



Number 1 at St. Johnsbury, 290-yard, Par 4.

# 18 Charismatic Holes

By  
**Bob Labbance**

THE 19 SIGNATURES OFFERED UP HERE represent some of my favorite golfing holes in northern New England. Obviously just as many, some of which may be your personal favorites, haven't been included. Golfers down south will wonder why I didn't use the par-5 second with the hidden bowl green at Bellows Falls, the snakelike downhill eighth at Brattleboro, the monument hole at Mt. Anthony, or any number of gems at the Equinox which is currently being remodeled.

Players up north will claim I overlooked the great double-greened par 5 at Enosburg Falls, one of the wildflower-framed hilly encounters at Richford, the cross-the-water-twice seventh at Farm Resort, or the par 3 with the horseshoe-shaped green at West Bolton. Burlington

area golfers will scream I forgot the outrageous downhill 15th at Rocky Ridge, the bite-off-as-much-as-you-can-chew 17th at Williston, or the longest par 4 in the state at Kwiniaska.

Still others will cry about the absence of the 103-yard rocky fifth at Basin Harbor, the dangerous par-5 11th at Middlebury, the bi-level third at Windsor, or the nearly impossible cross-the-chasm par 4 at Lake Morey, whatever its number is this season.

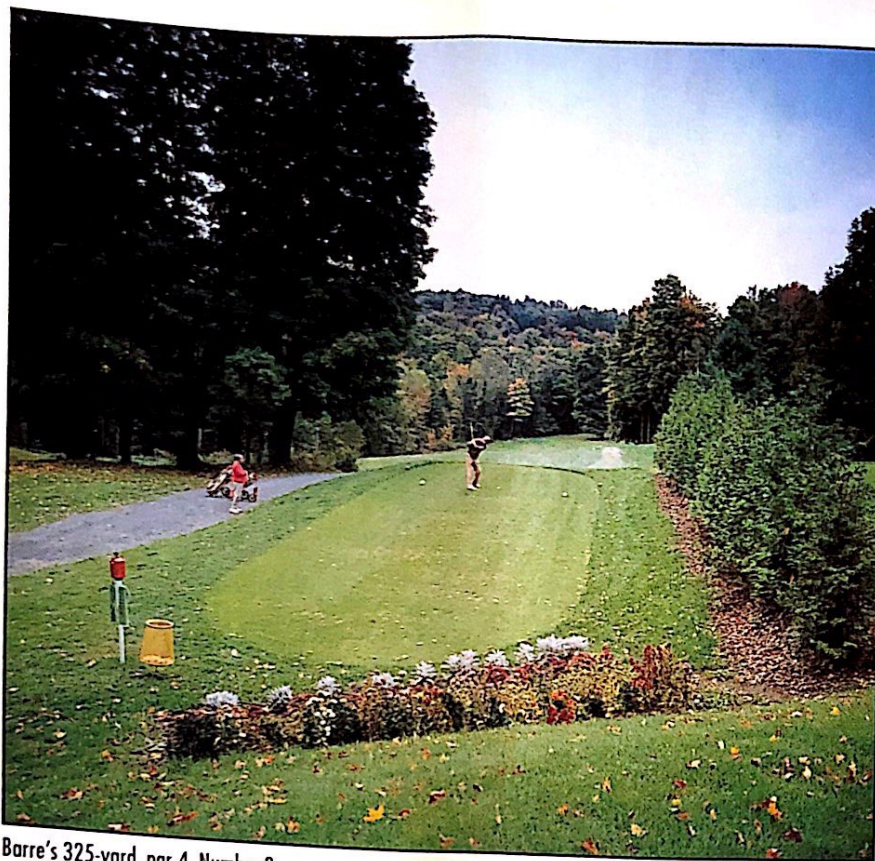
The list goes on. All I can say in my defense is that this was a very personal exercise. For 18 holes to measure only 6,036 yards from the rear markers shows my preference for the short par four and antique holes of merit. If a challenge was devised 90 years ago, and it still confounds

golfers with the two-piece low-trajectory golf balls and the graphite shaft, oversize head drivers of today, it's got a lot going for it. I'd challenge anyone to pack their bags and make par on this signature "course." And that'll go for the second eighteen as well.

