Seymour Dunn 1882-1950

Seymour Dunn, one of the most influential forces on the early years of golf in the Adirondacks, came of an eminent golfing family. He was a descendent of Douglas Gourley, golf instructor to King James of Scotland. His father, Thomas Dunn, was the first manufacturer of golf clubs and "Feathery" balls; his mother, Isabella Dunn, was World Woman Golf Champion for 21 years in the late 19th century. Seymour's uncle, Willie Dunn, won the first U.S. Open Championship in 1894.

1900 - Golf Pro at Stevens House.
1902 - Golf Architect to King Leopold of Belgium.
1904 - Course Architect to King Emmanuel of Italy and also to Baron Rothschild of France.
1905 - Designed and built the lower 18 holes of the original Lake Placid Club Golf Course.
1908 - Golf Director at the Lake Placid Club for the next 21 years.
1912 - Built the original Schroon Lake Country Club Golf Course.
1918 - Designed and built the extended 18 holes at Saranac Inn.
1923 - Architect of the Fawn Ridge Golf Course (present site of the W. Alton Jones Cell Science Center).
1925 - Designed and built the original 9 holes of the Craig Wood Golf Course (then known as the Lake Placid Golf Course). He subsequently served as first President of the Lake Placid Country Club.
1929 - Established the largest indoor golf school then known, in Madison Square Garden, New York City.
1932 - Enlarged the Ticonderoga Golf Course.

Adirondack Open Golf Champion for 12 successive years.
Assisted in the construction of the AuSable Club's golf course and the St. Regis course at Paul Smith's.
Originated the Lake Placid course in Sebring, Florida. Also designed the Laurel, Mississippi Championship course, the Ferncliff, New Hampshire golf course, the Casanovia Country Club course, the Chautauqua Country Club course, and many foreign courses.

Seymour's son, Gordon Dunn, and descendents are still living in Lake Placid.

written by A. Dunn
IT'S OUR HISTORY: Stories unfold through museum artifacts

October 1, 2015
By CARLA EILO, Lake Placid-North Elba Historical Society

If you read our article from last month, you know I have been busy learning the history of the town and organizing and familiarizing myself with the Lake Placid-North Elba Historical Society's broad museum collection. As I meet new people in Lake Placid, I quickly find that they are excited to tell me about their family history and their connection to the community. What makes a historical society special is the museum collections that come from different families, who tell their stories about their time spent in Lake Placid. As I look through the photos, scrapbooks and personal objects from the collections, I am able to see the history unfold.

This past month I was able to learn and familiarize myself with another story of Lake Placid through a historic object that is new to our collection. We received a donation of a golf club created in the Seymour Dunn golf club shop. Nevton Dunn, grandson of Seymour, was kind enough to donate this piece of local history to us.

Born in 1882 in North Berwick, Scotland, Seymour Dunn had come from a family who had a long history with the game of golf. By the age of 17, he was named pro at the Societe Golf de Paris. He thought of the idea to create an indoor golf school in the Bourne Hall Hotel located in Bournemouth, England. He went on to design golf courses for King Leopold of Belgium, King Victor Emmanuel of Italy and Baron Rothschild of France.

Dunn spent his summers in the United States. When he was 15, he designed a nine-hole course at the Lawrenceville School in New Jersey. In the year 1906, he spent his first summer in Lake Placid, where he would soon return.

In 1907, he immigrated to the United States and held a position at Van Cortlandt Park golf club in the Bronx and worked with his uncle, Willie Dunn. Shortly after, he would take the position as
golf professional and golf club maker at the Wykagyl Golf Club in New Rochelle. In the year of 1909, he laid out the Links Course at the Lake Placid Club and would settle in the area and take the position of golf architect and professional at the club.

He opened the first manufacturing assembly line for golf clubs in Lake Placid in 1910 and had 10 employees working at the shop. By having an assembly line, Seymour was able to create and sell matched sets of clubs. Through this business, he also set up a mail-order company distributing his equipment throughout the United States. Wood clubs would sell for $3.50 each, and irons would be priced from $1.50 to $3.40.

