



Top of the Hill Newsletter

Summer 2024

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<https://www.topofthehillnewport.org/resources>

President's Letter by Laurie Love

Dear Friends and Neighbors,

Newport in summer – what a wonderful place to be! I hope everyone has been enjoying a few of the TOH summer events, including the fantastic Summer Garden Party in June. A very big thank you to Anne Marie Biernacki - Smith and her husband Ken Smith for kindly hosting and to Susan Kelleher who made this year's event the best ever – with lobster rolls and all!!

I also hope that those who attended the Annual Forum in May with Xay and Charlie found it worthwhile. Community engagement is so important, especially in light of the many fiscal issues facing the city. Our aim, in addition to the social and cultural aspects of the association is to work with other groups interested in the betterment of Newport. To that end, I've also been in touch with the Point Association who has the same charter. As the two largest neighborhood associations, we are discussing some potential joint events for next year. Please let us know what topics are of greatest importance to you.

As this is an election year and we have new leadership at City Hall, our initial civic focus is on hearing from the Ward 2 city council candidates and meeting with our new City Manager, Colin Kennedy – so stay tuned for those Fall civic events. Harry Elkin is leading the charge as he did with the Annual Forum – thank you Harry!

This is an exciting time as we are approaching our association's 40th anniversary year which begins with our new fiscal year on 1 October. This is a wonderful milestone and one which we will celebrate throughout the coming year. Thanks to all who taken leadership roles over the last four decades!

We are planning our annual meeting in the late September/early October timeframe to kick off the new fiscal year. The strength of the association is only as strong as it's member's contributions so please consider volunteering your time and taking a turn on the Board. We have four board meetings a year and are actively seeking several new members to help lead. It's fun and a nice way to support your community.

As the Summer Olympics are taking place in Paris, I thought it would be timely and fun to include a brief piece on some popular and famous Newport summer sports. Newport is widely known for "les sports elegants" – as the home of polo, America's Cup yachting champions, the US Tennis Championships and US Open Golf Championships. We have so much wonderful sporting history in our little city as well as present-day enjoyment. And let's not forget to mention the Sailing Museum & National Sailing Hall of Fame and the International Tennis Hall of Fame and Museum – c'est fantastique!

Thanks to all who have already renewed your annual membership – much appreciated. As always, I hope you enjoy the newsletter and encourage everyone to please let us know what activities and interactions you would like to see Top of the Hill offer our wonderful members in the coming year.

Happy Summer!
Laurie

Community Corner by Harry Elkin

Now that our new City Manager, Colin Kennedy, is onboard, he started July 15th, we are putting together plans for a forum to introduce him to our members. I am in discussions with Mayor Xay to be involved and am currently looking at sometime around the middle of September. That will give Colin several months on the job to be able to share with us his initial assessments and what he sees as priorities going forward.

As soon as we get a specific date, we will let you know and, as always, I'll be interested in questions and issues that you would want to be sure to have covered. As a matter of fact, if you have any initial thoughts on this, please feel free to send them to me at elkinh@cox.net.

Harry Elkin
Community Committee

Gardening Corner by Claire O'Donnely

Summer Gardening

I hope you are all having a wonderful summer! What can I say about this summer in the garden? Hasn't it been quite spectacular? I don't think I have ever before seen such a dazzling array of flowers here in Newport. The Hydrangeas were absolutely stunning. Everywhere I walked I was greeted with a most spectacular display of large blooms in too many hues to list. I saw colors in my own garden and the garden of others that I have never seen before. Similarly, the Lillies both day Lillies and asiatic Lillies have also produced a stunning display. Whatever Mother Nature did this year was definitely the perfect combination of conditions to set Newport abloom!

I worry as many do about climate changes and what it will mean for the gardens here in Newport. However, if this is a taste of what is to come, I think that the flowers would definitely be a consolation to me for all the rain. Of course, with flowers comes staking and dead heading! My asiatic Lillies being so tall and heavy with blooms have required staking to support them. I also have tried to cut off any spent flowers mostly just to make the plants look better as the number or profusion of blooms will not change by doing so. On the other hand, dead heading of annuals usually results in better blooms. Same with roses. So it can definitely be worth it for those plants.

I kept my edible garden to a minimum this year due to the arrival of my second grandchild. To the raspberries and asparagus that grow annually I added tomatoes, cherry tomatoes and Basil. The staples basically! I must have my caprese salads and bruschetta! I wanted to introduce my grandson to the joy of home-grown veggies. Like many male children I have known, he is not the biggest fan of vegetables. I theorized that if he picked them himself, he would eat them! To his credit he did try everything he picked but they were still summarily rejected! Maybe next year! He does love the flowers however and would pick them all if I would let him! Too bad they are not edible!

As it gets warmer you may have to turn to watering of your grass and plants. As I have said before try to water early in the morning and give your plants a long deep soak to encourage root growth that will stand up to drought better. Determine a routine of watering based on how dry the soil is around the

plant and try to stick to it. Watering the plant haphazardly is almost as detrimental as not watering at all as it can drown the plant and fill all the air pockets in the soil depriving the plant of essential oxygen. Going forward you might want to consider soaker hoses which make the job of watering so much easier. Of course, the best advice I can give any of you gardeners out there is to enjoy your garden and spend as much time out there as possible. With SPF and large floppy hats of course! If tasks in your garden have become too time consuming for you to actually enjoy your garden, take some time in the upcoming fall to reconsider what you have chosen to grow and make a plan for next year that will balance gardening with enjoying the garden. Happy gardening everyone! Claire

Newport Sport History – Polo, Sailing, Tennis and Golf

Newport: The Cradle of “les sports elegants”

POLO

In the spring of 1876, James Gordon Bennett, the publisher of the New York Herald, hosted a special dinner party at his New York estate. His carefully selected guests were a dozen gentlemen who were members of the sporting set most likely to be attracted to the “new” game of polo.

