

The South Shore Country Club was founded in 1906. On its 50th Anniversary in 1956, the Club published a very impressive Anniversary Book, a copy of which was recently given to the Historical Society by a thoughtful friend. Below we reprint from that book the story of the Club's beginnings as told on the Club's 40th anniversary by the founder himself, Mr. Lawrence Heyworth.

The Founders Own Story

Back in 1905 when I was President of the Chicago Athletic Club I conceived the idea of having a Country Club in connection with the Athletic Club so the members of the Athletic Club could enjoy dining and wining in a beautiful place out in the country instead of having to resort to dives and saloons, which at that time were about the only available suburban places.

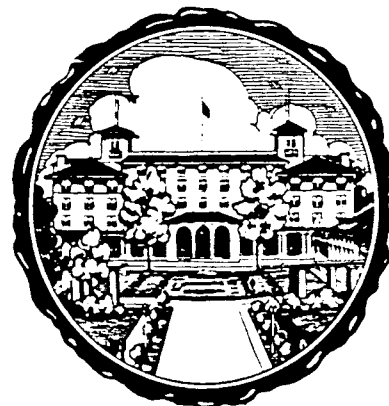
This idea was taken from the New York Athletic Club which owned Travers Island, a beautiful country club about fifteen miles from New York City, situated on Long Island Sound.

The grounds of the South Shore Country Club were at that time owned by Elisha W. Willard of Providence, Rhode Island. On my trips out in the country I used to take the children to this spot and have old man Barnes, a fisherman, fry perch for us on the spot where the shooting lodge now stands. It was from these trips that I came to the conclusion that this would be an ideal spot for the country club.

I sent out letters to members of the Chicago Athletic Club with this project in view, but received only a few acceptances, not sufficient to carry out my plans on this project. Still determined to build the club on this very advantageous site, I asked Mr. Honore Palmer, son of Mrs. Potter Palmer, Harry Honore, her brother, Mason B. Staring and W. C. Thorne to join me as a committee and help promote the club.

We then sent out about 1,000 letters to the most prominent people in Chicago and received only twenty-one acceptances, nearly all from members of the Calumet Club. This was a K.O. after I had already negotiated for the property through Bert Winston, and agreed to pay personally \$30,000 down and \$245,000 in twenty-four years with interest at 4½% on deferred payments.

I was certainly holding the bag and upon thinking the matter over thoroughly as to what to do next, conceived the idea of getting some better known and bigger names as directors. I telephoned Ogden Armour and asked him if he would be a director of the proposed Country Club to be built out at Seventy-First Street and the Lake, and if I could use his name as a director on one circular letter only. This I wished to use for promotional purposes to help finance the club. He laughed and asked me what other obligations he would be under and I told him he would have to buy a perpetual membership in the club, if the club was successfully organized, and he replied, "All right, go ahead and use my name."



"The Finest Club Of All"

After I obtained Mr. Armour's consent to directorship I telephoned Mr. Black, who at that time was President of the Continental National Bank, and I asked him if I could use his name also. Mr. Black consented and then in the same manner I obtained the consent of Mr. Forgan of the First National Bank, Mr. Smith of the Merchants Loan Bank and Mr. John J. Mitchell of the Illinois Trust & Savings Bank. In fact, the presidents of seventeen loop banks consented to their names being used as directors on the second letter sent out to the public.

About this time a committee of irate Bryn Mawr-South Shore residents walked into the Mutual Bank of which I was president, and threatened to stop the South Shore Country Club completely and to make matters worse, they had the right to do so. This committee, as I remember, was composed of State Senator Clarke, Ald. Bennett, Mr. French, a lawyer, and Mr. Brandenburg, who was Commissioner of Public Works, and several other prominent citizens. They said they were going to put a stop to the organizing of the Country Club, that 67th, 68th, 69th, and 70th Streets were to be extended through to the lake, that the City of Chicago owned this property and the City was going to open up these streets.

