

Falmouth Country Club (1929 - 1937)

by Maria C. Ward

They're going to build a motorway
Through me back garden
No one can explain why I came to be chosen
They're going to build a motorway
They're ripping up the trees
Soon the lorries will be zooming through
Me cabbages and peas.
They says to ease the traffic flow
A bit of my back garden had to go
Well I dunno
I suppose that those who started it must know best
And I wouldn't like my vegetable patch
To stand in the way of progress.

This Irish ditty by Len Rosselson may be a metaphor for the new Route 28 bypassing West Falmouth built in 1960, but the history of this land from the late 1920s until now is a bit more complicated.

In 1928, the Reverend Dr. D. Brewer Eddy, a summer resident of Chapoquoit Island, decided there was a need for a golf club in West Falmouth for both permanent residents and a vast army of summer people who could not get day privileges at the currently oversubscribed golf courses in Falmouth. With the help of Boston and resident investors, the new Falmouth Country Club was formed. A deed recorded December 19, 1928, shows acreage purchased from Charles Swift (25 acres at \$50/



Golf course construction with a bulldozer in the foreground and horses in the background.

Courtesy the Collins Archives, Falmouth Historical Society. acre), M.W. Murray (20 acres for \$625) and Frank S. Lambert (21½ acres for \$900 cash and \$300 in stock). This land was on the east side of the main highway in West Falmouth (currently Route 28A) including Telegraph Hill and property to the east.

Wayne E. Stiles of the golf architectural firm Stiles and VanKleek was hired to plan the course. He estimated that the cost would be \$3000 per hole. His rendering pictured an initial nine hole course (to be expanded to eighteen holes) constructed through the woods of a rugged but picturesque countryside. He envisioned most of the tees and many greens high enough to afford views of Buzzards Bay with a prevailing southwest wind only adding to the ideal location. The clubhouse plan was to use a large private home on the property that needed few alterations.

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THE BOSTON HERALD

Kolehmainen Leads Coast-to-Coa

Work on New 18-Hole Course of Falmouth Country Club to Be Started Within the Week

By HURT WHITMAN

A notable addition to the Cape Cod golf family will be the Falmouth Country Club, on which work will be started this week, according to a statement made yesterday by its president, the Rev. Dr. J. Brewer Eddy, associated with the American board of commissioners for Foreign Missions on Beacon street.

There have been too few courses in the Falmouth section of the Cape to satisfy the tremendous demand for playing privileges by permanent residents and by the vast army of summer people. The new course aims to remedy that condition, and the officers state the 18-hole course will be ready for play in the spring of 1929. Within a week there will be 100 men at work on construction.

NEW COURSE PURELY A COMMUNITY AFFAIR

The new course will be situated on the east side of the main state highway at West Falmouth, the land being on Telegraph hill and to the east of that hill. Much of the acreage was obtained at an unusually small price. Community spirit has been responsible, in the main, for this situation. It is said that the 150 acres became the property of the club at a total cost of less than \$4000. President Eddy says that there is no single dollar of promotion scheming behind the club, as the organization is being launched purely as a community affair.

"For some years we have heard the complaint on the Cape that there were not enough courses to take care of those who wished to play," said Dr. Eddy last night. "We have heard this same story from the hotel men and from those who rent cottages. Their query is, 'When can we play golf?' They found that the existing clubs had too large a membership to allow extending day privileges to the summer people. Under certain restrictions, our club hopes to take care of those golfers."

Wayne E. Stiles of the well known Boston firm of golf architects, Stiles & Vankiel, is in charge of constructing the course. He believes that the land available for this new course is practically the only large tract of land in that section of the Cape which lends itself admirably to a first-class golf course. As a matter of Cape history, tobacco was grown in many of the valleys in that rolling country around Telegraph hill. The growing of tobacco demands a rich soil.

18-HOLE COURSE WILL MEASURE 6400 YARDS

The commonly accepted belief regarding Cape Cod is that it is very sandy. Undoubtedly there is good reason for this belief. But the soil which the Falmouth C. C. will build its links on has clay as an aid. The importance of this cannot be over-emphasized, for it tends to hold the moisture and so allows the turf to become firm and even luxurious.

Architect Stiles says that his firm has compiled a careful survey of the property and has found it ideal for golf purposes. He says that the checking of the grades and of the soil and of other

HEADS NEW GOLF CLUB ON CAPE



The Rev. Dr. D. Brewer Eddy, president of the Falmouth Country Club, on whose course work begins this week.