## 1. ST. JOHNSBURY 290 YD., PAR 4, NO.1

Two-time British Open winner Willie Park Jr. surveyed this hillside site, but it was his brother Mungo who built the unique collection of golf holes after Willie returned to Scotland to spend his final days. Starting the course with a sharply uphill, ninety-degree dogleg to the left is St. J's mark, and a stiff challenge if you're not warmed up. Try to cut the corner and





Barre's 325-yard, par-4, Number 3.

you could take a walk in the woods, but a well-placed ball at the turn will leave a short iron, as the hole only measures 290 yards. The green is a pleasant hollow framed by cherry, ash, birch, maple, and tulip trees. Eight more singular tests await you, many of which you will never see repeated elsewhere. The course finishes opposite of its start, as nine is a sharply downhill dogleg right.

## 2. HAYSTACK 545 YD., PAR 5, NO. 11

Desmond Muirhead, an accomplished golf course architect, planner of residential communities, and the man who first took on fledgling designer Jack Nicklaus as an apprentice, laid out Haystack in the early 1970s. Nine holes were opened, but they quickly went to seed as a result of corporate financial difficulties. The layout was reclaimed in the mid 1980s and the 11th hole sets the tone for the difficult back nine. The biggest elevational drop on any hole in Vermont should help your drive along; it might even tempt you to go for the green in two. But beware. Sand surrounds the putting surface, mounds narrow the target, and anything over will be cast down an embankment where

you'll wish the course had never been recovered.

## 3. KILLINGTON 183 YD., PAR 3, NO. 11

The third hole at Killington consists of a skinny elevated tee, a slanted heart-shaped green, and a multitude of places you don't want to be. Like much of the mountainside layout, this is pure 1980s-

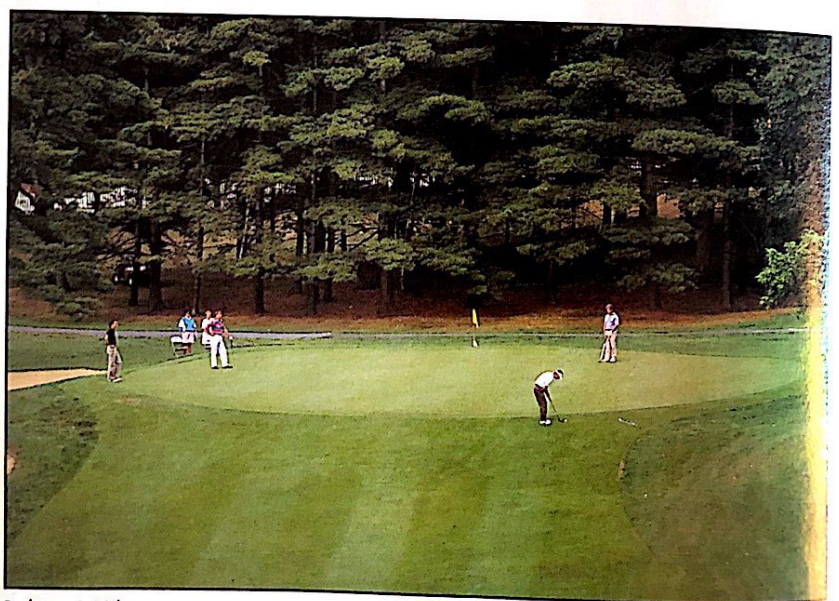
style target golf, and the lost ball litany preached by many first-time visitors is legendary. Left of this tricky putting surface is a steep grassy embankment, right lies a quick drop-off into a rocky mountain stream, and behind, the ever-present woods. The best miss will settle in the solo sand bunker, but par will be a score of merit no matter how you slice it.

