



THE HISTORY OF

St. Davids Golf Club

THROUGH THE YEARS





George W. Shultz

One Sunday in the spring of 1896, A. J. D. (Tony) Peterson arrived at the home of George W. Schultz. According to Schultz, Peterson was “carrying a small white ball and a club with a bent iron on its end.” The previous day Peterson had been introduced to a Scottish game called “GOLF” at the recently opened Devon Golf Club, a nine-hole course located on the current site of Waterloo Gardens.

1 *The following Saturday Peterson arranged for Schultz to play the Devon course with a set of borrowed golf clubs. Schultz apparently enjoyed playing golf enough that later on that year he, along with William H. Brooks, Dr. George L. S. Jameson (who went by “GLS”), Louis Peterson and Herman Wendell decided to organize their own golf club.*

This group of founders recognized the need to generate enough members to meet the financial obligations they would face and also the need for a site large enough to build a golf course. The Founders drafted a letter with an attached sign-up sheet for people interested in membership to sign and commit to the terms of becoming members of the new club. The undated letter reads as follows:

GOLF

It is proposed to form a golf club in Wayne and St. Davids, providing a suitable course can be found in the vicinity at a reasonable annual rental and if at least eighty (80) members will support such an organization with the annual dues fixed at Five dollars each member.

The undersigned pledge themselves to pay their first year's dues on call, in order that the links may be prepared and opened for play early in 1898.



St. David's Cricket Club Before Golf in Philadelphia

small clubhouse. According to Schultz, “it was largely due to his (Francis Fenimore) genial nature towards young men that we were able to use his land and form a club.”

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William Wood – 1st SDGC President

On October 7, 1897, the first official meeting of St. Davids Golf Club (SDGC) was held in Wayne at the home of R. Evans Peterson, father of Tony and Louis (a founder). The election of officers took place that night and William Wood was elected the first President of St. Davids Golf Club and Schultz was elected Secretary.

By 1898, golf was being played on the nine-hole course at the Fenimore property. George Schultz wrote: “We, the moving spirits of the project, laid out the nine-hole course, that had natural hazards rather than artificial bunkers, and it certainly could be called ‘sporting.’ The small group of enthusiasts, armed with picks, rakes and shovels, built the tees and mowed the grass of the greens by our own sweat of brow. We could afford no laborers nor a professional golf instructor.” During its first season SDGC played a home and home match against the Idlewild Club of Media with each Club winning on its home course. Member Gus Gallagher set the St. Davids course record and Archer Mifflin won the St. Davids Handicap Tournament with a net 84.

Sometime in 1898, Francis Fenimore informed the Club that he was going to begin selling off lots on his property and the Club would have to find a new

The solicitation efforts resulted in 123 signatures. Having exceeded the necessary 80 members, the founding group then approached a retired wallpaper manufacturer by the name of Francis Fenimore who owned a large tract of land where Eastern University is currently located. An informal group known as the St. Davids Cricket Club had previously used this ground, but that group fell apart after a grass fire ruined the field and destroyed the



Martha Brown

site for its golf course. Schultz was chosen by a Site Committee to sound out Miss Martha Brown and Mrs. Samuel Chew, sisters who owned a large tract of land (120-acres) on both sides of Lancaster Pike at the 13-mile post, between St. Davids and Radnor. The ladies were amenable to a lease, but insisted there would be no liquor served and no bar on the property.

Philadelphia Country Club professional John H. Harrison laid out the golf course and construction began. Herman Wendell, who was in the construction business, did most of the golf course construction without cost to the Club. The first nine holes opened for play in 1899. That year, St. Davids hired its first golf professional, Harry Gullane, who had been Harrison's assistant at the Country Club the year before. Gullane, who commenced work in April, revised and supervised the construction of the

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Clubhouse with Porch

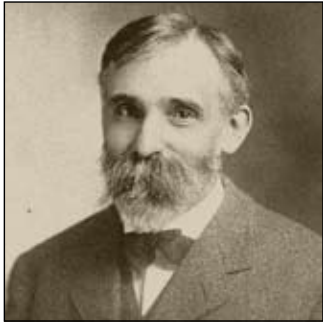
second nine holes. Gullane, an accomplished golfer from North Berwick, Scotland, proceeded to finish seventh in the U.S. Open at the Baltimore Country Club that September. He also finished second in the driving contest at the U.S. Open with a drive of 264 yards, two feet and nine inches.

A farmhouse on the property that dated back to the early 1800's was converted into the Club's new home. Several of the Directors papered and painted the rooms of the farmhouse at their own expense and built a long porch. An article in the Philadelphia Inquirer stated: "The clubhouse has been finely furnished throughout, and fitted with every improvement. It is now the centre of interest for Philadelphia and suburban golfers, and will be the scene of considerable social activity during the coming winter months."



