



The Golf Chronicles

The story of golf at Reading Country Club and in Berks County



Number 23 • October 28, 2015



Members were invited to a New Year's Eve gala on December 31, 1924.

Celebrating 90 Years

We meander into the final quarter of 2015. What better time to celebrate the 90th anniversary of the opening of Reading Country Club's 18-hole golf course in October 1925!

There is no traditional anniversary symbol or gift for 90 years, probably because precious few 90th anniversaries are observed. Sapphire is the traditional gift for 45 years, so let's call RCC's 90th a Double Sapphire celebration.

The word for 90 years is nonagennial, and the official color is, well, who cares.

With that preface, let's see what was going on at the club in 1925.

First pro. By 1925, Jimmy Young was in place as RCC's first head golf professional. Young learned the game beginning at age 13 as a caddy at Carnoustie Golf Club in his native Scotland. He later became an apprentice club maker. He came to the United States in 1914 as an assistant at Aronomink Golf Club. Following service in the U.S. Army, he resumed his golf career at Atlantic City Country Club and, after that, at Wildwood Country Club. He then moved to RCC. Young was preceded by Byron Nelson in 1937. After his tenure at RCC, Young became head professional at Maple Dale Country Club, Dover, Del. Jimmy Young died November 7, 1941, while still serving the golfers at Maple Dale.

January 1 – Club members welcomed 1925 with a gala New Year's Eve formal. Dancing was followed by a midnight supper. Cost was \$2.50 per person.

April 15 – At the annual meeting of Reading Country Club's stockholders attended by 125, the membership learned that an extension to the "locker house" would be completed within the month, adding 125 lockers; 11 new bridges with concrete bases were being built over the Antietam Creek running through the grounds; and three new members had been elected, bringing the total to enrollment to 413. The members enjoyed a "fine platter luncheon."

June 21 — More than 40 golfers participated in RCC's sweepstakes tournament on Saturday afternoon. E.D. Hunter won with a net 70, the same score as Dr. A.L. McDowell. Hunter won first prize on a coin toss. The entry fee was a golf ball. Hunter won 20 balls, Dr. McDowell 12 and C.L. Miller won 8 balls with a net 71. Dr. McDowell and Howard Freese tied for low gross with 87.

June 28 — Members of the Reading High School Class of 1905 held their first reunion in 12 years at RCC.

July 6 — RCC's Independence Day lottery tournament was a big success, with some three-score of the devotees of the ancient Scottish game, men and women, teeing off on the links by the side of Philadelphia Pike. The players were divided into four classes, three for men and one for women, based on their medal play score. Class A scores were from 80 to 100, Class B from 101 to 115 and Class C 116 and above. Winners were determined by a blind draw after the scores were turned in. Robert Ferguson (92) won Class A; Fred Hertwig (111) won Class B, Oliver Ginn (118) won Class C and Mrs. Fred Hertwig (62) won Class D. Low gross scores were turned in by Sylvester Weiss, 89, and John Shouder, 90. In the women's 9-hole tournament, the winners were Mrs. Frank Nistle and Mrs. Sylvester Weiss, each turning in a score of 55.



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Joe Kirkwood, Sr., brought his golf trick-shot show to RCC in 1925.

Tricks of the Trade

In 1920, Joe Kirkwood, Sr., a 23-year-old Australian, won the Australian and New Zealand opens and the New Zealand PGA Championship. He played in the U.S. for the first time 1921 and moved to the Philadelphia area in 1923.

An accomplished player, he found his trick-shot show more lucrative than tournament golf.

Pete Trenham, the [historian](#) of the Philadelphia PGA Section, considers Kirkwood the first of the great trick-shot artists and maybe the best of all time. Kirkwood traveled the world putting on his show, appearing frequently with with **Gene Sarazen** and **Walter Hagen**.

Kirkwood won 13 PGA tour events, including three in a row in Texas in 1924 by a total of 28 strokes. At Corpus Christi he won by 16, a tour record he shares with **Sam Snead** and **Bobby Locke**. The winner of the Australian PGA receives the Kirkwood Cup.

His son, **Joe, Jr.**, played in the 1949 Reading Open at RCC and 1951 at Berkleigh CC.

July 21 — The Greens Committee, Dr. Wayne L. Shearer, chairman, announced that 14 holes were open for play. The remaining four holes were expected to be open by fall.

August 2 — Reading Country Club's golf team lost to the Brookside Country Club team, 19 ½ to 4 ½. The match at Brookside was played in foursomes, with the Nassau scoring system: one point for winning the front nine, one point for winning the back nine and one point for winning the 18-hole match.