A railcar loaded with Texas ranch horses was delivered by the meal’s end, whereupon the gentlemen tried their hands at polo. Immediately addicted, they embraced the sport and made it a part of their annual summer retreat in Newport, Rhode Island that summer.

The gentlemen, who predominantly hailed from Westchester County, NY, formed a club, and proceeded to establish playing fields for practices, near their summer ‘cottages’ on Bellevue Avenue. The Westchester Polo Club, based in Newport, became the first polo club in the United States. The game caught the imagination of the buccaneering class of the Gilded Age in America, and during the following years, other clubs were founded up and down the East Coast.

Ten years after the club's founding, Bennett and the Westchester Polo Club challenged those same English army officers who introduced him to the sport, with a somewhat casual remark at a dinner party in West London, to compete in the world's first international polo match. The idea was well received, in an era of increasing friendship between the US and England, with growing transatlantic trade, travel and intermarriage, and amity between the two great English-speaking nations. This event became one of the first international sporting events in modern history, predating the resurrection of the Olympic games.



The historic tournament in 1886, known as the Westchester Cup, was held at Newport, and the worldwide spotlight earned the City by the Sea a reputation as a destination for international polo and recreation. The International Polo Cup or the International Polo Challenge Cup, as the tournament was called in its infancy, was one of the earliest international sporting events. Only the America's Cup yachting tradition had an older pedigree by a few years, and was succeeded by the Davis Cup and the Ryder Cup eventually, also examples of cordial Anglo-American athletic interaction.

The inaugural tournament of the International Polo Cup took place at the Westchester Polo Club in Newport, RI in August, 1886. Newport was the cradle of 'les sports elegants' - as the home of polo, America's Cup yachting champions, the US Open Tennis Championships and US Open Golf Championships and as well.

A trophy cup cast from 396.3 ounces of sterling silver was designed by Tiffany & Co., to stand eternal. The matches generated tremendous excitement in this tiny summer colony for America's wealthy, and attracted large crowds to the polo grounds. In the best-of-3 match format, the English team handily won in two straight matches, 10-4 and 14-2.

While the inaugural tournament basically resulted in a teaching clinic on the sport of polo by the superior English squad, it was nevertheless deemed to have been successful in helping to popularize the game further, as well as set the social standard that was to become the hallmark for all the subsequent Westchester Cup encounters over the ensuing years. As the *London Field* dryly remarked at the time: Hospitality of the most lavish description was extended to the English polo players, and the bijou palaces (the 'cottages') were open day and night to their transatlantic visitors.

The famous tournament has been contested 15 times over its 125-year history. It was not until the second rematch that the Americans finally managed to win the cup on foreign

soil and have won it a total of 10 times. The 125th Westchester Jubilee in Newport in 2011 celebrates the origin of this most famous polo rivalry in the history of the sport, and will set in motion the excitement & anticipation of its next contest in the not-so-distant future.

Newport maintained its esteem as the international polo capital of the world for nearly 40 years, until the outbreak of WWI, the Great Depression, and the income tax all took their toll and ended the era of opulence and international polo in Newport.

In 1992, James Gordon Bennett's legacy was resurrected. The Newport International Polo Series is much larger in scale than Bennett's original conception but remains within the same fraternal tradition. Each season the Newport International Polo Series attracts teams from the world's six continents. Notables such as actress Stefanie Powers and Major Ronald Ferguson, father of the Duchess of York Sarah Ferguson, have graced our field. The Polo Series features top-level amateur players from around the world. USA's squad has included two world champions, John Wigdahl and Charlie Bostwick, members of the only US team to win the World Championships (1989). Visitors have included Francisco Lanusse, world champion Argentine player, Patrick Guerrand-Hermes, former FIP president and his son Mattias, European champion, the families Domeqc and Mora from Soto Grande, and many other noteworthy players of world championship caliber. The Newport International Polo Series is the only forum in the world dedicated primarily to international polo competition.

The Newport Polo Club remains registered with the United States Polo Association under the historic Westchester name. Its outdoor polo season and public exhibition matches take place at Glen Farm, a site whose heritage dates back over 370 years!

America's Cup Yachting

The Sailing Capital of the World – Newport has a longstanding sailing history that is evident everywhere in the “City-by-the-Sea” from the many Colonial sea captains’ homes that line the streets of Newport’s downtown, to the busy Newport Harbor that is a destination and home port, to some of the most renowned sailing and motor yachts in the world. Newport even has a busy downtown street, America’s Cup Avenue, dedicated to the most famous sailing race! Since its founding in 1639, Newporters have taken advantage of their city’s seaside location by using sailing for trade, pleasure, sport and business.

In the 18th century, Newport became a worldwide, maritime, trading center. Newport, along with Boston, New York, Philadelphia, and Charleston, emerged as one of the five leading ports in colonial North America. Economic growth created by maritime trade generated an expansion of Newport’s harbor and downtown. Over 150 wharves were built and sailing, cargo ships crowded Newport Harbor. Many of Newport’s famous landmarks were built during this time, including Trinity Church, the Redwood Library and The Brick Market.

In the 19th century the United States Navy officially sailed into Newport and became a major part of Newport's economy. During the Civil War the US Naval Academy was temporarily moved to Newport. The USS Constitution and The America, the first America's Cup winner, were sailing in Newport and were used for midshipmen training while the US Naval Academy was located in Newport.

After the Civil War the Naval Academy was moved back to Annapolis, but the Navy was here to stay in Newport. During this time, the first naval laboratory for torpedo testing was built in Newport Harbor on Goat Island; the Naval Training Station and Naval War College were also established in Newport, RI. Later, Newport and Narragansett Bay were used as a major port for US Navy ships. At one time more than a quarter of the US Navy's Atlantic Fleet was stationed in Newport, Rhode Island. Today, although Newport is not a home port to the Navy's ships, there is a retired aircraft carrier at the base. With the Naval War College and other training facilities still in Newport, the Navy continues to be an important part of Newport's economy.

