



Lambton Golf & Country Club

**I LAMBTON**  
*A Celebration of our Past & Present*

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# The Percy Barrett Story

## Lambton Pro won 1907 Canadian Open

Lambton Golf and Country Club has played host to the Canadian Open four times since being founded in 1902, but only once has its head golf professional won the national championship.

By the time the course opened for play on June 13, 1903, our founder, Albert W. Austin had his man in place. It was just a matter of time before he would be a winner. As you read through the club's early history, you'll quickly learn that A. W. Austin wanted only the best for Lambton – the best clubhouse in the city, the best amateur golfer in George S. Lyon, the best facilities for women to learn and play golf, tennis courts – a club worthy of hosting the world's top players, as well as a head golf professional who would bring recognition to the club.

Austin's search took him overseas. Upon the advice of distinguished English professional, Harry Vardon, Percy Barrett was hired. Barrett was born on January 1, 1881 in Huddersfield, England. He worked six years for Vardon at Ganton GC in Yorkshire, and at Totteridge GC, near London. The 23-year-old had been Vardon's star assistant at Ganton and agreed to give the job in Canada a try for the 1903 season. Barrett was already a talented teacher, skilled clubmaker and strong golfer – all prerequisites for pros at the time.

Barrett returned to England at the end of the season and when he came back to Lambton in the spring of 1904, he brought with him an able assistant, Arthur S. Russell and an expert greenskeeper, James Dickson.

Percy's grandson, William Barrett, who lives in Brampton, also notes that Percy's younger brother, another William Barrett,



**Percy Barrett, Lambton's first golf professional from 1903 through 1914.**

accompanied the elder brother to Lambton where he worked for several years before moving to the United States.

"Apparently Percy caddied for a Miss Mueller in the 1898 club championship at Huddersfield GC. After she won, she was so impressed with the boy's ability that she promised to get him a place with Harry Vardon. William came to live in Percy's home in 1904 at 230 Humbercrest Boulevard in what was known as The Junction at the time (Dundas and Runnymede)," says William, who recently provided the club with 30-plus images from his grandfather's collection that had been passed down from Percy's eldest daughter.

Here, Percy found golf virtually in its infancy and he played a significant role in growing the game by laying the foundation of better and more polished golf amongst hundreds of his pupils and also amongst those privileged enough to watch him play, especially in tournaments during his Lambton days. Canadian Golfer magazine noted that his position as head golf professional at Lambton "was recognized as one of the most lucrative propositions in the Dominion."

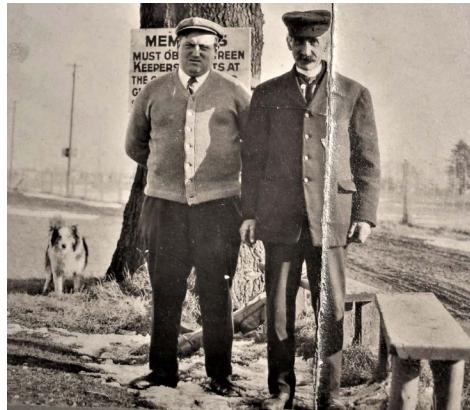
Barrett played in the very first Canadian Open, 36 holes on July 2, 1904, at Royal Montreal Golf Club. He shot an 81 the first round to trail John Oke by five strokes and settled for second behind Oke after shooting a 77 to lose by two strokes. Lambton's George S. Lyon finished third as an amateur and George Cumming and Charles Murray finished T4.

On July 1, 1905, Cumming (76-72) won the Canadian Open by three strokes over Barrett (75-76) over 36 holes at The Toronto Golf Club. Charles Murray led after the first round with a 74 and finished T3 after a final round 79. George S. Lyon finished T8, John Oke settled for T15, and Lambton assistant, Arthur Russell finished T18 in the field of 22 players.

Barrett would go on to play in all Canadian Opens from 1904 to 1914 finishing no worse than ninth. Then after World War I from 1919 to 1926 – a total of 19 times! Percy made headlines on July 5-6, 1907, when the national championship was played at Lambton for the first time. He won the two-day, four-round tournament by two shots over George Cumming and was 12 shots ahead of Charles Murray in third. Lambton's Arthur Russell finished sixth and Lyon didn't play in the event. Barrett picked up \$80 for the victory from



**Percy as a child with his parents William and Emma Barrett.**



**Percy Barrett (left) with James Dickson.**



**Post card from H.W.V (Harry Vardon).**



**Pocket watch presented to Percy when he left Lambton.**

a total purse of \$245 on a course that was playing 6,604, par-71 at the time.

"I think it would have been terribly difficult to make a living as a golf professional in Toronto at that time, but somehow he did it," William says. "There's no doubt that he was an excellent player and I believe he was also an excellent teacher and that's how he made ends meet."

