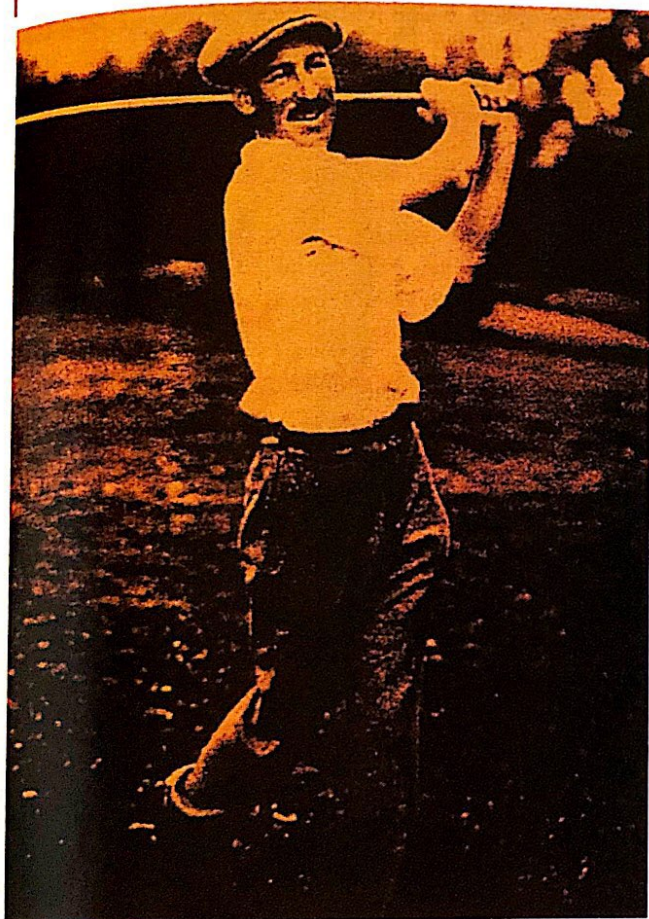


George Sargent



George Sargent
From the collection of Bob Labbance

When George Sargent won the U.S. Open at the Englewood (New Jersey) Golf Club on June 25, 1909, one New York newspaper ran the headline: "Unknown Golfer from Unknown Club in Vermont Wins U.S. Open." Indeed Sargent was a new face in American golf, having arrived from Canada just three months prior to the tournament.

Sargent was born in Brockham, Surrey in England and served part of his professional apprenticeship with Harry Vardon before sailing for North America and a head professional position at the Royal Ottawa Golf Club in 1906. After a three-year stint Sargent was lured to Hyde Manor Golf Club in Sudbury where he was to design the golf course and then serve as the pro. Although the course no longer exists, it was at one time the only course in the world designed by two U.S. Open champions. Sargent solicited the advice of Horace Rawlins in the final design.

Six weeks after his arrival and well before the golf course was completed, Sargent decided to try his luck against the best golfers in the country. He had tested the waters the previous year at Myopia but failed to turn in his card after a discouraging opening round. "I could do nothing right," he wrote, "and I was too disgusted to return my card for the first round, which was over 90. When I cooled off and saw how bad everyone else was I realized my mistake, and promptly made up my mind I had torn up my last card."

At Englewood, Sargent also started poorly. "When I started the first round 6, 5, 5, 5, which was enough to dishearten anyone, I never lost confidence. After the fourth hole I pulled myself together and managed to get round in 75." Sargent had learned his lesson well, and even though he had trouble with the opening holes on all four rounds he never gave up as he had at Myopia, and eventually persevered over Tom MacNamara by four strokes. His 75, 72, 72, 71—290 held up as the tournament record until 1916.

Afterward Sargent said, "It is up to MacNamara, myself and all the younger generation to try and raise the standard of golf in this country a notch higher. The older professionals have raised it to its present standard

and [I] can not have too much praise for their work. It is up to us to go ahead, and there is no reason why we cannot do it."

Sargent lived his professional life by those words. He served at Hyde Manor for only one year before being lured away to the prestigious Chevy Chase Club in the Washington, D.C. area. He would move on to Interlachen in Minnesota and Scioto in Ohio during a 30-year club pro career. He helped to establish the Professional Golfers Association of America (PGA) in 1916 and then served as president from 1921 to 1926. He remained the only Vermont player to win a national open for 85 years, until Patty Sheehan captured the women's title in 1994.

by Bob Labbance

Ed Cooke