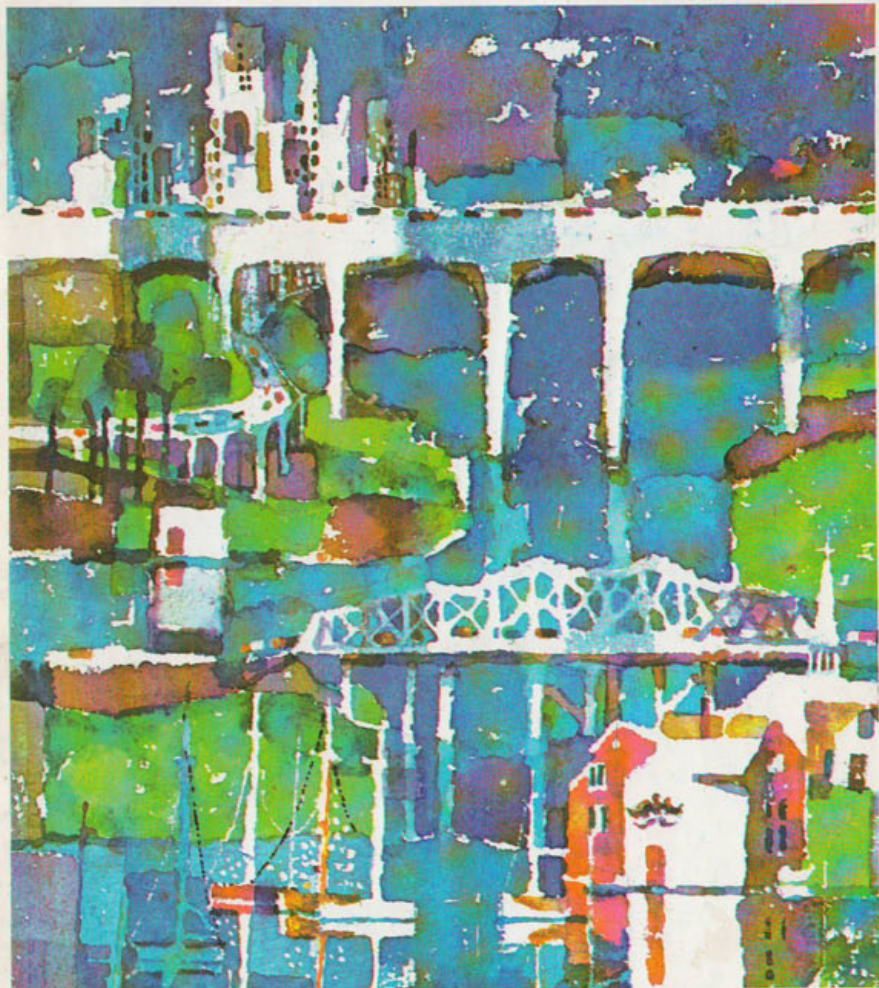


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NEW ENGLAND VACATION ISSUE

Golfer's Tour Down East

Keep Your Eye off the View

Four of the oldest—and best—courses in the nation challenge your game while the family enjoys the scenery

by Judson P. Philips . . . paintings by Milton Weiler

VACATION GOLF in New England has one very distracting hazard. Unless your dedication to the game is intense, you will almost certainly break your neck looking up at the extraordinary scenic beauties surrounding most of its prime courses.

When I received the happy assignment to report on the top resort golf courses in New England I anticipated refreshing my memories of fifteen or twenty courses I had played in the past. It didn't happen quite that way because I found I couldn't tear myself away from a course until I had played it three or four times, discovering each time that the fiends who are golf course architects combine with nature's gently winding brooks and placid ponds in a cunning conspiracy. Catching up with my ball, nestling in a trap I hadn't suspected was there, I'd find

the weary trail of other feet and other golf carts, and I could imagine the Cheshire-cat smile of the course designer who knew, without ever seeing me, exactly where my stray shots would take me.

If you ask a dozen golfers who know New England thoroughly for the best courses in the six states, you will come up with twelve answers. Whatever suggestions I may make to the vacationer will result in cries of pain and outrage, probably quite justifiable, from the adherents of courses I neglect to mention. The best I can do is to tell you of a four-course trip I made last summer after consulting many experts.

I began at the Taconic Golf Club in Williamstown, Massachusetts, one of the really fine eighteen-hole layouts in all New England. Taconic, like Topsy, just "grewed." In 1895 three holes



The peaceful beauty of the Berkshire Hills, surrounding the Taconic Golf Club in Williamstown, Massachusetts (above and right), is a dividend to the golfer

were laid out, with tomato cans stuck in the ground, to satisfy the golfing yen of summer residents from Troy, New York. The present eighteen-hole course opened for play on Labor Day of 1928. It was a gently rolling layout, unusually easy to negotiate for mountain country. It was fairly wide open, with a few seedling pines and other young trees planted here and there. From a high point you could see three states—Massachusetts, New York, and Vermont. Today, however, the seedling pines tower overhead. The saplings have grown into beautiful elms and



Large greens at Ekwanok (right) are contrast to nearby Equinox Links

maples that line each fairway, along with breathtaking clumps of birches and willows. The greens have the smoothness and patina of age. They are well trapped to catch the second shots of the low-handicap player, but in every instance there is a way in for the bogey shooter.