Percy's teacher and mentor, HWV (Harry William Vardon) sent Percy a postcard congratulating him on the victory at the Canadian Open that arrived in Lambton Mills on July 25, 1907. It is part of William's collection.

"The family story that has been passed down is that Harry Vardon would come and stay at my grandfather's house on Humbercrest Boulevard when they were doing their tours of Canada and the United States in 1913 and 1920," William says.

The Open returned to Lambton in 1910 with Daniel Kenny of the United States winning with a total score of 303 for four rounds. Lyon finished second at 307 and Barrett settled for T4 at 320 with Charles Murray. It was the first victory by an American in the tourney.

In the US Open, Barrett finished T6 in 1904 at Glen View Club, T3 in 1905 at Myopia Hunt Club, T33 in 1906 at Onwentsia Club, T8 in 1908 at Myopia Hunt Club and T13 at Country Club of Buffalo in 1912. Impressive results, but he did struggle to get the job done on the international stage and somewhat at the national level.

He's also credited for laying out the first nine holes at Mississauga Golf and Country Club in 1906 after surveying the site with George Cumming, Head Golf Professional at The Toronto Golf Club.

Barrett remained at Lambton through 1915 and was replaced by Willie Freeman, but that's a story for another time.

On November 14, 1911, Percy and R.J. Brown received a patent from the Department of Agriculture in Ottawa for an "Apparatus for Teaching the Correct Standing Position to Golf Players."

"My wife was just searching the internet and it popped up one day. We couldn't believe it when we opened the document and saw the design," says William. "I wonder if it could help golfers today?"

Percy left Lambton at the end of 1914 as indicated by the pocket watch that the club gave him in January 1915, and it remains part of William Barrett's collection.

We're not sure where Percy worked in the summer of 1914. His next stop was Weston Golf and Country Club where he started in November 1915 according to its club records. He remained there through the 1922 season when the club opened at its new and current location. How much he worked at the club during WWI is unclear. He worked/taught at Uplands GC in 1923 and acted as golf professional at Lake Shore GC (no longer exists) from 1924 to 1926.

In 1923, he won the one-day, 36-hole, PGA of Canada Championship at Summit Golf and Country Club by two strokes (73-78) earning \$150 for first and followed it up with a second victory in 1925 at The Toronto GC.

The PGA of Canada Championship at The Toronto GC was Percy's last significant victory. It was scheduled to be played over 36 holes on the Tuesday before the Canadian Open started on the Thursday. Rain on the Tuesday resulted in 18 holes being played in the afternoon on Tuesday, July 28 and 18 holes on Wednesday, before the players teed it up at the 1925 Canadian Open at Lambton on the Thursday. It featured a record number of 65 professionals and 12 assistants.

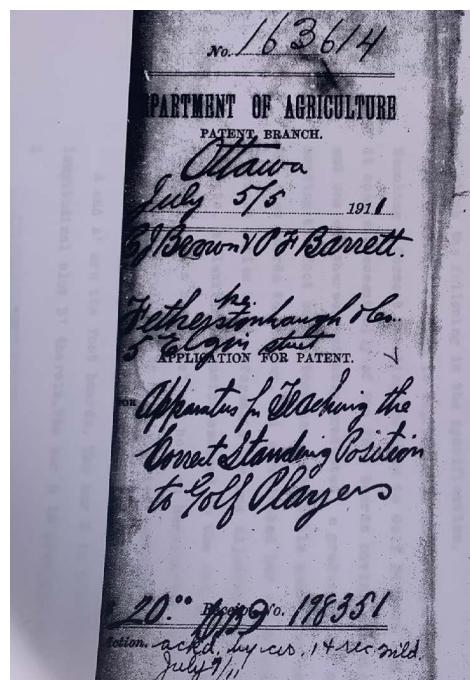
Percy, who was working at Lake Shore CG, fired an opening round 74 and was tied for the lead with Charles Murray from Royal Montreal GC, Jock Brown from Summerlea, while Andy Kay, Lambton's Head Pro was T2 at 75. Barrett would go on to shoot a 1-under 71 in the second round with 17 pars and a birdie on No. 18 to win the championship by two strokes over Dave Spittal of Savannah, Georgia.

"It was a thrilling and fitting finale to the best championship ever staged by the Canadian Professional Golf Association. It was a case of 'Hats off to Percy' and off they went by the score – for really a very great score, only one over fours for the 36-holes, which considering the testing course and the adverse conditions on the opening afternoon must be classed as one of the greatest performances of a great golfing season," it is written in the August 1925 issue of Canadian Golfer magazine. Andrew Kay from Lambton finished sixth at 75-75-150. The P. D. Ross Trophy, Dunlop Gold Medal and \$250 went to Percy.

At the Canadian Open at Lambton that followed, Leo Diegel won by two strokes to



Percy Barrett, bottom right, standing beside younger brother William Barrett at Lambton with fellow pros during the 1910 Canadian Open.

