

The History Of A Golf Historian

Whenever Pete Trenham was around golf courses in his younger years, whether doing odd jobs in the summer at a nine-hole course in Mount Dora, Fla., near his childhood home, or later as a young professional in the Philadelphia area, he loved hearing people tell golf stories.



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"I always was interested in listening to people, especially what the older golfers had to say about this or that or different things," Trenham said. "Now that I'm older, I wished I had asked more questions."

Still, Trenham's attentiveness sparked a keen interest in golf history. Now, after a distinguished career as a PGA professional that

includes a 29-year stay as head pro at St. Davids Golf Club in Wayne and a stint as Philadelphia Section PGA president, Trenham, 77, is as fascinated as ever about the subject.

His website, trenhamgolffhistory.org, is chock full of interesting articles, videos and tidbits, most with a local flavor. It received much attention last year after Trenham's exhaustive work researching the four U.S. Opens at Merion Golf Club prior to the 2013 championship, and later updated with Justin Rose's victory. There is information about the 1939 Open at Philadelphia Country Club and the 1962 PGA Championship at Aronimink Golf Club.

The site even includes a vintage 1962 film from the legendary *All-Star Golf* series matching Sam Snead and Bob Goalby at Philadelphia Country Club, believed to be Snead's first visit to the course since his best chance to win an Open went up in smoke in '39.

"It keeps me busy," said Trenham, who officially is the historian of the Section and of St. Davids. "I probably work about four hours a day on the website, sometimes more in the wintertime. I have maybe 500-600 books on the history of the game. My filing cabinet is about 7 feet tall and I've got all

my Philadelphia Section articles in there, one decade to a drawer."

After growing up in central Florida, Trenham attended the University of Florida, where he captained the golf team his senior year. After graduation, he worked in construction for two years before the lure of the links brought him back, and he settled in the Philadelphia area.

Trenham's pursuit in chronicling local golf history began in the mid-1990s when famed author and Villanova resident Jim Finegan was compiling information for a book commemorating the 100th anniversary of the Golf Association of Philadelphia. When Trenham learned that Finegan was considering not including the history of local professionals in the book because his deadline would not

permit him to research the topic, the pro offered his help.

"He told me, 'If you'll research it, I'll put it in there,'" Trenham recalled. "I said yes but it turned out I didn't know what I was talking about because of all the work involved. But I got it done."

Trenham started out by researching the Philadelphia Open, which began in 1903, and the history and officers of the Philadelphia Section PGA. The more he read, the more he was hooked.

"I started finding things out about different golfers and I'm thinking, 'I never knew this, this is really interesting,'" he said. "I gave Jim my information and then I thought, 'Somebody ought to save this stuff.'"

A fan of renowned sportswriter Red Smith growing up, Trenham found bits of information and put them on a timeline. He discovered the field for the first U.S. Open played in 1895 included a local pro. He included big tournaments held in the Philadelphia area, or the record of local golfers in national events. The research meant long hours poring over microfilm at Temple University's library.

But it wasn't until he met Jack Darcy, a retiree who created websites as a hobby, that the

idea for a golf history site took off. The process was further fleshed out when Bill Orr, whose father owned a production company that specialized in college football and golf films, showed old golf flicks to Trenham, who identified many of the players in them.

"We formed a team," Trenham said. "Each of us has our own expertise. With Bill, I call him my idea man-slash-critic. He has lots of ideas. Jack is the webmaster. And I have all the information. So it evolved out of that and we've kept adding stuff on."

Trenham's most recent presentation was the history of Cobb's Creek Golf Course, a city-owned jewel that has been adversely affected by budget cuts, and plans to revitalize it. His next project is on the PGA of America's efforts during the Great Depression to have noted architect A.W. Tillinghast visit courses and help them become more economical.

In the meantime, Trenham continues to rev up his laptop and read golf articles, and joins his wife in finding what he calls "musty old bookstores" seeking historical material.

"I like it," he said. "I guess I never considered it work. Everything I've done, I've enjoyed doing." ●

Pete
Trenham

