

IMAGES

... then and now



Buckingham Lodge
1861

Memories of a Camargo Caddy



Caddies at Coney Island

Born in 1913, Richard Naegel grew up on Graves Road when it was unpaved and had no electricity. Indian Hill was farmland, and the Naegel family did not yet own a car. Richard's father, an electrician, walked to Madisonville to take public transportation downtown. Water came from a hand dug well, and Richard's mother did laundry in tubs. He attended Jefferson School, walking to and from morning and afternoon. At age 13, he began earning money by caddying at the new Camargo Club.

Bill Jackson, the golf professional, managed the course. The pro shop was across the driveway from the clubhouse, and the caddies worked out of the pro shop. Later a caddy shack was built across Shawnee Run Rd. A "barny looking place", it was about 25 by 20 feet, with 2 rooms containing tables, chairs, and benches. The caddy master, Mr. Grimes,

sold snacks to the youths awaiting a round. The boys played cards until they were assigned a player. When hired, the youths learned the basics by studying a booklet that explained proper techniques of a good caddy. Naegel was taught to stand as far away from the hole as possible while holding the pin on the green, and to position himself so as not to shadow the hole. He was trained to remain quiet during a player's swing, not to rattle clubs in the bag, and where to stand in relation to a player.

Seeking work, Naegel was usually the first caddy to arrive between 6:00 and 7:00 a.m. He walked to the course from his home about 1½ miles away. Upon arrival, all caddies signed in. There was a shortage of caddies, particularly in the beginning; and boys had to carry doubles (two bags). Caddies came from "the hill" as well as Madeira, and included Bill Roach, Elmer Eubanks, Frank Ulrich, the Allen brothers, and Richard's brother, Harry. Carrying two bags for 18 holes was hard work, but caddies earned more money and could go home after lunch rather than waiting to caddy again in the afternoon.

In the early years, most of the golf at Camargo Club was on weekends and holidays. Many good golfers played together on a regular basis, and "they were a lot of fun." Men's foursomes usually started at 7:00 or 8:00 a.m. on Saturdays and Sundays. Some weekdays after school (Withrow), Naegel would stop by the club to see if work was available. One member learned about the eager schoolboy, and sometimes stopped by Withrow on Madison Rd. in his Rolls Royce to give him a lift to the club.

Golf balls were made of gutta percha and clubs had wooden shafts in that era. There were no golf carts or pull carts – only caddies. With no water spigots on the course, glass jugs of water were placed out for thirsty players. The flags were mounted on bamboo poles. At night the greens and fairways were watered by men who moved hoses from hole to hole. Richard and his brother took *heimgamacht* (homebrew, made from barley) to the course and sold it to the nighttime watering crews.

An inquisitive young man, Naegel picked up tips about golf and life while caddying. He learned the clubs' special names (#5 was a mashie; #2 wood, a brassie; #3 wood, a spoon) and started playing the game himself. One club member taught him which button mushrooms along the course were edible, and thereafter he snacked on raw treats. Once when he was injured during a lesson (a club head detached and gouged his leg), he was driven to the doctor for stitches. Naegel was on the course when one club member's plane crashed near the first tee in 1932. The plane, a Waco F, got tangled in electric wires, flipped, and wrecked, but the pilot suffered only a broken leg. Naegel earned the title "Honor Caddy" and got a raise from \$1.00 to \$1.25 per 18-hole round. He was chosen to caddy in the foursome when the legendary Bobby Jones played the course. Once a summer all Camargo caddies took an excursion to Coney Island, where the club paid for the group outing.

Naegel grew up watching great golfers. He taught himself the game, played in local tournaments and even scored a hole in one. The players that Naegel caddied for are now gone, but the Camargo Golf Course continues to attract talented caddies and avid players.

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