

THE HISTORY OF STORM KING GOLF CLUB

1890 – 1923

On July 9, 1890 several prominent Cornwall residents living on the mountain established the Storm King Club on Deer Hill, a spur of Storm King Mountain. Some of its members had played golf elsewhere and desired to learn the game. In 1894 Messrs. James Wyld and Lawrence F. Abbott were appointed as a committee to investigate and report on the possibility of establishing a golf “links”. The committee determined that the representatives of the Highland Park Estate were agreeable to leasing their property and could be transformed into a golf course for a nominal fee .

The original course consisted of three holes. The first hole was called “The Hole By The Big Tree”. It was probably near our present 1st hole since there once was a huge elm tree just across the road. The second hole was referred to as “The Hole By The Road”; most likely the current 2nd hole. And the third was named “The Hole By The Big Rock”; perhaps referring to the large boulder on the current 7th hole. A nine hole course was eventually laid out by Mr. Willie Norton using the services of the noted Scottish professional, Mr. George Low

By the summer of 1896 the course opened for play and the initial tournament for which a record exists was held on July 10, 1897. Mr. Elliott Benedict was the winner posting a nine hole score of 64. A modest clubhouse was constructed in the same year and in 1911 tennis courts were installed thanks to the generosity of Dr. A.R. Ledoux. Remnants of these courts can still be seen in the woods bordering the right side of the 9th hole and trophies from early events are located in the clubhouse.

In these early days of the Club golf affairs were controlled by a committee but upon the disbanding of the Storm King Club in 1898, a somewhat informal organization called the Storm King Golf Club was inaugurated. It continued in this manner until February 11, 1903 when the members adopted a constitution perpetuating the name.

On June 3, 1902 members of the club sought to have permanent control of the land containing the course and formed the Highland Realty Company for that purpose. The company purchased 46 acres of land from the Hasbrouck Estate for \$270 an acre. This land was then leased to the golf club for an annual fee of \$50. This amount was roughly equal to the taxes and other expenses imposed upon the owners. As taxes increased over time, the annual cost to the club rose to as much as \$150.

A large plaque is located in the clubhouse signifying that Storm King Golf Club was elected to allied membership in the United States Golf Association on January 28th, 1903. The original 13 founder’s names are listed and several of their putters are displayed.

At a meeting of the golf club on November 7, 1922, it was proposed that the club should attempt to purchase the land in its entirety from the Highland Realty Company. The Board of Directors were authorized to negotiate a purchase of the land and to proceed with the incorporation of the club. The Directors and shareholders of the Highland Realty Company met on November 24 and unanimously voted to sell the property to the club for \$13,000 (approximately what they had paid for the land 20 years earlier!). However, attention was called to the fact that under the restrictions in an ordinary deed, the club would have the power to resell the land to anyone and it might thus pass into undesirable hands to the detriment of adjoining or nearby property owners or even to the community at large. After much discussion Mr. C. Chauncey Stillman suggested that the Highland Realty Company convey the land to him for the same amount and he in turn would sell it to the club for \$8000 thus in effect donating \$5000 to the club. In recognition of this generous donation the club would give Mr. Stillman an option giving him or his heirs the right of first refusal to purchase the land should the club decide to sell the property. Walter H. Crittenden, Esquire, donated his services and carried the incorporating to completion and on January 25, 1923 the Certificate of Incorporation was issued and filed with the NY County Clerk on January 30.

In a magnanimous gesture several members of the club offered to contribute over \$5000 of the \$8000 required for the purchase on the land. Indeed, all of the original stockholders of the Highland Realty Company agreed to turn back to the club all or part of their original investment.

On February 9, 1923 the Certificate of Incorporation was presented and the following officers were elected:

President	Mr. Lucius H. Holt
Vice President	Mr. Thomas W. Weeks
Treasurer	Mr. Morris M. Davidson
Ass't Treasurer	Miss M. K. Hastings
Secretary	Mr. Albert R. Ledoux
Captain	Mr. William A. Robinson

Thus the Storm King Golf Club Inc. was founded.

1923 – 1941

During this period John (Jack) Moore played an integral part in opening up the membership to the townspeople. Players now came from all walks of life. Elting Breed, an engineer working on scenic Rt. 218, Father Thomas Pendergast, a priest from St. Thomas parish, Appleby Robinson, a retired sea captain, Moses Ely, a lawyer from New York City, Billy Cavanaugh, the boxing coach from West Point, as well as the West Point golf team since at the time they had no course of their own. Another member, Yank

Toohey, traveled by bus from Newburgh, carried his clubs up Hasbrouck Avenue and at times played 72 holes and then caught the bus back to Newburgh.