## 4. WOODSTOCK 400 YD., PAR 4, NO. 12

Negotiating the Kedron River on the Woodstock layout is nothing unusual, as it influences more than half the holes. But the 12th, like its sister the fourth, is twice blessed your drive and your approach shot both must clear. The drive is the tighter of the two, as fairway bunkers on the far side and tall trees along the riverbank on the inside track conspire to foil all but the long and straight. Even a good poke to the right side of the fairway will leave you 180 yards or more to the green, and a lay-up off the tee might not get you far enough to see it. Maybe that's why the card diagrams this hole like a par 5, with three turns in the fairway path instead of two.

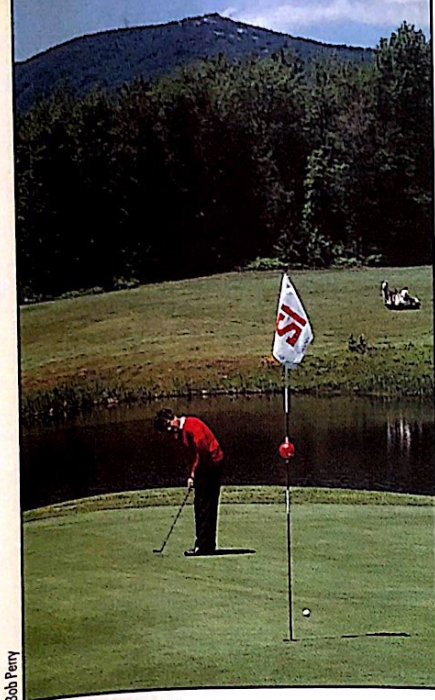
## 5. MOUNTAIN VIEW 320 YD., PAR 4, NO. 8

Although the layout has evolved some, golf has been played over the same grounds at Mountain View in Greensboro



Burlington's 10th.





Bob Perry

Mt. Snow's Number 12.

since 1895, and cows were used to maintain the fairways until 1960! Today this natural gem is in fine condition, with a balanced blend of challenging and pleasurable golf. The fairway on the symmetrical eighth is bounded on both sides by a line of evergreens that bow out in equal proportion halfway home. As the hole narrows, just 75 yards from the small hilltop green is a perfectly shaped spruce tree, smack in the middle of the fairway. Choose your route, make your shots, and your reward will follow. Once attained, the rolling compact greensite features a commanding view of Caspian Lake and hills of the Northeast Kingdom beyond.

#### 6. STOWE 372 YD., PAR 4, NO. 16

Stowe is perfect resort golf. Fairways are ample, greens are accepting, rough is light, bunkers save you from worse fates, and it's under 6,000 yards from the middle markers. However, nary a flat hole, water on more than half, and adjacent woods everywhere make the course no easy touch. The roller-coaster 16th ascends and descends several mounds on its path home. You'll need to carry 235 yards to the bottom of the first hill to have a flat lie. Then a mid-iron might carry you to the top of the second hill and a crowned green that falls off a small cliff to the right. With a thin row of pines behind, your only bail-out area is left, and you better

bring your short game if you head down there.

#### 7. EKWANOK 597 YD., PAR 5, NO. 7

The long seventh hole has always been Ekwonok's signature. Its enticing curvaceous route is full of hidden danger, but the severity of the camelback that your second shot must clear has been lessened. According to club history, "Up until 1936 the traps on the top of the camelback remained unchanged. There were more of them than there are today and to make matters worse they were deep traps which imposed a real penalty on the player unfortunate enough to get to them." Despite this alteration the hole remains a stern challenge and a visual treat 93 years after its design by U.S. Amateur Champion Walter Travis.

