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Historical Investigation Waiting *Just Below the Surface*

“Most of us spend too much time on the last twenty-four hours and too little on the last six thousand years.” – Will Durant

or “While the dangers of ignoring history are considerably less existential in the world of golf and country clubs, it is still a great mistake for owners, managers and club members not to avail themselves of it.”

In a world where ever-evolving technology allows the “here and now” to be presented to us quite literally – here and now, it becomes sadly easy for man to lose sight of his past – or, all too frequently, to forget about it altogether.

On the larger stages of international relations, economics and all manner of other human events, the dangers of such shortsightedness are obvious.

While the dangers of ignoring history are considerably less existential in the world of golf and country clubs, it is still a great mistake for owners, managers and club members not to avail themselves of it, for the history of the game and its many-splendored venues is a rich and vibrant one indeed.

In a manner, far more relevant to the game as we know it, golf’s story on American shores dates to the latter two decades of the 19th century and is quite well documented. In fact, several clubs which remain among the nation’s most prominent today, played critical roles in that initial development.

From both a marketing and ambience perspective, an exploration of a club’s own special place within the game’s past can prove highly fruitful, often uncovering long-forgotten nuggets that can be used very effectively in today’s competitive marketplace.

In many cases, such historical moments have come in the form of high-level tournament play, because the game’s competitive history includes today’s professional and amateur Major championships, as well as the PGA and LPGA Tours. However, it also encompasses all manner of long-forgotten professional and amateur events, many boasting legendary champions and storylines.

Also worthy of historical investigation, especially at older clubs, may be a long-ago visit from a famous



player or two in the form of an exhibition, visits by famous athletes and celebrities for recreational play; involvement in the design and construction of the golf course by a time-honored architect or; looking internally, the presence of famous people of yesteryear among a club's membership.

One example is Los Angeles' famed Riviera Country Club, one of golf's iconic venues and a club whose history draws extensively from every category. Having hosted a U.S. Open, two PGA Championships, a U.S. Amateur and a U.S. Senior Open in addition to serving as the annual site of the PGA Tour's Genesis Open, Riviera boasts a museum's worth of Hall-of-Fame champions, in addition to a timeless association with Ben Hogan, who famously won thrice there over an 18-month span in 1947-48.

Our work for Riviera began by covering the obvious, creating a wide range of colorful historical displays throughout the clubhouse highlighting many of these epic events and their champions.

But even as well-documented a facility as it is, the Riviera had some unknown stories left to tell. Researching in conjunction with Riviera General Manager Don Emery, has unearthed a range of new materials on the club's past. These are presented in displays promoting Riviera's hosting of equestrian events during the 1932 Olympics, the original blueprints of the palatial clubhouse, previously unknown contributions made to the club by member Walt Disney and a variety of other subjects.

Thus, while research into a club's history may do little to prevent wars from starting, it can absolutely provide a club not just with a greater sense of self, but also with valuable tools to help market and retain both members and, where applicable, outside events.

In so many cases, the history has long been there, just below the surface, waiting to be discovered. And a little digging can go a long, long way. **BR**

