

## For the Building Committee of THE COUNTRY CLUB

### Born from a Barn in the Catskills

By CHARLES N. WHEATON

A PRETTY little valley in Ulster County in the Catskill Mountains was discovered long, long ago by artists and writers and others who loved nature. Mme. Amelita Galli-Curci was one of the active leaders who found true pleasure in the great outdoors. The Esopus River, winding through the playground of this group of nature-lovers yielded more than the average number of speckled beauties, while inquisitive inhabitants of the surrounding woods—from deer to bear—peered from their shaded retreats, but more was wanted. The twenty thousand or more acres owned by the group was as wild as could be found in any section of the far-off Rockies—even though it was but a few hours from the great Metropolis by motor.

A few golf germs were wafted from the 250 odd clubs in the Metropolitan District and infected the happy group in their mountain retreat. Rocky terrain and mountain sides offer few inducements for a golf course, but when the little bug

starts to work, rocks and hills seem easy to conquer—if the right spirit is there. Well, anyway, it was decided that to complete the charm and happiness of the enchanted spot—filled with history of Dutch sturdiness and ghostly dwarfs of mountainside mythology—a golf course was necessary. When it was discovered that this feeling was unanimous, action began. The first move was to form a club. Then a substantial acreage was acquired through the members. Substantial, I say, because 700 acres is substantial—n'est-ce pas? Right in the heart of this acreage was a nice farm and a well-built barn. The club was formed as the Rip Van Winkle Club of Shandaken. The Shandaken came from the place where letters are addressed to members, as Shandaken, N. Y., is the nearest place where mail is received—even the trout know that and send scouts down to see who has received flies and lures. But this is about golf, not trout.

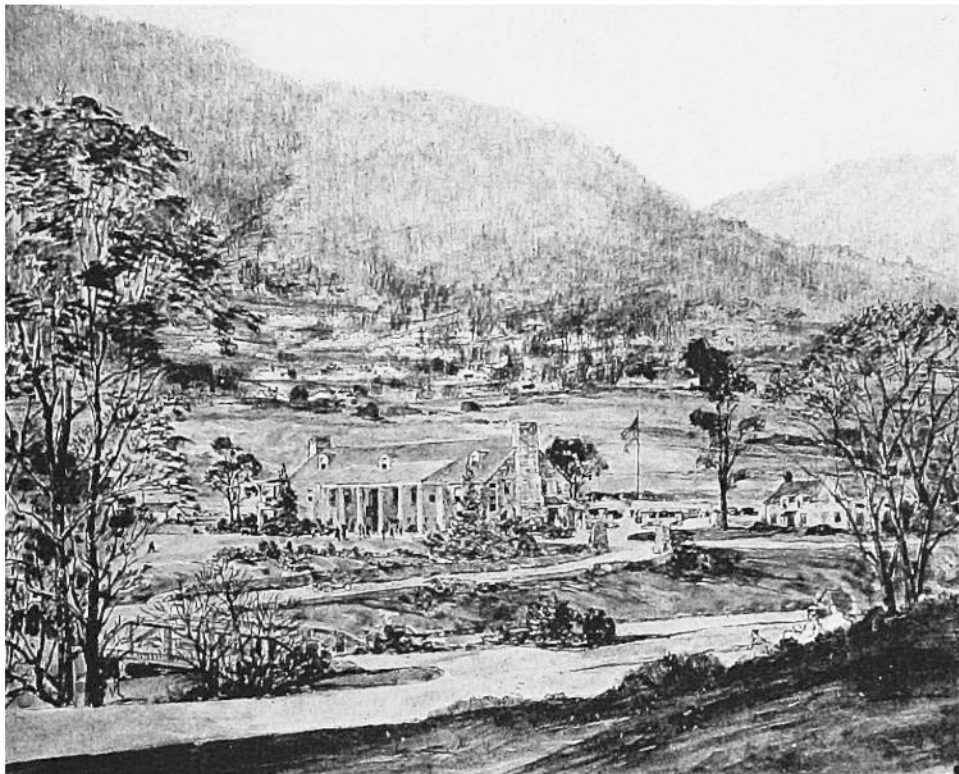
As mentioned before, a goad barn set in the center of a farm. As everyone wanted a golf course, the idea was to change the regular rills of the mountain farm into nice smooth lawn where a golf ball would stand out in the fairway like a diamond in a high old-fashioned setting—sort of teed up, as it were. The artistic element of the membership

felt that the barn wasn't just the thing for a regular golf club, so some thought was given to that.

Wm. T. L. Armstrong, a member, happened to be a New York architect, and he was drafted and asked what about the barn. He looked it over and soon changed the simple Dutch lines into an attractive club house, sketched a curling road up to the entrance, glorified a steel bridge with the aid of large stones that were abundant, with the aid of farm hands from the neighborhood eager to lend a hand at fifty cents an hour. Meanwhile, Lawrence Weber, who has had some experience as a golf course architect, was busy carefully

changing the farm lands into a golf course. Thus golf was born in the quiet old section where few deeds have been recorded since 1702 when Johannes Hardenburgh made a petition to buy "a small tract of vacant land in the County of Ulster," which in 1709 resulted, in an immense and historic grant from the English crown, and the town of Shandaken was born. These mountain acres were later fought for by Indian, Hollander, French, Huguenot, Englishman, Scotchman, and Irishman—and now the spirit of Rip Van Winkle roams the hills.

But, to again return to the subject as this is not a historical sketch, but the story of the birth—under extremely economical conditions—of a fine golf club, I'll try to make the real story as brief and sane as my enthusiasm on the subject will permit. The salient feature of interest to Building Committees is that a golf club was desired under not entirely (Continued on page 66)



THE RIP VAN WINKLE CLUB HOUSE THAT WAS A BARN

Nestled in Catskill Mountains at Shandaken, N. Y., is a quaint golf club that not so long ago was a farm. The club house was the barn on the farm. An architect member, Wm. T. L. Armstrong conceived the transformation



THE FIRST FOURSOME AT SHANDAKEN  
VanDyke MacBride, Vice-president and Charge of Finance; Mme. Amelita Calli-Curci and Mrs. Louis King Hyde, Vice-presidents; Charles N. Wheaton, President

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perfect conditions. The land was given by William E. Risley under extremely favorable conditions, allowing it to be paid for three years later. Every member put his shoulders to the wheel and contributed his service—chiefly professional—without any thought of recompense outside of anticipated pleasure. The course architect became general manager of the club, for which service payment was made. Farm hands who knew soil and its products were engaged at an average cost of fifty cents an hour, and they became as interested in the ultimate result as any of the members. Officers and members alternated in supervising the work, and actually, before we really realized it, nine dandy holes—real good golf—were ready for play on July Fourth, last, when the owners of estates and residents of the mountainside gathered to see Mme. Galli-Curci drive the first ball. Scores of men whose names are more or less nationally known for artistic and other accomplishments are now among its members. From the opening day the Rip Van Winkle course seems to have gathered fame, and many motors loaded with golfers have found the way to our little course in the mountains. Residences built of stone and of pleasing architectural simplicity are springing up on the mountainside surrounding the course, the membership is about complete, and everyone is happy enjoying the grand old game. That's all there is to it. It would not add to the happiness of those who have paid exorbitant entrance fees and large annual dues to know the extremely low cost of our experiment, but, it might be noted that though less than the usual initiation fee, each member is a part owner of the course. This, at least, furnishes food for thought.

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