Later in the 19th century, Newport Harbor went from being a maritime trading center to a sailing playground for the rich and famous. During this time many of America's most influential businessmen, with names like Vanderbilt, Astor, Belmont and Berwind, built summer homes in Newport, Rhode Island. With this influx of wealth into Newport, Newport Harbor became a major yachting destination. The Vanderbilts, the Astors, the Manvilles, J.P. Morgan and many more all brought their luxurious sailing yachts to Newport, Rhode Island. In 1883 Newport came into the sailing spotlight when the New York Yacht Club held its first annual regatta in Newport. Newport was also added as a stop on the NYYC Annual Cruise from New York to New England. As the interest in Newport sailing grew, two local yacht clubs were formed – the Newport Yacht Club in 1893 and the Ida Lewis Yacht Club in 1928. The New York Yacht Club also officially came to Newport and formed station #9, a Newport clubhouse, for their yachting events. The Newport, NYYC clubhouse has been the center of an impressive number of international sailing events, including America's Cup sailing defenses, the Annapolis to Newport race, and the World Championships of the One Ton Ocean Racers from around the world.

For over fifty years of the 20th century, the most coveted sailing race in the world was held in Newport – the America's Cup. Since the first America's Cup defense in 1870, the New York Yacht Club held the America's Cup races in New York. However, in the 1930's, after an increased interest in the "City-by-the-Sea's" sailing, the New York Yacht Club brought the America's Cup sailing races to a new venue – Newport, Rhode Island. During the 1930's the spectacular J-Boats raced for the America's Cup. At over 100 feet long and with a crew of over 20 men, the building and sailing of these yachts was a very expensive endeavor. Some of Newport's most wealthy summertime residents were very active in America's Cup sailing including Harold Vanderbilt who funded campaigns and sailed in the 1930, 1934, and 1937 America's Cup in Newport, Rhode Island.



The America's Cup – the most famous sailboat race!

America's Race:

Competition for the America's Cup, the oldest and one of the most prestigious sporting trophies in the world, began in England in 1851. The newly founded New York Yacht Club was challenged by the Royal Yacht Squadron, then the most prestigious yacht club in the world, to take part in The Solent Races, sailing races that took place on the body of water between the Isle of Wight and Great Britain. Answering this challenge, the New York Yacht Club assembled a team to cross the Atlantic and race with their contender, the yacht **America**. The schooner **America** was designed and built by George Steers in 1850 at the urging of the New York Yacht Club to build a fast sailboat.

Of all the races held on The Solent, the Royal Yacht Squadron decided that **America** was only eligible for the "All Nations Race", a 74 mile race around the Isle of Wight starting and ending in Cowes. The prize for the winner of this race was the 100 Guineas Cup, an award commemorating Queen Victoria's Jubilee year.

When the starting gun was fired at ten in the morning on August 22, 1851, the **America** was the last over the starting line. However, in the end the speedy **America** stunned the British fleet and crossed the finish line 19 minutes ahead of all 15 of her British competitors thus winning the 100 Guineas Cup. The schooner **America** brought its prize across the Atlantic, and the New York Yacht Club renamed it "The America's Cup" after the winning boat.

The America's Cup in Newport, Rhode Island:

In 1930, J boats raced in the first America's Cup races that were held in Newport, RI. During this era the races were held at the mouth of Narragansett Bay off Breton Reef in the Atlantic Ocean. From 1930 to 1937, the America's Cup course was 30 miles long. In 1958, when the era of the 12 Meters began the course was shortened to just over 24 miles. For over 50 years Newport proved to be a perfect venue for the America's Cup because of its light and predictable winds and small volume of commercial traffic.

The America's Cup Deed of Gift:

On July 8, 1857, the members of the original **America** race syndicate, the first team to win the America's Cup, wrote a letter, known as The Deed of Gift, to the secretary of the New York Yacht Club. This letter was written to formalize the rules of future America's Cup racing. Originally it stated that the America's Cup would be held as a permanent challenge trophy that would be open to competition from any foreign yacht club. It also stated that the races would be held on the waters of the yacht club in possession of the America's Cup and all competitors had to sail to the race destination on their own bottoms. In other words, the boats could not be disassembled and shipped to the spot where the America's Cup races were to occur.

Subsequent changes were made to the Deed of Gift changing the racing rules of the America's Cup. Because of the original rule that stated that all competitors had to sail to the race destination on their own bottoms, America's Cup racing boats had to be large vessels that were capable of crossing the Atlantic Ocean. It took massive amounts of money to maintain and crew the large cutters of the 1880's-1920's and the J Class boats of the 1930's. After World War II, the vast fortunes needed to finance these huge boats had largely vanished on both sides of the Atlantic. Both the British and the Americans were looking to choose an alternative to the large expensive pre-war yachts of previous America's Cup races. In 1956 the New York Yacht Club, trustee of the America's Cup, petitioned the Court of New York State to modify the Deed of Gift. In doing so, they cancelled the clause that obligated America's Cup challengers to cross the ocean in the boat they intended to race. Enter the era of the 12 Metre Class, smaller, more manageable racers, in America's Cup racing.

The 12 Meters:

In 1958, after a twenty-one year halt of America's Cup competition, racing continued with a new class of racers, 12 Meters. During this era of the America's Cup, American syndicates continued to win the America's Cup with the wooden 12 Meters, **Columbia**, **Weatherly**, **Constellation** and **Intrepid** twice. In 1974, aluminum 12 Meters began racing in the America's Cup and the American team subsequently won the America's Cup with **Courageous** twice and **Freedom**.

