

The Little Club that Could

The People

The Times

The Games

and

The Cup

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The Davis Cup Trophy

The Neighborhood Club, West Newton, Massachusetts

The Neighborhood Club of West Newton, Massachusetts, is one of the oldest tennis clubs in the United States. Its story is in many ways central to the history of the sport. The Club hosted a series of important tournaments from 1892-1895, the last one of which was the very first international contest on US soil among players from the US and UK. As we will see, that competition set the wheels in motion toward what has become known as the Davis Cup, though the aftermath of the event spelled the end of the Neighborhood Club as an venue for world-class tournaments.

In this narrative, we'll look back on the young men who founded the Club and who in 18 short months established the Neighborhood Club as one of the world's leading venues for major tennis tournaments. The Club's history gives us a look at a different age, when ambitious and energetic people could get big things done in a hurry - it's remarkable what the founders accomplished in a short time.

We'll also present fresh evidence supporting a new version of the origin story of the Davis Cup, a competition which remains today the most important team event in international men's tennis.

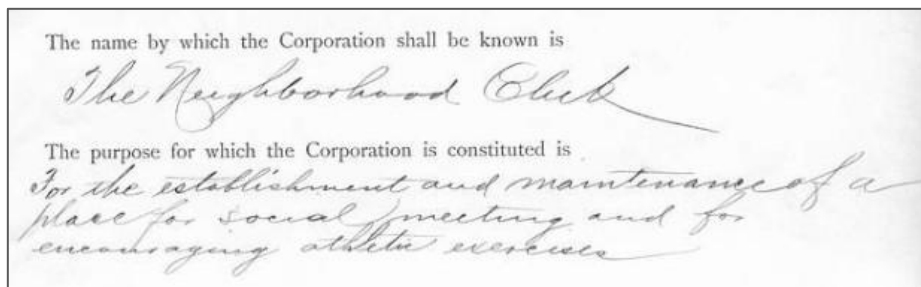
In the Fall of 1890, five men; George H. Phelps, Henry B. Day, George A. Frost, Charles I. Travelli and Harry L. Ayer, all interested in the game of lawn tennis, held a meeting for the purpose of making plans to organize a club, to build tennis courts and a club house. At this meeting it was suggested that each one of the original five men invite five other men to attend a meeting which was called for December 13, 1890. The thirty men, all living in West Newton, met and organized the Neighborhood Club. As the name implies, it was a family organization, and all the members' families were entitled to full privilege of the club. The members of the new club were all interested in the development of tennis and the class of sports which required no systematic methods of training and which provided a pleasant amount of recreation.

- "The History of The Neighborhood Club," c. 1900, by Harry L. Ayer, West Newton, Massachusetts



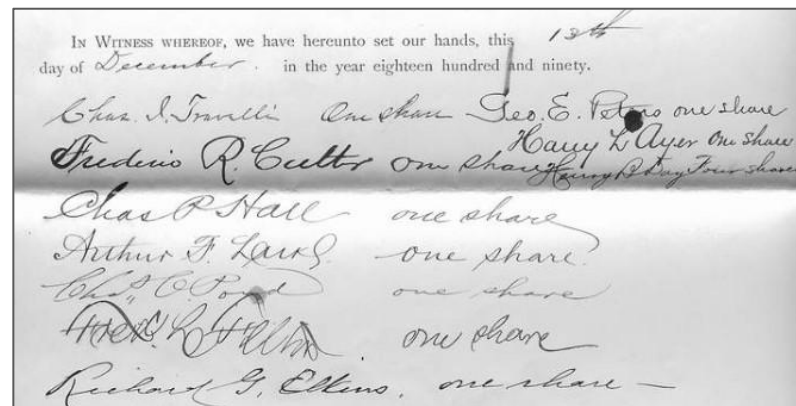
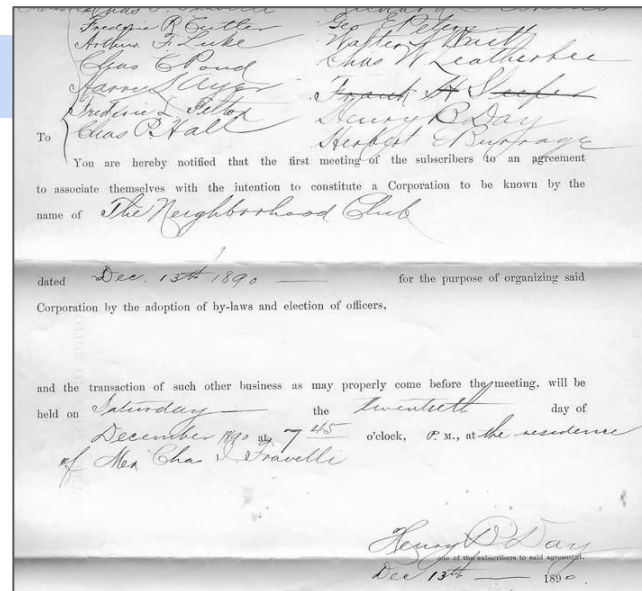
Masters of the Universe

The five founding members were loaded with energy, purpose and financial resources, and knew how to get things done. One of them, Henry B. Day, who at 28 years old [furnished the land on which the club was constructed](#), seems to have been the prime mover. The manuscripts below and to the right are in his elegant hand:



Remarkably, the Club that was launched in December 1890 was sufficiently subscribed, constructed and financed so as to be able just 18 months later, in June 1892, to host a tournament featuring some of the finest players in America. Over the following three years, the Club hosted several more tournaments, featuring even stronger players.

But as with any good story, we'll find a few twists at the end ...



The Founders: George H. Phelps (1851 - 1914) (39yo in 1890)

Phelps worked with and lived with his brother-in-law, George Frost, another Club founder.

In 1891, Phelps and his wife Melissa lived at Melissa's brother George Frost's home at 170 Chestnut St.

In 1899, apparently only for that year, they resided at 156 Highland St.

Immediately thereafter, the couple were listed at the Jamaicaaway in Boston.

Phelps was the third President of the Club, serving from 1895 to 1899.



156 Highland St, West Newton

GEORGE H. PHELPS DEAD.

For Many Years Treasurer of the George Frost Company—Had Been Ill Only Six Days.

