

100 Years of uninterrupted play reflects
Woodstock's enthusiasm for the game.

WOODSTOCK COUNTRY CLUB CELEBRATES ITS CENTENNIAL

BY BOB LABBANCE

As early as 1792 a tavern stood at the intersection of two wagon trails in the town of Woodstock. A century later the trails would become Routes 4 and 106, and the tavern would be replaced by the Woodstock Inn. More than two centuries later the guests are still coming to this attractive resort town.

For the past 100 years those guests have been able to enjoy the game of golf in a verdant setting just a short walk from the Inn. From a modest start and gradual development that parallels the history of golf in America, the club has grown, changed, and adapted as it fought to stay afloat. It is an amazing tribute to those involved that not one single season has been missed. Today the club invites tourists, locals, and summer residents to play upon its smooth, neat surfaces.

In this centennial year of golf in Woodstock we take a look back at the chronology that has brought the town's

sporting enthusiasts from hickory sticks and gutta percha balls to titanium shafts and lithium balata spheroids.

OCTOBER 3, 1895: Dr. F. B. Harrington, a member at The Country Club in Brookline, and a doctor in Boston, registers at the Inn, only to find that the golfing sticks he has brought all the way from Bean Town will be useless, as Woodstock lacks golfing grounds.

OCTOBER 12, 1895: One of Woodstock's two newspapers *Spirit of the Age* announces that "Golf has Come, and Come to Stay." Together with A.B.

Wilder, of the Woodstock Inn, Dr. Harrington "selects" six links on the rough and tumble side slope of Mt. Peg. A curious crowd of soon-to-be-enthusiasts follows his progress.

OCTOBER 18, 1895: The Woodstock Country Club is organized and officers elected. Their stated goal is "the encouragement of outdoor sports of all kinds, the energies of the enthusiastic members just now being devoted to golf, which has sprung into sudden popularity here." Members are assessed \$2.00 a year, and a round of golf will cost 25 cents.

OCTOBER 22, 1895: Author Rudyard Kipling, who has already been playing golf at his estate in Brattleboro for over a year, visits the Billings family, founders of the club. No scores are posted.

NOVEMBER 28, 1895: *Spirit of the Age* notes that members of the country club

are still playing golf. Proof that trying to extend the golf season is a time honored tradition in the Green Mountains.

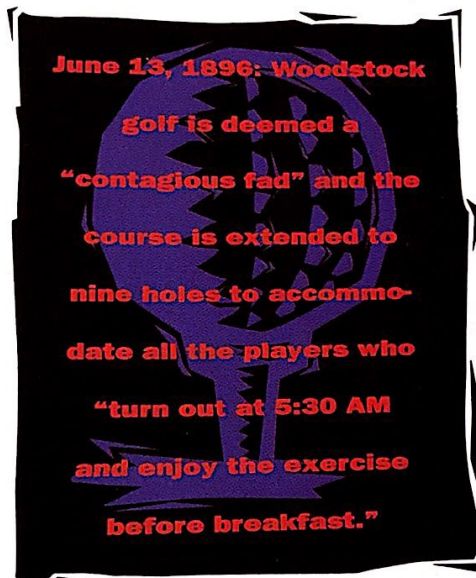
JUNE 13, 1896: Woodstock golf is deemed a "contagious fad" and the course is extended to nine holes to accommodate all the players who "turn out at 5:30 AM and enjoy the exercise before breakfast." The organization has reached its quota of sixty members.

SEPTEMBER 12, 1896: Woodstock travels to Hanover for the club's first match, and wins easily.

OCTOBER 31, 1896: Woodstock dominates the return match at Mt. Peg as all three lead players win handily.

March 18, 1898: Articles of Association are filed and the Woodstock Country Club is incorporated.

JULY 14, 1898: WCC purchases the seventy to eighty acres of Mt. Peg pasture from Daniels & Pinney and an improved golf course is installed. A tent is pitched near the home hole and the paper predicts the club "will become more and more of a pleasure ground."



JULY 20, 1899: A reception and tea is held to open the handsome new clubhouse. *Spirit of the Age* tells us "The building is located on an ideal spot near the edge of the woods on the links, at a height giving a beautiful view of the surrounding hills from the broad piazza which extends around three sides of the house."

SEPTEMBER 9, 1899: When the game's popularity continues to grow through

another summer the paper notes "Good citizens who do not care for the game can at least look with complacency on old pastures smoothed into green lawns, made sightly to the eye, and suggesting localities for pleasant house lots if the golf-fever ever dies out."

NOVEMBER 1899: According to the Report of the Executive Committee, "After the close of the season the fair green of No. 1 was entirely cleared and smoothed, doing away with one of the worst features of the course." Two new holes are added between the clubhouse and the entrance.

SEPTEMBER & NOVEMBER 1900: Alex Findlay of Boston visits and sets course records while offering suggestions for lengthening and improving the golf course.

SEPTEMBER 12, 1901: The club purchases five level acres from Caroline Townshend and the two new holes that result, are, for the first time, on a portion of the course that is in play today.

After a taste of golf in the fall, snow could not delay the opening of the first full season in April of 1896.

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