

# The New York State Golf Association

The history of the New York State Golf Association has been among the most interesting in the United States. Given the state's outsized role in the beginning of golf in the U.S., one would expect that the NYSGA to have been right there at the beginning. But it took three decades and a high-profile nudge for New York to form its own governing golf association.

The American golf boom teed off in the 1880s in various parts of the country. Like ripples caused by pebbles tossed across a pond, golf expanded first in the Northeast and Middle Atlantic states and made its way across the country.

Nowhere were those footholds more solid than in New York, with pockets of golf blooming on Long Island, outside New York City and in a few cities and towns throughout the state.

By 1894, golf had graduated beyond a fad to 50 clubs in the entire country and had attracted a clientele willing to invest fortunes in time and resources to grow the game. With help primarily from golf professionals — almost exclusively immigrant Scots and Englishmen — who sensed the sweet smell of opportunity, the game started to take hold.

The United States Golf Association (USGA) was formed that year in Manhattan and started holding its men's amateur and open championships. Golf clubs, public courses and golf associations were popping up across the country, holding championships, organizing team matches, devising handicaps and providing a structure for the growth of the game.

However, by 1920 the Metropolitan Golf Association, with a multi-state view of its role, had emerged as a premier regional golf association and assumed a leading role in New York's part in the golf boom. There were other associations and loose alliances in pockets of the state, but nothing rose to a level of governance. New York was, therefore, one of the few states at that time without its own golf association or championship.

It took an early 1923 column by Grantland Rice, generally regarded as America's premier sportswriter, with an assist by Walter J. Travis, a leader of the Garden City Golf Club and proud disruptor of the already staid world of golf, to get things going. Rice loudly opined in Travis' American Golfer magazine that New York state should have its own state association and championship. He followed that up with calls to prominent New York golfers.



# 1923 2023



Invitations went out to 150 clubs across New York, describing an association whose objective would be to “foster closer and more intimate relations in and among the great body of golfers in this state than is now possible.”

That Aug. 9, at New Hartford's Yahnundasis Golf Club, delegates from across New York unanimously voted to form the NYSGA, and — wasting no time — hold the first men's championship later that year.

Travis and Rice's home club, Garden City, one of the nation's most respected courses, offered to be the site of the late October match-play championship.



Grantland Rice

## The first 100 years of the NYSGA were under way.

# The birth of NYSGA

## Officers in 1923

Sherrill Sherman, Utica – President

Irving S. Robeson, Rochester – 1st Vice President

Ganson Depew, Buffalo – 2nd Vice President

Don M. Parker, Garden City – Secretary-Treasurer

**Executive Committee:** John M. Ward, Garden City; Grantland Rice, New York City; John F. Nash, Syracuse; Richard B. Emmett, Schenectady; Gardiner White, Glen Cove; Alfred Bourne, Garden City; Clarence Wheeler, Rochester; and Harry Davis, Buffalo.



Ganson Depew of Buffalo, an early leader of the NYSGA.



Yahundasis Golf Club in New Hartford, the founding site of the NYSGA.

## Meeting Called at Utica To Organize a New York State Golf Association

By GEORGE TREVOR.

**S**HERRILL SHERMAN, Utica's indefatigable golf enthusiast, is heading a committee which has for its object the organization of a New York State Golf Association. Notwithstanding that golf clubs near the metropolis are already affiliated with the Metropolitan Association, Mr. Sherman believes there is a real need for a body which shall embrace the golfing resources of the entire Empire State and bring the metropolitan clubs into more intimate touch with the clubs situated near Buffalo, Rochester, Utica, Albany, Schenectady, etc. We are disposed to agree with the man who has done more than any other individual to promote the welfare of the royal and ancient game in that populous and pleasant vast sweep of territory which we provincial inhabitants of Bagdad-on-the-Subway like to call "up-State."

### Why State Body Is Needed.

Admitting that the district bodies, such as the Westchester, Long Island and, to some extent, the New Jersey golf associations are of necessity extremely local in scope, there would seem to be a very real place in the golfing firmament for a powerful organization that would link up all the golf clubs in this the greatest of States. Surely if lesser States can support golf associations New York owes it to the game to unite her golfing sons in an alliance worthy of her dignity.