*Dr. Jameson
President 5 Years*

The Charter incorporating St. Davids Golf Club was issued on March 20, 1899 by the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania and listed all the Officers and Directors including Dr. Jameson, President. The Club had over 300 members, which included many women, and was prospering while operating under a conservative financial philosophy (no debt). The first Club



*Herman Wendell
Club Champion*



*Louise Bergner
Women's Club Champion
1899*



Champion was Herman Wendell and Louise Bergner won the Women's Championship. The President's Cup was played on November 30, Thanksgiving Day with the low 8 players to play off at match play during December.

In February 1900, St. Davids joined the United States Golf Association. That same month SDGC became the sixth member of the Golf Association of Philadelphia (GAP) and the Women's Golf Association of Philadelphia (WGAP). That year our members were active participants in all associations including the men's and women's team matches. James Govan followed Harry Gullane in 1900 as Golf Professional and Golf Course Superintendent at SDGC. Govan served our Club until 1914 when he left to join our member George Crump, as the first golf professional and course superintendent at the recently opened Pine Valley Golf Club, which Crump had designed and founded.

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George Crump

As golf began to be played on the new links, Mrs. Chew and Miss Brown, the landlords were dismayed that golf was being played on Sunday mornings. The ladies and the Club reached a compromise that play would not begin on Sundays until 1:00 PM. The members had overcome the ban on liquor sales and a bar by keeping a liquor supply in their lockers.

In 1916, the lease on the golf course property was going to expire and a group of members believed it was time to seek out another site for a golf course that would be owned by the Club. In May, SDGC entered into an option agreement at a cost of \$1,000 on a piece of ground in Upper Merion Township. As it turned out the majority of members at SDGC were not thrilled about moving to the proposed site because its location was viewed as inaccessible except by automobile and the idea of laying out a new course was not appealing. Following a special meeting of the members, it was announced that the Club had rejected the plan to move and had agreed to a satisfactory new 15-year lease on its present site. Several of the SDGC



*James Willcox
SDGC President
1921 to 1928*

members, which included A. J. Drexel Paul, decided to exercise the Upper Merion option and formed the Gulph Mills Golf Club.

St. Davids continued to grow and thrive into the early 1920's. By 1925, with six years left on its lease, and unable to negotiate a reasonable price to purchase the existing golf course, the Club's Officers decided to again explore moving the golf course to a new location where SDGC would own the ground.

A well-attended membership meeting was held on Saturday, April 18, 1925 at which the members unanimously agreed to a plan presented by the Officers. The plan was to purchase the

129-acre farm and farmhouse of the late John Henry from its present owners Paul D. Mills and A. J. Drexel Paul. The necessary financing included a \$500 charge to each member. According to Club President, James M. Willcox, the farmhouse would become the new clubhouse. The Club would not become a Country Club, and the policy of maintaining a Golf Club, simple but comfortable in its appointments would remain. Renowned golf course architect Donald J. Ross was engaged to design the new course.

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Donald Ross

On July 31, 1925, St. Davids Golf Club consummated the purchase of the ground (82-acres) on the clubhouse side of Upper Gulph Road from Mills for \$98,000. The Club didn't have to make settlement on the 47.6-acre tract owned by Drexel Paul until April of the next year. On August 19th the Public Ledger reported, "The land has been surveyed and a course planned by Donald Ross." The article also stated, "So fast do rain and snow run off and so swiftly does the ground dry out that play will be possible virtually all the year round." Work then began clearing the ground, but it did not have to be rushed since there was still a period of six years left on the Lancaster Pike lease, which did not expire until September 30, 1931. In October a bent grass nursery was planted and in September 1926 the bent grass stolens were taken from the nursery and plugged into the green sites.



*St. Luke's School
One of Seven Buildings*

On June 10, 1927, St. Luke's School, which was located on the southern edge of the new golf course property, held its final commencement. That same day

SDGC added to its property by purchasing 25 acres from the owners of the school. With the acquisition of that property, the plans for a clubhouse changed. Instead of using the farmhouse, the clubhouse was now going to be located among the compound of buildings on the school campus. Because of its proximity to the new clubhouse location, what was to be the third hole (and currently is) became the starting hole and the second hole became the 18th hole. The former gymnasium would be the men's locker building and included a tiled indoor swimming pool facility. All the buildings would be modernized and St. Davids would become a modern Country Club.

