

Golf Facilities in Maryland

Trends, Statistics, and the State of the Industry in 2010

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The new certificate in Golf Course Construction Management coupled with the difficult economic times enticed several faculty members at the Institute of Applied Agriculture (IAA) to question the effect the last decade has had on Maryland golf facilities. Sparked by this interest, IAA faculty members inventoried golf facilities in the state of Maryland with a current and historical perspective.

While the data will be used in our academic programs, specifically Golf Course Management and Golf Course Construction Management, the heart of this effort is to develop a database, similar to that of the National Golf Foundation (NGF), where custom searches can sort and generate lists of golf facilities by date of establishment, type (public, private, number of holes, etc), county, architect, even by address and zip code.

Maryland's rich history in the game of golf has produced a very diverse population of golf courses, which, as it turns out, creates problems in categorizing the facilities. The NGF data uses "18-hole equivalents" in reports that often results in fractional numbers. This paper focuses on golf facilities, regardless of the number or length of holes. These facilities range from the 54-regulation-hole Andrews Airbase facility to several 9-hole par 3 facilities. There are 190 golf facilities in the state. Most facilities (154) have 18-hole courses. However, 17 facilities have only 9 holes, 10 facilities have 27 holes, 8 facilities have 36 holes, and only one facility has more than 36 holes. Montgomery and Baltimore counties have the highest number of facilities with 28 and 26 respectively. Every county and Baltimore City have golf facilities, albeit Caroline and Kent counties each have only one course. Table 1 gives a breakdown of golf facilities by county.

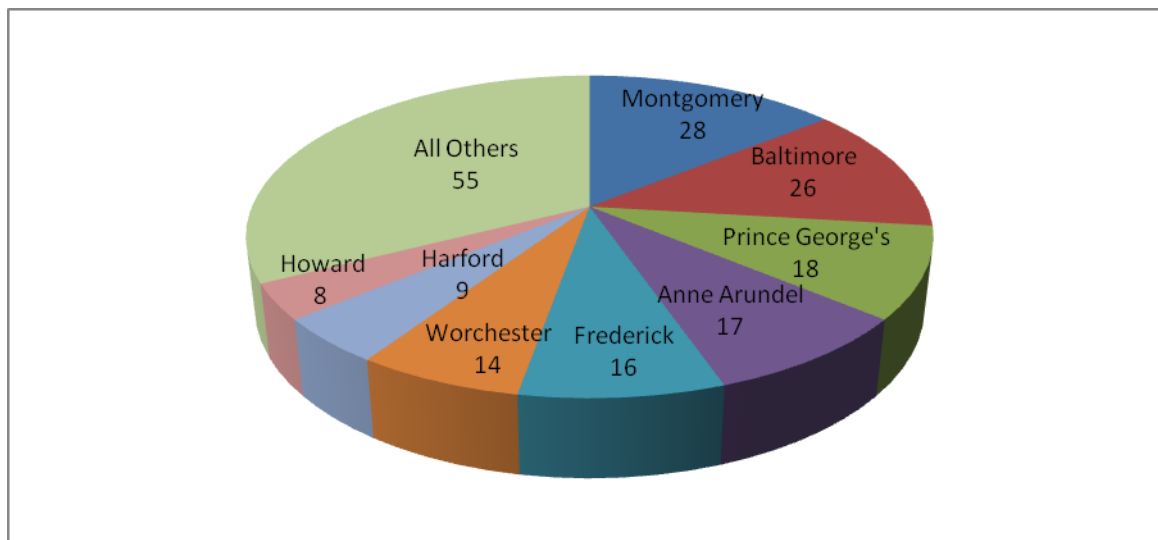


Table 1. Golf facilities by county (190 total)

We classified facilities as public or private not based on ownership, but on the requirement of a membership agreement to play the course. Many clubs could be classified as “semi-private” but the amount of non-member or outside play varies greatly and is difficult to quantify. The majority (124 or 67%) of courses are open to the public and 64 are private clubs.

Challenging economic times in the golf industry together with a national trend that shows more golf facilities are closing than are opening craft an interesting historical analysis of golf development. Historically, Maryland followed the national trend of golf course development showing a surge of new courses in the 1920s, a lull through the Depression and WWII, a post WWII surge between 1950-1970, and then the greatest period of growth for the game in the 1990s. Table 2 shows the number of Maryland golf facilities in each decade.