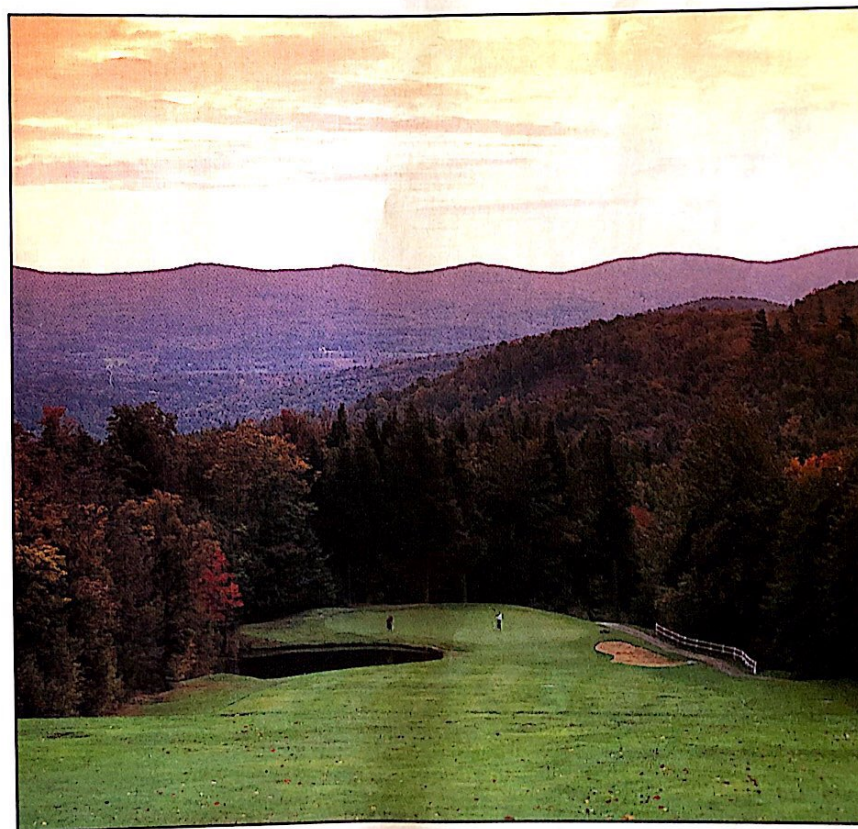
#### 8. BARRE 325 YD., PAR 4, NO. 3

With a multiple of blind shots, hidden rock outcroppings, abrupt changes in elevation, and tricky wind patterns, Barre is a course where local knowledge is the

most important club in your bag. The short-but-dangerous third is a perfect example. Can you go over the massive trees that guard the corner and nearly drive the green? If not, what's a safe distance to lay up from the elevated tee and therefore avoid a dogleg turn into the deep woods? Is the second shot really as short as it looks, or do you have to blast it to clear the tree on the left upslope and the cloverleaf sand field on the right? You'll have a better idea on your second visit.

#### 9. CROWN POINT 172 YD., PAR 3, NO. 9

There isn't a more natural course in a more rural setting anywhere in Vermont than William Mitchell's gem just north of Springfield. With scarcely a structure in view, and the vista from the 14th green one of Vermont's best, this is how the game should be enjoyed. Both nines finish with demanding par-threes. The small oval shelf of a green that taunts golfers as they complete the front side is backed by a rise and fronted by a pond, with a sentinel sugar maple ready to chuckle at a folly. Even if you choose the right club and



Stephen Ostrowski

Sugarbush's Number 14.



hit it perfectly your work is far from done. Without proper respect for the speed of the green or a miscalculation of the line you might find yourself chipping back to the carpet for your third stroke.

#### 10. BURLINGTON 214 YD., PAR 3, NO. 10

Donald Ross designed more than 300 golf courses in his career but only 50 have remained virtually untouched since their planning. The golfing exam at Burlington Country Club is one of them. Demanding holes begin the inward and outward halves on Burlington's unique double-loop routing where the two nines encircle an unused center piece of property. The par-3 tenth requires nothing less than arrow-like straightness from the tee, with an alleyway of mature trees framing the masterpiece and a smooth, rounded putting surface casting any roving projectiles off one side or the other. Even when it is eventually attained, multiple putts are not uncommon on the speedy pitched green.

#### 11. BLUSH HILL 206 YD., PAR 4, NO. 3

The third hole at Blush Hill is unique in Vermont, northern New England, and perhaps the world. Narrowing the fairway to a scant 15-yard opening only 60 yards from the tee is a 300-foot radio tower. Granted, Local Rule #3 on the scorecard states "a ball hitting white house, tower, or wires, on the fly may be replayed," but the magnetic draw of this spire can influence golf balls and the golfing mind of the uninitiated. On the other hand, driving the green, while not without its share of risks, is possible. Just beyond the tower, the hole heads downhill to a gully, then rises steadily to a small plateaued oval green with lateral water, woods, and out of bounds in close proximity.