He designed many golf courses in the area, the more familiar ones being the course at Craig Wood and the Lake Placid Club Links Course.

Dunn wrote many articles for golf magazines but is best known for writing “Golf Fundamentals.” This notable book, first published in 1930, broke down the game into 20 different phases and divided them by mechanics, dynamics and psychology.

From this one object, we were able to connect it to a larger story that further revealed another interesting facet to our town's history. By associating the history with the golf club, it brings more depth to the piece, and hopefully it will bring more enjoyment to future generations as they share in these stories.

As the historical society receives new acquisitions, it is important to have that same community history connected with the object. Not only does this provide a background that bridges the item to the area, but it offers another layer of richness to Lake Placid’s past.

If you have been waiting to catch our latest exhibit, "The Lake Placid Volunteer Fire Department: 110 Years of Service & Dedication," you still have two weeks before the History Museum closes for the season. We will be open through Columbus Day weekend, Wednesday to Sunday, 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. We hope to see you there!

Scott Chisholm, a golf writer of the 1900-1960 era once introduced me to a golf group to whom I was to display a leather and feather ball which had been made by my grandfather. Scotty had his mind on the golf ball, I hope, because his opening remark was, "Fellows, I'd like to show you an ancient golf relic, this is Cameron Dunn." Rather than silver, I guess I was born with an old Irish spoon in my mouth and I've had trouble with it ever since.

Early ancestor Douglas Gourlay was appointed teacher and equipment maker by Royal Warrant to James VI of Scotland in 1612.

Great-Grandfather, Willie Dunn, was a prominent golf teacher, player and course builder during early and mid-1800's. Willie was appointed custodian of the links at the Royal Blackheath Club in London in 1850 and became active in developing golf in England.

Grandfather, Tom Dunn, was born at the Royal Blackheath Club and grew up in the profession, securing his first position in 1871 at the Royal Wimbleton club. Tom covered all phases of golf - club and ball maker - teacher - player - and course builder. He authored many published articles on standardization of golf swing styles. He built more than 130 golf courses in England, Belgium, France and Switzerland between 1870 and 1900.

Father, Seymour Dunn, came to America in 1894 to join his brother and Uncle Willie Dunn, Jr. Uncle Willie had just won the American Open which was the forerunner of the U. S. Open. Seymour spent the next sixty years at club making, teaching, publishing golf text books, building golf courses and fathering five boys who became golf professionals.
I served my apprenticeship under my father at the Lake Placid Club, N. Y., and gained my first golf position as assistant to my brother, Bob, in 1929. I was on my own as Professional and Greens Supt. at the Fawn Club, Lake Placid, N. Y. in 1933. I have been a member of the PGA since 1935, and of the Golf Course Superintendents Association since 1950. I have also held positions in New York, New Hampshire, New Jersey, Connecticut, Florida, North Carolina, California, Pennsylvania and the Republic of Panama. Military Service includes Naval Reserve in 1930's and Army during World War II, achieving rank of Major, Field Artillery.

My first acquaintance with Carlisle Country Club was in 1946 while playing at a golf course superintendents meeting at the club. I have held the position of Pro and Greens Superintendent during the periods 1958 to 1962 and 1967 through 1975. I am looking forward with pleasure to continuing as Golf Professional at Carlisle Country Club, the golfingest club in the area. We may not make history, but we will have our moments and continue to enjoy the game as we have all the spirit, facilities and membership and management necessary to do so.

Cameron Dunn, O
PGA - GCSAA
The Dunns of Musselburgh

If there is a first family of golf, surely Scotland's Dunns have earned the title, for their influence on the game started early and continues to this day.

by Ron Crowley

THE RAPID SPREAD of golf beyond Scotland during the late 1800s can be attributed in large part to the Dunn family of Musselburgh, Scotland. Since 1851, and for more than a century, three successive generations of Dunns made major contributions toward establishing golf in England, Ireland, the European continent, and even the New World itself.