The new course was opened for play on Saturday, October 1, 1927. It was a beautiful fall day and over 200 members played the course for the first time. Many felt the new course was among the finest in the country. Temporary clubhouse facilities in an old school building were used pending completion of the renovations to the main clubhouse. The newly renovated clubhouse facilities were opened on April 28, 1928.

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SDGC continued to operate the former course on Lancaster Pike under its lease and opened it to the public. In order to avoid any confusion, the name of the former course was changed to the Main Line Open Golf Club.

On January 18, 1929 the former Devon Hotel, home to the four-month old Valley Forge Military Academy, was destroyed by fire. Needing a facility to continue the school, Major Milton Baker, school founder and Superintendent contacted SDGC that same day. By that evening the students were housed in the old St. Luke's School dormitories. Baker had planned to rebuild in Devon but found that SDGC might be agreeable to selling the school property. An agreement was reached and the Club sold the property to Valley Forge Military Academy, which continues on the site to this day.



*Clubhouse and Barn in 1928
On left 18 green, a par 3
On right 9 green, a par 4*

St. Davids was now faced with the need for a clubhouse facility. Under the leadership of President Charles W. Bayliss and Building Committee Chairman Frank H. Mahan, the old farmhouse and barn on the site of the present clubhouse were torn down and construction on the new clubhouse began in November 1929. It officially opened in June of the next year and served the membership until 2005 when the current clubhouse replaced it.

The 13th and 14th holes were reconfigured between the time the new course

was opened in 1927 and the completion of the clubhouse in 1930. The 13th hole on the original layout was a par three and the 14th a long uphill par four to the present site of the 14th green. These holes were changed to the present configuration of 13 being a dogleg par four and 14 a par three.

The Club managed to continue its operations through the “Great Depression” of the 1930’s. A significant event for the Club in 1936 was the recommendation of golf course architect A. W. Tillinghast to change the par four 9th hole. Mr. Tillinghast thought the hole was too short for a par four. Under his recommendation, the hole was shortened slightly by moving the green to its present location making it a par three.

Golf and limited social activities continued at the Club through the Second World War. Dues for SDGC members serving in the armed forces were suspended during this period. Food rationing impacted usage of the Club, but limited meals were served. There were also driving restrictions due to gasoline rationing. To



Transportation via Horse & Buggy

help members commuting to the Club by train, transportation between the course and the Wayne train station was provided by SDGC via horse and carriage that was driven by the locker room attendant. Dr. Fred Aldridge donated the carriage to the Club. In 1943, the Tredyffrin Country Club, located in Paoli, closed and many of its members joined St. Davids. This helped greatly as the SDGC membership had dropped to 120 members.

The financial situation at the Club was deteriorating and the Club was in arrears on its \$200,000 mortgage. Valley Forge Military Academy was rumored to be considering making a proposal to purchase the Club property. At this time, a group of young members including Bill McLear and George Brown, referred to as the “Young Turks,” orchestrated a plan to save the Club. George Brown, a banker, was sent to discuss the delinquent payments with the mortgage holder. He was able to negotiate a 2% reduction (6% to 4%) in the interest rate and forgiveness of all delinquent interest.

In 1949, St. Davids went through a recapitalization by calling in all the existing Certificates for \$10.00 each and reissuing them for \$200 each. This was prompted by a requirement of the lender that the mortgage be reduced from \$160,000 to \$125,000 by March 1, 1950. The recapitalization also generated an extra \$20,000 in cash for some necessary improvements. The plan worked and the Club entered the 1950’s in sound financial condition.



George McKenzie
"Mr. Mac"

The Club prospered and grew through the decade of the 1950's and into the 1960's. Two longtime employees of the Club passed away during this period. George McKenzie, Golf Course Superintendent for over 25 years retired in 1955 and died a year later. Tommy Robinson, Head Golf Professional died in 1959 after 45 years of service to the Club. In December 1959, Jimmy Johnson followed Robinson as the Head Professional. Jimmy was a fine player who competed in eight U.S. Opens and eight PGA Championships.

8 During the early 1950's, the Junior Program at St. Davids grew and thrived with as many as 60 juniors participating. The program was run by the Women's Golf Committee and had the support of the Board of Directors and professional staff. This program was regarded as one of the best in the Philadelphia area. Many of our juniors enjoyed success in competition including Judy Moulton who was twice runner-up in the WGAP Junior Girls' Championship, and played in the 1955 USGA Girls' Junior Championship. In 1956, Bobby Lindinger won both the GAP and the Pennsylvania Junior Championships along with qualifying for the USGA Junior Amateur Championship.



