

# MARATHON ROUTE A GOLDEN MEMORY

## Arthur Duffey Recalls Thrills of the B. A. A. Classic Stretching Back Over 50 Glorious Years

BY ARTHUR DUFFEY

The ballyhoo that's tacked onto the B. A. A. Marathon of this historic year, 1946, boasts that this is the golden anniversary of the race of races, and that takes me on a magic pair of running spikes sprinting back through the years. I can remember that first Marathon with a clarity that belies those 50 long years—just as though it was yesterday.

In those days of horse and buggies and the handlebar mustache, the first Marathon reached its climax in the old Irvington Oval. The runners ran clear the length of Exeter street, crossed old Huntington avenue and entered the oval through a massive gate. They sprinted to a finish on the track there to the acclaim of thousands of fans and fanatics.

Before the race the throng was entertained with a track meet, starting at 10 o'clock in the morning and continuing until about 2 in the afternoon, in time for the rooters to get ready for the triumphal entry of the first Marathoner to the tune of cheers that could be heard down on Boston Common. On that day—April 19, 1897—I ran in one of my first races, the novice sprint, and such stars of the day as Bernie Wefers ran in the handicap events of the meet. I can remember now waiting after our events were over and won for the appearance of the first Marathoner.

### MARATHON FEVER GRIPS HUB

Many of the shorter distance men of the day tried to transform themselves into Marathoners. I was halted in my ambitions along that line by an axiom whispered into my ear by one wiser than I, half serious, half in jest—"The longer the distance you run, the crazier you are."

Honestly, I can't say today—these 50 long years afterwards—whether I'm happy or sorry at my choice to be a sprinter. So great is the glory of the Marathon king!

But back to that first B. A. A. race. How many are there, who will watch tomorrow's Marathon, I wonder, who also can go back in memory to that first great day those golden years ago? How many can recall the thrill there in the Irvington Oval, as a perspiring gladiator sped onto the turf with the long road to Ashland stretching those weary miles behind him? It was J. J. McDermott from New York with the cheers thundering down upon him. His time for the distance (somewhat shorter than the 26 miles, 385 yards of tomorrow, somewhat slower than the present record of 2 hours, 26 minutes, 51 1-5 seconds) was 2 hours, 55 minutes, 10 seconds.