They touched every aspect of the game, too, serving as professionals, playing tournament golf, designing courses, developing innovative equipment, teaching, and writing. Their influence reached beyond any other family's in the game.

Their story begins with the twin sons of a Musselburgh plasterer, Willie, Sr. (1821-1878), and Jamie (1821-1871), who apprenticed to the eminent club- and ball-making Gourlay firm. While they became accomplished craftsmen, their most lasting notoriety resulted from their famous challenge matches.

Before the first British Open, in 1860, top players met head-to-head, sometimes individually but more often with partners in alternate-stroke foursomes. No

Ron Crowley is a New Hampshire-based freelance writer. He is working on two books about golf in Great Britain.

This 1850s photograph shows the leading professionals of the time at St. Andrews. Willie Dunn, Sr., is third from the left, addressing the ball; to his right are Willie Park and a somewhat simian Allan Robertson.
world rankings clouded the issue of who was the best player in those days.

Such grand occasions created tremendous excitement, many wagers, and rabid civic rivalries. The most keen of them involved the golf centers of Musselburgh and St. Andrews.

Willie took on Allan Robertson in just such a match in 1843. The undisputed king of St. Andrews golf, Robertson sold golf equipment and took care of the Old Course, which he ruled over. It has been suggested that Robertson was never beaten in a match on level terms — anywhere — but his 20-round match with Willie shows that to be misleading. Robertson prevailed two rounds up with one to play, so he lost more than one round of golf to Willie Dunn.

Six years later, Willie and brother Jamie battled Robertson and Old Tom Morris in a celebrated series of foursomes over three courses for £400 a side. The Dunns overwhelmed their guests at Musselburgh, beating them 13 and 12, but the St. Andrews pair earned a narrow victory at home.

An immense crowd at North Berwick watched the Dunns squander a four-hole lead with eight holes to play. All square at the 35th, the twins became flustered when their ball lodged behind a boulder. They lost the hole and eventually the match. Nevertheless, had the match been decided by holes instead of rounds, they would have prevailed.

Shortly after he became the professional at Blackheath, near London, in 1855, Willie returned to St. Andrews to join Willie Park, Sr., in a foursomes match against Robertson and Morris. They lost by two holes and two strokes (96 to 94).

Oddly enough, neither of the Dunn twins was invited to play in the first Open championship. Since they became 40 years old the next year, they never featured prominently in the event.

Willie relied on his club salary and equipment-making for a steady income. He had been one of the first to make golf balls of gutta-percha, in 1848, and his thriving business, known as "Dunns of London," soon required the assistance of Jamie.
(Left) Well into his 60s, Willie, Jr., still could swing a mashie, although he’d long abandoned the moustache.

(Below left) Willie Dunn, Jr., was the longest-lived of the Dunns. He won the unofficial 1894 professional championship and finished runner-up in 1895, at the first U.S. Open, in Newport.

The Dunns returned to Scotland 10 years later, which allowed Tom (1848-1902), the older of Willie’s two sons, to court and marry Isabella Gourlay, the superb golfer and daughter of the famous Musselburgh equipment-maker. Isabella and her young husband headed over the border when Tom was appointed professional to the London Scottish Golf Club (now Royal Wimbledon), in 1870.

Tom fit in well. He was described by Horace G. Hutchinson, the game’s first thorough chronicler, as “another most perfect of Nature’s gentlemen.” He also played in the Open championship, compiling three top-10 finishes (1878, 1879, and 1884).

By 1887, however, he was devoting most of his time to his club responsibilities. A major internal dispute at Wimbledon in 1881 convinced Tom to return to North Berwick. He revised the links in 1883, using the lessons he had learned expanding the Wimbledon course to 18 holes.

When Tom went back to England, in the late 1880s, he found an emerging passion for the game and a seemingly insatiable demand for new courses. He recognized he could have a lucrative future in course architec-
It was inevitable that someone like Willie Park, Jr., would go beyond Dunn, producing courses that turned Tom’s into old-fashioned relics. Park created the Old Course at Sunningdale in 1901. Its outstanding natural beauty and strategic qualities made it the benchmark to measure all other inland courses against. Park’s sculptured designs were expensive, however.

