovered newspaper stories of the early days, but also investigated the personal accounts of founder Joseph Mickel Fox and interviewed several of the remaining founders who signed sworn affidavits pertaining to the genesis of the club. That recognition culminated on June 20, 1955 when the State of Pennsylvania unveiled an historical marker at the golf course to celebrate the honor.

But Adams stimulated other members and friends to take the notoriety even farther. With only the USGA to celebrate golf's heritage, residents and friends of the Foxburg Country Club considered plans to erect an American Golf Hall of Fame, a concept originally advanced by Dr. Richard Vensel. Supporter Ken Christy took the next step on a visit to St. Andrews in Scotland during the summer of 1964. Christy met Laurie Auchterlonie, recently appointed honorary professional at the Royal and Ancient Golf Club of St. Andrews, who invited him to visit his shop and club manufacturing business. Informed of the plans afoot in Foxburg, Auchterlonie helped Christy purchase many original artifacts that are today still housed at the museum. They found feather balls, long-nosed clubs, hand-hammered gutties and original artwork that initiated the collection.



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Museum Visit

Continued from inside front cover

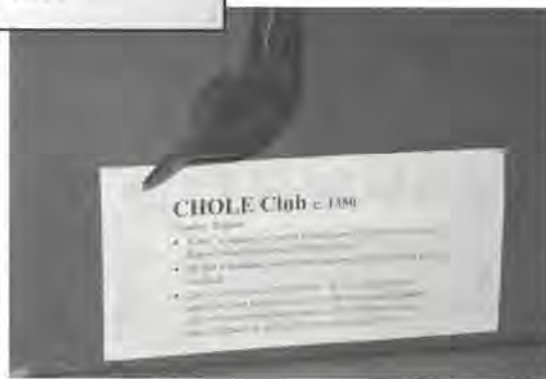
Returning to Foxburg, Christy secured the second floor of the cottage that Fox had built in 1908 to house the club's pro shop and meeting rooms. The three rooms were filled with items from Scotland and donations from American supporters. To help finance the project life memberships were sold for \$1 each and an executive board was established. Christy said, "The enthusiasm on all sides promises well for the success of the American Golf Hall of Fame. Golfers, both pro and amateur, have shown an eagerness to lend a hand."

Walter P. Johnstone, a golf pro who was born in St. Andrews and had immigrated to America in the early 1900s took an acute interest in the project. Johnstone "has been an invaluable aid in acquiring many valuable balls and clubs for the museum," wrote Rachael Newton of the *Butler Eagle*. "As an authority on early golf, he will authenticate and catalogue all exhibits."

With materials assembled, descriptions written and displays planned, the committee turned its attention to installing a group of important personas of golf as the first members of the Hall of Fame. While local supporters had conceptualized and launched the endeavor, larger contributors from the national stage were selected to head the Selection Committee. Lowell Thomas chaired a group that included Robert Trent Jones, Sr., George Ferrier, Herb Graffis, Joe Kirkwood, Carl Hogan and John Sawyer. They chose Harry Vardon, James Braid, J. H. Taylor, Francis Ouimet, Bobby Jones, Tommy Armour, Henry Cotton, Gene Sarazen, Walter Hagen, Byron Nelson, Chick Evans, Sam Snead, Joyce Wethered and Babe Zaharias as the first inductees. May 15, 1965 was announced as the day of dedication.

Laurie Auchterlonie and his wife came from St. Andrews to cut the ribbon that opened the doors of the American Golf Hall of Fame. First, a luncheon was served to 100 invited guests who then moved to the front lawn of the clubhouse. The Grove City Fuseliers, "wearing red jackets and trousers of Scottish plaid, marched and played, finally lining up on either side of the walk leading to the clubhouse," according to the May 19, 1965 issue of the *Butler Eagle*. "Kenneth A. Christy, president of the American Golf Hall of Fame Association, teed a celluloid golf ball to which was tied a string attached to a white ribbon stretched across the clubhouse steps. The ribbon was held by three lassies in Scottish kilties. Auchterlonie then approached with a golf club, took his stance and whacked the ball. The string yanked the ribbon, and thus the doors of the museum were opened to the public. The band played and marched in review."

Chief Hanging Feather of the Seneca Indian Nation placed headbands on Mr. and Mrs. Auchterlonie, making them honorary tribe members; and the Chief was presented with a Buchanan Tartan plaid scarf. Auchterlonie presented the museum with an original oil painting, a driving putter, a wooden putter and a gutta percha ball. A putting match was conducted on a sand green, built in front of the clubhouse to mimic the first greens installed on the Foxburg course, followed by a



long drive contest from the third tee and an 18-hole golf tournament. In the evening a ceremony took place to install the first honorees and Congressman Albert Johnson presented the Club with a copy of the U.S. House of Representatives Resolution 497, passed on August 2, 1965 that declared Foxburg as "the oldest golf course in continuous use in the United States."

It is unclear for how many years a similar ceremony was conducted. In 1966, Col. Otto Probst was the featured speaker and Joe Kirkwood gave an hour-long demonstration of his ball manipulation skills. The third annual in 1967 featured a return engagement by Probst and was attended by golf professionals Lew Worsham and Bob Toski. The efforts of all these prominent people established an enjoyable space that has remained virtually untouched in the 40-plus years since their initial work. And judging from the guest register, in recent years the American Golf Hall of Fame has not attracted the audience it deserves.

Three rooms are filled with original artifacts, and unlike installations at other institutions the descriptions are accurate and informative. One room contains a top hat full of feathers centering an explanation of the manufacturing of the feathery ball, together with many items from golf's earliest days. A second room explains how Fox brought to game to Foxburg, and its slow spread throughout America. The third room includes many American clubs of note with a special case holding the golf bag of Joe Kirkwood. The giant niblick, corkscrew-shafted driver and many other unusual devices that Kirkwood employed are on display, along with testaments to his genius.

Foxburg is in the rural northwest corner of Pennsylvania, about an hour-and-a-half north of Pittsburgh. Interstate 80 rambles by, providing easy access from the metropolitan centers of the East and Midwest. The town center is snug to the Allegheny River but without as much as a general store or other commercial establishments. The recently opened Foxburg Inn provides comfortable lodging, with the one dining option in town sufficient for hungry travelers.

The museum is housed on the second floor of Foxburg's clubhouse, overlooking the nation's oldest golf course on its original site. It is supported by donations and can use your help. This is just the kind of outpost the Golf Collectors Society should embrace: a non-commercial monument to the true spirit of the game, established by amateur enthusiasts to honor golf's heritage. Try to add a visit into your golfing travel plans.