August 30 — The visiting Brookside Country Club team defeated the host Reading Country Club golfers 13 ½ to 10 ½ in a match played over Reading's 9-hole course. This was the third of five scheduled matches, Brookside having won the previous two. Howard Freese, RCC, posted the low score with an 82. R.C. Storh, Brookside, was second with an 85.

September 6 — Reading Country Club's Greens Committee announced a men's and women's sweepstakes as the feature of the Labor Day program at the new golf course. On Sunday, September 12, the RCC golf team will travel to Pottstown to meet the Brookside team for the fourth in a series of interclub matches. Play in the Frank Tyack Cup (Tyack owned a jewelry store at 760 Penn Street, Reading) competition will begin on September 20 with an 18-hole qualifying round. The cup is valued at \$150 and must be won three times to be retained as permanent property.

Frank Tyack was quite the cup donator. He provided a trophy for the winner of the relay race in the annual Reading High School interscholastic track and field meet (*Reading Eagle*, May 29, 1921). The event attracted more than 200 competitors from Bethlehem, Birdsboro, Boyertown, Cheltenham, Coatesville, Collegeville, Germantown, Harrisburg, Lansdale, Norristown, Ontelaunee, Phoenixville, Pottstown, Reading, West Chester and West Reading. Tyack also donated a trophy awarded to the bridge champion of the Wyomissing Club (*Reading Eagle*, January 18, 1935; January 8, 1937; January 9, 1938). Frank Tyack died at age 80 on March 26, 1938.

September 27 — A. Lincoln Frame, RCC president, announces the formation of the Reading Riding Academy on club grounds. The club contracts with Mr. and Mrs. Frederick W. Hannon to open the stable. Mr. Hannon was master at the Detroit Riding and Hunt Club.

October 6 — More than 125 members of the Kiwanis Club played in the state championship of the Kiwanis Club of Pennsylvania at RCC. The tournament coincided with the Kiwanis' state convention held in Reading, October 5 through 7.

October 13 — Joe Kirkwood, renowned professional, entertained golfers at RCC with his trick-shot artistry and played an exhibition match. He also gave a talk on the game of golf.

October 17 — An estimated 1,200 spectators, including many of the fair sex, attended the Autumn Leaf Horse Show and Gymkhana, presented by the Reading Riding Academy on the RCC grounds. Visitors from Pottstown, Philadelphia, Phoenixville, Lebanon, Norristown, Allentown and Bethlehem were noticed in the large crowd. Competition featured seven saddle classes and four gymkhana events. The program, Berks County's first horse show in "many years," attracted 48 thoroughbreds. Because of wet and slippery going caused by heavy rains, the jumping competition for saddle horses was cancelled. Handsome silver cups with the coveted blue ribbon were awarded to the class winners.



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Jimmy Young, a Scot, was RCC's first head golf professional.

October 19 — Ray Dengler won medalist honors in club championship qualifying with a round of 46-45—91. Harry Maurer was second with 45-48—93. Ernest J. Poole, who won RCC's first club championship in 1924, did not defend his title.

October 22 — Fred Krug was disqualified from club championship play following his first-round 2-and-1 victory over William Schrader. The disqualification was relative to Krug playing a lost ball on the 15th hole.

November 2 — The final match in RCC's club championship scheduled for Sunday, November 1 was postponed until Tuesday, November 3 because the snow-covered course was deemed unplayable. Ray Dengler and Harry Maurer were scheduled to meet in the 36-hole match.

November 4 — Harry Maurer defeated Ray Dengler, 7-and-6, to win the first club championship contested over RCC's 18-hole course. Maurer won a handsome trophy and had his name engraved on the Reading Country Club Cup, a perennial trophy. Maurer had Dengler 3-down, shooting 40 on the first 9 holes. He led 5-up after 18 holes, with a matching 40 on the second 9. Dengler shot 42-42—84 for the first 18. Maurer closed out the match on the 30th hole with a winning 20-foot putt. Maurer finished runner-up to Ernest J. Poole in RCC's first club championship in 1924.

November 27 — More than 500 spectators enjoyed a Thanksgiving Day horse show at the RCC Riding Academy.

December 18 — One fireman was overcome by smoke as fire in the RCC clubhouse caused an estimated \$2000 in damage. [Click here](#) to read about the fire in *A Burning Issue, The Golf Chronicles #20*.

And if you must know, it's the color purple.