

The Golf Chronicles

Golf Stories from the Pennsylvania Heartland

Byron Nelson
Reading CC Pro
1937-39



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The Curtis Cup Emerges

Although the 1930 team matches between the U.S. and British women were not as formal as championship play, plans were under way to establish an international women's golf competition. In 1927, Misses **Harriot** and **Margaret Curtis** donated a trophy for a regular series of matches between the U.S. and Britain. The trophy was inscribed, "To stimulate friendly rivalry among the women golfers of many lands."

Harriot won the U.S. Amateur Championship in 1906 and Margaret in 1907, 1911 and 1912.

In 1931, the United States Golf Association and the British Ladies Golf Union sanctioned the first Curtis Cup to be played in 1932. The United States won the first matches, 5 ½ to 3 ½ at Wentworth Golf Club, England.

Many of the players who participated in the 1930 matches would play in the Curtis Cup. **Glenna Collett** (1934, '36, '48 and '50) and **Edith Quier** (1954 and '56) were Curtis Cup team captains for the U.S.

Glenna's team won all four: 6½ to 2½ at Chevy Chase Club, Md., in 1934; a 4½ to 4½ tie to retain the cup at King's Course, Gleneagles, Scotland, in 1936; 6½ to 2½ at Royal Birkdale in 1948; and 7½ to 1½ at the Country Club of Buffalo in 1950.

Edith's team won, 6 to 3, in 1954 at Merion Cricket Club, Ardmore, Pa. and lost, 5 to 4, in 1956 at Prince's Golf Club, Sandwich, England.

Daisy Ferguson, who defeated Edith Quier by 1-up in the quarter-final round of the 1930 British amateur championship, was captain of the British team in 1958 where her team retained the cup on a 4½ to 4½ tie at Brae Burn Country Club, West Newton, Mass.

The U.S. has won the Curtis Cup 32 times to 10 for the Great Britain and Ireland team.



Glenna Collett led the U.S. team against the British in 1930.

This is another in a series of Golf Chronicles articles about **Edith Quier**, Berks County's first national and international golf star. Stories about Miss Quier appeared in *The Golf Chronicles* Nos. 91, 92, 93, 94, 95, 96 and 109.

The U.S. Invades Britain

Edith Quier completed the 1929 golf season ranked among the top 10 women golfers in America. An article in the *Reading Times*, July 10, 1929, reported that she was looking at the possibility of becoming the first Reading-area golfer to compete in a British tournament. Miss Quier and a number of American women were invited to play in the 1930 British Ladies' Golf Championship. Among those invited were **Glenna Collett**, **Maureen Orcutt**, **Helen Hicks**, **Dorothy Campbell Hurd** and **Helen Payson**. An American had never won the British championship.

Miss Quier told the *Times* that she had not made definite plans to compete in England but leaned heavily to making the trip. The *Times* noted that she was playing the best golf of her career as evidenced by a final-round appearance in the Buffalo invitational.

On April 9, 1930, the Associated Press reported that **Edith Quier** accepted **Glenna Collett's** invitation to join the United States team that would play a series of matches against a British team May 1 at Sunningdale Golf Club in England.

The competition was set up to accommodate 10 players on each side. Miss Collett had communicated to **Molly Gourlay**, British captain, her desire to have more matches so players would have the international experience.

"Perhaps we could agree to play 10 singles and eight foursomes," said Miss Collett. "Certainly I hope so, for the response to my invitation has been so sweeping that I am anxious for all of our girls to get a chance to play in the matches which, of course, are entirely informal. We are paying our own expenses and there is no weight of authority behind us.

"I have been amazed at the enthusiasm. I have gone over several times by myself, so I thought it would be a good idea to have two teams of women to play before the championship and then I would have company. I thought six might agree to go and perhaps even eight.

"So I sent invitations to about 40 women and nearly half of them have replied that they would go and play on the team. Of course all of them will also compete in the championships beginning May 12."

