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Newsletter and Book Review for the Serious Collector

The Piping Rock Club

U.S.G.A. founding member Charles Blair Macdonald is most famously known for the course he designed on the eastern end of Long Island: The National Golf Links of America, and for his beautiful course in Bermuda: the Mid Ocean Club. Macdonald also designed another beautiful course on Long Island's North Shore: Piping Rock Club.

Opened in 1912, Macdonald designed the course with the assistance of Seth Raynor, who he often worked with. Piping Rock is located in the über-affluent town of Locust Valley, New York. Piping Rock is a very private club and has never published a club history and seeks no publicity. As our regular readers know, on occasion, we like to focus on obscure and lesser known golf books. This month our focus is on an early club book for the Piping Rock Club, issued a year after it opened in 1913.

This small, fifty-one page book offers some interesting insight into golf in the early part of the 20th century. Today, titans of industry, leaders in business and captains of finance belong to Augusta National. Seminole Golf Club held this position in the 1930s and 1940s. The Piping Rock Club was the Augusta or Seminole of its day.

The book contains a certificate of incorporation, list of officers, rules, by-laws and most importantly a list of members. The list is a who's who of prominent people from the pre-war era.



To better understand the membership at Piping Rock, a little history is in order. The Piping Rock Club is not dedicated exclusively to golf, although golf is a central feature. When it opened, the club also featured polo, trap shooting and tennis. I have been fortunate enough to play Piping Rock and a unique feature you notice immediately is the oversized driving range, which was previously the polo field. Bill Quirin writes in *Golf Clubs of the MGA* that Macdonald was never particularly happy with his overall design at Piping Rock because he had to work around the polo field. Piping Rock contains many holes typical of Macdonald courses such as a Redan hole, Road hole and a Biarritz hole.

A sampling of Piping Rock's 466 members is listed below and gives a good indication of the type of membership it had when it opened:

Golf

- Charles B. Macdonald
- Charles H. Sabin, co-founder of the National Golf Links, prominent banker
- Devereux Emmett, amateur golfer and architect
- Theodore Havemeyer, the U.S.G.A.'s first president
- Howard F. Whitney, secretary of U.S.G.A.
- H.J. Whigham, Macdonald's son-in-law

Finance

- J.P. Morgan, Jr.
- Benjamin Strong, Jr., first president of the Federal Reserve Bank of New York
- Percy Chubb, co-founder of the insurance company
- Mortimer L. Schiff, banker and early leader of the Boy Scouts

The Arts

- Louis C. Tiffany, stained glass
- Frank N Doubleday, publishing
- Condé Nast, publishing

Industry

- William L. Harkness, Standard Oil
- Charles H. Pratt, Frederic B. Pratt, George D. Pratt, Harold I. Pratt, Standard Oil heirs and philanthropists
- Henry Phipps, Carnegie Steel

Politicians and Philanthropists

- Theodore Roosevelt, listed as an Honorary Member
- W. Averell Harriman, future New York Governor
- Payne Whitney, patron of the New York Public Library
- Alfred G. Vanderbilt. Alfred G. Vanderbilt would die two years later as a passenger on the RMS Lusitania (first class, of course) as it was sunk en route to Liverpool
- Cornelius Vanderbilt
- William Vincent Astor
- William W. Aldrich, future ambassador to Great Britain