The Canausa brothers were the club's first golf professionals. In the first "Storm King Golf – 36th Season – 1931" by Mr. Lawrence Abbott and Mr. Ralph Ogden, wrote "The success of any golf club rests in large degree upon the character and efficiency of the professionals in charge. In this respect the Storm King Golf Club is particularly fortunate. Fred and Mike Canausa, one of whom may always be found at the club house during hours of play, are excellent players, competent and agreeable teachers and dependable in every respect. Their well managed shop is equipped to repair and take care of clubs and they are prepared to give lessons and to furnish all kinds of golf supplies at reasonable prices. They are especially successful in their management of a reliable group of caddies. It is hoped that the members will give them cordial support and cooperation."

The annual closing party was a gala affair. A large tent and dance floor was constructed over the 9th green. Prohibition did not deter the creation of the libation referred to as "artillery punch".

Beginning in the 1930s the cadets of West Point played their matches at Storm King up until the outbreak of World War II. The West Point Golf Course was constructed during the latter part of the war by prisoners of war and opened in the late 1940s.

Following the attack on Pearl Harbor in 1941, everyone's lives were immediately changed and the club was to fall to its lowest point.

1942 – 1981

As many members marched off to war and gasoline rationing began, the Board of Directors, fearing the club would close, approached a current member, Frank Moore, and asked him to take over as Club Manager on a non-salaried basis. His only income would be a commission from equipment sales and green fees. Frank, son of John Moore, had a special devotion to the club having been a part of it from the age of nine. With his wife Gladys, Frank began a labor of love that would span 38 years! Following Frank's death in 1981, the club named the trophy room in his honor and his professional's jacket with insignia is still displayed in the new clubhouse. These were donated to the club by Carol Moore McGowan and her husband Ray McGowan. The Frank Moore Tournament is also held annually; another tribute to Frank's untiring dedication.

Surviving the war years, the club welcomed the returning veterans as members and several were former caddies that had worked at the club in the previous decade. One was Sammy Gilardo, who devoted his life to keeping the course manicured until his death in the 1980s. At this time there were fourteen members and \$52 in the club's Treasury! The returning veterans were offered a special membership for the annual cost of \$35.

The need for a larger clubhouse became apparent at this time. The mansion that is located to the right of the 7th green was up for sale for \$27,500. However, it was thought that the club could not afford the price and no action was taken. Soon after, Ms. Elizabeth Williams offered to give her large kennel building to the club. It was located on what is now Jogue's Retreat. If the club would move the building down the hill and demolish the old clubhouse so that she would have an unimpeded view of the valley (similar to our new clubhouse) she would pay all expenses. This offer was refused! Also at this time the Schmidt sisters contacted the club about leasing some 50 acres of property located across the road to the right of the 8th green. The land consisted of open fields and wooded areas. The club asked for a 99 year lease but the offer (when relatives of the sisters became involved) limited the timeframe to 25 years. No agreement could be reached.

In 1947 the first addition to the original clubhouse took place. The "Great Room" and porch were enlarged; the club-making room was converted to a small kitchen and a Ladies room added. Member's donations covered the \$10,200 cost for the project.

A second addition was later begun, enlarging the Men's locker room. Since financing could not be obtained for the club itself, each member of the Board of Directors agreed to personally guarantee part of the loan.

During the early 1950s the course was changed to include the current 5th and 6th holes. The work was done mostly by the membership and opened for play in 1954.

1982 - Present

The Board of Directors decided that due to the ever increasing size of the membership, another addition was required and a dining room was added to the clubhouse. Part of the renovation involved the demolition of the screened-in porch that many members over the years had enjoyed trading tales of birdies and bogies. Generations of members had etched their initials in the planking on the porch. These planks were preserved by Lifetime Member Bobby Hall and are on display throughout the clubhouse. The park between the 2nd and 4th holes is dedicated to his memory.

Beginning in the mid 1990s, many course renovations and improvements were undertaken. An irrigation system was added and scores of trees were planted. A new pond was created behind the 4th green. New equipment was purchased. Some tees were renovated and by 2006 the course had been nurtured into the best condition in its history. During this time the club purchased 3.2 acres of property from Jogues Retreat. The land included the entrance to the club, the upper and lower parking lots as well as the large rear parking lot on which the new clubhouse is constructed. Before this time it was impossible for a member to park their car on land owned by the club!

It was then that the Board of Directors authorized the construction of the new clubhouse on the newly purchased property. It should open our venerable club to a new era and make membership in it very enticing.

(Many thanks to Ms. Betty Jurgens, Mr. Albert R. Ledoux and Carole & Frank McGowan for their research and contribution to the history of Storm King Golf Club)