



Figure 1. Early 20th century cover depicting the Lake View Summer Resort on Catawba Island.

Catawba Island's Lake View Summer Resort

by Patricia Loehr

While looking through my collection recently I came upon the cover in Figure 1 from the Lake View Summer Resort on Catawba Island, Ohio. I remembered finding this cover several years ago in a postal history dealer's stock where it turned up in a large section devoted to Dead Post Offices or DPOs.

At the time, I knew little about DPOs so it was an opportunity to learn about this often overlooked area of philately. I hadn't expected to find anything sports-related, so imagine my surprise when I noticed this cover with golf clubs in the design. I happily purchased it.

The cover has a monochromatic greenish color over the entire front advertising the Lake View Summer Resort. Next to the oval showing an image of what I took to be the resort, are two golf clubs and a tennis racket. I wondered if the resort did indeed offer golfing and tennis.

The DPO information provided with the cover indicated that the Catawba Island post office existed from 1868-1917. The reverse of the cover bears a Locust Point receiving postmark, also a DPO, which operated from 1858-1903. Both post offices were in Ottawa County and about 20 miles apart.

The cover is franked with a 2¢ red Washington stamp (Scott 279B) paying the per ounce rate for a First Class surface letter. The duplex Catawba Island cancel is dated 7 October 1902. There is an 8 October 1902 receiving cancel from Locust Point on the reverse.

Catawba Island is located on a peninsula jutting out into Lake Erie along the northern shoreline of Ohio, about halfway between Toledo and Cleveland.

Before proceeding, let's consider what golf was like in 1902.

Early Golf in the United States

Although golf grew in popularity in the decade of the 1890s, it was still in its infancy. Actually it had only begun in 1888 when the St. Andrew's Golf Club was organized in Yonkers, New York. That club is the longest continuous golf club in the United States. Other clubs soon followed. Five of those clubs met on 22 December 1894 to establish the United States Golf Association (USGA) to administer, protect, and promote the interests of the sport.

The following year in September 1895 the first U.S. Open and U.S. Amateur Championships were to be held at the nine-hole course of the Newport (Rhode Island) Golf and Country Club. However,

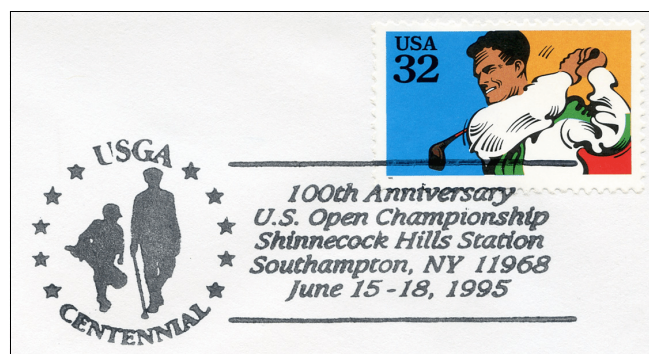


Figure 2. Cancel celebrating the centennial of the U.S. Open Championship.



Figure 3. An early view of Course Number 1 at Pinehurst, NC, depicting golfers on a sand putting green.

those championships were postponed to October because of a conflict with the more established America's Cup yacht races. Figure 2 is a commemorative cancel for the 100th anniversary of the first U.S. Open Championship.

As championship golf events began in 1895 so too did the concept of resort facilities when James W. Tufts purchased 5,000 acres of land thought to be worthless in south-central North Carolina. He wanted the area to become a wintertime health retreat for his fellow New Englanders. Tufts commissioned the making of a nine-hole course, simply named Course Number 1, which opened in 1898. Nine more holes were added the following year.

Figure 3 is a hand-colored picture postcard of Course Number 1 published by Pinehurst Pharmacy and printed by Albertype Co., circa 1930. As seen in this view some early golf courses had sand putting greens.

At the beginning of the 20th century golf's growing popularity was mostly east of the Mississippi River, but spreading westward. Eleven Chicago-area golf clubs decided to organize a golf association in 1899 naming it the Western Golf Association (WGA). That same year the WGA held their first Western Open and Amateur Tournaments.



