

Fact Sheet: Exploring Golf History and Historic Firsts

Philadelphia has been a hotbed for golf enthusiasts dating back to 1772

PHILADELPHIA, May 11, 2026 – There is much debate about where and when the game of golf first gained popularity in the United States. Founding Father [Benjamin Rush](#) – a proud Philadelphian, signer of the Declaration of Independence and America’s most celebrated physician – mentioned golf in his 1772 *Sermons to Gentlemen Upon Temperance and Exercise*, saying: “Golf is an exercise which is much used by a gentleman in Scotland ... a man would live 10 years the longer for using this exercise once or twice a week.” Did Rush heed his own advice? Well, the only evidence to point to is that he lived until the ripe age of 68.

2026 Major Golf Events in Philadelphia

- [108th PGA Championship](#): May 11-17, 2026 (Aronimink Golf Club – Newtown Square, PA)
- [126th U.S. Amateur Championship](#): August 10-16, 2026 (Merion Golf Club – Ardmore, PA)

Philadelphia Golf History: Facts & Firsts

- Oldest country club in America: [Philadelphia Cricket Club](#), established in 1854; located in Chestnut Hill, their St. Martins course hosted the 1907 and 1910 U.S. Open.
- First American to win the U.S. Open: [John J. McDermott](#), of Philadelphia. First learning golf as a caddie at Aronimink Golf Club, McDermott won the 1911 U.S. Open at age 19.
- Most USGA Championships in history: Founded in 1912, Merion Golf Club’s [East Course](#) has held a record 19 USGA championships, with plans to host the 2030 and 2040 U.S. Open.
- Oldest regional golf association in the U.S.: Founded in 1897, the [Golf Association of Philadelphia](#) continues to promote, protect and preserve the game of golf.
- First African-American to compete on PGA Tour: [Charlie Sifford](#); after moving from Charlotte to Philly at age 17, Sifford joined the Tour in 1961 and honed his skills at Cobbs Creek Golf Club.
- First venue to host each of America’s three rotating major championships: Founded in 1896, [Aronimink Golf Club](#) has now hosted everything on the PGA Tour – PGA Championship, KitchenAid Senior PGA Championship, KPMG Women's PGA Championship.

Connecting the Dots: Local Ties

- Wanamaker Trophy: given to the winner of the PGA Championship, this trophy was the brainchild of [Rodman Wanamaker](#) – part of the family behind the Wanamaker department stores.
- The Philadelphia School: Philadelphia natives Hugh Wilson, A.W. Tillinghast, George Crump, and George Thomas are credited with architecting “[ageless championship golf courses.](#)”
- Bobby Jones: the [most dominant amateur golfer](#) in history started his record run of five U.S. Amateur championships by winning at Merion Golf Club in 1924.
- Pine Valley Golf Club: located in Camden, NJ, Pine Valley is routinely ranked as the No. 1 golf course in the world; look out for [Hell’s Half Acre](#), golf’s largest bunker, spanning 100 yards.
- Jay Sigel: The native of Bryn Mawr, PA recorded a historic win in 1975 at Bidermann Golf Club in Delaware, carding a 3-under 137 to win the [Philadelphia Open](#). He won it six times.

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- Jim Furyk: arguably the area’s most successful professional golfer, the West Chester, PA native has notched 17 PGA Tour victories, including one major – 2003 U.S. Open championship. Recently, Furyk transitioned into a [lead analyst role](#) at Golf Channel.
- Cobbs Creek Golf Course: this newly-redesigned course in West Philly partnered with Tiger Woods’ [TGR Foundation](#) to provide golf education to inner-city youth; Cobbs Creek legend Charlie Sifford was a mentor to Woods, naming his son Charlie after the golfer.
 - Here are [five pitch angles](#) for Cobbs Creek.

Where to Play: The Best Private Courses

- [Aronimink Golf Club](#) (Newtown Square, PA)
- [Merion Golf Club](#) (Ardmore, PA)
- [Pine Valley Golf Club](#) (Camden, NJ)
- [Philadelphia Cricket Club: Wissahickon](#) (Flourtown, PA)
- [Huntingdon Valley Country Club](#) (Huntingdon Valley, PA)
- [Philadelphia Country Club: Spring Mill](#) (Gladwyne, PA)
- [Union League Golf Club: Torresdale](#) (Philadelphia, PA)
- [Whitemarsh Valley Country Club](#) (Lafayette Hill, PA)
- [Gulph Mills Golf Club](#) (King of Prussia, PA)
- [Stonewall: Old Course](#) (Elverson, PA)

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