

Golf Historical Society

JOSEPH FRANCIS SARTORI 1858-1946

by John Jones - 2010 SCGA Hall of Fame program



Joe Sartori circa 1900

For more than half a century, Joseph Francis Sartori played a major role in the development of Southern California with his pioneering vision for a sound financial footing in all aspects of the community. One of the original founders of the Southern California Golf Association and The Los Angeles Country Club, Sartori was instrumental in building Southern California foundations in real estate, oil and gas, water, transportation, municipal bonds, banking legislation, golf, and philanthropy.

Nicknamed "Little Joe" for his small stature (5 feet 5 inches), Sartori was a gifted athlete who considered a career in baseball before choosing law at Ann Arbor. In 1887, Sartori and his wife Margaret moved to Southern California after a long tour of the country looking for the best place to settle. In his first financial deal in Monrovia, he secured an option on a farm for \$150, and sold it three days later for \$8,500. He knew he'd found his new home!

Sartori co-founded the First National Bank of Monrovia and became the town's first treasurer. Within two years, the couple had moved to Los Angeles, and organized Security Savings Bank. Sartori was a leading member of the major business syndicates of Southern California, and was fully behind the Owens Valley Aqueduct, and the development of the San Fernando Valley, which he part-owned.

Sartori is credited with starting the oil business in Southern California and organizing the Los Angeles City Gas Company. He also organized the group that built the Biltmore Hotel, which at the time was the largest hotel west of Chicago. His wife Margaret was one of the founders of the Friday Morning Club and the Assistance League, along with many other charities, and was a Regent of the University of California, who together with Joseph were instrumental in bringing UCLA to Westwood. Sartori also founded the California Community Foundation in 1915, to which he left the majority of his estate.

In 2006, the California Community Foundation was a billion-dollar foundation.

In 1897, Sartori founded what became The Los Angeles Country Club with Conde Jones, Ed Tufts, Mark Severance, and Hugh Vail. He wrote to friends, urging them to join, and noting, *"We need shovels and things to fix up the greens, so we're obliged to charge you \$5 to enter our club."*

Sartori chaired the green committee and was credited with laying out the club's second and third golf courses on Pico Boulevard, as well as the original course at "Beverly", with Ed Tufts. Sartori was the new club's first net champion in 1898 and became one of its original five "scratch" golfers. It was Sartori's foresight that led to the purchase of the Pico and Western land and later the "Beverly" land that secured the long-term financial stability of The Los Angeles Country Club and led to his title as its Patron Saint.

Sartori's training as a lawyer led to his part in the founding of the SCGA in 1899. He wrote the original constitution and bylaws for the SCGA, and the first meeting was held in his office in downtown Los Angeles, where he was elected secretary. Sartori was later president of the SCGA from 1903-1904. He remained president of The Los Angeles Country Club from 1912 until his death in 1946.

Highlights

Founder, Secretary, President - The Los Angeles Country Club
Founder, Secretary, President - Southern California Golf Association
Writer - SCGA constitution and bylaws
Director - Los Angeles Athletic Club
President - California Club
Founder - California Community Foundation
President - State Bankers Association
President - American Bankers Association
Federal Reserve Board Representative



Golfers at Los Angeles Country Club for the Southern California Amateur. Sartori, front left.



Joseph Francis Sartori, circa 1921

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