



Scenic view of the St. Lawrence and awe-inspiring topography of the Frontenac Arc at Smuggler's Glen in Gananoque.

GOLF ALONG THE ST. LAWRENCE

A History of the Sport in the Regional 1000 Islands

By Ryan Gainford

A young man garnered attention once he came ashore from a merchant vessel on the St. Lawrence at Quebec City. Standing in the sunlight he dropped a ball along the Plains of Abraham and started practicing his swing.

That was 1854. One of the first known incidents of golf on a North American shore.

We here in Canada, owe our taking up of the sport to the massive immigration of Scots to the New World in the 1800s. When the word 'golf' first appeared in a Canadian newspaper in 1826, it'd already been played for over 350 years in Scotland. The number of golf

courses in Canada went from just six courses in 1889 to 60 courses in 1902.

The first golf course in our area was created in 1906 to the west of Brockville. In 1913 a new club was formed when a new course was designed and the golf course was named the Brockville Golf and Country Club. It was a nine-hole course and opened in 1914 with two holes on the south side of the road and seven on the north side.

The Country Club was exclusive by its location, close to the water but far from town. It was accessible only to those with boat or carriage. Membership was a status

symbol only of those who "belonged" to Brockville society.

In 1927 the Prince of Wales (later Edward VIII), Prince George of Kent, and the British prime minister visited Brockville. Before the Fulfords hosted them for lunch and gave them a tour of the 1000 Islands on the Magedoma, the princes arrived first and played a round of golf at the Country Club.

Heavyweight boxing champion Joe Louis and Olympic figure skater Barbara Ann Scott once played there, as well.

An elitist sport since its early days,

golf's popular emergence resulted of a phenomenon known as 'The Ouimet Factor'. A result of amateur New England golfer Francis Ouimet, who won the 1913 US Open and helped popularize the sport amongst the working class. This projection of golf was when a lot more people started to play.

'Gentlemen only, ladies forbidden,' whether a familiar acronym in your lexicon, was another 'regulation' a lot of so-called purists of the sport may at first be reluctant to discuss with liberal sympathizers. Women in golf started more in war times (both WWI and WWII). This changed due to women's rights movements, and an invention similar in its contribution to 'The Ouimet Factor': the widespread appearance of the bicycle (and later the automobile) as an available mode of transportation in the early 20th century.

After the Brockville Country Club's success, other golf courses soon opened in the area.

Established in 1939, the Prescott Golf Club offers a semi-private, 18 hole course.

The Brockville Highland opened in 1964 as a nine-hole course, and again in 1970, as an 18 hole course, making it Brockville's oldest 18 hole course.

By the early 60s the Brockville Golf and Curling Clubs both had more members than they could handle. In 1976 the two clubs amalgamated with a mandate to build a new clubhouse and expand the golf course to 18 holes and the curling rink from four sheets to six. Construction began in 1975 and a New Brockville Country Club opened in 1977 all on the north side of the road. Seven holes are from the original course.

Sunnidell Golf opened in 1992 and is an 18 hole short par 3.

Smuggler's Glen Golf Course opened at the Glen House Resort near Gananoque in 2005 and further distinguished the 1000 Islands as a true golfing destination.

Golf courses are important to communities in the 1000 Islands.

"The Brockville Country Club has always been an asset to the city. It is home away from home for a lot of its members of the population of all ages," says Jack Kenny, course historian.

The Brockville Country Club is a year round function facility, with a banquet hall which facilitates special events. In recent years it has become an entertainment center as well, with dinner shows, meals, entertainment, and dances.

"The Country Club really supports the community, in that it hosts a lot of different



View from tee at Smuggler's Glen



Smuggler's Glen Golf Course Clubhouse

events and fundraisers," Kenny added. "Over the years the Country Club has done its share to raise millions of dollars through its fundraisers and tournaments, such as the Pro-Am, Memorial, Palliative Care, Rotary Classic, Bruce Wylie Golf Tournament, Sherwood Park Manor, Chamber of Commerce, and United Way."

City of Brockville Championship tournaments were cross-club tournaments and took place annually from 1978-95, between the BCC and Brockville Highland courses.

Smuggler's Glen specializes in hosting groups and resort guests. There's a river view from the clubhouse patio and banquet rooms seating 70. The Resort itself offers a dining room, a variety of accommodation choices, Stay & Play golf, as well as wedding and conference facilities.

"It's a semi-private course but public play is a big part of business," says Dave Seal, resort general manager. "It's a nice venue, and we've done very well maintaining our market niche through memberships, fundraisers, and day-to-day green fees."

Annual Smuggler's Glen tournaments include; The Gananoque Playhouse Theatre Fundraiser, Habitat for Humanity, Kingston University Hospitals, Big Brothers and Sisters, Alzheimer's, Boys and Girls Club, Queen's University School of Medicine, and Ladies, Men's and Senior's Club Championships. Awards and trophies are also included at the end of August each year.

Whether it be improving your game or relaxing and admiring the beauty of the course, a lot of people live for golf and with the Spring thaw on its way in the 1000 Islands Region, you can have it, any way you want it. **LH**