The championship she referenced was the Ladies' British Amateur Open Golf Championship that began on May 12 at Formby Golf Club, near Liverpool. The word 'open' indicated that the event was open to all golfers, regardless of their country of residence. Only Great Britain residents were eligible for the British closed championship.

On Monday, April 21, 1930, Glenna Collett scheduled a practice session for the American team at Knollwood Country Club, White Plains, N.Y. The event was much less of a success than Miss Collett would have liked.

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According to **Ralph Trost**, writing in the *Brooklyn Daily Eagle* on April 22, the cold, blustery weather was not conducive to good golf but it heralded things to come. The wind had a nasty sting, numbing hands and feet, just the sort of weather the players could expect in England. A further disturbance for the players was the format. Americans were not accustomed to Scotch foursome, or alternate stroke, golf.

Although cards were not kept, Trost reported that the team of Collett and **Marian Bennett** scored 96, the day's best round. He also noted that **Helen Hicks**, **Virginia Van Wie** and **Edith Quier** did not play because, he opined, they had so many clothes to buy for the upcoming trip to England. Trost proved prophetic when he predicted a victory for the British ladies over their American counterparts.



U.S. team members wave farewell aboard the *Berengaria* as they departed New York on April 22. From the left, Mrs. O.S. Hill, Marian Bennet, Glenna Collett, Bernice Wall and Fritzi Stifel.

The American team departed from New York the evening of April 22 aboard the S.S. *Berengaria*, as reported by the Associated Press. Edith Quier was accompanied by her mother, **Mrs. Edwin Quier**.

They almost were forced to leave their captain, Glenna Collett, on shore. The morning of the sailing, she discovered that her passport was two days from its expiration date. She got her renewal, but only after a hectic day of phone calls to Washington, D.C., and waiting in the passport office in New York for her new document. Not until 5:00 p.m. was Miss Collett sure that she would make the voyage.

Coincidentally, the ship also carried Mrs. **Helen Wills Moody**, American, French and British tennis champion. Mrs. Moody was embarking on an extensive tennis tour of England and France. She would defend her French title in Paris beginning May 19 and then lead the United States Wightman Cup team against the British team at Wimbledon June 13 and 14. She would then defend her British title beginning June 22.

The American golfers had three scheduled events. They were to play matches against a team of British amateurs at Sunningdale May 1; they would compete in the British amateur championship at Formby beginning May 12 and they would play matches the French team in Paris.

The trip was bitter-sweet for Miss Collett because she would not renew her rivalry with England's greatest player. The woman considered the world's best golfer, **Joyce Wethered**, had announced that she was withdrawing from tournament golf. The two had met previously in the British amateur tournament. In 1925 at Troon, Scotland, Miss Withered won, 4 and 3, in the quarter-final round. She defeated Miss Collett in the 36-hole championship match at St. Andrew's in 1929, 3 and 1, after trailing 5-down after 18 holes.

"I'll never forget either of those matches," Miss Collett said. "It's hard to define just what Joyce Wethered has. It's a certain knack, a kind of genius."

When asked if she played more of a "man's game", Miss Collett replied, "No. She is a lot more graceful than any man."

Commenting on Miss Wethered's retirement, Glenna said, "The galleries got to her, I guess and she grew tired of the demands made on her. And so I don't ever expect to have another chance at her. But I would like to."

Joyce Wethered—she became Lady Heathcoat-Amory in 1937—won the British amateur in 1922, 1924, 1925 and 1929.

The 16 Americans were set to meet a team of 10 Britons.

"My idea is for our best 10 to play the English team in morning foursomes," Miss Collett explained. "In the afternoon, six of our players will drop out and the six who did not play in the morning will get their chance in singles matches."

All was ready at Sunningdale. The greens had been roped off for gallery control. Spectators would not pay admission but they were expected to buy a program book to support local charities.