Jill Nesbitt

Other juniors who distinguished themselves included Jill Nesbitt who won the WGAP Junior Girls' Championship three times and Elizabeth Stanley who won it once. Brett Upper, another graduate of the Junior Program in the middle 1970's, went on to play in 154 events on the PGA Tour. In addition, former juniors Dave King, Mac Burns and Jay Howson would collectively go on to win 16 SDGC Club Championships. There are a number of current Club members who got their start in golf as St. Davids' juniors.



Charles Morris Young

For many years St. Davids has prominently displayed several paintings by longtime member Charles Morris Young. Mr. Young was still an active member of the Club when he died in 1964 at the age of 94. Young was recognized by the National Academy of Design in New York in 1956 when a painting by him of his SDGC foursome was placed on exhibit at the Academy.

In 1965, Victor Mauck was elected to the Board of Directors for the first time. This is significant as Victor was a member of the Board every year through 1996



*Victor Mauck, Jr.
President 25 Years*

except 1971 and 1972. He would serve the Club as President for 25 of those 30 years.

Peter Trenham was hired as our new Golf Professional in December of 1965, replacing Jimmy Johnson who had resigned. Pete was responsible for the development of Jill Nesbitt, Brett Upper and Jay Howson into successful tournament players. He played in a USGA Senior Open and a PGA Seniors' Championship along with winning the Philadelphia Section Senior Championship twice. Pete served as the Section PGA President and is a member of its Hall of Fame. He is now the historian for the Philadelphia PGA.

The early 1970's were a difficult time in American history due primarily to the Vietnam War. Private Clubs were unpopular and things were no different at St. Davids where, by 1973, the Club had 31 Certificates available.

9 By the mid-1980's under Mauck's leadership, St. Davids continued to operate in a fiscally sound manner and the Club had developed a waiting list of 20. Society was becoming more casual and Victor recognized that the Club needed to change with the times. He led the Board in developing a plan to add an addition to the clubhouse that included a casual dining room along with an enlarged and modernized kitchen. The new dining room (Terrace Room) was opened in 1987 for casual dining. It rapidly became very popular with the members.

In 1994 the Club engaged golf course architect Brian Silva to renovate the golf course. The renovation involved rebuilding all the bunkers on the course and adding some new bunkers, particularly on the left side of the third fairway and the right side of the seventh fairway. The fourth, sixth and 14th greens were re-built and a fourth set of tees was added creating the current green (forward) tees.

John Y. "Jay" Howson, Jr. was elected president in 1996, following Victor Mauck. Victor Mauck completed his 30th year as a member of the Club's Board of Directors. He was honored in September for his many years of service and subsequently made an Honorary Member of the Club. In January of that year the membership approved construction of an outdoor patio for dining. Construction started almost immediately and the patio, which opened on May 1, quickly became very popular.

That same year SDGC observed its Centennial. The Centennial Celebration was chaired by J. Paul Rowe and consisted of a number of events throughout the year. Highlights included a picnic on July 3, complete with fireworks and attended by over 800 members and guests. At the picnic a plaque bearing the names of the

founders was placed near the first tee commemorating the 100th Anniversary. The plaque was imbedded in soil that was transported from the site of the original nine-hole course on what had been the Fenimore property. On October 18th over 200 members attended a 100th Anniversary black tie dinner dance.



*SDGC Clubhouse
May 2005*

The Club thrived through the 1990's with a full membership and waiting list. In 2001, Jay Howson stepped down as President and Paul Rowe was elected President. Paul served as president for two years, during which time the Board recognized the need to do something with the clubhouse that was over 70 years old.

The idea of spending a large amount of money on the clubhouse was not embraced by the membership at large and while the plans were shelved, this initiative proved to be the catalyst for the Club's ensuing long-range plan.

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In 2003, Jay Howson returned to the Board and was elected President. The Board began working on a long-range plan to identify the needs of the Club. Attracting new members remained difficult. The lack of a full-shot practice range was clearly a liability in attracting new members along with the condition of the clubhouse and some needed work on the golf course. Golf Course Architect Ron Prichard, who specializes in restoring Donald Ross golf courses, was hired to develop a plan for a restoration of the golf course. In September of 2004, the Board presented to the membership for its approval a comprehensive plan consisting of four separate projects. These projects were: a new maintenance building; significant renovations

to the clubhouse; implementation of the golf course restoration plan and construction of a full-shot practice range.



*Full-shot Range (L)
Revised 17th and 18th Holes (R)*

Each of the projects was approved by the membership and construction started on the range the morning following the membership meeting. The practice range was conceived by

two members, Mike Dingus and Andy Sweeney, and designed by Ron Prichard. The plan involved replacing the par four 17th hole with a new par three and rerouting the 18th hole into a dogleg right down the old 17th fairway and into the existing, but modified 18th green. The full-shot practice range was then built on the former 18th fairway. Chipping and putting greens along with a practice bunker were part of the final product.