In contrast, Tom Dunn’s primitive layouts were affordable to new clubs and therefore available to legions of new golfers.

His younger brother, Willie, Jr. (1865-1952), often assisted him. After designing a course at Chingford, in London, he went to Biarritz, in southern France, to help Tom with a course. Little did he know he was actually making his way to America.

Willie taught golf to the French aristocracy, and through them met W. K. Vanderbilt, a wealthy American. Although Willie believed his future lay on the European Continent, Vanderbilt persuaded him to go to America in 1893 and become the professional at his Shinnecock Golf Club, on Long Island.

Shinnecock’s original 12-hole course had been laid out by Willie Davis, in 1891. To relieve its growing congestion, Dunn added a nine-hole ladies’ course. No one liked it, so he combined the two courses into one stronger 18-hole course, which in turn was significantly altered by others during the 1920s.

A useful player, Willie had competed regularly in the British Open during the 1880s, once tying for seventh place. In the shallower depths of American golf, however, he did better against his fellow Scottish expatriates. In 1894, at the St. Andrews club in Grey Oaks (New York), Willie won what is regarded as the forerunner of the U.S. Open, a four-man match-play tournament for professionals. The following year, Willie finished behind Horace Rawlins in the first U.S. Open conducted by the USGA. Despite tying for third in 1897, his days as a serious competitor ended in 1900 when Harry Vardon thrashed him in a pair of exhibition matches.

Willie turned wholeheartedly to course architecture. After moving to the Ardsley Golf Club (north of New York City), he opened “Tom Dunn’s of Bournemouth and Ardsley Casino.” He also began mass-marketing golf equipment from offices on Fifth Avenue, in New York City. An inventor, Willie sold a one-piece driver he had patented in Britain in 1894. He even offered an early metal wood called the “Indestructible.”

Business was good — exceptionally so — and this convinced his brother Tom to send his sons, John Duncan (1872-1951) and Seymour (1882-1959), to help
Willie in America. Each would sink deep roots into the fertile land of American golf.

JOHN DUNCAN began designing and building courses for the Florida West Coast Railroad, and by 1900 he was designing courses with Walter Travis. Perhaps the Ekwonok, in Vermont, turned out their best. A few design efforts in Europe followed, but in the 1920s he went to California, where he laid out 11 courses before the financial collapse of 1929.

As the popularity of golf in America increased, John Duncan became a prolific writer, publishing The A.B.C. of Golf (1916), Intimate Golf Talks (1920), a three-volume “how-to” instructional set in 1922, Elements of the Golf Swing (1930), Natural Golf (1931), and Golf (1941).

Along with Seymour he opened what is believed to be the first indoor golf schools, one in Bournemouth, England, and another in the RKO Building, in New York City.

Seymour had also returned to Europe, where he took over the progressive club-manufacturing business of professional C. S. Butchart, in Newcastle, Northern Ireland (1905-1906). He then laid out a number of courses on the continent, but by 1910 he was back in America laying out courses, primarily in the Northeast.

Seymour settled down as the longtime professional at Lake Placid, New York, where he wrote a number of instruction books. He lived at a time when science and technology continually offered new solutions to life’s problems. Wondrous things such as air travel, automobiles, telephones, radio, and vaccines all appeared during his early adulthood.

Understandably, Seymour looked to science to help unravel the complexities of golf. His self-published opus Golf Fundamentals: Orthodoxy of Style (1922) is laden with the concepts and language of science and mathematics. It opens with a section called “Mechanical Laws of the Golf Swing” that lists five daunting fundamentals: Maintain a Steady Swing Center, Maintain a Proper Swing Radius, Keep Proper Oblique Plane of Swing, Guide Club Thru Proper Swing Parallel, and Strike with Square Impact.