The End of the American Streak:

During the 19th and 20th centuries American yachts and sailors dominated and successfully defended the America's Cup 24 times and created what is still today the longest winning streak in the history of organized sports. However, on the waters off Newport, Rhode Island in 1983, the Royal Perth Yacht Club's challenger, **Australia II** (12 Meter KA-6), devastated the New York Yacht Club's defender **Liberty** (12 Meter US-40), skippered by Dennis Conner, by winning the America's Cup and ending the New York Yacht Club's 132 year winning streak.

Although this defeat was devastating to the United States and the New York Yacht Club it would not be the last time that Dennis Conner would race in the America's Cup. Four years later in 1987, the world saw the largest group of 12 Meters in the history of the America's Cup. Over twenty-five of the multimillion dollar 12 Meter racing machines were designed and built to compete in the America's Cup trials. Conner, then already a two time winner of the America's Cup but more famous for being the only American sailor to ever lose the America's Cup, staged a remarkable comeback winning the America's Cup under the San Diego Yacht Club with his **Stars & Stripes '87** (12 Meter US 55). Conner demolished the Australian defender **Kookaburra III** (12 Meter KA-15), winning the America's Cup finals seven race series 4-0 and, therefore, reproving his racing capabilities to the world. This marked the last America's Cup in which the graceful twelve meter yachts would sail.

The Infamous Catamaran Defense:

The San Diego Yacht Club defended the America's Cup three times after Conner's 1987 win before losing it to the Royal New Zealand Yacht Squadron in 1995. In 1988, one of the most famous America's Cup competitions took place off the waters of San Diego, California. An America's Cup that would, unfortunately, begin and end in the court room instead of on the race course. Striking back to the New Zealand challenger, the 133 foot ***New Zealand*** (KZ-1), Conner and the American team designed a catamaran, ***Stars & Stripes '88*** (USA-1), to defend the 1988 America's Cup. ***Stars & Stripes '88*** swept the three race series but the race committee decided that a catamaran was not eligible to race in the America's Cup. Conner and the Americans protested and the first America's Cup defense by the San Diego Yacht Club, was finally settled in the courtroom long after racing had ended, declaring the catamaran, ***Stars & Stripes '88***, the winner of the 1988 America's Cup but subsequently tarnishing the image of the America's Cup.

America's Cup Racing Today:

In 1992, after the end of the 12 Meter era and the debacle of the 1988 America's Cup, the Deed of Gift was again modified and the International America's Cup Class of yachts, IACC boats, was introduced as the new America's Cup racers. The IACC boats are longer, lighter and have about twice as much sail area than the previous America's Cup 12 Meter racers. This is the class of boats that currently races in the America's Cup.

Today the America's Cup remains the premier challenge of yachtsmen. The best of the best in sailing from around the world have battled to gain what has become the greatest prize in yachting. While the America's Cup prize, a solid silver trophy standing twenty-seven inches tall, is magnificent in its own right, there is no cash prize awarded to the winner of the America's Cup. However, racing teams spend tens of millions of dollars to either defend or challenge for the America's Cup and prove their technological supremacy in yacht racing. The only prize for the multi-million dollar syndicate that wins the America's Cup is fame and, of course, the glory of bringing the America's Cup and the next races to their country and their names engraved on the perpetual Auld Mug!

US Tennis Championships

THE NEWPORT CASINO – HISTORIC GROUNDS

The International Tennis Hall of Fame is set in The Newport Casino, a National Historic Landmark that was first opened on July 26, 1880 as a social club for Newport's turn of the century summer elite.

Watch the virtual tour to experience the historic grounds of the International Tennis Hall of Fame and learn more about the history of tennis at the Newport Casino.

Despite what its name implies, the Newport Casino is not, and never was, a gambling facility. However, the beautiful property's history does have its roots in a story about a bet. The setting was Newport, Rhode Island, August 1879. Per legend, James Gordon Bennett, Jr., the influential publisher of the *New York Herald* and a summer resident of Newport, reputedly bet his polo partner, Captain Henry Augustus Candy, a retired officer of the Queen's 9th Royal Lancers and skillful British polo player to ride his horse onto the front porch of the exclusive gentlemen's-only club, the Newport Reading Room.

Candy took the dare one step further and rode straight through the clubrooms, disturbing members. After Candy's guest membership was revoked, Bennett purchased the land across the street from his home, Stone Villa, and sought to build his own social club.

In reality, Bennett already had plans in 1878 to create a social gathering place. Nonetheless, by October 1879, Bennett had purchased land on Bellevue Avenue opposite his summer home Stone Villa and had decided on his preferred architectural firm. The Newport Casino opened in the summer of 1880 and quickly emerged as the center of Newport's social society.



Bennett commissioned the newly-formed architectural firm of McKim, Mead & White to build a social club with both private and public areas. McKim, Mead & White was a premier architectural firm of the late 19th and early 20th centuries, and the Newport Casino was one of the firm's earliest projects. The name, Newport Casino, was never meant to refer to gaming and gambling, as the word *casino* traces its origins to the Italian word *casa* and refers to a small country villa, summerhouse or social club.

The structure combines shingle, stone, and brick to evoke an English design. The horizontal façade on Bellevue Avenue included storefronts and a restaurant on the ground floor, with club rooms, reading rooms, and billiards on the second and third floors. Gables, tall chimneys, small windows, and open-air porches complete the building's architectural aesthetic. The grounds were designed to include a theatre, court tennis facility, bowling alley, and lawn tennis courts. Designated a National Historic Landmark in 1987, the Newport Casino represents one of the finest examples of American Shingle Style architecture.



