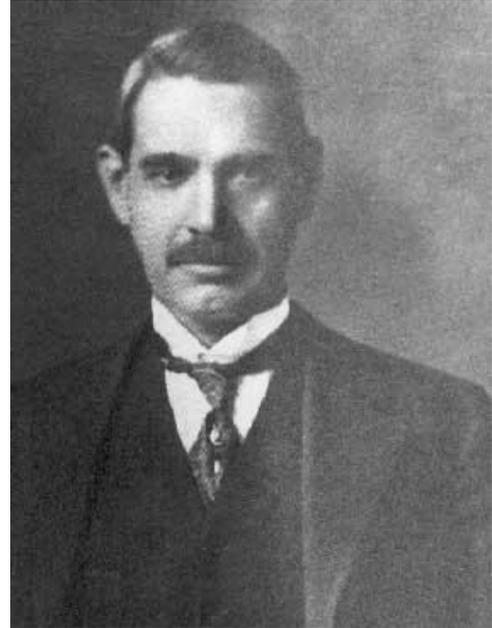


Charles Vancouver Piper (1867–1926)

Charles V. Piper was born in Canada and grew up in the Pacific Northwest. He began botanizing as a young man in Seattle, and his interest led to a career as botanist and professor at the [Washington Agricultural College and School of Science](#) (now Washington State University).¹

Piper was hired by the USDA in 1903 as curator for the department's Grass Herbarium,² but in 1905 he exchanged this position with his colleague [A.S. Hitchcock](#). According to [Agnes Chase](#), "Professor Piper...yearned for economic work, while Professor Hitchcock carried on economic work but devoted such time as he could find to taxonomic work."³ In 1907, Piper was appointed Agrostologist-In-Charge of the USDA's Division of Forage Plants.⁴ Important contributions by Piper during his years with the USDA included development of the soybean for American agriculture and research into numerous forage crops, including the introduction of Sudan grass to the United States.⁵



Charles V. Piper. Image source: <http://www.pwrc.usgs.gov/resshow/perry/bios/PiperCharles.htm>

Piper's involvement in turfgrass research began in 1906 when he was approached by [Dr. Walter S. Harban](#), an officer of the Columbia Country Club in Washington, DC, who was seeking advice from the USDA on problems with the grasses at the club's putting greens.⁶ Then, in 1908, Piper and his colleague [Dr. Russell A. Oakley](#) were asked for help by [Charles B. MacDonald](#), the architect designing the [National Golf Links at Southampton](#), Long Island, due to the problems he was experiencing establishing turf on the sand dunes.⁷

These two queries prompted Piper and Oakley to undertake an investigation of problems of turfgrass at U.S. golf clubs, and in 1913 they began to publish a series of articles on turfgrass, to the great interest of the golf community.⁸ In 1915, the Executive Committee of the [U.S. Golf Association \(USGA\)](#) met with Secretary of Agriculture [David F. Houston](#) to formally request help with golf course turfgrass problems. As a result, the USDA established the [Arlington Turf Garden](#) at its Arlington Experimental Farm in Virginia.⁹

The USDA had managed experimental grass gardens dating back to the 1860s, but the Arlington Turf Garden was the first USDA grass garden to focus specifically on turfgrass for golf courses. Research was carried out there on turfgrass diseases, fertilizers, and the

selection and propagation of grasses best suited for golf turf.¹⁰ In 1917, Piper and Oakley published their most influential work on this topic, [Turf for Golf Courses](#).

In 1920, the USGA established the office now known as the "[Green Section](#)," and Charles Piper became its first chairman. While serving in this capacity, he retained his position with the USDA at the Division of Forage Plants. He held both posts until his death in 1926.

For more information on Charles V. Piper:

Wood, Micah. "Charles Vancouver Piper: the Agrostologist." *USGA Green Section Record* (March-April 2006). <http://gsr.lib.msu.edu/2000s/2006/060317.pdf>

Oakley, R. A. "Dr. Charles Vancouver Piper." *Bulletin of the Green Section of the U.S. Golf Association* 6:3 (March 16, 1926): 54-57.
<http://gsr.lib.msu.edu/1920s/1926/260354.pdf>

Archival Collections related to Charles V. Piper:

Charles Vancouver Piper Papers, 1888-1926. *Manuscripts, Archives, and Special Collections*, Washington State University Libraries, Pullman, WA. Cage 317.
<http://ntserver1.wsulibs.wsu.edu/masc/finders/cg317.htm>

¹ Micah Wood, "Charles Vancouver Piper: the Agrostologist," *Green Section Record* (March-April 2006): 17.

² Ibid, 18.

³ Agnes Chase, "[Obituary: Albert Spear Hitchcock](#)," *Science* 83, no. 2149 (March 6, 1936): 223.

⁴ Wood, 18.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ "History of Arlington Turf Gardens," *The Greenskeepers' Reporter* (March 1937): 46

⁷ T. T. Taylor, "Turfgrass – its Development and Progress," *USGA Journal and Turf Management* (September 1957): 8.

⁸ John Montieth, Jr., "The Arlington Turf Garden," *The Bulletin of the United States Golf Association Green Section* 8:12 (December 1928): 244.

⁹ Ibid, 245.

¹⁰ Ibid.