#### 12. STRATTON: MOUNTAIN NINE 398 YD., PAR 4, NO. 3

In the inaugural year of the LPGA Stratton Mountain Classic this hole not only played as the most difficult hole on the course, but also as the most difficult

1990 LPGA season. These talented women averaged 4.681 on this demon. The tee shot must traverse a rise in the slanting fairway that casts everything towards the deep woods bordering the right side. The logical path into the green is guarded by a series of sprawling sand bunkers, and the rough also snuggles up close. The two distinct elevations of the putting surface effectively create two tiny greens that are no easy target with a pitch, never mind from 175 yards out. It's little wonder they shortened the hole by nearly 100 yards for the 1991 tournament.

#### 13. ORLEANS 140 YD., PAR 3, NO. 13

Orleans's lucky 13 is one of those potentially frustrating holes where only an aerial assault will produce satisfactory results. The flat green is totally surrounded by a two-foot-tall mounded ring and accompanying sand trap, the classic example of the punchbowl green first found in England and copied extensively in the 1920s. The only break in the hazard is a small path to walk on to the green. Whereas many of the problems at Orleans are subtle, there can be no mistaking the blatancy of this blemish. Yet golfers all over New England recall this hole more than any other from this northern hamlet.

#### 14. SUGARBUSH 475 YD., PAR 5, NO. 14

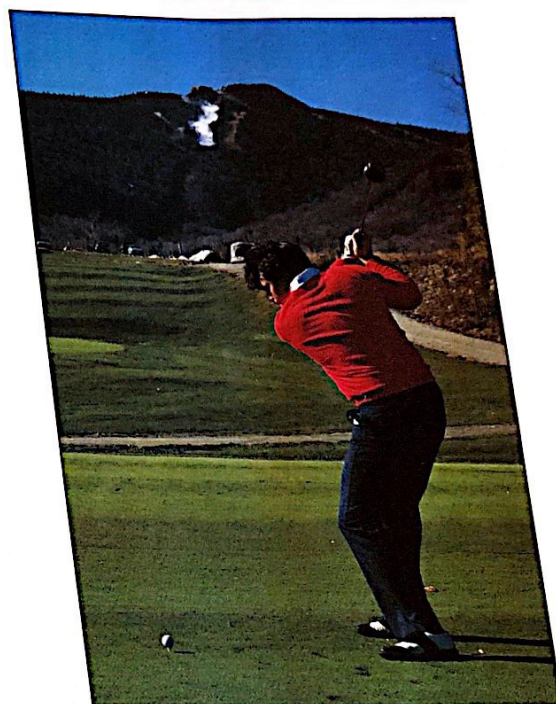
Sugarbush has its share of stimulating holes, including the nearly impossible 570-yard, par-5 second, two devilish par-3s (11 and 16), and the twisted par-4 13th. All the links have scenic mountain views but it's the 14th that symbolizes this most difficult of Vermont's golf courses. The accomplished member at Sugarbush may know how much of the left side line of trees to try and carry, for the soaring draw that follows this route could travel a long way toward home. For most, a placement to the turn is appropriate, but don't crunch it through the fairway. This fairway is one of Sugarbush's broadest, but like all of them, once you're off it you're in the forest and unplayable. A downhill route to the perched green requires two

to the left, and an embankment behind direct your play. Revel in the beauty, and don't worry about your score.

#### 15. RUTLAND 323 YD., PAR 4, NO. 11

Indicative of the attractive defiance found on the Rutland links is the short, ninety-degree dogleg left 11th. The first part of the hole appears foreshortened by a deceptive series of rolls, but all, save the longest of hitters, can let it fly. In fact it's better to hit through the fairway (and take

a drink at the natural spring you'll find there) than to play safe. From the safety of the 150 marker you still may not see the flagstick, as the inward turn is only 100 yards long. The greenside area epitomizes the fine design style of the 1920s team of Stiles and Van Kleeck: a mounded bunker to the right 20 yards before the green confuses club selection and a collection bunker waits front left for the resultant short shot. The skinny green set in a side-slope only measures 30 feet wide, but stretches more than 100 feet long. With



One thing's for sure, he's not thinking about his mortgage.

