

## The Heritage of Congress Lake Club

The history and heritage of Congress Lake Club runs as deep the lake itself and is as rich as the land that it surrounds. Prehistoric Native Americans, the Delaware Indian tribe, and early pioneers have all left their mark at Congress Lake. Generations have had the privilege and pleasure of enjoying this wondrous place. We give thanks to all those responsible for preserving its assets and beauty as we enjoy it today. We embrace the responsibility of stewardship so future generations may enjoy its natural beauty and precious assets.

It all began with the glacier. This natural event created our most precious natural resource, the lake. Historians agree that before the peaceful Delaware Tribe came to this part of Ohio, their ancestral prehistoric relatives, the Mound Builders, were the first to inhabit the area. Remains of the Mound Builders are documented on a map of prehistoric Ohio. One location, a conical mound, is located on the Western shore of our lake.

In 1802, an Act of Congress fixed the boundaries of Ohio. The larger, more southern part of Congress Lake was located in the "Congress Lands," while the more northern section of the lake was located in the "Connecticut Western Reserve." Shortly after 1803, when Ohio was admitted to the Union, Conrad Brumbaugh laid claim to a significant amount of land boarding the eastern shore of Congress Lake. The Brumbaughs were one of Stark County's earliest pioneer settlers. When the club purchased a 160 acre farm in 1999 from the Hershey family, the property contained the original Brumbaugh pioneer log home and barn complete with the family plot.

The origin of the name of our lake has been controversial. Some believe it is derived from the conferences or "Congresses" of the Native Americans that were often held at the Lake. The more generally agreed upon opinion is that the Lake was named because it lies within what was known as the "Congress Lands." Its name came from an early surveyor.

Just shortly after the Civil War, Congress Lake became a popular recreation area. Nature lovers from Canton would drive three hours by horse and buggy on a narrow dusty road to enjoy the pleasures of Congress Lake. According to a *Prospectus of the Canton Outing Club*, one of the former owners, a "Boston Capitalist" - expended \$50,000 on the pavilion grounds. A 20 room hotel, cottages, and dance pavilion were built around 1880.

By the early 1880s, the property was owned and operated by the Connotton Valley Railroad. The trip by rail to Congress Lake made the journey much more convenient. People from Canton could board the morning train to the lake and return the same evening. In 1893 the railroad, which had been renamed the Cleveland Canton and Southern, went into receivership.

The resort was reorganized by a group of Canton's leading executives and was renamed The Canton Outing Club. They purchased the land and assets from the railroad. Some of the assets included an icehouse, the hotel, four cottages, a pavilion, some farmland, and an orchard. In 1896 the name Canton Outing Club was changed to our current name, the Congress Lake Club Company.

Congress Lake Club is unique as we own the land and the waters of the lake. It took a few years to acquire and perfect title to Congress Lake. The ownership of the lake was acquired largely through the efforts of Governor William McKinley, who was an original stockholder, and member, of the Congress Lake Club. The title of the lake passed from the United States to the State of Ohio in December 1893 and from the State of Ohio to the Canton Outing Club in 1894.

Beginning the Twentieth Century, members built a nine-hole golf course in front of the present club house. In 1909 a steel bridge was built across the channel, replacing the original wooden model. In 1912 the decision was made to erect a new hotel and clubhouse. Canton's leading Architect, Guy Tilden, designed the clubhouse. It was completed in 1913 at an approximate cost of seventy-thousand dollars with an outrageous fifteen-thousand dollars spent on furnishings.

In 1919 thirty-eight acres of new lands were added to the club. Willie Park Jr. was commissioned to build an eighteen-hole golf course. Mr. Park was British Open Champion in 1887 and 1889, and runner-up in 1888. He was considered the finest golf course architect of the day and became the benchmark of professionals to follow. The Park course opened for play in 1923.

The membership was quite taken by this new game and requested more. When more land became available, the club's leadership again contacted one of the finest people in their field. Donald J. Ross was commissioned in 1926 to rework the Park routing. He modified the first seven holes and designed the next ten. The last hole is a Park design, kept intact by Mr. Ross. The Donald Ross Members' Course at Congress Lake opened for play in 1932 and has become our most famous asset.

The post-World War II years have seen numerous modernization projects, including clubhouse expansions and renovations in 1946, 1960, 1989 and 2006. The pool was added in 1950, updated in 1992 and 2006. A Lake Rejuvenation Project was undertaken in 1987.

For over 110 years, members have enjoyed the many activities that Congress Lake provides. The 1914 Congress Lake Year Book states that the club, "...has the unique distinction of combining within itself every activity that any Club in this part of the country, organized for the pleasure of its member, can engage in...and gives it an attractiveness that cannot be found elsewhere." This rings true today. Generations of members and guests have enjoyed Congress Lake Club. It holds many fond memories. It generates special bonds of friendships. Our club's strength lies in its members. Our members offer a sense of belonging and caring toward others. We care also for the beautiful environment so that future generations will continue to enjoy the Congress Lake Club.