The founders of the New York State Golf Association do not propose to have their organization conflict in any way with the efficient Metropolitan Association or lesser bodies; but rather intend that the "big league" shall work with the other associations for the mutual good of all.

### Annual Get-Together.

Mr. Sherman believes that it would be a marvelous thing for golf to have an annual New York State "get-together" tournament, wherein golfers from Buffalo, New York City and all points in between would meet in friendly competition. The promoters vision a State championship which would come to hold the importance of a miniature National meeting. There are plenty of minor golf events of local interest on the calendar right now, but all too few tournaments of major importance that attract players from a distance and encourage that interchange of ideas that alone insures progress.

In order to launch the projected New York State organization, Mr. Sherman has called a meeting at the Yahundasis Golf Club at Utica on Thursday, Aug. 9, to which representatives of all golf clubs in the State are cordially invited.

The following letter, sent to the respective club secretaries, is self-explanatory:

### Sherman's Letter.

"It is proposed to organize the New York State Golf Association, to include every golf club of the State, more particularly outside the Metropolitan District. The purpose is to regulate and promote the sport under the auspices of an association that will be closely in touch with the aspirations of the New York State golfers. It is intended to foster closer and more intimate relations in and among the great body of golfers in this State than is now possible and create an opportunity for an annual meet which will have

official sanction as a State championship, as this new association will be organized with the full approval and support of the United States Golf Association.

"The subscribers are heartily in favor of such an association. They have voluntarily associated for the purpose or bringing about a meeting of the representatives of some of the more active clubs to perfect an organization and define its scope, purposes and by-laws tentatively.

"It is proposed to have a meeting at 8 p. m., Thursday, Aug. 9, 1923, at the Yahundasis Golf Club, Utica, N. Y. This date and place has been selected because of its central location and the fact that the Fifteenth Annual Tournament of the Yahundasis Golf Club will take place at that time. As there will normally be a very representative number of golfers there, the nucleus of a successful meeting is assured.

### Idea Started Last Winter.

"Some preliminary steps were taken last winter and this matter brought to a formal head at the tournament of the Rochester Country Club in June when upon motion duly proposed, seconded and carried, the following committee was elected and instructed to proceed to take the necessary steps to complete the organization of the State association.

"In organizing this State association, there is no intent to interfere with any of the district associations or smaller leagues, but to have a larger organization working with the other organizations in every way for the mutual good of all.

"This letter is being sent to some two hundred and fifty golf clubs of New York State for their consideration of this proposed plan. Replies outlining your club's position regarding the formation of the association should be made to Sherrill Sherman, Chairman, Utica, N. Y.

"If your club is to be represented by a delegate at this organization meeting, please advise Sherrill Sherman, Utica, N. Y., time of arrival and the name of your delegate and he will be met and taken care of. If he desires to play in the Yahundasis Golf Club Tournament Aug. 9, 10, 11, plan on arriving Wednesday and send entry to Sherrill Sherman, Utica, N. Y.

"Organization Committee, New York State Golf Association, Sherrill Sherman, Chairman, Ganson Depew, Irving S. Robeson, John F. Nash, Richard S. Emmett, Don M. Parker, Secretary.

Brooklyn Daily Eagle, August 1923.