He based his notion of golfer-as-machine on the principle of a proper swing plane, which is viable even today. Science also explained other areas of the game in sections entitled “Dynamic Laws of the Golf Stroke,” “Golf Psychology,” and “How to Play Every Simple and Scientific Stroke in the Game.”

The Dunns were multi-talented, listing fine clubmaking among their accomplishments. Here are three beauties, from left: a scared-head driver by Seymour, a long-nose play club by Tom, and a scared-head from Willie, Jr.

Doesn’t sound user-friendly, does it? Yet stars of the 1920s such as Walter Hagen, Jim Barnes, Gene Sarazen, and Joe Kirkwood relied on him.

THE TREMENDOUS SUCCESS of Seymour and John Dunn convinced their sister, May Dunn-Webb (1880-1948), to come to America in 1915. Almost immediately she published golf articles for women in the New York Herald that emphasized the exercise golf afforded, the beauty of the courses, and the importance of wearing less-fashionable, unrestricted clothing.

May Dunn was unique as a female instructor, and she was in great demand. She managed the Wentworth Hall Golf Club, in Jackson, New Hampshire, in 1916, taught golf at Wellesley College, in Massachusetts, and laid out a course in Moana Springs for the Reno Golf Club. She also managed the Reno club, and she contributed articles to a local newspaper to promote it.

By 1917, however, she was on her way to California to lay out and manage a six-hole course in Tahoe. Later on, the Linnard Hotel, in Pasadena, California, hired her as its director of golf, but in 1920 Mrs. Gourlay Dunn-Webb — as she called herself professionally — became Mrs. Adolph Hupfel and effectively ended her career. Five years later she was reinstated as an amateur, and settled down to a less-hectic life.

More than a century of prominent and dedicated service to golf by the Dunn family ended in 1959, when Seymour died. The family left an unsurpassed legacy in many lands; surely none had done more to bring golf to so many than the Dunns of Musselburgh.
May Dunn, A Pioneer Among Women

A member of the famous Dunn family, of Scotland who emigrated here in the 19th century, May Dunn concentrated on teaching golf to women.

by Kristine Baer

May Dunn, who was known throughout her life by her childhood nickname Queenie, is hardly a familiar name in golf. Indeed, she was listed simply as "other issue" in an accounting of the Dunn family's contributions to the game in the book Golf in the Making, by Ian T. Henderson and David J. Stirk.

She was overshadowed variously by her uncle, Willie Dunn, creator of the original 12-hole course at Shinnecock Hills; her father, Tom Dunn, designer of a number of courses in Britain; and her brothers, John Duncan Dunn and Seymour Dunn, who ran a golf equipment business in New York and also designed courses. But May Dunn — the "other issue" — is said to be America's first woman professional. That alone would seem to entitle her to something more than a footnote in the history of the game on this side of the Atlantic.

May Dunn was born May 12, 1880, in Wimbledon, England, and began playing golf as a young child, competing against her brothers on makeshift courses they would set up in meadows, using empty cans for holes. At 17, May went abroad as governess to the Walkenstein family, in Germany. She was married the following year and spent the next 17 years raising a daughter, playing golf non-competitively, and teaching golf at Prince's Mitcham Ladies's Links. Queenie came to America in October, 1915, hoping to make a career of teaching golf to American women. Golf had been virtually suspended in Great Britain during World War I.

Within two months of her arrival, May Dunn was commissioned by the New York Herald to write eight articles devoted to golf instruction. Her purpose was clear: she wanted to improve women's golf in the United States. She saw no reason why British women golfers should be more competent than Americans. This theme sounded repeatedly throughout the series in the Herald.

This photograph of May Dunn appeared in the San Francisco Examiner on November 21, 1918, the day after she shot 87 at the Lincoln Park golf course.