George H. Phelps, for many years treasurer of the George Frost Company and one of the founders of that concern, died at his home, 256 Commonwealth av, yesterday, after an illness of six days.

Mr Phelps was in his 62d year. He was a member of the Country and the Brae Burn Golf clubs. He was well known as a golf player and was considered an expert on the curling rinks. He is survived by a wife and two daughters, one of whom is the wife of Prof Henry Fay of Technology and the other is the wife of Francis W. Bird of New York. The funeral services will be held at the residence tomorrow at noon.

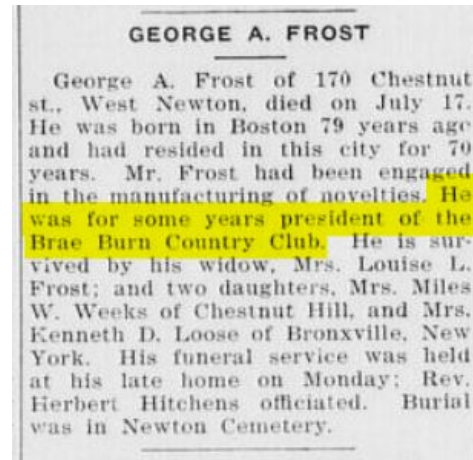
The Founders: George A. Frost (1858-1936) (32yo in 1890)

Frost and his wife Louise lived at 170 Chestnut St with three servants, all surnamed Casey



RESIDENCE, GEORGE A. FROST, CHESTNUT STREET.

The George Frost Company, was founded by Frost's father George no later than 1876. They produced, among many other things, suspenders, braces and hose supporters (notably the well-regarded "Velvet Grip" and "Boston Garter," the latter of which featured a rubber button and metal loop to hold long stockings securely in place - essentially a "modern" garter belt).¹



Newton Graphic, July 24, 1936

In the summer of 1903, George A. Frost was vacationing at a cottage on Cape Cod when he met, by chance, Gleason L. Archer [founder of Suffolk Law School]. Archer, who had been injured while working at a hotel on Cape Cod, was on his way to the railroad station to make the trip into Massachusetts General Hospital when the stagecoach he was riding in stopped to pick up another passenger: George A. Frost. Although Archer was in pain and paid little attention to Frost, Frost struck up a conversation with him, and, as Archer wrote in his book, Building a School, "*such was the magnetism of the man, that before we had reached the railroad station I had told him much of my story*" ... George Frost became Archer's benefactor, funding his medical treatment and later his law education at Boston University.

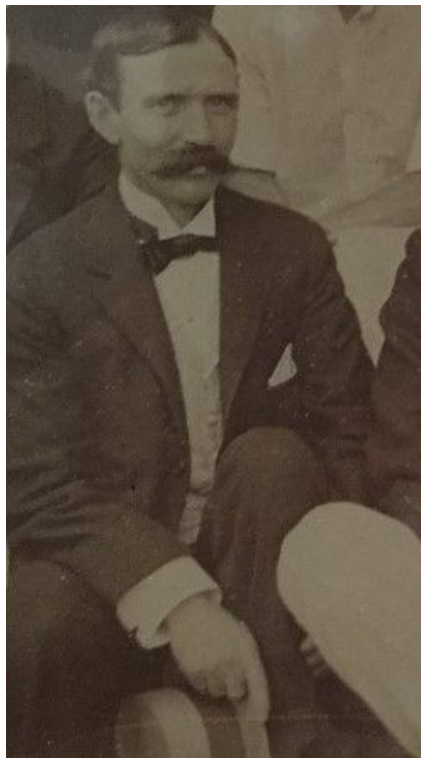
*"George Frost was a significant figure in Suffolk Law School's history, as he provided the financial support that Gleason Archer needed to become a lawyer and later to start his own law school. He served on the Suffolk Law School Board of Trustees beginning in 1919 and acc to Suffolk records, was "the school's foremost backer until his death in 1936."*²

¹ <https://www.histclo.com/style/under/comp/alpha/f/mu-frost.html>

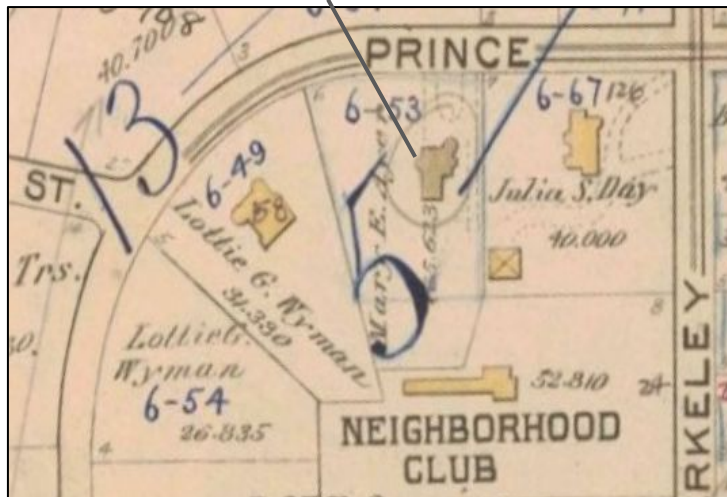
² https://www.suffolk.edu/-/media/suffolk/documents/academics/libraries/moakley-archive/research-tools/biography_frost_pdf.txt.pdf

The Founders: Harry L. Ayer (1858? - 1936) (32yo in 1890)

Ayer lived at 140 Prince St (which no longer exists) with wife Mary E, mother-in-law Mary, a Butler, and two Maids



Ayer was an exceptionally athletic man - he played baseball, tennis, and most particularly, golf, all at a high level. According to his obituary, he was educated in public schools, and was “an investor.” Ayer is the only club founder listed in “Newton, Garden City of the Commonwealth, 1874-1902”, where it was said, “Mr Ayer is one of the best known men in social and athletic circles in the city and is a member of the Newton Brae Burn Golf, Neighborhood, Newton Boat Club, Manchester Yacht Club of Manchester Mass, the Exchange Club of Boston, the Essex County Club of Manchester Mass, and the Misery Island Club Beverly Mass. Mr Ayer was the leading spirit in the famous tennis tournaments held by the Neighborhood Club and is an active member of that organization. He attends the West Newton Unitarian Church and resides on Prince Street.



