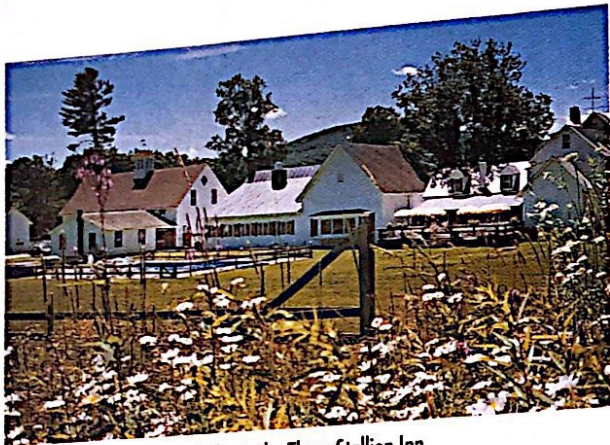




EXPANDING MONTAGUE

Careful Design, Preparation, and Construction are Key to a Successful Addition in Randolph.

By Peter Kriff



Adjacent to the new nine holes is the Three Stallion Inn.

Something is happening, right in the middle of the state, that hasn't happened very often in Vermont over the last six years. A golf course is expanding from 9 to 18 holes! The difficulty and expense of getting any sort of developmental project through the Act 250 process (see p. 33 for a complete discussion of Act 250) has severely limited golf course expansion in this state.

So how did this miracle come to pass? Some special people showed us that it's definitely not easy, and most certainly not

cheap—but if you're patient, careful, environmentally conscious, and well funded, your project can survive the Act 250 process.

The Montague Golf Club sits along the White River in Randolph, Vermont. It is one of the oldest courses in the state of Vermont. The current

nine holes are challenging, but members and guests have long wished to continue play on a new nine holes rather than to play the course twice for an 18-hole round.

Enter Jesse F. Sammis III, president of the New England Land Company. In 1971, he and his wife bought the Green Mountain Stock Farm, a 1300-acre real estate development that abuts the current Montague course. This historical property, dating back over 185 years, was a principal breeding farm for the Morgan horse. The property has a spectacular southwest

orientation, rising from an elevation of 600 feet to over 1300 feet.

For the past ten years, the Montague Golf Club and Sammis have been discussing a possible expansion of the golf course. Some long-time members were originally opposed to expansion because they feared additional dues and a more crowded course. Eventually those objections were overcome. When Sammis or "Sam," as his friends call him, deeded 68 acres (and leased another 8 acres) to the golf club, it became the responsibility of the club to build the course. The systematic approach that Sammis and the Montague club took in the Act 250 process was slow and expensive, and at times frustrating, but it paid off. Play will begin on the new 18-hole course in the fall of 1992.

It is easy for developers to get worn out or financially stressed by Act 250. Any foe can appeal four times. This can get very expensive for developers. In the case of golf courses, pesticides can be a major problem. This is one of several places

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with 140. The next year Sheppard made it to the top spot, beating Thoren and Kennedy. After the 1951 contest in Manchester, the Open retired for three years until Frank Ward, owner of the Lake Morey Inn, rescued it from an agonizing demise.

In 1955 the Vermont Open made its debut at the Lake Morey Country Club and has remained here for the last 37 years. The first year was a huge success and had a total purse of \$1500. (\$500 in amateur prizes). The same Charles Sheppard who won in 1951, and a National Hockey League star, Bill Ezinicki, who had turned to golf that summer, shattered the lake Morey course record on the first round with 63s. Sheppard edged out Ezinicki on the second day. Art Butler of Portsmouth, New Hampshire, was low amateur with 133.

The Open grew in size over the next few years. The innovation in 1959 of a Sunday low gross tournament—with special awards—provided another spark that has helped to build an outstanding attraction, not only for the players, but for spectators as well.

The first amateur ever to win the Vermont Open title was Jay Dolan, in 1960, who set a course record of 128 for 36

holes. The then 21-year-old college student from Leominster, Massachusetts, played the Lake Morey course with a 63-65, two of the finest rounds ever played on any course in the state. That year Bill Barclay, from Salem, Massachusetts, won the pro title. He took the crown away from Bill Flynn, his left-handed assistant, who had taken the top honors in 1959.

Jay Dolan and George Kinsman are the only two men to have won the Vermont Open titles three times each. Kinsman, from Point Judith, Rhode Island, made the Vermont his personal conquest in 1956, 1957, and 1958. Kinsman held the course record of 129, set in 1958, lowered by one stroke in 1960 by Dolan. The amateur Dolan went on to win as a pro in 1964 and 1966 with a 7-under par 131. The 128 stands as a course record equaled once in 1970 by Charles Volpone with rounds of 66 and 62. Volpone beat Ron Leclair, who went on to win the tournament in 1971.

The 1991 Vermont Open had 232 golfers, 34 of those golfers being amateurs. The purse was \$44,250, \$6,600 going to the first place pro and \$500 to the first place amateur. The Vermont Open has one of the highest purses of any state tournament and has become one of the premier events in the Northeast. ♦