# 1923 through 1929 A Delayed but Successful Start

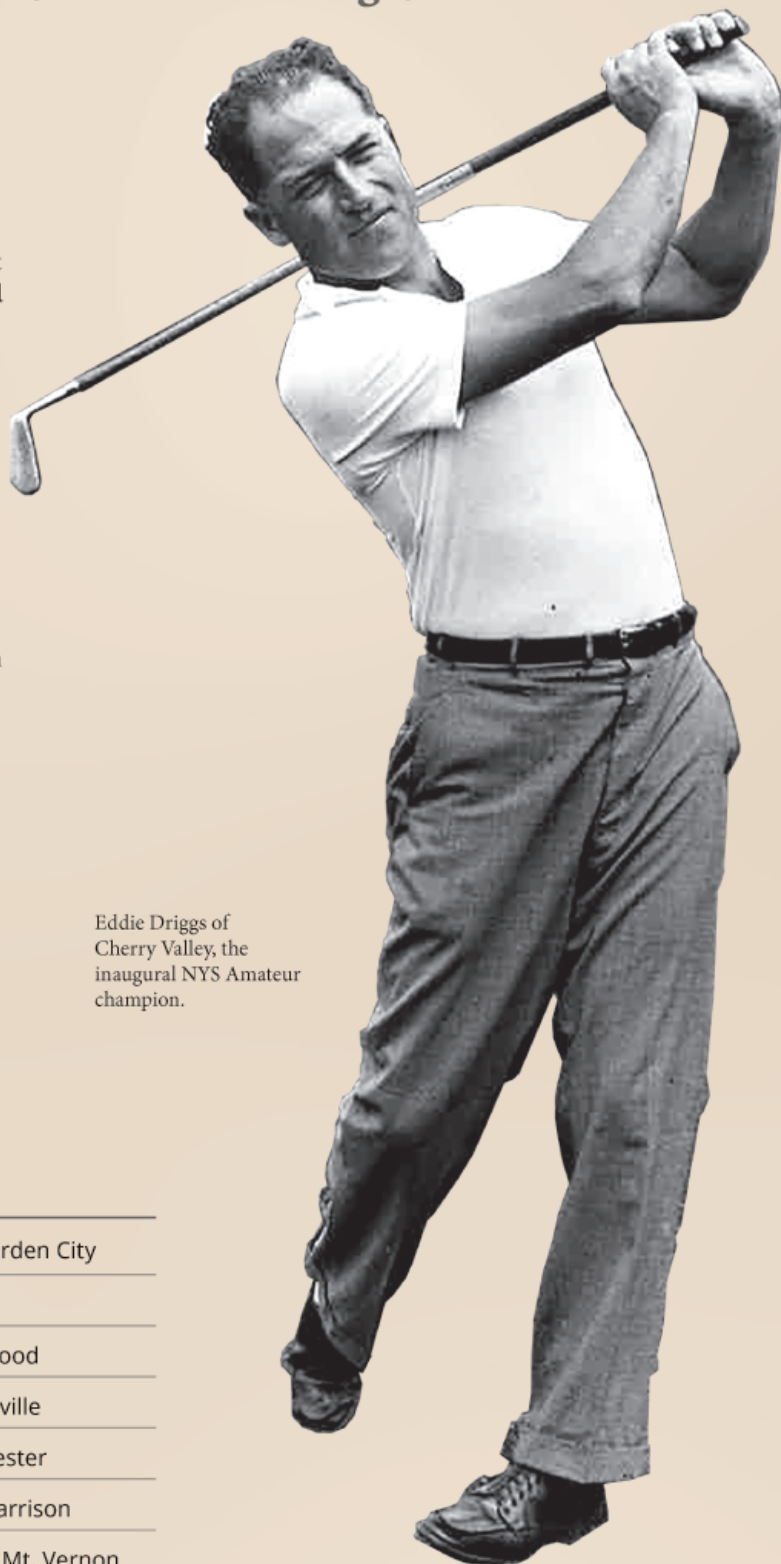
*The Jazz Age; Babe Ruth; The Golden Age of American Sport; Bob Jones; the Teapot Dome Scandal; Charles Lindbergh; the 1929 Wall Street Crash*

## The First Championship

**T**he inaugural NYSGA Men's Championship got off to a promising — if sodden — start. Garden City was host to the inaugural championship as the first shots were struck Oct. 24, 1923. Sixty-one golfers qualified over 18 holes for 16 match-play positions. Despite the NYSGA's emphasis on a state-wide championship, the majority of golfers hailed from the metropolitan area, probably a reflection of both the event's newness and the challenges of cross-state travel in 1923.

Eddie Driggs from Cherry Valley and Gardiner White, the 1921 Met Amateur champion from Nassau, carded 77s in solid rain to capture the medal. An early featured match included heavyweight White vs. Rochester's Arthur "Ducky" Yates, a highly regarded former North and South Amateur champion and future (1927) NYSGA titleist, won by White. In the end, Driggs captured the finals in an 8-&-7 victory over Garden City member Clifton Mabon, foreshadowing future NYSGA Men's Championship wins.

The New York Times concluded that "The first championship tournament of the newly organized NYSGA more than justified itself." It further wrote that a "strong entry in respect to both numbers and class . . . contended for the title."