I asked all of them to step into the director's room of the Mutual Bank and asked each of them individually where he banked and then told them that the presidents of their banks were directors of the Club. I then said to them, "Are you going to fight the presidents of your banks where you borrow money and stop the organization of a club of which these same gentlemen are directors?"

I then showed them the letter that was about to go out upon which appeared the names of the directors, headed by Ogden Armour, and consisting of all the Loop bank presidents. After seeing this letter with the names of the directors listed thereon, they decided not to fight the Club and I told them that if they did not join the Club before they left the room not one of them would be allowed to step upon the grounds of the club so long as I lived which would be very detrimental to the social standings of their families.

They all joined and were very instrumental in passing an ordinance through the City Council trading the property

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owned by the City of Chicago located inside of the present fence for a forty-foot strip of land bordering the west side of the grounds from 67th Street to 71st Street. This particular strip was used for widening the present South Shore Drive to 60 feet from the old Bond Avenue 30 foot width. This also increased the ten foot grass plot bordering the club on the west side of the grounds to twenty feet.

The results from the second letter sent out were over one thousand acceptances for membership in the club, and in each letter of acceptance was enclosed a check for \$100.00 as a initiation fee.

Thereupon we closed the real estate deal through Bert Winston who, at our request, showed his good fellowship by donating his commission of \$7,000.00 as a fund to be used for promotional expense of the club.

We engaged Marshall and Fox as architects and copied a picture which I had in my possession of an old Mexican Club in the City of Mexico, leaving out the expensive embellishments shown in the picture.

The solarium of the club was originally developed from an open porch which was glassed in between the columns for protection from severe storms. This is how the beautiful solarium in both buildings originated.

The present ballroom is the original ballroom which was left in its present site when the new building was built. The acoustics of the ballroom were pronounced by Walter Damrosch and his orchestra as the best in America. In a corner of the ballroom, Mr. Damrosch played a high note on his violin which could be heard in any part of the ballroom and which he said was impossible in any auditorium in which he had played. This, of course, was just a lucky break in our favor.

We then started erecting the first South Shore Country Club. It was necessary to build it rapidly as we could not collect the club dues until we had the grounds and the building finished. Every member was called upon to donate his services, material and time towards the completion of the club.



Lawrence Heyworth

About this period the Washington Park Club closed. I told Lawrence Young, president of that club, that if he would give us the greens and the lockers of the Washington Park Club we would make him a director of the South Shore Club later on when a charter was taken out. He was another loyal fellow and sold us the greens and lockers of the Washington Park Club, which was considered the finest English turf at that time.

We paid 1¢ per square yard for the greens and fifty cents each for the lockers. We then used delivery wagons from the Loop stores to haul all of these greens and lockers over to the grounds of the South Shore Country Club. This line-up of wagons was a quarter of a mile long and consisted of wagons from Marshall Field, Mandel Brothers, the Fair Store, Montgomery Ward and many others, and with their help we succeeded in sodding the grounds in a few days.

The club house was finally finished within two and one-half months. Mr. H. I. Miller, who was then president of the Rock Island Railroad and had rebuilt the Pennsylvania road through Johnstown in twenty-four hours after the famous Johnstown flood, was the fellow we persuaded to finish up the terraces. We told him that if he would put in all the sod, grass and trees around the club within seven days we would make him president of the Club the second year of its existence. He put in temporary railroad tracks and with gangs of men finished the entire grounds in six days and gave all this to the club as a donation.

Mr. Worcester, the Vice-President of the Peoples Gas Light and Coke Company, put in all of the lights and pipe lines for lighting up the grounds and building.

We opened up the club at the end of September, 1906, with a grand party which was a great success. The kitchen was not yet completed at that time and Mr. Southgate of the Congress Hotel and Mrs. Potter Palmer, owner of the Palmer House, sent out wagonloads of food, a manager and all necessary waiters and service for the opening party. It made a regular New Year's Eve celebration look like a tame affair.