Neither team had extensive practice opportunities. The American team arrived the day before and had only one round to learn the course. The British team had also not practiced on the course.

The American team stumbled in its first international team matches against British women amateurs. The home squad prevailed, 8 to 6 with one tie. The British team expressed surprise at their victory, having watched the Americans in the practice round the day before and witnessing their shot-making skill.

The teams battled to a tie in morning foursomes matches, each side winning two matches with one all square. The British won in singles by 6 to 4 to secure the victory. Most surprising were losses by three of America's top players, **Glenna Collett**,

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Helen Hicks and **Virginia Van Wie**. **Maureen Orcutt** won her match, 4 and 3, against **Mrs. J.B. Watson**, the Scottish champion. **Edith Quier** lost to **Dorothy Pearson**, 2 and 1. Miss Quier did not play in the morning matches.

In the battle of team captains, Miss Gourlay defeated Miss Collett by one hole. Glenna led by 2-up with six to play but she could not match her opponent's all-4 finish. Miss Collett holed a 20-foot putt for birdied 3 on the 17th hole to stave off defeat but only temporarily. Matching 4's on the final hole gave Miss Gourlay the win. Each player carded medal scores of 75 on the challenging 6,300 yard course.

The American's were vexed by the tricky greens. **Helen Hicks** in particular lost because her opponent, **Jean McCullough**, was the superior putter.

Maureen Orcutt was one of America's leading amateur golfers, winning championships from the 1920s to the '60s. She had her greatest success in the Eastern Amateur, winning a record seven titles between 1925 and 1949. Her great frustration was the U.S. amateur; she advanced to the championship match once, only to lose to England's **Pam Barton**.

She was also a journalist, being a correspondent for *Golf Illustrated*, the country's largest-circulation golf publication of the era. Further, she was the second female to work as a sports writer at the *New York Times*.

Her talents as a championship golfer and writer provided her a unique perspective for chronicling the game, especially for the tournaments in which she played.



Maureen Orcutt was a golf champion and a renowned journalist.

Writing in the June 1930 issue of *Golf Illustrated*, Maureen Orcutt provided her take on the international matches between the U.S. and the British teams played May 1.

The Americans disembarked at Southampton then traveled by train to London, arriving at Waterloo station. A cab ride later, they arrived at the Strand Palace Hotel only to find they had no rooms. With the help of the Ladies Golf Union, the U.S. team was housed in a suitable hotel.

She told of the difficulties **Molly Gourlay**, the British captain, had in selecting the home team. Members of the British public sent numerous anonymous letters to Miss Gourlay expressing disappointment of several omissions. As a result, the captain added **Diana Fishwick**, a nineteen-year-old star in the making, and **Doris Park**, daughter of the late **Willie Park, Jr.**

Here's Berks County connection. **Willie Park Jr.**, a native of Scotland, designed the golf course at Berkshire Country Club. Willie, Jr. won the British Open Championship in 1887 and 1889. His father, **Willie, Sr.**, won the first Open championship in 1860 and collected wins in 1863, 1866 and 1875. Willie Sr's younger brother, **Mungo**, won the Open in 1874.

Miss Orcutt lamented the lack of practice time the Americans had on the Sunningdale golf course. The players had only one full day to learn the course. Miss Orcutt would have preferred up to four days to unlock Sunningdale's secrets. She was especially candid in her observation that the U.S. players struggled on the fast, undulating greens. Poor putting, she wrote, cost the team several matches.

Two examples of woeful putting stand out. **Helen Hicks** missed a 15-inch putt that would have won a hole; she would lose, one down, to **Jean McCullough**. **Mrs. Leo Federman** suffered 10 three-putt greens in the 14 holes played and lost 6 and 4 to Miss Fishwick.

The matches were played in what Miss Orcutt described as a magnificent day as far as the weather was concerned. But not so magnificent was the outcome for the American team.