Eddie Driggs of Cherry Valley, the inaugural NYS Amateur champion.

### 1923-29 NYS Amateur Champions

Year	Host Club	Winner
1923	Garden City GC	Eddie Driggs Jr., Garden City
1924	Orchard Park CC	Lee Chase, Buffalo
1925	Lido CC	Jack Mackie Jr., Inwood
1926	McGregor Links CC	Al Brodbeck, Bronxville
1927	Oak Hill CC (East)	Arthur Yates, Rochester
1928	Westchester CC (West)	George Dawson, Harrison
1929	Mohawk GC	Maurice McCarthy, Mt. Vernon

# DRIGGS EASILY WINS STATE GOLF HONORS

Defeats Mabon by 8 and 7 in  
36-Hole Final Over Gar-  
den City Links.

## VICTOR LEADS FROM START

Makes First Three Holes in 3s  
and Is 8 Up for the  
Morning Round.

## AFTERNOON PLAY IS EVEN

Loser Recovers and Holds Cherry  
Valley Star to Early Score—  
Kerr Beats Thompson.

*Special to The New York Times.*  
GARDEN CITY, L. I., Oct. 27.—Eddie Driggs of Cherry Valley is the first State amateur golf champion. The former Princeton halfback defeated S. Clifton Mabon of the home club today in the 36-hole final of the initial tournament of the newly formed New York State Golf Association at the Garden City Golf Club, 8 and 7. The match came to an end on the eleventh green of the afternoon round. It was decided much earlier. At the end of the morning round the Cherry Valley representative stood 8 up, and the victory was practically clinched.

Mabon, a veteran in years, compared to his young opponent, never stood any chance of winning. Even had he played the sort of golf that enabled him to put out A. C. Gregson, the conqueror of Captain Tippet, it could not have prevailed against the performance of the former Tiger star in the morning round. Driggs almost repeated his remarkable record of Friday, when he made four 3s in a row, by doing the first three holes today in 3, getting birdies on two of them, and negotiating the outgoing stretch in 36, one under par for the difficult nine holes. It was his approach shots and his work on the greens which have caused wide comment here, that spelled Mabon's defeat, and it was only by the margin of a hair that he failed to sink a number of approach putts for a much lower score.

Mabon did not disgrace himself by any means, as Gardner White, the favorite in the tournament, went down before the Cherry Valley star, 7 and 6, the match ending on the twelfth hole. The Garden City veteran was only 4 down at that point, so that his performance at least was better than the Nassau player's. Failure to make capital of his opportunities on the greens cost Mabon numerous advantages that he had gained with his steadiness off the tee. Two holes in succession that he should have won he halved, and lost the following one, which he should have halved.

### Makes a 40.

He took three putts on the tenth after Driggs had trapped his drive; he missed a four-foot putt on the eleventh that would have won for him, and he lost the twelfth by rinning the cup on a short putt after getting over the artificial mound nicely. As it was, he got a 40 going out, which is not at all bad, but meant nothing matched against the unbeatable playing of his younger opponent, who stood 3 up at this turn.

Driggs was not as indefatigable coming in on the morning round, getting a 39, which is 3 over par; but Mabon also fell below his standard for the first nine holes, and instead of pressing his advantage took either a 5 or a 6 on seven holes and became 8 down at the end of the round. His card showed a total of 45 strokes for the homestretch, giving him a total of 85 for the 18 holes, to Driggs's 75. The local player's biggest asset at the outset was his straightness down the fairway; but once he had lost that and began to find the rough and the traps with his wood and iron shots he was outclassed. He could not hope to beat Driggs on distance or with the putter, the way the Cherry Valley man has been going for the four days of the tournament.

The afternoon round was altogether different. Mabon and every one else knew that his plight was hopeless; but that did not prevent the Garden City veteran from going out and giving Driggs so good a fight that he held the Cherry Valley star on even terms all the way of the eleven holes played. In the morning round Mabon did not win a single hole. He started off in the afternoon by taking the first, and before the match was over he had won two more.