Alaskan Golfers Play Every Day All Winter

MONTREAL, Que., March 5 (AP)—While golf enthusiasts have been flocking to southern resorts in pursuit of their sport, the 400 residents of the town of Skagway, Alaska, have been enjoying the game on their one-hole course within 400 miles of the Arctic circle.

L. J. Johnson, a railway agent in the Yukon and northern British Columbia, who arrived today, said the game had been played all winter on Skagway links.

constructed through the woods, making for a picturesque layout through a rugged and broken country. Most of the trees and many of the greens will be high, affording views of Buzzards bay, the south shore of the Cape and even, at some places, across to the north shore of the Cape. The prevailing wind is southerly and we have taken that into consideration in our plans and in our survey. The surroundings will be ideal.

WILL GIVE AVERAGE GOLFER A CHANCE

"So far as the course itself is concerned, it will be a testing course for good golfers, but it will not be so constructed that it will have the tendency to break the heart of the average golfer. For we have made tentative plans to give the average golfer a 'way around' which will not break his spirit."

The clubhouse will be a large private home on the property, to which the requisite alterations will be made at a comparatively small cost. Definite announcement as to the membership scheme, dues and allied topics soon will be made through the officers.

The organization meeting was held Feb. 6 of this year. With President Dr. Eddy are serving these officers and directors: Vice-President, C. Arthur Fiske; secretary-treasurer, Joseph W. Crowell; directors, the president and vice-president, Clifford L. Hubbard, Harold L. Niles, W. Randolph Sides and Rupert A. Thompson.

SUBSCRIPTION AGREEMENT

1928

In consideration of the subscriptions of others, and for the purpose of constructing a golf course, I hereby subscribe for the following securities of the Falmouth Country Club Corporation of Falmouth, Massachusetts.

..... Shares of capital stock at \$100 per share

..... Certificates of Indebtedness at \$500 per unit

..... Certificates of Indebtedness at \$1000 per unit

I agree to pay for the above as follows: In one payment before 1928, or

Signed

Address

Stock or Certificates will be delivered when payment has been made in full. Interim receipts will be issued.

Courtesy the Collins archives.
Falmouth Historical Society.

Courtesy the Collins archives.
Falmouth Historical Society.

The grand opening was July 4th, 1929. Two hundred people visited the clubhouse with its grand view of Buzzards Bay. The Harvard Rhythm Kings provided "high grade" dance music through the afternoon. Weekly club dances were promised on Friday nights for the young people. Thursday afternoon bridge parties began July 11th for the purpose of adding new equipment to the club house.

However, building membership rolls was difficult. 1929 records show the golf course open to

as March 31, 1932, *The Falmouth Enterprise* has a long lead article describing a meeting between Dr. Eddy and the Succannessett Club, a Falmouth men's club. The header to the article made an offer that was not taken up.

The article reveals that the clubhouse building, too expansive and ambitious, had been returned to the

Crowell Realty Company, from whom some of the original acreage had been purchased. The golf club directors were willing to cede to Falmouth managers the responsibility for a

quicker response to problems (broken tractors etc.) and plans for change and course improvement (money to be handled in Boston). They hoped the Succannessett Club members could help collect membership dues owed, take in greens fees, and extend local membership. The trade-off was because the original investors were unwilling to incur any more debt propping up the golf club.

Falmouth did not assume the responsibilities.

WANTED TO GIVE AWAY:—An \$85,000 golf course to someone who can demonstrate capacity to run it better than we can. Only Falmouth people need apply.

Header to the March 31, 1932 *Enterprise* article.

The golf club did not open in 1938. The fairways and greens reverted to their original state. The holders of the first mortgage of \$15,000, issued in 1928 at 6% interest, still unpaid,

foreclosed upon the property. At a directors meeting held at his home on Chapoquoit Island on August 14, 1938, Dr. Eddy announced that there were notes outstanding of \$27,133.27, of which he personally held \$20,633.37. Other than the land, he declared the only assets were “the wood in two shacks, the water pipes in the ground, and equipment not worth \$10.” On April 1, 1939, the land and property of the Club were foreclosed legally by public sale on the grounds. In a letter to the stockholders and bondholders dated May 11, 1939, Dr. Eddy writes of his personal regret. “Circumstances have been against us from the beginning. The primary failure was in the unexpectedly large cost of construction, far beyond the original estimates [\$9,000 vs the quoted \$3,000 per hole]. In the last analysis, it was the depression which robbed a fine community plan of final success.”

As first mortgagee, Dr. Eddy became a major owner of the foreclosed grounds. He later gifted the property to his son, David B. Eddy, George R. Collins, and Blair Scanlon, the trio of stewards for the country club in 1935. Thus begins the second part of the “motorway through me back yard.”

