

THE ORIGIN OF THE SCHENECTADY PUTTER

By B. B. H.

It may be of interest to your readers to know something of the origin and development of the now famous Schenectady putter, which lately has been the subject of so much discussion by golfers of both high and low degree in America and Great Britain.

This putter was invented and developed by Mr. A. F. Knight, of Schenectady, N. Y., and was by him patented in both the United States and Great Britain.

Mr. Knight obtained his first knowledge of the game in his home city in 1896, and while at first not a very enthusiastic golfer, he played occasionally, and by the time the present Mo-

hawk Golf Club was organized in 1898 was not only an enthusiast, but also the best player the club then had.

In those early days, when the club team consisted of but eight men, the chief golfing ambition was to "make the team." Mr. Knight had no difficulty in doing this, but the defense of his position as number one was becoming more and more difficult each year, and was the cause of much anxiety, all because he could not putt even reasonably well. Mr. Knight quickly recognized the weak spot in his game, and in casting about for a remedy he hit upon the idea of the flat head with the shaft inserted in the center.

This was in the summer of 1902, and Mr. Knight at once made a wooden model embodying his ideas, in the head of which he poured sufficient lead to give it the proper weight and balance. A trial convinced him that he was on the right track, and for a week or more he continued to use this model with highly satisfactory results. This clumsy-looking club made Mr. Knight the recipient of much good-natured chaff from fellow players, but the climax was reached one evening when the late Mr. S. M. Hamill, the then president of the club and captain of the team, after watching the practice for a few minutes, remarked to Knight as he turned away, "Bill, if you can't play golf without using such a thing as that we won't need you at Syracuse to-morrow." The Mohawks played the Onondagas at Syracuse the next day, but the captain's injunction was final and Mr. Knight did not take his new putter with him, which fact always has been, to him, a complete and entirely satisfactory explanation



Mr. A. F. Knight,
The inventor of the Schenectady putter.

why he came in seven down to Mr. C. F. Ayling of the Onondagas.

On returning from Syracuse, Mr. Knight immediately started to make a putter of aluminum. The first one was ruined in the making and went to the scrap heap, but the second one was a success, and was substantially the same as the putter of to-day.

While entirely satisfied in his own mind that the putter was all right and a decided improvement over existing types, Mr. Knight was exceedingly anxious to get the views of some of the more prominent golfers respecting it. It so happened that at about the time the first aluminum putter was finished, Mr. Devereux Emmet, of Garden City, was a visitor at the Mohawk Golf Club and Mr. Knight was fortunate in finding Mr. Emmet on the links, where he had a good opportunity to test the merits of the new club. Mr. Knight left the putter with Mr. Emmet and on returning to the club house some time later found a note from Mr. Emmet saying he had been called home and had taken the putter with him for further test.

A day or two later Mr. Knight received a telegram from Mr. W. J. Travis ordering a putter like Mr. Emmet's, and one was hurriedly made and forwarded. A little later on Mr. Knight made for Mr. Travis a second putter, with slightly more loft than the first one, and this second one Mr. Travis pronounced "the best putter I have ever used." In the fall of the same year at Garden City, Mr. Travis, using this second "Schenectady," won the open championship of the United States, and within a week thereafter Mr. Knight received over one hundred letters from prominent golfers asking for a putter like Mr. Travis's.

This very auspicious introduction of the "Schenectady" found Mr. Knight in a great state of unpreparedness to meet the great demand for them thus suddenly created, but this concerned him less than a suitable name for the club. Mr. Knight was anxious to call it the "Travis" putter and to that end sought an introduction to Mr. Travis, through Mr. Emmet. On a trip to New York for this purpose he was fortunate in finding both of these gentlemen at Baltusrol and was there introduced to Mr. Travis. Mr. Emmet had always spoken of the club as the "Schenectady" putter, and this name seemed to stick, and was the one by which the club was known wherever it was known at all. While Mr. Travis did not definitely decline the use of his name, he made it clear to Mr. Knight that he regarded "Schenectady" as a more suitable and lasting name for the putter than his own, in which view Mr. Knight rather reluctantly concurred, but subsequent events have amply proved the wisdom of giving this unique club the very distinctive name by which it is so widely known. Since this time the club has been a standard commercial article, and is used exclusively by many prominent players.

Golf Illustrated's famous cartoon of Mr. Travis at Sandwich in 1904, with his "Schenectady," is sufficient testimonial to the merit of the putter, and the more recent and violent attention it has received at the hands of the St. Andrews legislators is a crowning testimonial to the fact that Mr. Knight's introduction of the club was a substantial contribution to the pleasure which the game of golf offers.