### Both Make Birdies.

The big feature of the twenty-nine holes played was furnished on the second 132-yard green, where both men got birdie 2s. Mabon teed off first and got a lie twenty feet from the cup. Driggs sent the ball high over the yawning gully to drop four feet from the pin. It was a remarkably fine shot and the hole seemed as good as won; but Mabon sank the ball with a single putt and earned a half, to the delight of the gallery. The local player got into difficulties on the next hole when he topped his drive, but he continued to battle pluckily to the end. Had it not been for that heartbreaking score of the morning round the match might have gone to extra holes the way he was standing his opponent off. Both did the outgoing nine holes in 39.

In the final of the championship consolation H. K. Kerr of the local club defeated Ray Thompson of the Westchester Biltmore Country Club, 4 and 3. Don McKellar of North Hempstead won the honors in the second sixteen consolation, defeating R. Rothenburg, N. Y. G. C., 6 and 4.

Mabon started poorly in the morning round by topping his drive off the first tee, failing to get over the mound. Driggs got on the green in 2, getting a lie within four feet of the pin with his mashie approach and sinking his putt for a birdie 3. Mabon was down in 5. The short second was halved in 3.

A long putt of twenty feet enabled Driggs to get a second birdie on the third, and after the fourth had been halved in 5 he became 3 up when his opponent took an extra stroke on the fifth. Driggs was able to get a par 5 only by sinking a putt from the edge of the green. The next four holes were halved, the sixth in one above the prescribed number of strokes and the

Continued on Page 3, This Section.

### MORNING ROUND.

Out—	Driggs	3	3	3	5	4	5	5	4	4	36
	Mabon	5	3	4	5	5	5	5	4	4	40
In—	Driggs	5	5	3	6	4	5	4	4	3	39-75
	Mabon	5	5	4	6	5	6	6	5	3	45-85

### AFTERNOON ROUND.

Out—	Driggs	6	2	4	4	5	4	5	5	4	4-30
	Mabon	4	2	6	6	5	4	4	5	5	5-30
In—	Driggs	4	4								
	Mabon	4	6								

The summaries:

### CHAMPIONSHIP FLIGHT.

Final Round—Eddie Driggs, Cherry Valley, defeated S. C. Mabon, Garden City G. C., 8 and 7 (36 holes).

### CHAMPIONSHIP CONSOLATION.

Final Round—H. K. Kerr, Garden City G. C., defeated Ray Thomson, Westchester Biltmore G. C., 4 and 3.

### SECOND SIXTEEN CONSOLATION.

Final Round—Donald McKellar, North Hempstead, defeated R. Rothenburg, N. Y. G. C., 6 and 4.



Arthur "Ducky" Yates  
of Rochester, 1927 NYS  
Amateur champion.

# 1923 through 1929

## The NYSGA Open

A sensible extension of the NYSGA's mission and the fledgling Men's Amateur championship was the concept of a New York State Open — that is, a competition for both the state's best amateurs and professionals. The NYSGA decided to conduct the New York State Open starting in 1928, largely funded by the host, Onondaga.

The first New York State Open was intended strictly for residents of New York, but the princely purse of more than \$2,000 — well beyond the norm for comparable events — drew an unsolicited contingent of touring professionals from across the country. In a Solomon-like decision, the NYSGA let the foreigners play. Will Klein, a club professional from Long Island, won the two-day, 72-hole event by a stroke over Scotsman-turned-Chicagoan Bob MacDonald.

The 1929 Open was held at Westchester the week before and just down the road from the U.S. Open at Winged Foot, guaranteeing a "Who's Who of Golf" quality field that included Billy Burke, Harry Cooper, Johnny Farrell, Walter

Hagen and Gene Sarazen (all U.S. Open or PGA champions). Burke came out on top, his 1-under 287 beating unheralded George Christ by four.

The 1930 tournament at Green Meadow in Harrison in late June attracted a good field, including Burke, Wiffy Cox, Farrell and local favorite Joe Turnesa. Farrell captured the top prize with a birdie on the last hole for an even-par 288 and a two-shot victory over Cox.

Despite featuring major tournament winners and excellent venues, the New York State Open faced strong headwinds. The Great Depression was having its way with professional sports, especially golf, which was dependent on business sponsors. In late 1930, the NYSGA decided to drop the State Open as financially prohibitive, intending instead to focus on amateur events.

