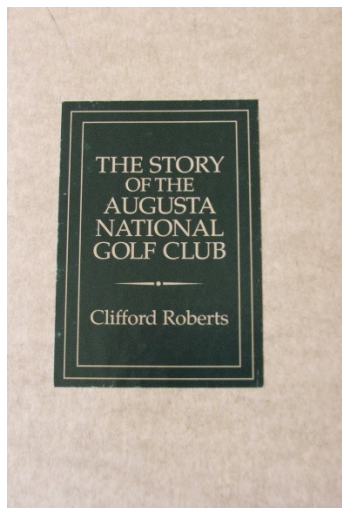


Valuable Book Group, LLC
Specialists in Rare and Antiquarian Golf Books
Newsletter and Book Review for the Serious Collector

The Story of the Augusta National Golf Club by Clifford Roberts

A good way to combat depression during a cold and snowy winter is to read about Augusta National, to anticipate the spring, and the brilliance that is the Masters. This month we return to the fountainhead to gain insights into Augusta National co-founder Clifford Roberts, author of *The Story of the Augusta National Golf club*, published in 1976.

Returning to the source is rewarding and Roberts offers many interesting insights into the formation and running of the club. Of particular note are the detailed chapters describing his relationship with President Eisenhower and their friendship over the years. Roberts was such a trusted advisor that he ended up serving as trustee of Ike's estate after his death. The book also features a nice collection of black and white photos of the club's history including one of Bobby Jones's final round of golf, some nice images of founding member Grantland Rice and of the Berckmans family.



Roberts is a good storyteller and gives insights into the inner workings of the club and describes the origins of many of their traditions including the awarding of the first green jacket, which was only instituted in 1949. The club opened during the Great Depression while prohibition was still the law of the land. The official course opening was beset with poor weather, or as Roberts described it, “Miserably bad, both wet and cold, but most of the party went ahead and played golf despite the conditions. One thing that stimulated their determination was tents at the first and tenth tees, each with a keg of corn whiskey.”

Roberts describes why the club decided to use Pinkertons for security, because the club had no fence around the property and people could just walk onto the club grounds without a ticket. The Pinkertons were needed to enforce the buying of badges since the local police knew too many patrons and were lax at enforcing the rules. Difficult as it is to believe today, both Augusta National and the Masters has a difficult time gaining traction in the early years. As Roberts describes it, “To accurately describe the state of our club’s finances...one would have to use the old saying about being only one jump ahead of the sheriff.”

Another astonishing fact, especially in today’s era of thousand dollar Masters tickets on StubHub, is that television broadcasts of the tournament was blacked out within 200 miles of the course between 1956 and 1969 to help spur ticket sales, which were anemic for many years.



A young Cliff Roberts with Bobby Jones

Bobby and Cliff were traditionalists and wanted their club to follow suit, as Roberts describes, “The club’s operation was to be kept as simple as possible, on the order of golf clubs in England and Scotland, with no living quarters.” As famed as the on-property cabins are today, they were not a part of the original design of the club and were added out of necessity, “During 1945, however, it was realized that the Augusta National was doomed unless the club provide living quarters on the grounds. This was something we did not at all want to do, but we were forced by unforeseen circumstances to undertake such a program.”

The book contains hand-drawn black and white illustrations of various early Augusta National members including Alfred Severin Bourne (a founding member of the club and heir to the Singer Sewing Machine Company), Burton F. Peek (a founding member and chairman of Deere and Company), Clarence J. Schoo (a manufacturer from Massachusetts), John W. Herbert (an attorney and Judge from New Jersey), Bartlett Arkell (founder of the Beech-Net Company) W. Alton Jones (CEO of Cities Services, today’s Citgo), Melvin A. Traylor (head of the First National Bank of Chicago) and Charles H. Sabin, CEO of the Guaranty Trust Company). Focusing a spotlight on members and their backgrounds is certainly something the secretive club would not do today.

Roberts is a difficult historical figure to get insights into and *The Story of the Augusta National* is as in depth a look at the man as you will find. His rigid personality comes through, but the book also features warm writing about employees of the club. Roberts displays a real affection for the loyal service and dedication of early club employees. He writes about his own journey as well, "I have fared reasonably well, despite never being willing to make an all-out effort. The making of lots of money never seemed as important as traveling extensively and retaining some independence...I have no regret about lost business opportunities. In all truthfulness, my life has been so enriched by the working association and joyous companionship of Bob Jones and Ike, and many other Augusta National members, that I consider myself to be far richer today than could have been possible by any other measure of success. Briefly state, I've been overpaid."

The Story of the Augusta National Golf Club was published in two editions by Doubleday, Garden City. A limited edition with no limitation cited (D & J R11110) that includes a slipcase and a standard trade edition (D & J R11080). Later editions were also produced, including a 1993 reprint.