

History of Caddies

Most golfers pull or drive a golf cart to help them travel comfortably from hole to hole. But before there were golf carts, there were golf caddies to carry the clubs, rake sand traps and offer the occasional bit of quiet advice. These days, it seems you can only spot caddies on the most prestigious courses, or on the big screen. Caddies are a dying breed, but the history of caddies is a colourful one.

Perhaps the most famous caddy of them all, William Gunn, a.k.a. Caddie Willie, is said to have labored most of his adult life at the illustrious St. Andrews course in Scotland. Tales have been told of the infamous caddie shack, where the most horribly unmentionable acts were allegedly carried out, away from the sight of club members. The hilarious film "Caddy Shack" forever changed the way we felt about gophers, groundskeepers, and country club members.

The history of caddies is up for debate, with no one really sure how the tradition began. The most mythic explanation is that early caddies were true students of the game, and far more talented than the players for whom they toiled. The caddie worked the course to gain a better understanding of how to beat it. This theory was proven at the 1913 U. S. Open when former American caddy Francis Oimet defeated Harry Vardon and Ted Ray, two of the leading British golf pros.

Golf carts were introduced in the 1940s and caddies have become, well ... history. Most modern golf and country clubs own a stable of gas-powered or electric carts to give members the quickest and most convenient way to zip around a course. If a player chooses to walk, he or she can tow a pull cart or simply carry the golf bag. Caddies have become too expensive for most players to afford, so it's difficult for golf and country clubs to justify employing them.

The history of caddies was relatively short-lived. The tradition is gone, and for the most part today, golfers are left to choose their own golf clubs, rake their own sand traps, and tackle the tough shots without that bit of inside advice.