Without Ayer, the 1892-1895 tournaments simply would not have happened. He also wrote, in approximately 1900, “The History of the Neighborhood Club,” our only first-hand account of the Club’s first decade.

The late Harry L. Ayer was one of those energetic, well-balanced men who made things go. He rendered invaluable services to golf in its pioneer days as an executive of the Brae Burn Club and as president of the Massachusetts Golf Association.

Boston Globe Oct 10, 1936

1895 Newton City Atlas, plate 14

Ayer's home, now gone, abuts the Club and is circled on this map in pencil.

The Founders: Charles I. Travelli (1859 - 1920) (31yo in 1890)

The Travelli family lived in the magnificent “Stone House” at 180 Chestnut St until February 1, 1898, on which date, during a severe winter blizzard, the house was destroyed by fire. The family narrowly escaped with their lives. Afterward they lived at 173 Chestnut St with Charles’ wife Emma’s family. Today there are nine large houses on big lots constructed on the site of the Stone House. Its Carriage House survives, and is today a stand-alone residence.

Travelli’s obituary in the June 29, 1920 Boston Globe is short and to the point. It is worthwhile to note Travelli’s “Irwin Fund” remains active to this day.

The “Stone House,” built approximately 1890



**FUNERAL OF C. I. TRAVELLI
AT WEST NEWTON TOMORROW**

NEWTON, June 26—The funeral of Charles Irwin Travelli of Chestnut st, West Newton, who died Sunday after a long illness, will take place Wednesday afternoon at 3 at his home. Mr Travelli had lived in Newton 31 years. He was one of the founders of the Brae Burn Country Club.

He was born 62 years ago in Pittsburg and was graduated from the University of Pennsylvania. He became associated with the Pittsburg Steel Casting Company and later with the American Steel Foundry and the General Chemical Company of New York.

Mr Travelli was widely known for his philanthropic work and was one of the founders of the Irwin Fund, a corporation devoted to charitable work. In 1888 he married Emma A. Robinson of Newton, daughter of Charles and Rebecca Robinson of Newton, who survives him.

CHARLES IRWIN TRAVELLI FUND
77 SUMMER STREET, BOSTON, MA 02110-1006 | TAX-EXEMPT SINCE SEPT. 1938

Form 990 for period ending **November 2015**

Part I Analysis of Revenue and Expenses		(a) Revenue and expenses per books	(b) Net investment income	(c) Adjusted net income
1	Contributions, gifts, grants, etc., received	1,211,543.		N/A
2	Check <input type="checkbox"/> if the foundation is not required to attach Sch 9			
3	Interest on savings and temporary cash investments	60.	60.	
4	Dividends and interest from securities	56,841.	56,841.	
5a	Gross rents			
b	Net rental income or (loss)			
6a	Net gain or (loss) from sale of assets not on line 10	1,792.		
b	Gross sales price for all assets on line 6a	3,100.		
7	Capital gain net income (from Part IV, line 2)		1,792.	
8	Net short-term capital gain			
9	Income modifications			
10a	Gross sales, less returns and allowances			
b	Less: Cost of goods sold			
c	Gross profit or (loss)			
11	Other income			
12	Total. Add lines 1 through 11	1,270,236.	58,693.	
13	Compensation of officers, directors, trustees, etc.	35,000.	3,500.	
14	Other employee salaries and wages			
15	Pension plans, employee benefits			
16a	Legal fees			

RECEIVED AUG 29 2016

The Founders: Henry B. Day (1862 - 1941) (28yo in 1890)

Henry and his wife Julia lived at 126 Prince St, next door to the Neighborhood Club, until approximately 1895. Afterward they built and lived at 321 Chestnut St, along with three servants, a gardener and an ostler. [Henry provided the land and much of the initial funding for the new Neighborhood Club](#), and served as its President in 1895.

Henry's father Robert Lansing Day

- b 1820, Lansingburgh, NY
- d 1896, Framingham MA

founded R.L. Day & Co in Boston in 1865.

(Interestingly, "Horace W. Day" (b 1814, Lansingburgh) was President of the Bank of Lansingburgh, which closed in 1877. There is no record showing Robert and Horace to be related, but there has to be a story there. There's also no trace of the elder Day having a Lansing in his family.)

Robert L. Day hired Henry into R.L. Day & Co at age 18, though Henry did acquire at least some University level schooling.

By age 25, in 1887, Henry owned land in Newton including most of the many acres shown on the map (though excluding the lot highlighted in pink).

The photo shows Henry's home at 321 Chestnut St, the current site of the All Newton Music School, and the **green** on the map shows its location.

Henry's older brother, Frank A. Day, was an important Newton benefactor, and is the namesake for F. A. Day Middle School and Frank A. Day YMCA Camp.

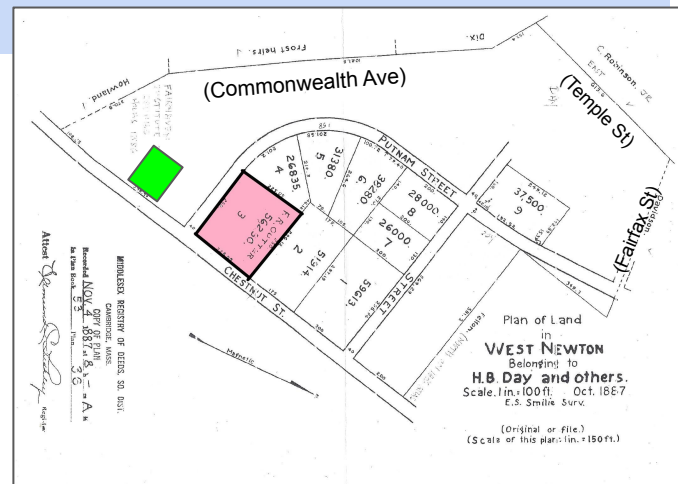
Henry B. Day, Noted Banker, Dies Suddenly

NEWTON, Dec. 1.—Henry Brown Day, 79, senior partner of the banking firm of R. L. Day & Co., 111 Devonshire st., Boston, died suddenly this morning at the West Newton Railroad Station while on his way to his Boston office. Death was due to a coronary attack.