Kristine Baer is a member of the Dunn family. She lives in Providence, Rhode Island.
father had been apprenticed. Tom Dunn moved south and became professional at Wimbledon (London Scottish Club) where he enlarged the course from 7 to 18 holes leaving there in 1881 when the club split up following disputes. His young brother Willie Dunn Jr. became his clubmaker apprentice there in 1878. He then returned to North Berwick to spend eight years as greenkeeper and clubmaker and numbered A. J. Balfour and W. E. Gladstone among his golf pupils. Finding that he could not make any money by combining the job of greenkeeper and clubmaker, he went to Tooting Bec in 1889. In 1894 he laid out a course at Bournemouth and made that town his future base for starting a most active business as one of the early golf course architects, especially of inland courses. Before he died at the early age of fifty-two he had laid out some 137 courses.

Willie Dunn, Jr., Champion of America 1894

Tom Dunn
DUNN GOLF SCHOOL
ROOM 310, R.K.O. BLDG., ROCKEFELLER CENTER
1270 SIXTH AVENUE, NEW YORK 20, N. Y., U. S. A.
TELEPHONE COLUMBUS 5-9201

Golf Tradition
Class A member of the P.G.A.

Direct descendant of the two oldest families in golf history, the Dunn's and the Gourlay's.
The Gourlay's were owners of Musselborough, oldest golf course in the world.
Ancestor Douglas Gourlay was appointed golf instructor by Royal Warrant to King James V of Scotland.

1882 Born of Tom Dunn, golf professional at North Berwick Golf Club, Scotland. Mother, Elizabeth Gourlay, world's best woman golfer of her time.

1894 Assistant Pro to brother, John at Ardsley Golf Club, N. Y.

1894 Uncle Willie Dunn won 1st Nat'l American Open Golf Champ.

1896 Pro to Griswold Hotel Golf Course, New London, Conn.

1898 Pro to Lawrenceville School, N. J.

1900 Pro to Stevens Hotel Golf Course, Washington, D. C.
“History: Seymour Dunn”

By J. Peter Martin
PGA Golf Professional

Seymour Dunn, who was born in North Berwick, Scotland in 1882, came to Lake Placid in 1900 to assist his brother John Duncan Dunn, who was the golf professional at the stately Stevens Hotel Golf Course located on Signal Hill in Lake Placid.

Seven years later, Seymour Dunn became the golf professional at the Lake Placid Club and spent the next twenty-one years teaching the wealthy and fashionable members of the club.

Besides being the club professional, he was also extremely busy during the early 1900's designing golf courses in the Adirondacks. At one time, in fact, he had fourteen golf courses under his supervision. These courses included the Lake Placid Club course, Craig Wood course, Ausable Club course and the Saranac Inn golf course.

Dunn was a very diversified man who not only designed golf courses all over the world, but also established one of the earliest golf club factories here in Lake Placid. Dunn was a great teacher and player who was held in very high esteem by other professionals. His book, “Golf Fundamentals,” which he wrote and published in 1930, was one of the most scientific analyses of the golf swing ever written. Although he lived most of his life ion the Adirondacks, Dunn was always on the move.

“Seymour Dunn,” said Ford Frick, one of the century's best known sports writers, “was fore-ordained for golf a hundred years before he was born, as kings are born to their throne. Probably no man in the world knows the game more thoroughly, no man has analyzed it so carefully or completely, no man knows its organics, its mechanics, its psychology, and its science so intimately.”

His grandfather, “old Willie Dunn,” a golf professional and a greens keeper was born in 1821 and was one of the world’s greatest golfers. His father, Tom Dunn, was also a Scottish professional and a prolific architect with one hundred and thirty-seven courses to his credit.

But it was his Scottish mother Elizabeth Gourlay Dunn who really taught Seymour how to play the game of golf. In fact, she was the best woman golfer in the world for twenty seven years, often entering in men's tournaments and frequently bringing home first prize.

The multi-talented Dunn lived most of his life in Lake Placid where he raised a family of eight, most who would become golf professionals themselves.

Seymour was in many ways a pioneer in the world of golf. His name, and the names of his ancestors, played a very important role in the development of the game. Although he died in Lake Placid in 1959, the Dunn name is inscribed in golf history and record books for all time.