Figure 4. The Chicago Golf Club featured the first 18-hole course in the United States, dating to 1893.

After winning his third British Open Championship in 1899, Harry Vardon came to the U.S. for a year-long (in 1900) tour of the country demonstrating his golfing excellence in a series of exhibition matches. He impressively outplayed most of his opponents. Notable matches were held March 9 and 10 on Course Number 1 at Pinehurst. Vardon took time off from his exhibition tour to win the 6th U.S. Open held at the Chicago Golf Club (Figure 4).

Jersey-born and native son Harry Vardon was already a legendary golfer when he played at the opening of the La Moye Golf Club in 1902. He is featured in the stamp pair and in the margin for the centenary of the club (Figure 5).

While Harry Vardon was at the peak of his fame as a golfer in 1902, another destined to become as renowned was born in Atlanta, Georgia. Bobby Jones who would dominate championship golf in the 1920s was born on 17 March 1902. His likeness appears on the commemorative cancels in Figures 6 and 7 celebrating his St. Patrick's Day birthday.¹

Was there golfing in 1902 at the Lake View Summer Resort at Catawba Island?

As we've seen, golf courses were well-established in the eastern area of the U.S. at the time my cover from the Lake View Summer Resort was mailed in 1902. My big question, though: was there a golf course at the resort?



Figure 5. Harry Vardon, a native of Jersey in the Channel Islands, was a legendary golfer at the turn of the 20th century.



Figures 6 & 7. One of the most famous American golfers of the 1920's was Bobby Jones. His birthday is on St. Patrick's Day, thus a favorite subject for dual-themed pictorial postmarks.

Locating a website for the Catawba Island Historical Society (CIHS), I made some inquiries with the curator, Jane Priestersbach, passing along a copy of my illustrated advertising cover. In the course of our email exchange, I discovered the following:

- Sadly, there was no golf or tennis on the island in 1902.
- The first golf course and tennis courts were most likely brought to the area by the developer of the Catawba Island Club in the early 1920s.
- The envelope could possibly have been a commercially purchased item that endorsed recreation in general.
- It was probably mailed from the post office in the West General Store which was in a building on the tip of Catawba Island.

I had also been curious as to whether Catawba Island was actually an island or, as it appeared on current maps, more of a peninsula.

Again the curator provided an answer. Catawba Island was once actually an island, or more precisely, a "tied island" connected by a *tombolo*, a kind of sand bar. Eventually a road was built atop the sand bar permanently transforming the island into a peninsula. The curator added that the Lake View Summer Resort was a 50-room hotel located close to Lake Erie. The original owner had been J. Gamble, a Civil War officer.

A black and white postcard image of the hotel (Figure 8) shows a rambling, three-story, wooden structure with a covered front porch running across the front of the building. At center is a four-story tower complete with a viewing deck affording a panorama view of the lake and surrounding islands. It is clearly the same facade as portrayed on my

illustrated envelope. And, as this is an undivided back picture postcard, it would have been published prior to 1907, thus most likely from about the same period as the advertising cover.

Had I not dipped into a box of postal history to find this intriguing advertising cover, I would never have known about this little corner of Ohio. 🍀

Acknowledgment

I greatly appreciate the efforts of Jane Priestersbach, Curator of the Catawba Historical Society at Union Chapel who provided information about my illustrated cover for this article. For more information on the Catawba Island Historical Society, visit: <https://catawbaislandhistoricalsociety.com>

End Note

1. This year is the 90th anniversary of Bobby Jones' 1930 Grand Slam of golf. To celebrate the lasting historical significance of his achievement, a special publication of the Golf Heritage Society entitled "Bobby Jones and the 1930 Grand Slam" was mailed to members of the Golf Heritage Society and the Society of Hickory Golfers in September 2020.



Figure 8. Postcard of the Lake View Summer Resort as it looked in the early 1900's.