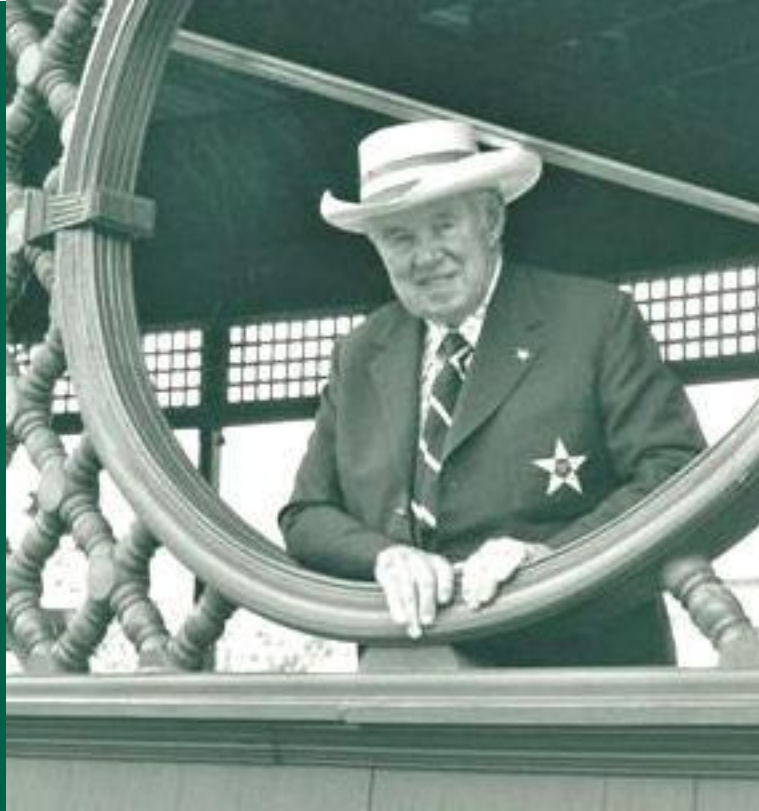
The Newport casino complex was built in only six months. On July 26th, 1880, a soft opening was held with guest admittance by invitation only. One week later, on August 2nd, the public was invited to inspect the premises and more than 3,000 attended. The Newport casino offered a block of shops on Bellevue Avenue, a restaurant and gentlemen's lodging. Archery, billiards, concerts, dancing, dining, horse shows, lawn bowling, reading, tea parties and theatricals, along with the staples of its present-day offerings of lawn tennis, croquet, and court tennis, were all part of the social scene. Writing three days after the opening, the Newport news boasted, "it is doubtful if a more lively place can be found."



Tennis in Newport

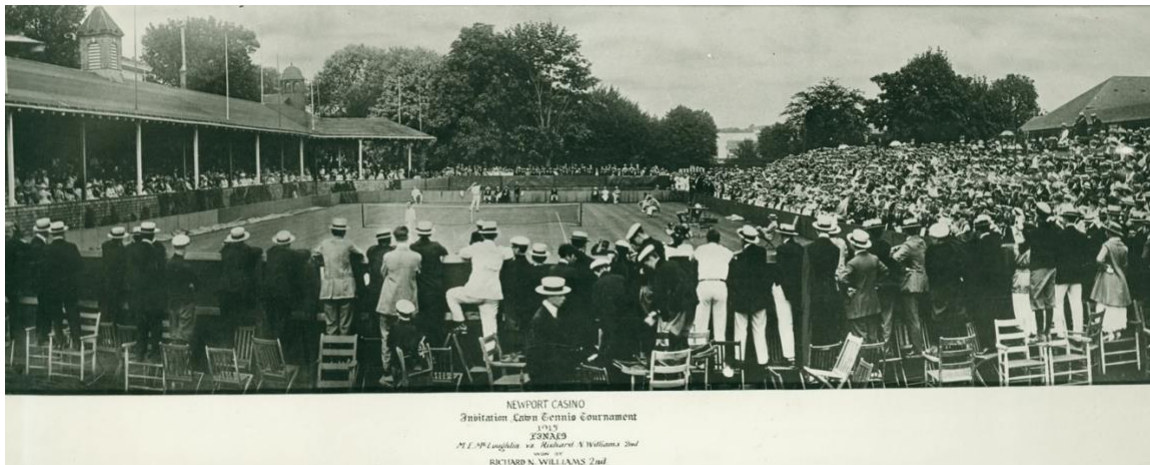
On August 31, 1881, the first U.S. National Men's Singles Championship was contested at the Casino, among a field consisting of 25 participants, accompanied by a string quartet.

Founding of the International Tennis Hall of Fame



Following a visit to the National Baseball Hall of Fame in the early 1950s, Jimmy Van Alen, then-President of the Newport Casino, and his wife Candy, decided that tennis also needed a place to honor its great figures. The Newport Casino was in danger of demolition, and with its rich tennis history, it was the perfect spot to establish a hall of fame. Jimmy Van Alen successfully lobbied the leadership of the United States Lawn Tennis Association to sanction the establishment of a National Tennis Hall of Fame in Newport. The venerable Newport Casino became the National Lawn Tennis Hall of Fame and Museum and was officially recognized by the International Tennis Federation in 1986.

TOURNAMENT HISTORY



THE NEWPORT CASINO

The International Tennis Hall of Fame and its historic grass courts are located in the Newport Casino, a National Historic Landmark property. The stunning 7-acre property was constructed in 1880. Commissioned by New York Herald publisher James Gordon Bennett, the grand venue initially served as a social club for the elite summer residents of Newport. Three days after it opened in July 1880, the Newport News boasted, “It is doubtful if a livelier place can be found.”

The name of the property is not indicative of gambling. “Casino” is derived from the Italian word, la casina or “little house.” The Newport Casino was designed by the architectural firm of McKim, Mead & White and is one of the finest examples of American Shingle Style Architecture.

In recognition of its social, sporting, and architectural significance in American history, the Newport Casino was designated a National Historic Landmark in 1987.



TENNIS IN NEWPORT – AND IN AMERICA!

The history of tennis in Newport is synonymous with tennis in America. On August 31, 1881, the first U.S. National Lawn Tennis Championship was contested at the Newport Casino, among a field consisting of 25 participants, and accompanied by a string quartet. Bostonian Dick Sears emerged as the country’s first champion, going on to win the first seven championships (1881-1887) before retiring undefeated.