Future plans for building their own summer houses on this land were stymied when the state took major parts of the former golf club to build a new section of Route 28 with the Brick Kiln Road access. With a 30-day eviction notice dated July 8, 1959, the state took parts of the 2nd, 4th, 5th, and 7th holes. As George Collins lamented

Falmouth Country Club

West Falmouth — Route 28

NINE HOLES OF GOOD GOLF

50 cents per day

Reduction for Week, Month, or Season

You are invited, with your friends, to make this your golf home

Courtesy the Collins archives.
Falmouth Historical Society.

Beginning in 1935, three young men who were to figure prominently in the care of this land became the managers. They were David B. Eddy Jr. (the son of Dr. Eddy), Blair Scanlon, and George R. Collins. Receipts for 1935 and 1936 show how dire the situation was. 1935 had 31 seasonal members, gross receipts of \$1069.47, expenditures \$825.62 leaving a net of \$243.85 split three ways for \$81.28 per young manager. The split was \$40 per manager in 1936 and only totaled \$25 each in 1937.

to Blair Scanlon in a September 2, 1963, letter, "Although Christiane and I are still enthusiastic about the 5th green, ... it seems out of the question for us to build out there. The 4th tee, also a scenic spot, has been ruined for a home by the noise of traffic on the Route 28 by-pass. And as you are well aware the more practical sites that all three of us had thought to use on the 7th ridge have been completely wiped out by the roadwork. The engineer who designed the bypass by laying a ruler on the map, thereby exterminating turtle ponds [destroyed was a pond actually named Turtle Pond], ruining the bluff for miles, etc., should have his head examined. A half-dozen gentle curves between the Canal and Woods Hole would have preserved a lot of spectacular American scenery for the future. At that time I tried to talk them into moving the road back east a couple of hundred yards, but I had no effect ..."

[An interesting side note of grander plans for this road construction comes from *The Falmouth Enterprise*, August 10, 1956, concerning the continuation of the Route 28 bypass, as they then called it. The road was envisioned to continue to Woods Hole to the south with an offshoot to Teaticket. "A new Highway would cut through Highfield's woods and join Woods Hole Road approximately at the Quissett standpipe." Another road was described thus: "An interesting part of the state's tentative blueprint is a wide road through Goodwill Park across Gifford Street and to Teaticket." It even predicted "an eventual bypass of Teaticket." As the Irish ditty says, "Well I dunno."]

In a May 27, 1961, letter, with land conservation already on their minds, David Eddy and George Collins "agreed to consult together before conveying any of our land ... to a third person." With this in mind, in exchange for a deed to Eddy's land, George Collins donated \$2700 to the Unitarian

Service Committee, a cause dear to the late Dr. Eddy. Thus Collins said, "We made our piece large enough now to be really worth saving."

A continuation of the Scanlon letter of September 2, 1963, says, "Meanwhile our general concern with what was going on here on the Cape with so little real planning brought us in contact with the rather active, if belated, conservationist movement here. Considerable progress is now being made in preserving the swamplands, back-lands, etc., that are important for the life cycle of these parts."

Real estate companies had other ideas. There were numerous "grand" plans for developing the open land. Although Country Club Estates was built on some of the land, Collins refused all offers for his land, despite the persistence of the buyers. Example: A May 14, 1974, letter from Jason Nash Real Estate in Falmouth reads,

"I have a qualified interested buyer for parcels of this land. With your permission I would like further to inspect and appraise this property for my client and yourself."

That drew the following reply:

"Dear Mr. Nash,

Our land is posted. If we find you on it we will shoot you.

Does that answer your letter.

G & C. Collins

Copy of this with xerox of your letter to Jack Hough."

To everyone's satisfaction, The 300 Committee was formed in 1985 with the "goal to save 300 acres to celebrate the towns 300th anniversary" in 1986.

"Article 1, Special Town Meeting April 8, 1986 sponsored by the Falmouth Conservation Commission and the Falmouth Planning Board" proposed the purchase of thirteen parcels of land

amounting to 425 acres. Town meeting members overwhelmingly approved the purchase. Thus the Collins Woodlot, under the stewardship of The 300 Committee, was preserved with the promise of “wildlife protection/passive recreation/green belt.” George Collins sold his 49.3 acres for \$327,000. Trail maps of this acreage, the shaded area between Blacksmith Shop Road and Brick Kiln Road, augmented by later purchases including Blair Scanlon’s 47.7 acres in 1995, are available at The 300 Committee website.

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About the Author

Maria C. Ward has been a member of the *Spritsail* editorial board since 2005.