Despite his advanced age, Mr. Day participated in athletics. Only last Saturday he played tennis at the Badminton and Tennis Club, Boston.

Henry B. Day
Continued on Page 28

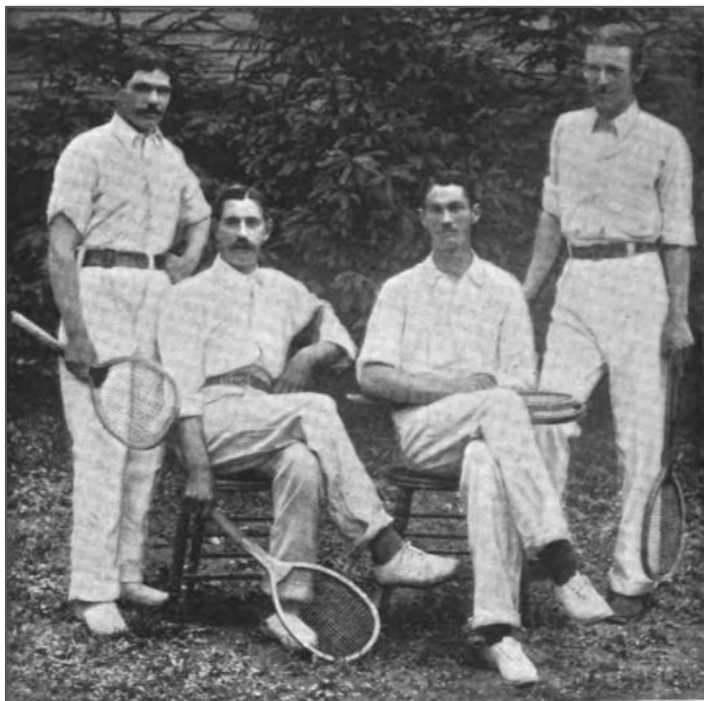
Boston Globe, Page One, December 1, 1941



Day's Residence at 321 Chestnut St, West Newton
Currently occupied by the All Newton Music School

The Tournaments! Who played When?

The Club formed in December, 1890, with Henry Day providing the land and much of the financing. Just 18 months later, in June 1892, the first of five major tennis tournaments got underway in West Newton. Here are the players, the years they played, and how they finished. As we'll see, many were top-ranked in the US, and later in the UK. These were among the premier tennis tournaments in the world at the time.



HOVEY, PIM, MAHONEY, AND HOBART.

(Harold Mahony's name is misspelled in the photo caption)

	June 1892	Sept 1892	1893	1894	1895
F. H. Hovey	1	Not Known	T1	1	4
M.G. Chace	T2	1	4	3	3
R.D. Wrenn	T2	Not Known	3	5	
H. Tallant	4				
A.E. Wright	5				
R.B. Beach	6				
C.F. Hubbard		Not Known			
C. Hobart			T1	2	5
W.A. Larned			5		6
A. Foote				4	
J. Pim					1
H.S. Mahony					2

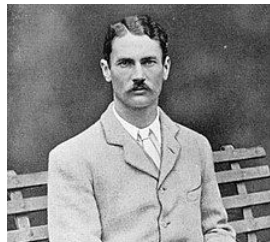
At the time of that first tournament, Hovey, Chace and Wrenn were top-ranked American players, while Tallant, Wright and Beach were not quite at that level. In successive years, the tournaments grew in reputation and attracted new players (Hobart, Larned, Pim and Mahony), who were ranked as some of the finest in the world. Pim and Mahoney were both Wimbledon winners.

The Tournament Players



Dr. Joshua (Josh) Francis Pim (95)

From Ireland. Runner up at Wimbledon in 1891 and 1892, then won the championship in 1893 and 1894. Was Wimbledon doubles champion (with Frank Stoker) in 1890 and 1893. Wikipedia page says, "In 1895 he competed in America rather than in England." Retired from tennis in 1896, but returned in 1902 to play on the British Davis Cup team, losing both matches. He was a Fellow of the Royal College of Surgeons, living to 1942.



Harold Segerson Mahony (95)

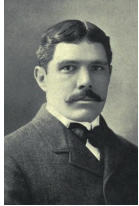
Born in Scotland but lived in Ireland most of his life. Singles champion at Wimbledon in 1896, and in the 1900 Olympics, won the Silver medal in singles tennis, the bronze medal in doubles (with Arthur Norris) and the silver medal in mixed doubles (with Helene Prevost). He was known for his formidable backhand. He has an extensive list of county championships in England from 1888 to 1905. He was killed in 1905 in a bicycling accident in Ireland, while descending a steep hill.



Malcolm Greene Chace (6/92, 9/92, 93, 94, 95)

From Rhode Island. Transferred from Brown to Yale, and was the first Hockey captain at Yale. In tennis he was ranked #3 in the US in 1895. Retired from tennis in 1896 after winning the US Intercollegiate Singles and Doubles titles three consecutive years 1893-95 (the only other to accomplish this feat was Pancho Segura). Chase went on to an important career in business, creating the Company that would become National Grid US, and acting as CEO to the Company that would become Berkshire Hathaway. More detail on his extraordinary business career can be found [here](#), starting on page 15.

The Tournament Players



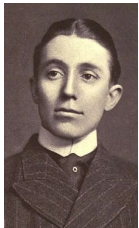
Frederick H. Hovey (6/92, 9/92, 93, 94, 95)

From Newton Centre. Graduated 1890 from Brown University, Phi Beta Kappa, active in tennis, baseball and football. 1893 graduate of Harvard Law School. He was 1895 National singles champion, and doubles champion with Clarence Hobart in 1893 and 1894.



William (Bill) Augustus Larned (93, 95)

From Summit NJ. Attended Cornell University, where he won the intercollegiate tennis championship. He invented the steel-framed tennis racquet. He won the US Men's Championship seven times between 1901 and 1911, and was on the US Davis Cup team four times. In 1901 he was ranked #1 in the world. Served with the Rough Riders in Cuba, where he contracted Rheumatoid Arthritis, forcing his retirement from tennis in 1912. After spinal meningitis caused partial paralysis, he became depressed and took his own life inside the exclusive Knickerbocker Club in NYC in 1926.