By 1914, the event had outgrown Newport, and relocated to New York City. Today, it is known as the US Open. The perpetual US Open trophies are displayed in the museum in Newport—be sure to take a peek when you’re at the tournament.

Newport has witnessed each new generation of tennis stars from 1881 to the present. After the U.S. Nationals relocated to New York, the world’s foremost players continued to play in Newport through various significant events.

From 1915 to 1967, the Casino Invitational hosted the world's premier players. The list of tennis stars that played and won at Newport reads like a who's who in tennis- "Big" Bill Tilden, "Little" Bill Johnston, Ellsworth Vines, Frank Shields, Wilmer Allison, Don Budge, Bobby Riggs, Don McNeil, Gardner Mulloy, Ted Schroeder, Bill Talbert, Pancho Gonzales, Frank Sedgman, Tony Trabert, Ken Rosewall, Mal Anderson, Rod Laver, Chuck McKinley, Roy Emerson, and Dennis Ralston.

The VASSS Pro Tennis Championships lasted from 1965 to 1970 and in 1971, professional women's tennis finally came to Newport with the Professional Women's Singles and the Professional Women Doubles from 1971-74. Standing room only crowds watched Kerry Melville, Margaret Court, Billie Jean King, Chris Evert, and Françoise Dürr play exceptional tennis. The Virginia Slims of Newport returned from 1983-1990, and from 1991-1998 it was known as the Virginia Slims of Newport Invitation.

In 1976, the Hall of Fame Tennis Championships, a stop on the ATP World Tour, debuted attracting many of the young talents on the men's tour. The tournament continues today, as the Infosys Hall of Fame Open.



Each summer some of the world's best tennis players meet on the grass courts of Newport to vie for the Van Alen Cup. The silver Tiffany's trophy, which is displayed in the museum year-round, is aptly named for Hall of Fame founder Jimmy Van Alen.

In the 1950s, when Jimmy was the President of the Newport Casino, he and his wife, Candy, visited the Baseball Hall of Fame in Cooperstown, and decided that tennis needed a place to honor its champions. As the inaugural home to the U.S. National Championships from 1881-1914, the Casino seemed the natural site. Van Alen lobbied the leadership of the United States Lawn Tennis Association (now the USTA) to sanction the establishment of a National Tennis Hall of Fame in Newport, and so it came to be. It stands today as a true and fitting monument to the sport of tennis worldwide.

A national champion in court tennis, Van Alen was a progressive thinker among tennis leaders. On the grass courts of the Newport Casino he introduced VASSS, the Van Alen Streamlined Scoring System, which advocated for a tie-breaker to end prolonged sets and matches. His original nine-point “Sudden Death” tie-break was implemented at a Grand Slam event for the first time at the 1970 US Open, and it has evolved into today’s best-of-twelve-point tie-break.

In recognition of his contributions to the sport, Van Alen was enshrined in the International Tennis Hall of Fame in 1965.

History of the Newport Country Club

US Golf Championships

HISTORY OF THE NEWPORT COUNTRY CLUB

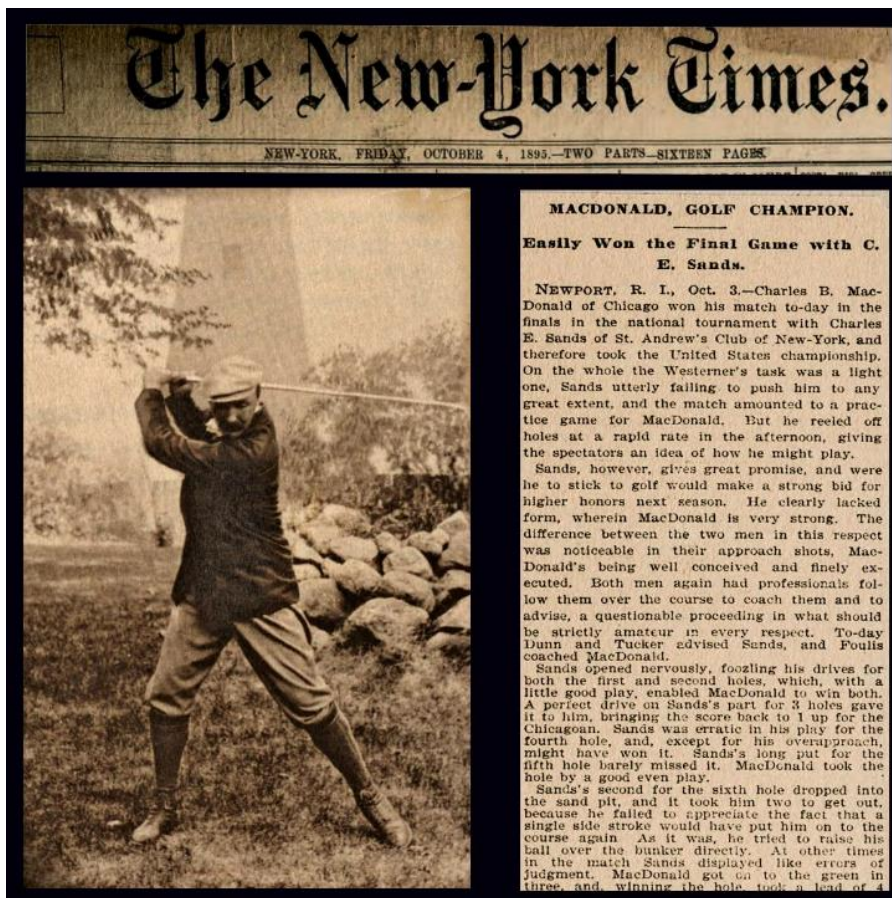


Newport Country Club, founded in 1893, is a historic private golf club located in Newport Rhode Island. It has been recognized as one of the top courses in the United States. The club is one of the five founding member clubs of the United States Golf Association.

