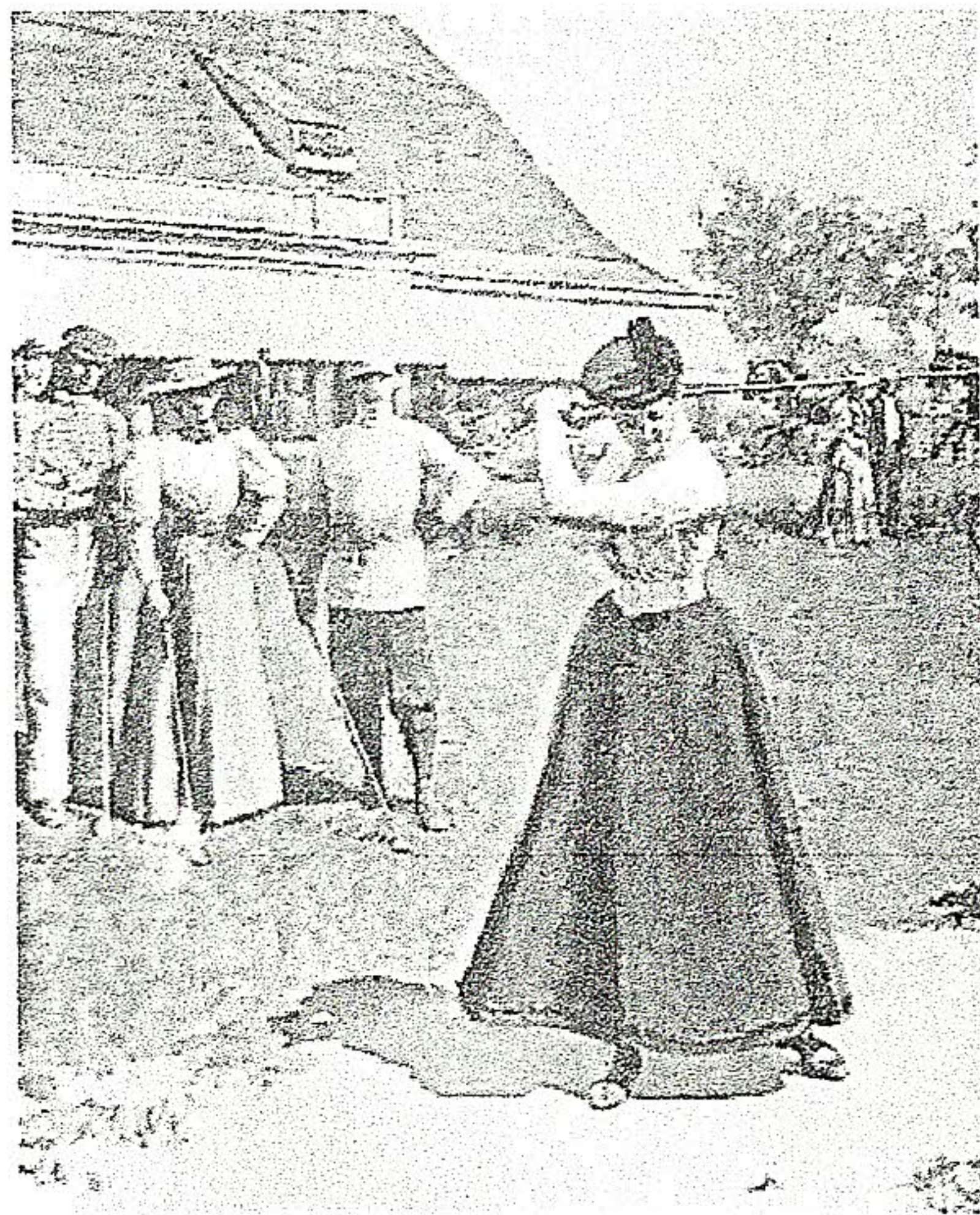


History of Women's Golf Attire

Golf was introduced into the United States and Canada in the 1870s. In the 1880s country clubs spread across the continent. More than just a sports club, the country club was a place where society's young men and women could meet one another. It was therefore important for people, especially women to be fashionably dressed. In the 1870's women were handicapped by long skirts that on a windy day made it impossible to see the ball, on a wet day rain and mud soaked those same skirts into dead weight. Corsets and fitted jackets restricted movement. Attempts were made to alleviate these problems by sewing an elastic garter which was worn at the waist, and then slipped down to above knee level to stop the skirt from rising in the wind. Leather hems were sewn on the bottom of the skirts to prevent soaking fabric. Golf also allowed women to have expanding pleats down the sides of their tweed jackets to prevent clothes tearing when they did a golf swing however those pleats could not be decorative. By the 1890s women had adopted a more practical approach to golf clothing.



This illustration from an 1894 Harper's Bazar shows the practical ensemble many women golfers were wearing at that time. It consisted of a skirt that was several inches off the ground, and a simple blouse. However there were still problems. A full swing of the club was hindered by the blouse sleeves that were too fitted. The skirt often caught the club as it swept by.

In 1904 Thomas Burberry of London introduced some improvements into the women's golf clothing sold in his store. They included the Free-stroke Coat which had special sleeves that moved freely with the golfer's arms. He also brought back the raisable skirt which had been popular decades earlier with crochet players. Through the use of a drawstring, the skirt could be raised up to eight inches or so above the ground.

Illustration is a 1913 Thermo Coat Sweater ad.

