

**A Chronicle of the
Philadelphia Section PGA and its Members
By Peter C. Trenham
The Leaders and The Legends
1916 to 1921**

The Leaders

Bill Byrne
Wilfrid Reid
Frank Sprogell
James R. Thomson

The Legends

Jim Barnes
Emmet French
George Kerrigan

Eddie Loos
Ben Nicholls

The Leaders

William C. “Bill” “Willie” Byrne

Bill Byrne was born in England to Irish parents in 1882 and his family immigrated to the United States in 1887. He grew up in the East Falls section of Philadelphia. Along with many other young boys from East Falls he got his start in golf caddying at the Philadelphia Country Club. He turned pro and served as a club maker under Ben Nicholls and James Harrison at the Country Club. Byrne worked at several clubs before settling in at the St. Davids Golf Club where he was the head professional from 1914 to 1927. He served on the national PGA executive committee during its first year in 1916. In December of 1921 he attended the founding meeting of the Philadelphia Section PGA and was a member of the organizing committee. Byrne could have held office in the Section but he declined saying that he would work for the Section in any way that he could be of assistance, but he did not wish to hold office. He was one of the most respected instructors in the Philadelphia area. Byrne also held golf professional positions in the Section at the Aronimink Golf Club, Delaware County Field Club, and the Overbrook Golf Club. In 1906 Byrne became the head professional at Aronimink where Johnny McDermott was then a 15-year-old caddy. Under Byrne’s tutelage McDermott’s game began to rapidly develop. Later McDermott would give Byrne credit for strengthening his game sufficiently to win the U.S. Open in 1911.



*Bill Byrne
PGA of America founder
Philadelphia PGA founder*



*Wilfrid Reid
PGA of America Founder
PGA of America VP 1920-1921
Philadelphia PGA Founder*

Wilfrid Ewart “Wilfie” Reid

Wilfrid Reid was born in Bulwell, England in 1884 and he became a protégé of Harry Vardon. He was the professional at Banstead Downs in England for ten years and a successful tournament player. In 1913 Reid visited America with Harry Vardon and Ted Ray where they played in a number of tournaments including the U.S. Open. In 1914 Reid immigrated to America to be a professional at the Seaview Golf Club and that year he finished fourth in the U.S. Open. He had moved to America at the suggestion of the DuPont family and in 1916 became the golf professional at the Wilmington Country Club. He was one of the original members of the PGA of America. In 1917 while the golf professional at Wilmington he was appointed to the national PGA Executive Committee as a vice president at large, a position he held for two years. In August 1920 he was elected vice-president of the PGA of America and he was reelected in 1921. In 1920 and 1921 he also held the office of secretary of the Southeastern Section PGA. That year in December of 1921 he attended the founding meeting of the Philadelphia Section PGA and was a member of the organizing committee. At a later time he was the president of the Michigan Section PGA. At various times he won the French, Dutch, German and Swiss opens. Reid was small of stature but not short of confidence. The border of his stationery, that he used to send George Izett of Bailey & Izett Inc. his customers’ golf club orders, listed so many of his accomplishments that there was very little room left for him to write his message. He was the professional at some of the country’s most prestigious golf clubs including Seminole Golf Club, Country Club of

Detroit, Wilmington, Seaview, and the Broadmoor Golf Club. In 1946 he returned to the Section as the professional at the Atlantic City Country Club for three years. Even with all this his greatest accomplishments were as a golf course architect. One of the courses that he designed, Indianwood Golf & Country Club in Michigan, hosted the 1989 U.S. Women's Open.

Frank T. Sprogel

Frank Sprogel was born in Philadelphia in 1895 and grew up in West Philadelphia on the same block with Johnny McDermott and Morrie Talman. They were introduced to golf as caddies at the Aronimink Golf Club, which was then in West Philadelphia. Sprogel worked as a professional at the Pocono Pines Golf Club, Philmont Country Club and in 1915 & 1916 he was the head professional at the Bon Air Country Club, which later became Llanerch Country Club. He left the Section in 1917. He was elected to the office of Secretary of the PGA of America in December 1941 and continued in that office through 1946. He was also a national vice president for five years and president of the Michigan Section for eight years. In 1957 he became the professional and general manager of the PGA Golf Club in Dunedin, Florida. In the winter of 1954 a few pro-golf salesmen had started showing their merchandise in the parking lot of the PGA Golf Club during one of the winter tournaments. By 1957 it had grown to the point that Sprogel decided to rent a tent and make it an organized show. The show became one of the PGA of America's largest revenue producers.