On January 12, 1893, Theodore A. Havemeyer was elected chairman of the Newport Golf Club. At subsequent meetings of the Club, the Rules of the St. Andrew’s Club (Scotland) were adopted, a golf professional/golf course designer was hired, the act of incorporation, a constitution and by-laws were accepted and 57 members were elected. This was not, however, the debut of golf in Newport. Havemeyer first brought the game to Rhode Island in 1890 after having played at Pau in the south of France, where he had spent the previous winter. On his return to Newport, he, along with several friends, leased 44.4 acres near Brenton Point and laid out a very primitive 9-hole course. During these years of golf at Newport, the Bateman Hotel was used as a clubhouse.

The lease on the 44.4 acres on Brenton Point for the 1893 season was not renewed. Havemeyer and H.A.C. Taylor, purchased the 140-acre Rocky Farm from Mary King for \$80,000. Within a month the deed was bought by a syndicate, led by both gentlemen, and in early 1894, the incorporation of Newport Country Club was established. During 1893/4, a cottage called the Pond Cottage was used as the new clubhouse.

Havemeyer started to show sketches for a new and permanent clubhouse. During the winter of 1894/5, a new clubhouse was built. It was designed by Whitney Warren. Mr. Warren studied architecture in France, first at Dame's atelier, and later at the Ecole des Beaux-Arts. The clubhouse at Newport was his first commission. The style of the clubhouse has hints of the architecture of Louis XIII. The clubhouse was designed in the shape of a propeller, with two main wings and a third built in piazza style extending to the East. To the South, members and their guests were able to view golf, and polo to the North. There was a dining room (now the bar area) where meals were served. The kitchen was in the basement where today's bag storage room is. The clubhouse received many accolades. The New York Times proclaimed "It stood supreme for magnificence among golf clubs, not only in America, but in the world". The piazza-styled wing was destroyed in 1954 by Hurricane Carol. This wing was constructed of lattice and glass, which was no match for the high winds of the hurricane.



Newport Country Club is legendary in the history of golf in America. The first national championships were played at Newport in October 1895. These championships were the first sanctioned by the newly formed United States Golf Association. The start of the championships was delayed until the conclusion of the America's Cup. The amateur championship was won by Charles Blair Macdonald of

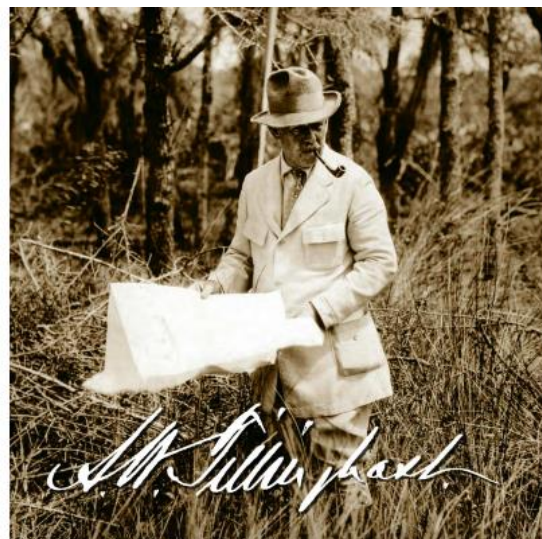
Chicago. Mr. Macdonald's margin of victory (12 and 11 strokes) remains today the most lop-sided win in the Amateur. Mr. Macdonald was not absent from controversy. In the previous year Mr. Macdonald had lost two amateur championships. One was played at Newport and the other at Saint Andrews, NY. The 1894 championship at Newport was played on another primitive course. Mr. Macdonald lost this 1894 championship because his ball came to rest behind a stone wall. Mr. Macdonald felt that in a stroke-played championship match, a stone wall was not an appropriate hazard. Later that year at St. Andrews, another championship was played. This time it was match played, but the result was the same, Mr. Macdonald lost in the finals. With this loss, he felt the national title competition should be conducted by a national organization. In December of 1894, the USGA was organized by five golf clubs. Newport was represented by Havemeyer. With his leadership and deep pockets, he was elected the organization's first president.



Horace Rawlins, Newport's young assistant professional, won the first national open championship at Newport on October 4, 1895. He bested many well-known professionals of the day who were favored to win. The Open championship was played over the 9-hole layout 4 times. It was stroke played. Others competing for the championship were: Willie Dunn, Willie Campbell, James Foulis and Newport's head professional, William Davis, to mention a few.

The course has had several serious modifications and additions. The original 9-hole course built for the 1890 season may partially exist today. This design was modified in 1893 by William F. Davis, the professional/designer previously employed at the (Royal) Montreal Golf Club, Canada. Davis designed two new courses in 1894 on the newly acquired Rocky Farm; the “long” course and the “short” course. In 1895 the “long” course was lengthened slightly and in 1897 an additional 9 holes were added making Newport an 18-hole course, the standard which other clubs had. It had been previously thought the second 9 holes of the long course was added by famous Scottish architect, Donald Ross, but a recent discovery of material showed that Davis added these holes. Havemeyer had not wanted a 2nd nine holes built, but after his untimely deaths in 1897, the 2nd nine holes were built.

The original 18 holes were all located east of Harrison Avenue. In 1921, the Club purchased two parcels of land, west of Harrison Avenue. One parcel was the same 44.4 acres from Mary Gammell. The same property that Havemeyer and friends has rented some 25+ years earlier. The 2nd parcel of 4.38 acres was bought from Ethel Rhineland King family. These purchases made possible the addition of 7 holes and the rerouting of the course to the east side of Harrison Avenue, thus alleviating the long-standing complaints about fairway proximity, poor drainage and wet conditions. The redesign of the course with the new 7 holes on the west side of Harrison Avenue was done A.W. Tillinghast.