Construction on the new maintenance building got underway and the building was completed in March of 2005. In the meantime, the clubhouse restoration ran into problems when the bids exceeded the amount the membership had approved. At a membership meeting in December 2004 the Board announced it was committed to improving the clubhouse, but it was going to reconsider the plan because of its higher than anticipated cost. The Board informed the membership it would report its recommendations for the clubhouse to them after the Annual Meeting four months hence.

Following the Annual Meeting in March of 2005, the Board presented a plan to tear down the existing building and build a new one at a cost of \$6,500,000. The Board informed the members that the new clubhouse would try to capture the informal nature and farmhouse appearance of the present facility. The reaction from the members who were present was very favorable. The members were informed that a presentation would be made around Labor Day with the bidding process completed and a builder selected, at which time the members would either approve or reject the plan. They were also informed that there would be periodic meetings to review the plans and get member input. The final plan was approved by an 84% favorable vote and one month later razing of the old clubhouse began.

The membership and staff of St. Davids were integral in the completion and success of the major projects, the building of the membership and the transformation of the Club. Over 100 of our members were involved in various phases of these efforts in a tireless and unselfish way and many of our staff members gave us the support to insure our success.

The new clubhouse was completed in less than 14 months and opened on November 19, 2006 with over 500 members attending a grand opening cocktail party. The enthusiasm displayed by the members for the new clubhouse was very gratifying to the many members who contributed to the final product. Jay Howson announced he was stepping down as President as of December 31, 2006.

Dan Aboyan, serving in his eighth year on the Board, was then elected President. Restoration of the golf course, which had been put on hold during the clubhouse construction period, was restarted in 2008. The restoration of holes four through eight was completed and the remainder of the plan will be implemented over time.

The new clubhouse and practice facilities have clearly had a major impact on membership growth, positioning the Club for the future. Well into its second century SDGC is blessed with a challenging Donald Ross golf course and our very capable management staff, which includes: Michael Butler, Clubhouse Manager since 2006; Henry Wetzel, Golf Course Superintendent for over 30 years and Stephen Wright, Head Golf Professional since 2001.



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New Clubhouse 2007

March 2009

HISTORICAL COMMITTEE:

Peter C. Trenham, *Club Historian*

Daniel Aboyan

John Y. Howson, Jr.

J. Paul Rowe

F. Harry Spiess, Jr.

Chris Albany, *Design Coordinator*

St. Davids Golf Club – Presidents

1897	William Wood	1957	Thomas “Tom” J. Skillman
1898	Frank D. Weckerly	1958	Charles “Chick” H. Kendrick, Jr.
1899-1902	Dr. G. L. S. (George Lee Street) Jameson	1959	Eugene “Gene” Clinton Swift
1903	Dr. John T. Carpenter	1960	Alfred “Al” A. S. Whittaker
1904-1905	Lewis Neilson	1961	Fronefield Crawford
1906-1907	Dr. G. L. S. (George Lee Street) Jameson	1962	Frank R. Lockhart
1908-1909	A. F. (Abram Francis) Huston	1963	John B. Yerkes
1910-1913	T. T. (Thomas Theodore) Watson	1964	Jackson A. “Jack” Woodruff
1914-1920	W. (William) Heyward Myers	1965	Donald D. “Don” Nesbitt
1921-1928	James M. Willcox	1966	Dr. John Reichel, Jr.
1929	Charles W. Bayliss	1967	Victor Mauck, Jr.
1930-1936	Daniel Miller Sheaffer	1968	Britton “Britt” H. Miller
1937-1939	Henry H. Ziesing	1969	Ralph F. Moss, Jr.
1940	Frederick S. “Fred” Metzler	1970	Victor Mauck, Jr.
1941-1943	Archie Dean Swift	1971	John Alden Tiff
1944-1946	William Ziegler “Bill” McLear	1972	Bruce S. Parkinson
1947-1948	Edward “Ed” A. Chasteney, Jr.	1973-1995	Victor Mauck, Jr.
1949	Warren H. Bodham	1996-2000	John “Jay” Yeatts Howson, Jr.
1950-1951	Dr. John “Jay” Yeatts Howson	2001-2002	J. Paul Rowe
1952	Vernon S. Mollenauer	2003-2006	John “Jay” Yeatts Howson, Jr.
1953-1954	Daniel “Dan” H. Krick	2007-	Daniel “Dan” Aboyan
1955	George H. Brown, Jr.		
1956	T. (Thomas) Seddon “Sed” Duke		