Robert Duffield Wrenn (6/92, 9/92, 93, 94)

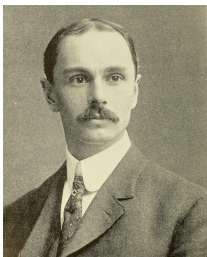
From Illinois. He was a left-handed player, and was four-time US Singles Champion (1893, 1894, 1896, 1897). Quarterback of Harvard football and shortstop on Harvard baseball. Served with Teddy Roosevelt's Rough Riders in Cuba, where he contracted Yellow Fever, which was said to have impacted his tennis. Later, he was a pilot during WW1. He died in 1925.

The Tournament Players



Clarence Hobart (93, 94, 95)

From Waltham MA. Wimbledon semi-finalist in 1898. Three-time US National doubles champion (1890, 1893, 1894) and three-time US National mixed doubles champion (1892, 1893, 1905). His 1905 mixed doubles partner was Augusta Shultz, to whom he had been married in 1895. He died in a swimming pool accident in 1930.



Hugh Tallant (6/92)

Harvard University lawn tennis player. In 1912 he went rogue, according to the NYT:

“An innovation in championship tennis was shown in the twenty-second annual Longwood Cricket Club tournament in singles to-day, when Hugh Tallant of New York, in his match with G.F. Touchard, winner of last year's tournament, played without shoes. His feet were incased (sic) in heavy socks, but he apparently gained no advantage from the change, proving unable to gather in the court drives of Touchard, who won all three sets.” (NYT July 17, 1912)

Charles Parker Hubbard (9/92)

From Alameda, CA. Visited East Coast to play in 1892 U.S. Open and Longwood Bowl. Ayer arranged a September 1892 tournament to acknowledge his being East. Hubbard won his first round at the Open, but lost the second to Clarence Hobart. He reached the semi-finals of the 1892 Longwood Bowl.

Rodmond Vernon Beach (6/92)

From New Haven CT, incorrectly listed by Ayer as “R.B. Beach.” Attended Yale undergrad and Yale Law School. He died in 1898 fighting in the Spanish-American War.

Arthur Ellsworth Foote (94)

From New Haven. Attended Yale. Ranked #8 in US Tennis in 1893, and #9 in 1894. Served as a Major in WW1, with charge over all US Army Post Exchanges, and worked in government afterward until retiring 1931.

Albert Empie Wright (6/92)

Attended Columbia Law School. Columbia University Intercollegiate Doubles Champion (with Oliver Campbell) in 1889.

Two more characters - do two Dwights make a Wrong?



Dr. James Dwight

Known as the “founding father of American tennis.” One of the driving forces behind the creation of the U.S. National Lawn Tennis Association. He was instrumental in establishing the first U.S. National Championships held at the Newport Casino and the first Davis Cup match at the Longwood Cricket Club in Boston in 1900. He was a strong promoter of US/UK international tennis.

Served for 21 years (1882-84, 1894-1911) as President of the USNLTA (which became “USTA” in 1975), and was a noted referee for more than 30 years at the U.S. Nationals (and at the Neighborhood Club!). A practicing physician, but in later years turned much of his attention to tennis.



Dwight F. Davis

To whom conventional wisdom attributes conceiving of, creating the format for, and founding what would become known as the Davis Cup. Some current research¹ suggests Davis’s purported role in this history may be exaggerated.

¹ Eaves and Lake, *Journal of Sports History*, Vol 41 Number 1 (Spring 2018) pp 1-23, “**Dwight Davis and the Foundation of the Davis Cup in Tennis: Just another Doubleday Myth?**”, licensed December 2019 from www.jstore.org.

Setting the stage for International Tennis

1892 and following: The “Irish Championships,” held annually, were actually the first international tournaments, pitting English players against teams from Ireland. Despite repeated pleas to the English LTA from the USNLTA (James Dwight), English players declined to travel to America because the crossings were long and the competition was considered weak. These competitions featured National teams made up of Irish and English players, anticipating the Davis Cup format of compatriot teams.

1894 Englishman Manliffe Goodbody was persuaded to come to Newport to play in the Challenge Round in the US National Championships. He lost to Bob Wrenn, who had played at Neighborhood Club tournaments. Goodbody was so impressed he vowed to come back in 1895 with his buddies Josh Pim and Harold Mahony.

1895 Goodbody was unable to come, but Pim and Mahony were delighted - Pim to the point of coming out of retirement, and Mahony to the point of eschewing Wimbledon (which did not sit well with the English LTA). James Dwight, representing the USNLTA, worked with Pim and Mahony and connected them with Harry Ayer to arrange the logistics for and promote the 1895 tournament at the Neighborhood Club, the first UK vs US international tennis tournament. The NC may have facilitated the expenses to some degree, which planted a seed we will explore later².

The tournament had two other important effects. First, Harold Mahony and Bill Larned became fast friends, and together would become an important force in Anglo-American tennis, for years afterward barnstorming tournaments on both sides of the Atlantic. Second, the success of the tournament was held in high esteem, and was used as a model for future (albeit individual round-robin as opposed to National team competition) Anglo-American events, starting in 1896 at the Niagara-on-the-Lake event, well in advance of ...

1900 Dwight Davis purchased and endowed the silver bowl given as a prize for the “International Lawn Tennis Challenge,” later renamed the Davis Cup. Davis also was one of three US players in that inaugural 1900 tournament, won by the US. Wikipedia¹ cites the revisionist but controversial Eaves and Lake piece giving Davis no founding credit, but naming him only as a player and as paying out-of-pocket for the bowl. That Wiki entry was written August 19, 2018 by Robert J. Lake, co-author of the revisionist article. The estimable Bud Collins anticipated that revisionist view, writing in 2010, ***“In 1895, what almost amounted to a representative contest between the Americans and the British took the form of a round-robin tournament at the Neighborhood Club, West Newton, Mass ... [Dr. James] Dwight had been trying to stir up the Anglo-American rivalry into a team event instead of individual exercises. In 1900, his hopes reached fruition as his friend, another Harvardian, undergraduate Dwight Davis, put up the famous bauble ... which soon became known as the Davis Cup.”***³

¹ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Davis_Cup#History, as of December, 2019

² [The New York Times, “For the Tennis Honors,” 18 Aug 1895, page 19](#)

³ Collins, Bud, [The Bud Collins History of Tennis](#), 2nd Edition, New Chapter Press (2010), page 11

Press buzz for the 1895 tournament



PIM LIKELY TO COME.
English Tennis Champion Has
Been Invited Here.

