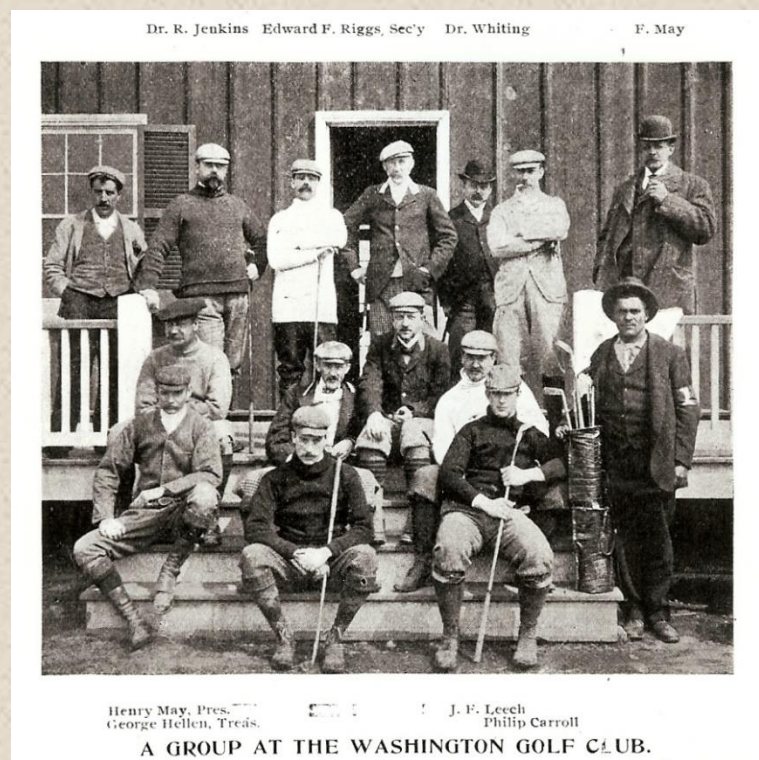


A Special History

The Club was established in 1893 and incorporated as the Washington Golf Club in January 1894. It is considered the oldest golf club in the Washington Metropolitan area and the ninth to join the United States Golf Association. Washington Golf holds a rich history with its members, employees, golf, tennis, swim, and dive activities, and especially its land. The original clubhouse and nine-hole golf course were located in Rosslyn, Virginia, along the west bank of the Potomac River with a majestic view of Washington, D.C. From this vantage point, club members could imagine historic visions, such as Captain John Smith famously sailing up the Potomac in 1608; Gen. Rochambeau leading American and French soldiers across the Potomac enroute to defeat the British at Yorktown in 1781; the early development of Washington as the new Federal City in the 1790s and home to the president and Congress; the burning of the city by British troops in 1814; the historic village of Georgetown and its renowned residents; neighboring Arlington House with its National Cemetery; and the Union Army crossing the Potomac in May of 1861, at the start of the Civil War. On the original golf course were remnants of the Union Army's Fort Corcoran, constructed to protect Washington during the war.

In 1893, members of the social Metropolitan Club in Washington, D.C., including, Col. Henry May (first president of the Washington Golf Club and an 1897 U.S.G.A. committee member), Sir Julian Pauncefote (the first British Ambassador to the United States), and three U.S. senators, were among the prominent Washingtonians who founded Washington Golf. Other 19th century club members included Cyrus Adler, Librarian of the Smithsonian Institute, Miss Mabel Boardman of Red Cross fame, Jerome Napoleon Bonaparte III, Supreme Court Justices Horace Gray and John Marshall Harlan, inventors Samuel P. Langley and George Westinghouse, department store magnate L.Z. Leiter, heiress Mrs. E.H.G. Slater of Newport, RI, Civil War veterans, and many members of



Congress. Sen. George Wetmore of Rhode Island was an early member and his daughter Maud was one of the finest golfers at the club. She finished runner-up in the 1898 U.S. Women's Amateur Championship, considered the National Championship for women until the Women's U.S. Open was created in 1946.

Washington Golf's first golf course, designed by Alexander R. Campbell and laid out by Col. May, as well as a renovated makeshift clubhouse, were located on land previously owned by the Hoover and Ross families in Rosslyn. There was also a smaller ladies' links built for play. The first employee of the club is

believed to be Andrew Jackson, formerly enslaved before the Civil War, who also had daughters employed by the club. The earliest known golf professionals were Dave Honeyman in 1895, Thomas L. Barker 1895 – 97, and two men named Miller and Bagley in the same decade. William F. “Willie” Davis was a pro during the winter months from 1897 – 1900, and split time with his summer duties at Newport Country Club. Davis hired Donald Ball as an assistant at Newport and Ball eventually became the head pro at Washington Golf.