*Prepared by the Preservation & Heritage Committee 2006*

**CONGRESS LAKE CLUB  
CHRONOLOGY  
Hartville, Ohio  
1896-2006**

**Omit from book and add to online history page**

Our timeline of The Congress Lake Club has been researched and documented by the Stark County Heritage Information Center (HIC) and The Heritage and Preservation Committee

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- 1750-1768**      The Delaware Indian Tribes settle in the Lake region after being forced west by British forces and hostile Indian tribes.
  
- 1787**            The Northwest Ordinance is enacted by United States Congress.
  
- 1803**    Ohio is founded as the 7th State  
**(Mar 1)**            in the Union.
  
- 1805**            The Village of Canton is founded by  
**(Nov 15)**           Bezaleel Wells.
  
- 1809**    Stark County is organized  
**(Mar 16)**          Five townships established - Canton, Plain, Sandy, Nimishillen, and Osnaburg.
  
- 1816**    Lake Township is formed from Plain Township.
  
- Pre-1817**      The Conrad Brumbaugh family settles in Congress Lake area.
  
- 1829**            The "Wild Boar Tavern" is built in            Hartville and becomes a stage stop,            today known as  
"The Pantry" restaurant.
  
- 1851**            The Village of Hartville is founded and named for John Morehart and John Willis.
  
- 1854**            The Village of Alliance is founded by Mathias Hester and Elija Teeters.
  
- 1859**            The Village of Cairo is founded by Simon Snyder.
  
- 1877**            Muck farming begins in the Hartville Swamps.
  
- 1885**            The Connotton Valley Railroad is built. A Hotel, cottages, and pavilion are built on southwest side  
of the Lake; a water tower is added at the Congress Lake stop.
  
- 1888**            Mr. and Mrs. Charles Sliker purchase the Congress Lake Hotel, the summer cottages, and the  
dance pavilion.
  
- 1893**            Title to the land passes from the United States Government to the State of Ohio.
  
- 1894**    Land titles pass from the State of Ohio to The Canton Outing Club with assistance of then Governor  
William McKinley.
  
- 1896**            The Canton Outing Club becomes The Congress Lake Club Company. The property includes a  
hotel, a bowling alley, summer cottages, a pavilion, some farmhouses, farmland, orchards, and  
the Lake.
  
- 1899**    In September Congress Lake is closed to the public.
  
- 1904**            Members build a nine-hole golf course.

- 1905** Amish and Mennonite families settle in Lake Township, building homes, barns, schools and churches.
- 1907** Congress Lake Club Company legally becomes The Congress Lake Club.
- 1909** The dance pavilion is razed.
- 1913** The Clubhouse is built. Barns, garages, a boathouse, a gasoline launch, the golf course, and tennis courts already existed. The shore in front of Clubhouse was prepared with a sandy beach for swimmers.
- 1915** Cliff Thompson becomes our first golf professional.
- 1919** Thirty-eight acres is purchased. Willie Park enlarges the golf course to 18 holes. A watering system, rebuilding of greens, and reseeding the fairways is accomplished.
- 1920** Lockers for men and ladies are remodeled and enlarged. Two new tennis courts are built.
- 1923** One thousand trees are planted on Golf Course land.
- 1926** Donald Ross designs and builds a new golf course.
- 1944** Joe Guysick becomes Head Golf Pro.
- 1946** The clubhouse is remodeled, locker rooms expanded.
- 1950** A swimming pool is installed.
- 1960** The Ladies locker room is redecorated and reequipped.
- 1964** The Congress Lake Garden Club is established.
- 1965** The CLC Sailing Club is formed.
- 1973** Paddle Tennis Courts are built.
- 1976** Don Miller becomes golf professional.
- 1987** The Lake Rejuvenation Project is started.
- 1989** The Clubhouse is redecorated and expanded.
- 1992** The Swimming Pool is modernized and expanded.
- 1994** Sleeping rooms are remodeled and redecorated.
- 1995** The Boathouse is renovated.
- 1996** The Club celebrates its Centennial.
- 1999** The Members Purchase 160+ acres of the Conrad Brumbaugh plot known as the Hershey Farm.
- 2001** A new golf practice facility opens.
- 2002** Golf Professional Don Miller retires.
- 2003** Faith Egli becomes Head Golf Pro.
- 2005** The Boathouse is renovated

**2006** Lower Level Renovation, New Pool House, & swimming pool modernized - Completed.

**2008** Bill Welch becomes Head Golf Pro.