The New York State Open remained mothballed until 1978, when the Metropolitan section of the PGA of America successfully revived the tournament.

### NYS Open Results

Year	Host Club	Winner
1928	Onondaga G&CC	Will Klein, Wheatley Hills
1929	Westchester CC	Billy Burke, Round Hill
1930	Green Meadow CC	Johnny Farrell, Quaker Ridge

Winner Billy Burke tees off at Westchester CC for the 1929 NYS Open.



## Familiar Faces:

- The winner of the 1929 NYSGA Men's Amateur Championship was Maurice McCarthy, a Mount Vernon resident who was also the NCAA champion playing out of Georgetown.
- Rochester's Arthur "Ducky" Yates, one of the more colorful players of New York's Roaring '20s, was a former football lineman at Yale who strained the scales at 300 pounds. Yates won not only the 1927 NYSGA Men's Am, but also the 1925 North and South Amateur Championship and was a semifinalist in the 1931 U.S. Amateur Championship.
- Lee Chase won the 1924 Men's Amateur in his hometown of Buffalo, winning the title at Orchard Park. He had also won the Florida State Amateur that season, having a winter home down there.

### LEE CHASE WINS STATE GOLF TITLE; DEFEATS COMSTOCK 7 AND 6; GOUVERNEUR VICTOR

By HARRY YORKE. *New Golf Champion of New York State*

Lee J. Chase, state amateur golf champion of Florida, yesterday added the amateur golf championship of New York to his string of notable victories when he defeated Henry W. Comstock, Wausau Country club star and former district champion of western New York, in the 36-hole final of the state tournament at Orchard Park links by the score of 7 and 6.

**Magical Putting Wins.** — Chase's victory was due to one of the most extraordinary displays of magic putts ever seen in the experience of the oldest of the many veteran golfers who witnessed the Park club final. He easily defeated one of the district leaders of one putt after another, played one of one putt pairs and broke, played one of one putt pairs and broke, played one of one putt pairs and broke, played one of one putt pairs and broke, played one of one putt pairs and broke.

**Runs Them all Down.** — But when there was a putt that would have won the match in such a crucial hole, Chase just strode up to his ball and leaped it in over all kinds of wind—wet, dry, cold, fat, up or down hill. His nerve shined on the green, and more importantly what has been said repeatedly, that after a golfer has reached reasonable perfection it is just the question how long he will last.

**Sensational Start.** — Though it was a fairly easy hole after it played in a professional way that it played in a way that a reverse result to what actually was the outcome. Comstock won the first four holes on the morning, and when Chase got into the one in front, actually things look hopeless for an opponent. But Chase,



Lee J. Chase of the Park club, who yesterday defeated Henry W. Comstock of Wausau in the final of the state amateur tournament.

Buffalo Courier, August 1924.

## Sherrill Sherman

**T**he first president of the NYSGA was Sherrill Sherman, son of U.S. Vice President James Sherman (under President Howard Taft). The senior Sherman imbued his son with a decision to service. Like Theodore Havemeyer, the first president of the USGA, Sherman was the right person at the right time. A volunteer to both the NYSGA and his club, Yahnundasis, Sherman was a rock of support for decades to both.

Sherman remained NYSGA president for just two years, stepping down to assume the role as first vice president under Don Parker, another anchor board member in the NYSGA's earliest years. Over three decades, Sherman served in every position the organization could offer. Notably, whenever issues rose with other institutions, from banks to the USGA, it was Sherman who made the issues go away.

In 1956, he said, "Since the formation of the state association I have served continually in different positions, and it has always been a matter of great personal pleasure to have had this opportunity for continued service." Sherman could have been the poster child for effective board membership.

Furthermore, he was a rare golf administrator who could also seriously play the game. Sherman played in 18 straight U.S. Amateurs, making it to the semifinals in 1915. He was the Yahnundasis club champion nine times over 27 years. In 1941, Sherman captured the NYSGA Senior Men's Amateur. In a crowning recognition for his contribution to the game, Sherman eventually became a member of the Royal and Ancient Golf Club of St. Andrews.

Sherrill Sherman of Utica (left) and Walter Travis of Garden City during a tournament at Yahnundasis in 1920.



Sherrill Sherman, the first president of NYSGA in 1923.