*Frank Sprogel
Secretary of the PGA
1942-1946*



*Jim Thomson
Won 1913 PA Open
PGA of America founder*

James Ramage "Jim" Thomson

Born in North Berwick, Scotland in 1881, Jim Thomson arrived from Scotland in 1905. Even though he was one of the best golfers in North Berwick he worked as a plasterer rather than a golf professional. There was more money in the plastering business than there was in being a golf professional. When he arrived in America he declared himself to be a golf professional for the first time. He went to work as an assistant professional at the Merion Cricket Club. His brother, Robert M. Thomson, had been the head professional at Merion from 1898 through 1904. Jim Thomson became the head pro at Merion in 1906 and he held the position through 1909. Thomson then held the head professional position at the Philadelphia Country Club from 1910 through 1920 and Overbrook Golf Club for 1921. He was a member of the first PGA of America Executive Committee in 1916 that elected the first national officers. That year he was selected as one of the national vice presidents of the PGA of America. The vice presidents were later called directors. In December of 1921 he attended the founding meeting of the Philadelphia Section PGA and was a member of the organizing committee. He also played quite well as he won the Pennsylvania Open in 1913, finished second once and third twice. He finished second in the Philadelphia Open in 1909 and three other times he was in the top four. In 1911 he finished third in the Met Open and second in the Eastern Professional Golfers' Association championship. While in Philadelphia he set two course records, a 67 at the Philadelphia Country Club and 65 at the Overbrook Golf Club. When he left the Section in 1921 he went to the Metropolitan Section as the pro at the Apawamis Club. In 1912 while playing in the Met Open at Apawamis he would have tied for fourth but after signing his card he realized that he had signed

for one stroke less than his score. He informed the committee and was disqualified but the tournament committee gave him a check for what a tie for fourth would have won. The members at Apawamis must have remembered Thomson as someone they would like to be their professional.

The Legends

James Martin "Jim" "Long Jim" Barnes

Jim Barnes was born in Lelant, Cornwall, England in 1886. Barnes turned pro at age 15 and became a member of the British PGA. He immigrated to the United States in 1906. Barnes was called "Long Jim" because he stood 6' 3" and was a long driver. In 1914 he came to the Whitmarsh Valley Country Club from Tacoma, Washington. He held the head pro position there until he left in early 1918 to become the professional at the Broadmoor Golf Club in Colorado. While at Whitmarsh he won the first PGA Championship in 1916. Barnes also won the next PGA Championship in 1919 as the tournament wasn't held for two years due to World War I and twice he lost in the finals to Walter Hagen. He won the 1921 U.S. Open, the 1925 British Open, three Western Opens, and the North



Jim Barnes
Won first 2 PGA Championships
1916 & 1919
Won 1921 U.S. Open
Won 1925 British Open

and South Open twice. In 1917 he won the Philadelphia Open and he finished second in the tournament in 1915. In November 1921 Barnes returned to win the Main Line Open, which the Philadelphia area pros put on just one month before they formed the Philadelphia Section. Earlier in 1921 he had returned to the British Isles as a member of an American professional team, which opposed the best golf professionals in Great Britain. Barnes wrote several golf instruction books. The book "Picture Analysis of Golf Strokes" was a classic. Eighty years later it was a prize possession of collectors of golf books. He made as much as \$20,000 a year from some of his pro jobs when the top professionals in the country were making about \$5,000. He had 20 victories on the PGA Tour after 1915. Barnes is in the PGA Hall of Fame and the World Golf Hall of Fame.

Emmet C. French

Emmet French was born in Philadelphia in 1887. His parents owned and lived on a farm that was purchased by the Merion Cricket Club officials and used in the construction of their famed East Course. He started his career in golf, by working in the locker room at Merion's original golf course in Haverford and he also caddied some. Whenever he had the opportunity he was out on the course working on his game. French began his professional career as an assistant at Merion in 1908. He was the professional

at the Country Club of York from 1913 through 1919. In 1922 he lost in the finals of the PGA Championship and he finished second in the 1925 Western Open. In 1919 and 1926 he won the Philadelphia Open and he won the 1924 Pennsylvania Open. French won the Ohio Open in 1922 with a score of 274 that was considered to be a world's record for 72 holes. In 1921 French was the captain of an American team of twelve professionals that lost to a team of Great Britain's best professionals at Gleneagles, Scotland. As the playing captain, he won one of his team's few points as he defeated Ted Ray. Again in 1926 he played on a ten man professional team that was soundly defeated by the British professionals at Wentworth, England. French was one of the few Americans to win points, winning half a point. Samuel Ryder sponsored the 1926 matches but there was no cup and they were not considered official.



Emmet French
International Team Captain
1921
RU 1922 PGA Championship
Won Philadelphia Open
1919 & 1926
Won 1924 Pennsylvania Open



George Kerrigan
Won twice on PGA Tour

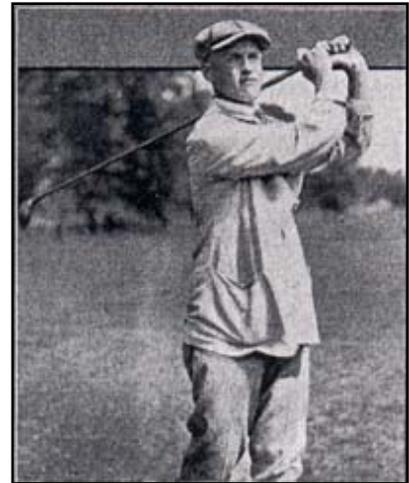
George E. Kerrigan

George Kerrigan was born in Massachusetts in 1899 and learned to play golf as a caddy at the Wollaston Golf Club. He turned pro in 1918. Kerrigan was the professional at the Northampton Country Club in 1919 and 1920. In 1922 he won the Florida Open, the St. Augustine Open and the Massachusetts Open. He won the Mass Open by eleven strokes. The two Florida tournaments would be the equivalent of today's PGA Tour events. In 1925 he won the Southern California Open and the next year he was the Southern California PGA champion. Kerrigan also had two second place finishes in other years, one of those being the 1924 Texas Open. He played in three U.S. Opens, a PGA Championship and the first Masters Tournament in 1934. His brother Tom Kerrigan was also a very successful playing professional.