His Reply to Neighborhood Club of New-
ton Said to be Affirmative.

Gossip About American Players and the
Coming State Championship.

It is rumored that the champion ten-
nis player of the world, Mr Pim of Eng-
land, is to visit America shortly. An
invitation to play at the Neighborhood
club tournament at West Newton has
been extended to Mr Pim by Mr Harry
Ayer, and it is said that he has ac-
cepted.

The visit here will be attended with
much interest by all tennis players.
Goodbody and Messrs. both in the first

Boston Globe 02 Jun 1895

AMATEUR SPORT

THE LAWN-TENNIS TOURNAMENT of the Neighborhood Club, concluded the first of last week, proved to be a mem-
orable week of play, probably the most notable in the his-
tory of the American game. For the first time an English
champion performed on an American court, and gave an
opportunity of comparing the utmost skill of the old coun-
try with that of the new. It is to be regretted that Messrs.
Pim and Mahoney, the visiting sportsmen, were unable to
remain for other tournaments, but an entire season's play
could not have shown more clearly than the week at West



DOCTOR JOSHUA PIM,
The English Lawn-Tennis Singles Champion.

Newton the distinguishing superiority of English cracks
over the corresponding class in America. We have known
since O. S. Campbell played part of a season on English
courts several years ago that the game of our best men is
inferior to that of England's best, and Goodbody's fine
work at Newport last year, when he won the All-Comers
to be defeated for the championship by Wrenn, gave ad-
ditional evidence in the same line.

<https://books.google.com/books?id=zYY-AQAAMAAJ&pg=PA66Z>

A WEEK OF THE FINEST TENNIS

Invitation Tournament of the
Neighborhood Club.

The Matches Begin Tomorrow at
West Newton—Two Foreign Cracks
Against Some of the Most Expert
Players of America—A Chat with
Messrs. Pim and Mahoney.

Tennis players and tennis enthusiasts
have for some time past been looking
forward with considerable pleasure to
the invitation tournament of the Neigh-
borhood Club, which opens at West
Newton tomorrow morning. The tour-
nament might properly be called an
international one, as two of the best
players in England will be pitted
against four of the best American
players.

When it was first quietly rumored
that Pim and Mahoney, the Irish cracks,
were coming over to play exclusively
at the Newton tournament, a very big
"doubt" was expressed in certain quar-
ters as to the reliability of the infor-
mation. But the tennis committeemen
of the Neighborhood Club said nothing
until they were absolutely sure of their
attraction, then it was Mr. Harry
Ayer's turn to smile, and now he is
reassuringly sure of giving the members
of his club and their friends a week of
tennis sport which promises to equal if
not surpass in importance the national
championship at Newport.

Boston Herald

PIM A WONDER.

Chace Gets a Set From
English Champion.

Mahoney Wins Dence Sets in
His Match With Hobart.

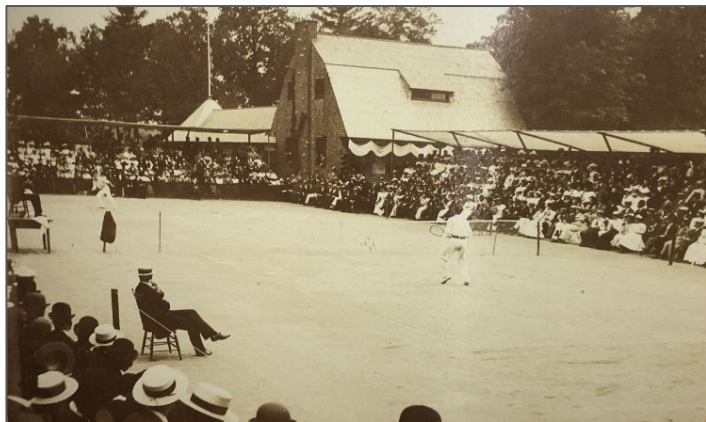
Visitors Show Great Skill at
the Game.

Tennis at the Neighborhood
Club Attracts Crowd.

Most Important Tournament in
History of Game Here.

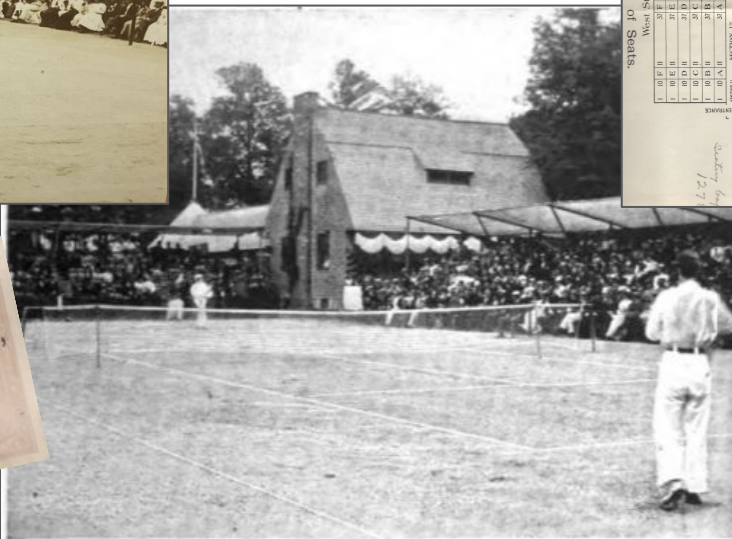
Boston Globe

Sights and sounds from the courts



The location on the Club's grounds of the tournament court and grandstand overlaps a part of the Clubhouse as it stands today. That portion of the building was constructed a number of years after the tournaments.

HARPER'S WEEKLY



INTERNATIONAL LAWN-TENNIS AT THE NEIGHBORHOOD CLUB, WEST NEWTON, MASSACHUSETTS.

Diagram of Seats.