#### GOLF GETAWAY PACKAGES

May 18 - October 18

From \$86 per person per night

Take advantage of Mountain Green's Golf Getaway and enjoy accommodations on the beautiful Killington Golf Course. Enjoy nightly on-course lodging in fully equipped condominium suites, daily greens fees, shared cart rentals, and a hearty Vermont breakfast.

1-800-336-7754 (802) 422-3000

MOUNTAIN  
GREEN



SKI & GO



the speed of these carpets, judging long distances can be difficult. As with all of Rutland's holes, beautiful shrubbery, fine outlooks, and majestic trees enhance the golfing experience.

**16. MOUNT SNOW 183 YD., PAR 3, No. 12**

The golf course at Mount Snow is built around the golf school, and vice versa. A bear of a mountainous course at first glance, the 18-hole Geoffrey Cornish design has been carefully planned and maintained to play easier than it appears. The fairways are ample and the adjoining woods at the slice zones have a clean floor for easy errant spheroid recovery. The 12th is a giant par 3, featuring a 40-yard long teeing ground, ample water hazard, massive sand bunker, and the largest putting surface in the state. To the avid learner, clearing the pond will bring such joy that it will not be diminished by the possibility of five-putting the carpet.

**17. MANCHESTER 463 YD., PAR 5, NO. 17**

The back nine at Manchester is a piece of golfing heaven. Emerald green strips of manicured turf weave in and out of specimen oak, maple, and fir trees. The sugar maples that surround the 11th are the tallest in town, but the mammoth oak that oversees play on the 17th and its postcard-like mountain backdrop symbolize this course. The beauty of this double-dogleg short par 5 is that one error can make a double bogey a real possibility. But a smartly placed drive could leave the better ball striker with a mid-iron to the green and that delicious attempt at eagle.

**18. QUECHEE HIGHLANDS  
430 YD., PAR 4, NO. 7**

Many golfers would choose the titan 241-yard par-3 eighth, two of the other par 3s that cross the back nine chasm, or the 609-yard par-5 18th as the signature of Quechee. But consider the long seventh, where all of Quechee's fine design elements come together, and there is only one way to make par: hit four good shots. The tee is bordered by a trademark flower

bed filled with outstanding perennial varieties as unusual as black tulips. Your first strike from this comely spot must be long, bend right to left, and climb the lateral upsweep that slashes through the drive zone. Sand and unplayable territory wait right, and the rambling Ottauquechee River rolls by on the left. The long approach is narrowed by evergreens on both sides, and your second shot must cross deep sand pits to find the swirling green.

**19. BRADFORD, 80 YD., PAR 3,  
NO. 4 (BYE HOLE)**

The Bye Hole is a leftover from an other era found at a few private clubs in New England. This 19th hole replaced the walk from a distant 18th green to the clubhouse, and was used to settle any outstanding bets after a full round. Our bye is the shortest golf hole in the state—right in downtown Bradford. From an elevated compact teeing ground on the periphery of this antique course, your pitch better be precise. The large sand bunker behind the green has considerable experience snagging the overhit. From there, blasting back to a green facing away from you may not be pretty. One would feel foolish with a double bogey on this surprise quiz. ♦

*Bob Labbance lives in Stockbridge, Vermont. He has co-authored (with David Cornwell) three books on golf: Vermont Golf Courses (1987), The Golf Courses of New Hampshire (1989), and The Maine Golf Guide (1991). He has also written numerous articles for Vermont Life, New Hampshire Profiles, Maine Golf Magazine, Golf Course News, and others. Throughout most of 1991 he served as special assistant to Geoffrey Cornish for the revision of The Golf Course, to be republished by Harper Collins in April 1992 as The Architects of Golf.*

I don't remember any glimmering thought of form, in golf, or any consciousness of a method in playing a shot. I seemed merely to hit the ball, which possibly is the best way of playing golf; certainly it is the easiest on the mind.

—Robert Trent Jones, Jr.  
*Down the Fairway*