Edward W. N. "Eddie" Loos

Eddie Loos was born in New York City in 1896 and learned to play at the Van Cortland Park Golf Course. He worked as an assistant at the Atlantic City Country Club, the Riverton Country Club and the Pocono Manor Country Club. In 1915 as the assistant professional at Pocono Manor Loos was runner-up in the Pennsylvania Open after playing 55 holes in one day. The 55 holes consisted of 36 holes of regulation play, an 18-hole playoff, and one sudden-death hole all on the same day. He was an assistant professional at the Philadelphia Cricket Club in 1916 and when Alex Duncan left for the Chicago Golf Club in late 1916 Loos took over as the head professional. In 1917 a substitute for the U.S.

Open called the Patriotic Open was played at the Whitemarsh Valley Country Club. Competing against the country's best players Loos finished third. Later that year he won the Shawnee Open by seven strokes against a very strong field. He left the Cricket Club to join the navy in 1918. After the war he hooked up with Jim Barnes for some exhibitions before moving to Chicago where he worked as a golf professional. He moved on from there to California where he won their state open in 1921. Loos was selected to play on a U.S. team that opposed Great Britain's team in 1921. The match against Great Britain was a forerunner to the Ryder Cup matches. Loos didn't play due to commitments at work and was replaced by Wilfrid Reid. In the 1920s he wrote several instruction articles for the American Golfer. The American Golfer was printed from 1908 to 1935 and was considered to be the best golf magazine of its time. In 1964 Charles Price edited the book The American Golfer that was a collection of the magazine's best articles. Three of the articles written by Loos were selected for the book. Loos had three wins and thirteen second place finishes on the PGA Tour after 1915. One of those second place finishes was to Ed Dudley in the 1931 Los Angeles Open.



*Eddie Loos
Won 1917 Shawnee Open
Lost playoff at 1915 PA Open
3rd in 1917 Patriotic Open*



*Ben Nicholls
Six top 10s in U.S. Open
Designed many courses*

F. Bernard "Ben" Nicholls

Ben Nicholls was born in Dover, England in 1877. He was the brother of Gil Nicholls. Ben Nicholls designed golf courses in Europe and Africa and he worked as a golf professional all over the world. He designed the first golf course in Japan and a public course in Detroit. At the age of 17 he was hired to design a course in France. He was noted for his taste in dress and his ability as a mimic. Ben was the professional at the Philadelphia Country Club in 1899 and the Whitemarsh Valley Country Club in 1912 and 1913. He was at the Wilmington Country Club with his brother Gil in 1914. In 1915 and 1916 he was the head professional at the LuLu Country Club. As the professional at LuLu, he attended the December 1915 meeting of Philadelphia area golf professionals who had met to form a Philadelphia Professional Golfers' Association. Nicholls had six top ten finishes in the U.S. Open and tied for tenth in the 1909 British Open. In early 1900 Harry Vardon was in the states for an exhibition tour during which he only lost two head to head matches and both were to Ben Nicholls. One of the matches was played in Ormond, Florida on a nine-hole course that was almost one hundred percent sand with raised clay greens. In early 1916 he wrote ten articles about his career for the Philadelphia Public Ledger's Sunday editions. Nicholls and Willie Anderson are buried in the same cemetery, which is near Chestnut Hill.

Jack Fowler "Jock" Hutchison, Frederick "Freddy" Robertson McLeod, John Douglas "J. Douglas" Edgar

Hutchison, McLeod and Edgar were members of the Southeastern Section but didn't work in the regions that later made up the Philadelphia Section. Hutchison was in Pittsburgh, McLeod was in Washington D.C. and Edgar worked in Atlanta. They were all nearly the same age and world class golfers. McLeod and Hutchison were born in Scotland in 1882 and 1884 and Edgar was born in England in 1884. Hutchison won the 1920 PGA, 1921 British Open, 1917 Patriotic Open, 1920 Western Open and two PGA Seniors' Championships. Hutchison also finished second in two U.S. Opens, lost in the final of a PGA and won the Pennsylvania Open. McLeod won the 1908 U.S. Open, the first Shawnee Open in 1912 and the second Pennsylvania Open in 1912. McLeod was the runner up in the 1919 PGA. Edgar won the 1914 French Open, two straight Canadian Opens in 1919 and 1920 and he was the runner up to Hutchison in the 1920 PGA. All three were members of the first international team that traveled to Scotland in 1921 to play against a British team of professionals, but Edgar wasn't allowed to play because he wasn't a naturalized citizen. This was a forerunner to the Ryder Cup. Hutchison and McLeod are members of the PGA Hall of Fame.