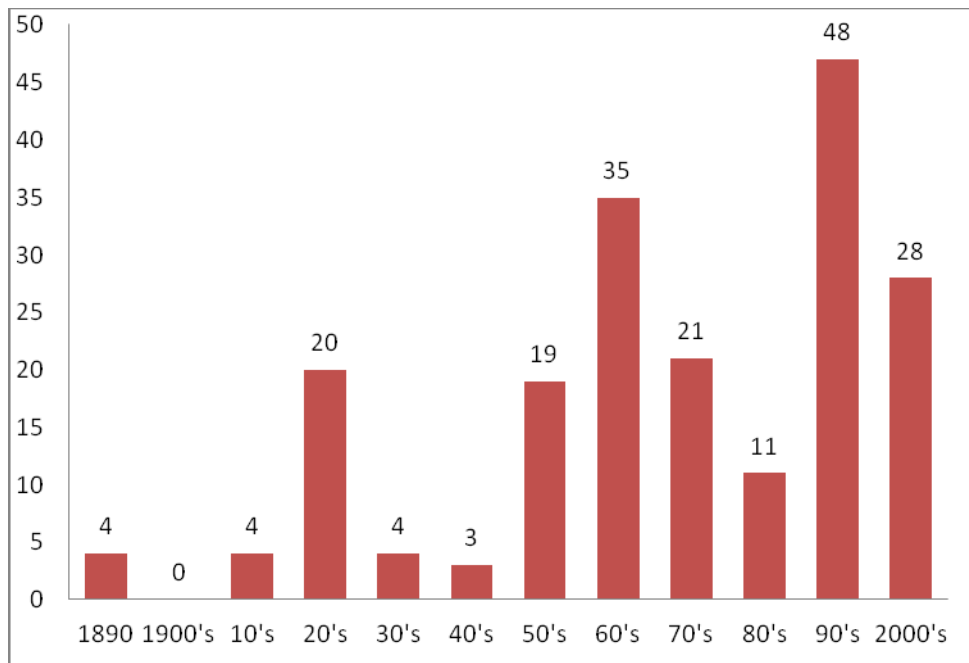


Table 2. Golf Course Construction by Decade (197 existing individual courses, 9 or 18 holes)

Golf course closings are somewhat difficult to track. Some clubs change names, ownership, or management but remain in operation. Several clubs have succumbed to urban sprawl in the Washington and Baltimore suburbs. Many older clubs have “relocations” in their club histories usually moving further away from the city. In the 1980s Greencastle GC, Brooke Manor, Germantown CC, and the Washingtonian courses closed in Montgomery County and the properties were quickly developed. More recently the 36-hole Indian Spring CC closed in 2004, Worthington Valley CC in Baltimore County closed in 2005 as did one course of the 54-hole Turf Valley CC in Ellicott City. All of these facilities were privately owned.

Somewhat more unusual was the closure of the member-owned Bonnie View CC in the Baltimore suburbs in 2003. Surprising, two relatively new, upscale public golf courses closed in 2009. Beechtree GC in Aberdeen and Upland Golf Course in Denton were in operation less than 10 years. At this writing two courses in Prince Georges County have recently closed, Lake Arbor and Marlborough, and their futures are uncertain. However, the national trend of closures

exceeding openings is not true in the state of Maryland. In the past decade, 7 golf facilities have closed while 18 new facilities opened.

A recent trend in Maryland show temporary closure and total reconstruction of golf courses. These courses usually retain the existing layout but rebuild greens, tees, fairways, bunkers, cart paths, and often include stream bank rehabilitation. Bethesda CC, Chevy Chase Club, Lakewood CC, TPC Potomac, Congressional Blue and Gold, and the University of Maryland GC have all undergone such renovation in the past decade.

Maryland golf courses have benefitted from many talented golf course architects, including such industry legends as Donald Ross, A.W. Tillinghast, Robert Trent Jones, Pete Dye, and Jack Nicklaus. Several Maryland residents have also made significant contributions. The most prolific of these was Edmund Ault. Mr. Ault designed 24 golf courses in Maryland, his son Brian is credited with another 5 courses, and the firm Ault, Clark, & Associates designed 11 more. That is almost one quarter of the golf courses in the state. In the 1960s, Ed Ault designed 60% of the 35 golf courses built in Maryland. Russell Roberts designed 8 golf courses. Roberts was very much a “design/ build” specialist who also installed irrigation systems. Both Ault and Roberts modified and reconstructed golf courses as well, leaving very few Maryland golf courses prior to 1990 untouched by these two men. Table 3 lists prominent golf course architects with designs in Maryland.

Architect	No. of Courses
Ed Ault, Brian Ault, Ault Clarke & Associates	40
Russell Roberts	8
Art Hills	6
Lindsay Ervin	6
Charles “Gus” Hook	4
Alfred Tull	4
Herbert Strong	3

Table 3. Prominent Golf Course Architects in Maryland

A database maintained on an Excel Spreadsheet is posted on the [website](#). Comments would be appreciated, especially the dates and architects of major renovations which are hard to document. Send comments to Ken Ingram at kingram@umd.edu.