Willie Davis,
golf professional.

Here’s how an 1899 *Harper’s Weekly* article described the club’s earliest known golf exhibition at the old Rosslyn course: “[The fifth hole] is a terrifying hazard for the stranger, and one of the members of the club is responsible for the assertion that Willie Park, Jr., who played several rounds of the course when he visited the club three years ago, did not succeed in carrying it a single time.” Park was one of the greatest British Open champions in history.

Initially, play at the club was on Wednesdays and Saturdays during the golfing season, which was October through May. Most members lived in Washington, so an omnibus transported them across the Potomac to the Rosslyn site. In 1902, the club joined the Mid-Atlantic Golf Association and has hosted multiple men’s and women’s championships.

The club members’ lease on the Rosslyn property was terminated in 1906, and a group led by Alonzo Colt Yates searched for a new location. Concluding the search in what would later be renamed Arlington County, Virginia, the members chose land once owned by the debauchorous Mary Ann Hall, known as the “Madam on the Mall” for owning the finest brothel in Washington during the mid-1800s. Ms. Hall was long gone and the current owner of the property was Rear Admiral Presley Marion Rixey (Surgeon General of the Navy and White House physician to Presidents William McKinley and Theodore Roosevelt). Rixey joined the club and sold 74.7 acres to the members which makes up a majority of the present location. The club reorganized as Washington Country Club on March 7, 1908, with Yates as president, and the following year nine holes were laid out by the retired Rixey and his personal laborers. A temporary clubhouse was erected that would later become the golf shop.

In 1909, former President Theodore Roosevelt and then President William Howard Taft were listed as the first U.S. presidents to join the club. That same year a second nine holes were added to the golf course and by 1910, a permanent clubhouse was built. It was about this time that golf course architect Donald Ross was hired to redesign the course and there is a story passed down that Ross offered two design options: “deluxe or not so deluxe.” Our fledgling club chose the not so deluxe. The first known golf pro hired at the new location was John Klein who arrived in May of 1910. The club’s new name, Washington Country Club, reflected the many new activities added for the members, including tennis with courts built in 1911. In 1913, newly elected President Woodrow Wilson joined the club and became a very active golfer while also enjoying other club amenities. His first regular golfing partner was fellow member Dr. Cary T. Grayson, later a Rear Admiral and personal physician to Wilson. After the president’s first wife passed away, Grayson introduced him to Edith Bolling Galt, and she became Wilson’s regular golfing partner.

In 1915, the club was reincorporated as Washington Golf and Country Club. In its 1921 annual report, it’s written, “Current member Sen. Warren G. Harding was elected President of the United States.” Upon



Harding on the first tee at Washington Golf.

Harding's death two years later, another club member, Vice President Calvin Coolidge, became the fifth successive U.S. President to be a member at Washington Golf. These were the years the club became known as the "Chosen Playground of Presidents".

One of the most significant events to occur at the club was in 1919 when member Dr. Charles V. Piper, an Agrostology scientist with the U.S. Department of Agriculture, discovered a patch of green grass resilient to brown patch on the old 4th green. Piper cut out part of the grass and took it to the Arlington Turf Gardens, a local growing program created by the U.S.D.A. Along with fellow member Russell Oakley, the two planted and grew strains of what would be named Washington Bent. These strains taken from Washington Golf would be delivered around the world to be used on golf courses. Because of Piper and Oakley, the U.S.G.A. established its Green Section.

Also in 1919, WGCC members finalized the purchase of an additional 47 acres adjacent to the existing club property. This was known as the Grunwell tract and allowed for a dramatic redesign of the Donald Ross course. Legendary amateur golf champion and golf course architect Walter Travis visited the club and provided an initial redesign that would be modified by Hugh

Wilson, of Merion Golf Club fame, and his protégé, William Flynn, to complete the expanded course in 1922. Some of Ross' originally designed holes remain today, including the first, second, third, and eighteenth.