NORTH STAND											
SECTION 1	SECTION 2	SECTION 3	SECTION 4	SECTION 5	SECTION 6	SECTION 7	SECTION 8	SECTION 9	SECTION 10	SECTION 11	SECTION 12
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24
25	26	27	28	29	30	31	32	33	34	35	36
37	38	39	40	41	42	43	44	45	46	47	48
49	50	51	52	53	54	55	56	57	58	59	60
61	62	63	64	65	66	67	68	69	70	71	72
73	74	75	76	77	78	79	80	81	82	83	84
85	86	87	88	89	90	91	92	93	94	95	96
97	98	99	100	101	102	103	104	105	106	107	108
109	110	111	112	113	114	115	116	117	118	119	120

Diagram of Seats.



What happened in 1896? For one thing, Pim couldn't return. October 1895 Letter Pim to Ayer:



Rose Cottage
Killiney
Co Dublin
17. Oct 95.

My dear Ayer,

I would have written you some days ago, but have been awaiting answers from some fellows I wrote to about this trip next year. - I don't think it can be worked - I had a letter from Hillyard & he would only go across to play in the Championship & I feel certain

all the other English men won't go except for that also, as any fellows that have any possibility of winning the English Championship won't ^{be} away for it or go from England before it.

I had a letter from Stoker, he will go in June, but who to get to go with him I don't know, I couldn't get any answer from Mahoney tho' I wrote him long ago, and I fear my going again (ah

least next year) is out of the question, as I must stick hard at work to get on here, which is a necessity.

Chaytor I asked, but he says, nothing would make him face the Atlantic.

You see it's only fellows dropping out of the game (like this cripple) that will go across as the others will keep trying after the sour grapes here. I don't know which to say, if they only knew what was before them they would all be fighting to go, I only know

I wish I could go again. You will have to get me an heiress or poison Vanderbilt or some of those jokers & make them make their wills in my favor & I will be with you annually.

Let me know if I can do anything for you in any way to forward your tournament. With kind regards to Mrs Ayer & all the "gals"

Believe me
Sincerely
Josh Pim

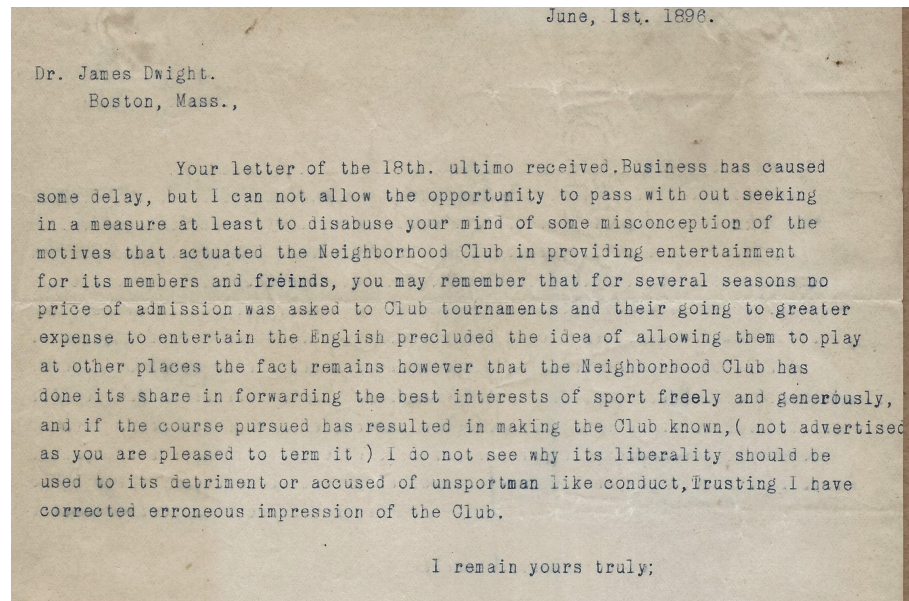
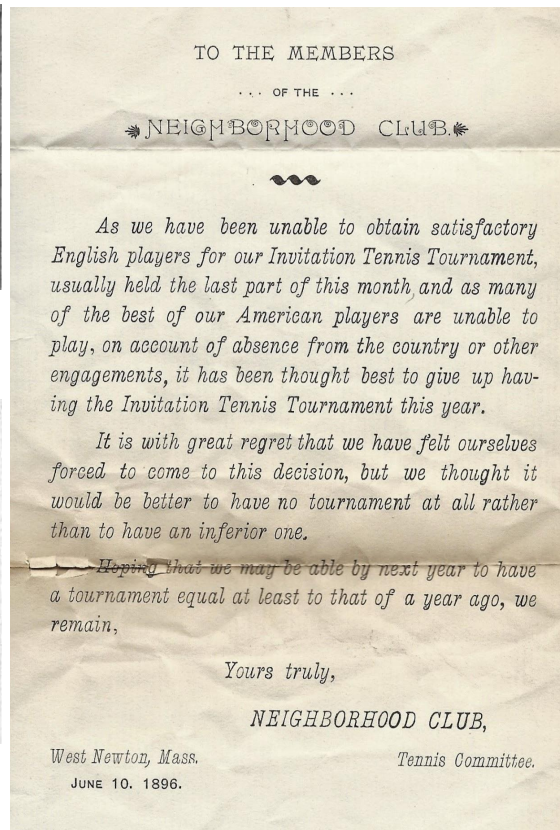
Rose Cottage, Killiney, Co Dublin, 17 Oct 95. My dear Ayer, I would have written you some days ago, but have been awaiting answers from some fellows I wrote to about this trip next year. - I don't think it can be worked - I had a letter from [George] Hillyard & he would only go across to play in the Championship & I feel certain all the other English men won't go except for that also, as any fellows that have any possibility of winning the English Championship won't be away for it or go from England before it. I had a letter from [Frank] Stoker, he will go in June, but who to get to go with him I don't know, I couldn't get any answer from Mahoney tho I wrote him long ago, and I fear my going again at least next year is out of the question, as I must stick hard at work to get on here, which is a necessity. [Tom] Chaytor I asked, but he says, nothing would make him face the Atlantic. You see it's only fellows dropping out of the game (like this cripple) that will go across as the others will keep trying after the sour grapes here. I don't know which today, if they only knew what was before them they would all be fighting to go, I only know I wish I could go again. You will have to get me an heiress or poison [sic] Vanderbilt or some of those jokers & make them make their wills in my favor and I will be with you annually. Let me know if I can do anything to forward your tournament - with kind regards to Mrs. Ayer and all the "gals." Believe me, sincerely, Josh Pim.