Part of the excellence of Taconic's condition is due to the unusual fact that a colorful Scot named Dick Baxter has been its professional and greens-keeper since 1924. Don't be misled by his years if you lure him into a round. He knows every blade of grass on his beloved course and he will pin your ears back flat.

Ekwanok and Equinox

You won't want to leave Williams-town in a hurry, but only forty-five miles away a pair of the finest golf courses anywhere are beckoning. The Ekwanok Club in Manchester, Vermont, is one of the early cradles of golf in America. It was here that Francis Ouimet, who turned golf into a popular sport in 1913 by defeating the great English pros, Vardon and Ray, in a playoff for the National Open title, won his first amateur title the following year. But Ekwanok is a private course, and if you are to play it you will have to get to know one of its members while you play the semi-public Equinox Links next door.

Equinox, designed by the late, great Walter Travis, was opened to the public in 1927, and some old-timers will tell you, reluctantly, that as a test

of golf it offers even more than Ekwanok, which has large greens that are easy to hit, but often leave you with putts of as long as a hundred feet. The greens at Equinox, however, are small and terraced. The low-handicap player has a tough target to hit, and his birdie won't come easy unless he lays his shot dead to the pin. But like all great courses there is a way in for the bogey shooter, and if his chipping and putting are sharp he may well have his day of glory.

From the third tee at Equinox only a slim wire fence separates you from the thirteenth hole at Ekwanok. At your back is Mount Equinox. She stared down at Ethan Allen and his Green Mountain Boys way back when; she saw Francis Ouimet win his championship in the valley at her feet in 1914; she saw a small fourteen-year-old boy play an exhibition match there for the Red Cross in 1917, showing a glimmer of golfing prowess that was to be unsurpassed in our time. He was, of course, Bobby Jones.

My chief memory is of the fourteenth hole, 95 yards in length, a nine iron or wedge to a tiny green almost directly below the tee, a green postage stamp in a sea of sand and blueberry bushes. It looks pathetically easy. In the clubhouse they call it "two or thirteen." I wish you luck!

Two hundred miles north and east, climbing steadily out of the Green Mountains into the more majestic White Mountains, you will finally arrive at the Mount Washington Hotel

Salt-water breezes at Shennecossett provide a different kind of golf



in Bretton Woods, New Hampshire. This drive is an experience in itself.

I will have reactivated old blood feuds by selecting the Mount Washington Hotel course as opposed to the one at Crawford's Notch, or Dixville Notch, or half a dozen other sporty layouts. I select it as the living end in luxury vacationing. They claim that the first tee provides the most beautiful first shot in the world. I won't argue. I know you won't want to leave it. If you do, you'll find the rolling course excellently conditioned, calling on you for every golf shot you possess.

Shennecossett at Groton

From the highlands of New Hampshire I suggest a leisurely descent southeast to Groton, Connecticut. The astringent aroma of mountain pines will be left behind you, and you will become aware of the new and exhilarating tang of salt water. Here at the Shennecossett Country Club, you will

find a different kind of golf than you've had on your first three stops. You will be constantly aware of the bright blue expanse of Long Island Sound, and confounded at times by its breezes. But this is a real championship course, built around the turn of the century, and rich in tradition. Its first pro, who remained for many years, was Alex Smith, one of the true greats. Light-horse Harry Cooper also made Shennecossett his professional headquarters for a number of years. The two women players who popularized golf for the laughingly-called "frailer sex," just as Francis Ouimet and Bobby Jones did for men, were Alexa Sterling, a neighbor and friend of the great Bobby, and Glenna Collett. Shennecossett was a prime hunting ground for Miss Collett, who won its Women's Invitation Tournament seven times in fifteen years. Don't let that lead you to think of it as short or easy. If, when you've met its challenge, the salty taste in your mouth is from tears and not the waters of the Sound, don't blame me. I had exactly the same experience.

Some of New England's really sporty nine-hole courses, dozens of them, are secreted away in the valleys and on the hills and by the sea and will give you all in golf you could ask for. But for the present I rest my case on Taconic in Williamstown, Equinox at Manchester, Mount Washington in Bretton Woods, and Shennecossett at Groton. These four offer all you've ever dreamed of—beauty of setting, perfect condition, and a layout that calls for your best and provides you, when you've met the challenge, with the most in satisfaction. ■

Women, too, like Shennecossett