In 1921, the club hired young Scotsman Dave Thomson to be the head golf professional and he ushered in a host of golfers on the professional and amateur circuit to play exhibitions at WGCC. Those players included, Gene Sarazen, Johnny Farrell, and Roland MacKenzie in 1924; Tommy Armour and Farrell in 1925; Glenna Collett, Leo Diegel and Farrell in 1925; Bobby Jones and Watts Gunn in 1926; Archie Compston and Farrell in 1926; Babe Didrikson and Helen Dettweiler in 1936; and Patty Berg in 1946. Some of these early golfing greats were able to enjoy the newly built putting "course" in 1926, which took the place of the old tennis courts. Membership during the 1920s also included, Gen. John "Black Jack" Pershing and the owners of the Hope Diamond, Ned and Evalyn Walsh McLean.



Bobby Jones brought excitement to WGCC.

One year after the club's first swimming pool was installed, tragedy struck on September 15, 1936, when a fire destroyed the current location's original clubhouse. Much of the club's priceless memorabilia and history went up in flames. However, "a new building rose out of the ashes the following year" and was dedicated on October 14, 1937. The 1930s became an important decade for membership when the club extended honorary

memberships to members of the Supreme Court. In all, a total of 19 justices on the High Court have been members at Washington Golf.



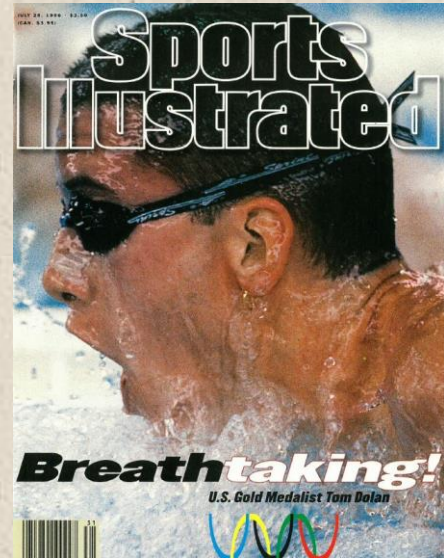
Tennis great Pauline Betz Addie, a Club member.

The club's tennis program seemed to gain in popularity after World War II with the hiring of professional players as tennis instructors, including Arthur Hendrix, Wayne Sabin, and Charlie Wood. Five-time grand slam winner Pauline Betz [Addie] played an exhibition at WGCC and shortly after became a member. The club has purchased adjacent property through the years that has allowed for the expansion of the tennis program with additional courts, as well as a first-class fitness center.

In 1952, Thomson retired after 31 years as head golf pro and in 1954 the club hired another favorite, Clare Emery, who lasted 26 years. In 1958, another new clubhouse and swimming pool were built and the golf course architect firm Findlay & Loving made significant changes to certain golf holes. The following year, WGCC lost longtime legendary first tee starter Brick Wood, who began at the club as a young caddie (said to be President Wilson's favorite) and who was caddying for Dr. Piper during the bent grass discovery. Wood was replaced by his son Gene, who manned the first tee for the next 27 years. In 1961, a significant hire was golf course superintendent Lee Dieter, who lasted 37 years and secured much of the club's historic memorabilia.

While golf remained WGCC's main focus, swimming was gaining in popularity. In 1955, one of the most memorable persons to grace our pool, Stanley Tinkham, was hired to coach the swim team and manage the pool. He had been stationed at nearby Walter Reed Army Hospital and was their women's swim coach. His "Tinkham's girls" set many national records which led to his being named the 1956 U.S. Women's Olympic Swim coach. He's a member of the International Swimming Hall of Fame. The pool has been rebuilt twice and become the perennial home of championship dive and swim teams, and produced Olympic Gold swimmer Tom Dolan.

In 2006, the current clubhouse structure was built and has benefitted from ongoing, rolling renovations, and in 2020, renowned golf architect Tom Doak completed the first major renovation of the golf course since 1922. The Doak renovation expanded the tournament course to over 6,400 yards and included the addition of The Turn, a modern halfway house facility used as a golf learning center, as well as an annexed entertainment area for club members.



Tom Dolan, twice an Olympic gold medalist.

Through the years, Washington Golf has been blessed with dedicated and beloved employees beginning with Andrew Jackson in the 1890s, and including names like James William Harrison Scott, Clarence Washington Jones, Edwin "Bear" Gross, Sylvester Bennett, Captoria Jenkins, Bob Berryman, the Shaw brothers, and the many GMs and managers who kept and are keeping Washington Golf a special place.