Picking up the pieces in 1896



game in this country. But last year the appearance of Goodbody late in the season and his sensational victories at Newport made the season end in a blaze of glory, while this year the great international contest at West Newton and the splendid play of Pim and Mahony came so early in the season that even the championship contest will seem a kind of anti-climax. It is a great pity that the English cracks did not come over on their own hook, and not as guests of the Neighborhood Club. It has since leaked out that both of the foreigners were enthusiastic over their reception here, and that they would have been glad to stay and play through the season. Mahony, at least, would have done so but for the arrangement with the West Newton people. The latter were enterprising enough to foot the bills of all the players, and it seems that the English cracks felt bound not to play anywhere but in West Newton, except with the consent of the Neighborhood Club.

The New York Times, "For the Tennis Honors," 18 Aug 1895, p19



We don't know if some version of this draft June 1, 1896 letter from Ayer to James Dwight (head of the USNLTA, who had handed the 1895 tournament to Ayer) was actually sent. Reading between the lines, and factoring in the NYTimes article on the left, it would appear Ayer is responding to an unseen criticism from Dwight for turning the 1895 tournament into self-advertisement, and perhaps more significantly, for the Club keeping Pim and Mahony for themselves and not sharing the wealth with other tennis venues. Ayer pretty much admits to all that and says, I got what I paid for. It may not be a coincidence 1895 was the last USNLTA-sponsored tournament at the NC rather than Longwood or elsewhere.

On a personal note, I will add that I have examined the ledger of expenses of the Club itself for the year 1895, and have seen no evidence of payments to cover Pim's or Mahoney's expenses. Any such payments would have had to have been made by Ayer or other Club members personally.

Life Goes On

So we've had two revelations here:

- James Dwight motivated Harry Ayer to fulfil Dwight's dream of a US vs UK tennis tournament on US soil, and by doing so, James Dwight, rather than Dwight Davis, may have set the stage for the Davis Cup tournaments. It is clear Dwight had a broad agenda in influencing Ayer to produce the tournament, and the tournament indeed sparked broad interest in trans-Atlantic tennis among both fans and players.
- James Dwight and Harry Ayer had strong disagreement over the way the NC and Ayer handled Pim and Mahony in July 1895. In Dwight's view, he had dropped the tournament in Ayer's lap, and Dwight was disappointed in Ayer's parochial monopoly of the Irishmen at the expense of the inclusive spirit Dwight had hoped to inspire. Afterward, there were no more USNLTA tournaments at the NC, and with Dwight's encouragement, the nearby Longwood Club usurped the Neighborhood Club's role as a world-class venue based in the Boston suburbs.

In the absence of a successor to the 1895 tournament at the Neighborhood Club, Mahony and Larned barnstormed numerous national and local tournaments the UK in 1896, and followed with a reciprocal tour around the US in 1897.

1896 UK Tour of Mahony and Larned

May Irish Championships, Dublin

(Mahony runner-up to Wilfred Baddeley)

June Middlesex Championship, Chiswick Park London

(won by Mahony; Doubles won by Mahony and Larned)

June Northern Tournament, Liverpool

July Bristol Tournament, Bristol

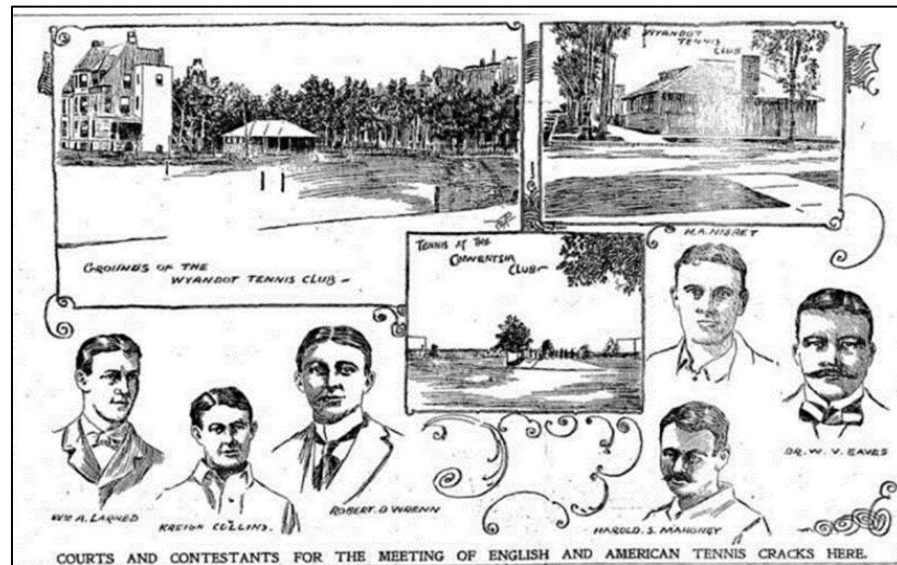
(Mahony and Larned met in the Final, won by Mahony)

(Mahony and Larned were Doubles runners-up to Baddeley twins)

July All-England Championship, Wimbledon

(won by Mahony)

1897 US Tour of Mahony, Larned, Eaves, Wrenn and others



Author's Note

These pages were created originally as slides to accompany a verbal presentation to members of the Neighborhood Club. I've come to realize that the real story, deserving of narrative presentation, recounts the founding of the Club and the 1892-1895 tournaments, especially the 1895 event which proved the undoing of the Club as an important part of the tennis pantheon.

As a member of the Club, and as someone who has done archival work in its behalf, I may be privileged to have access to Club archives that no outside researcher could enjoy. There are scrapbooks of news clippings, photos, and letters still in their envelopes, some of which appear in this document. Most interesting is the 1896 draft of the letter from Ayer to Dwight, which may never before have seen the light of day.

I hope individuals interested in the history of international tennis have an opportunity to look at it.

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September 2021
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