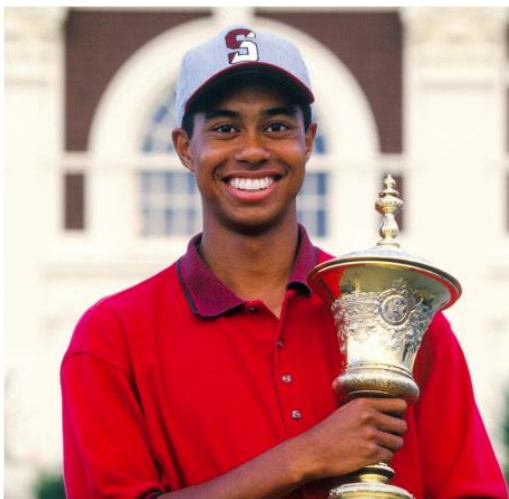


In 1917, the Newport Country Club and the Newport Golf Club consolidated. The two clubs had co-existed since the 1890's, but due to financial difficulties they decided to combine. The Newport Country Club had essentially owned the land where its members would enjoy the country, whereas the Newport Golf Club built and maintained the golf course.



In 1898, a silver cup was given to the golf club by Count de Turin (H.R.H. Prince Victor Emmanuel). There is a contest for the cup each year, and it remains the oldest of the Club's tournaments. The winner of this event receives a silver medal with the coat of arms of the Count de Turin.

In the late 1970's, the Club was the site of one of the first senior PGA events. The event was held in Newport until 1991. The first winner of this event was Sam Snead. Some of the other seniors who played at Newport are; Arnold Palmer, Lee Trevino, and Chi Chi Rodriguez and Gary Player.



In 1995, the United States Golf Association returned to "where it all began". The Centennial US Amateur was played in August 1995. The course was dry due to one of the severest droughts Newport has ever experienced. Most of the contestants had never seen a course brown and dry, but over-all they loved playing at Newport. Tiger Woods defeated Buddy Marucci 2up in a 36-hole final won the championship.

Golf architect Ron Forse in 1998, prepared a master plan for the golf course. A methodical implementation of the plan began the following year. Several portions of the plan were done each year until its completion in early 2004. Several bunkers that were eliminated in past years were revived while restoring others, all to their original “Tillinghast” design.



In June 2006, the USGA returned to Newport when the 61st US Women’s Open was played. Contrary to the conditions of the US Amateur in 1995 the course was extremely wet. The weekend before the championship was scheduled to start the course received over 3 inches of rain. Hundreds of volunteers including the local fire department helped to rid the course of water. The first practice day went on, but without spectators who were not allowed on the course. Continuing with weather problems the first round of competition was cancelled on account of an all-day fog. This cancellation created a 36-hole Sunday for those players who made the cut after the first two rounds of play. After 72 holes of competition Annika Sorenstam and Pat Hurst were tied at level par. An 18-hole playoff was played Monday with Annika Sorenstam winning. At USGA annual meeting in February 2007, it was decided the US Women’s Open would have 3-hole playoff rather than an 18-hole playoff.



In October 2004, a renovation of the clubhouse commenced. The work is the first major effort to update the mechanical and structural aspects of the building. The architectural firm of Mesick Cohen Wilson Baker, Architects was hired for the project. When the clubhouse was built in 1894/5 the needs

of the members and guests were different than those of today. A tremendous amount of work and input was spent on the renovation to serve the members while keeping the flavor and style Whitney Warren intended over 110 years ago. All this work was finished in time for the US Women's Open.

The RI Historical Preservation & Heritage Commission and the National Park Service declared the clubhouse a building of historical significance. This designation allowed the creation of Newport Country Club Preservation Foundation (NCCPF,) a 501c3 which enabled tax-deductible donations for the sole purpose of renovating and maintaining the clubhouse. Donations to the Foundation's endowment fund are welcomed and appreciated and will ensure that this wonderful building will be maintained to a standard worthy of its historic status.

In the summer of 2017, the Board of Directors hired the golf architect, Gil Hanse, in order to get a fresh set of eyes on the course. He arrived shortly and made several suggestions. In the spring of 2018, Gil Hanse's shaper, made several subtle changes to 5 fairway bunkers; 3 on the 2nd hole and 2 on the 6th hole. Gil Hanse also suggested the Club's greens be restored to their original size. This restoration would start after 2020.

The USGA was to return to Newport in June 2020 with the US Senior Open, but the event was cancelled due to Covid. In March of 2021, it was agreed that the USGA agreed to have the US Senior Open at Newport in June 2024. This championship was the 5th at Newport.

Committee Opportunities

If you would like to get involved or learn more, please connect with the respective Committee Chair(s) noted below via the *Members Chat* on the website or email us at: tohnewport@gmail.com

As mentioned, we are actively looking for several new Board Members for the new fiscal year.

Please think about taking a turn at volunteering and join the team!

Committee Chairs:

Community – Harry Elkin

Events – Susan Kelleher & Claire O'Donnelly (Co-Chairs)

Membership – Anne Marie Biernacki-Smith

Welcome – Susan McCoy

Beautification – Wayne Glazier

Website/Communications (includes the newsletter) – Laurie Love

Newsletter / Website

As no one has stepped forth to take over or help with the newsletter, we will be retiring this form of communication in the Fall (October issue will be the last). The new website facilitates easy and real-time communication through Forum posts and special interests through the various groups – e.g.) gardening articles may be posted to the Gardening Group. In addition to the website’s features, we’ll also utilize our TOH Gmail as we have been doing for various independent communications.

Having said this, if anyone would like to see the newsletter continue, one would need to take lead in creating content, editing, and formatting. If interested, please let me know. I’m happy to get anyone started – you just need to be comfortable with MS Word...or choose another app. ☺

Please do take advantage of the Forum to post information about community activities. It’s a great vehicle designed for members to proactively share information with all. More folks are starting to use it which is wonderful!

<https://www.topofthehillnewport.org/forum>

Photo Gallery

June 29, 2024: Summer Garden Party