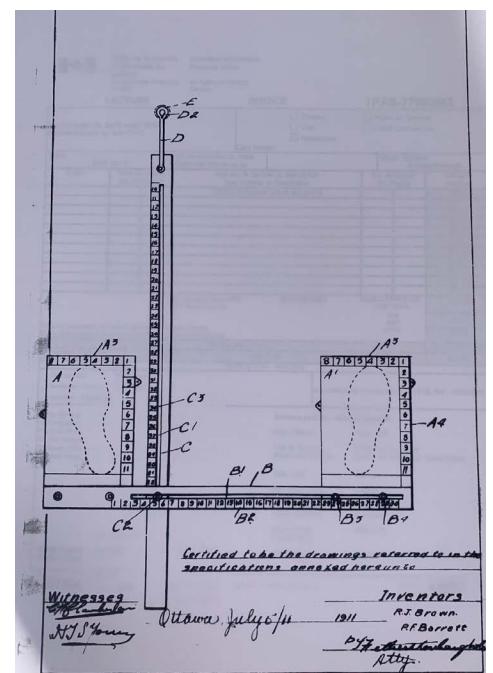


Percy's Patent documents.

earn \$400. Kay from Lambton was that top Canadian finishing T3 with Walter Hagen, six strokes behind the winner and they pocketed \$75 for four days work.

Interestingly, Spittal finished T42, and Barrett settled for T49.

Of note, Arthur Russell stayed with Barrett at Lambton until 1908 when he was hired as the head golf professional at Lakeview



GC, where he remained until 1936. Percy's younger brother, William moved to Minnesota in 1916 to work with British-born pro, George Sargent (he worked with Vardon) as an assistant at Interlachan CC until 1921. Then he took over as head golf professional at Lafayette Club in Minnetonka Beach, Minnesota.

William spent 34 years at Lafayette Club and died in 1954 at the age of 64.

Percy fell for the girl next door, literally. They met at a church social at Saint George's Anglican Church on the Hill Cemetery and were married at St. John's Church in The Junction in September 1907.

Sadly, Barrett died on January 20, 1927, at the age of 46, as a result of complications from diabetes, leaving behind his wife May and their three children Frances, 18, Beatrice 13 and William 7. An appeal was put out by several of the clubs that Barrett worked at to raise funds for his family, but little is said after that.

"We have photos of my grandfather teaching Fran to play golf at a young age, so I think it's entirely possible that he also started to teach my dad. If you look at my dad's swing in photos and compare it to Percy's it's identical," says William, who caddied a lot for his father and plays golf occasionally. "You can see the Vardon grip and stance quite clearly. My dad had a real love for the game that is rooted in his father's love for golf."

Upon Barrett's death, Vardon noted that Percy was the finest player that he sent to North America to be a golf professional. Percy is buried along with his wife and one daughter, Frances Emma Barrett in Saint George's Church on the Hill Cemetery in Etobicoke.

## The scoop on Harry Vardon

Henry William "Harry" Vardon (9 May 1870 – 20 March 1937) was a professional golfer from the Bailiwick of Jersey. He was a member of the fabled Great Triumvirate of the sport in his day, along with John Henry Taylor and James Braid. Vardon won The Open Championship a record six times and also won the 1900 U.S. Open. In 1896, Vardon won the first of his record six Open Championships. Vardon had great rivalries with James Braid and J.H. Taylor, who each won five Open Championships; together the three formed the 'Great Triumvirate', and dominated worldwide golf from the mid-1890s to the mid-1910s. These rivalries enormously increased the public's interest in golf. During his career, Harry Vardon made three visits to North America in 1900, 1913 and 1920. During all three trips he competed in the U.S. Open finishing first, second and tied for second. He became golf's first international celebrity in 1900 when he toured the United States and Canada and played exhibition matches. He returned in 1913 and 1920 to play many more matches across North America including at Lambton GCC.



Percy on the left, possibly giving a lesson.



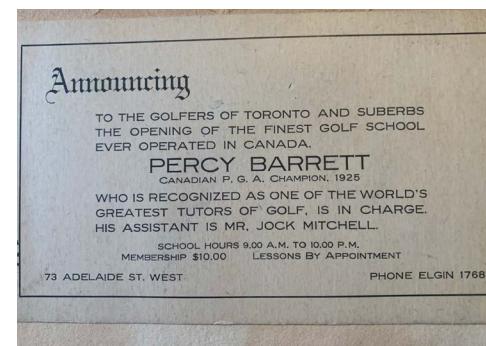
Percy's sweet finish with his ever-present cigar!



Percy's home at 230 Humbercrest with May and Fran.



Percy with the P. D. Ross Trophy and his daughter Fran in 1923 or 1925.



A promotion for Percy's golf school.

