

Timely Remembrance

A commemorative clock now stands as the permanent answer for how to properly mark this club's centennial.

By Joe Barks, Editor

While planning special events to celebrate the 100-year anniversary of their club in 2010, members and management of Old York Road Country Club, in the Philadelphia suburb of Spring House, Pa., also kicked around ideas for what they could do to create appropriate and lasting recognition of the club's first century.

"We explored a lot of things," says Alex Cifelli, a 16-year member who headed Old York Road's Centennial Committee. "We wanted to add something to the property that would serve as a real, permanent statement about our club's longevity and character, and also add to its overall appeal."

A plan to erect a commemorative clock in a prominent spot, establishing a new symbol of what the club stood for—past, present and future—soon emerged as the favored idea. Once the decision to get a clock was made, the next questions—how to pay for it, and where to get it—had easier answers.

Old York Road prides itself on a membership (currently numbering around 600) that has always stepped up to provide what the club needs; in its 100-year history, the club has only imposed three assessments, even with a move in 1963 to its current location on 128 acres of scenic farmland.

So Cifelli was confident the membership would once again come through with donations to a special fund (administered with the help of Sandi Sutton, an Old York Road Administrative Assistant) that was created to cover the costs of purchasing and installing the new clock.

Finding a source for the clock didn't take long, either. "We really didn't have to shop around," says Dave McKenzie, the club's 32-year Head Golf Pro, who worked with Cifelli and other Centennial Committee members to coordinate the sourcing, positioning and installation of the new timepiece.

"The Verdin Company is well-known for providing the type of distinctive, custom-made clock we were looking for," McKenzie says. "Through my association with the PGA of America, I knew of several other clubs that had obtained clocks from Verdin, and all of them spoke highly of their workmanship and active, hands-on service."

It also helped that Cincinnati-based Verdin had local representation in the Philadelphia area. McKenzie contacted Doug Gefvert, the company's area salesperson, in July of 2009, and conveyed two basic requirements: We want a clock that captures the character and history of Old York Road Country Club, and we want it up

The new clock was dedicated in May 2010, to kick off a series of special events for Old York Road CC's centennial celebration.



PHOTOS COURTESY OLD YORK ROAD CC



The customized clock and faces prepared by Verdin are complemented by a stone base built by a member and plaques on all four sides listing member contributors to a special Centennial Clock Fund.

and running by next spring.

From this point forward, McKenzie says, Gefvert and Verdin pretty much provided the rest of the answers.

"We originally thought we'd want a two-faced clock and really didn't have a firm idea of where to put it, because there were several good potential spots," says McKenzie. "As soon as Doug came to see the club, he felt strongly that the best place would be at the end of our long entrance driveway. He took photos looking toward that spot in all directions, and Verdin's production people then made a rendering to superimpose how a clock would look if located there—and they used a four-faced clock, to show how it could be seen, and make the right statement, from many important parts of the property.

"Once we had that rendering to send around," McKenzie adds, "everyone quickly agreed that was the way to go."

The renderings also started a buzz that continued to build as updates on the clock's progress began to be posted on a special Centennial section of the club's website. And they helped to fuel fundraising momentum—donations came in quickly enough, in fact, that Cifelli decided to add plaques on each side of the clock's base that would recognize the first 100 members making full (\$350) contributions to the clock fund (these contributors, as well as others who also made donations, will also be recognized in Old York Road's 100th anniversary book, to be released in April 2011).

Pete Clearkin, an Old York Road member who is a general contractor, also volunteered to build a special stone pedestal for the clock and help with required electrical hook-ups.

With all of this activity, reports General Manager Joseph Wurtz, talk at the club quickly turned from wondering what the clock would look like, or where it would go, to excited anticipation of "when it's going to be here?"

And thanks to the help provided by Verdin for the remaining details, including custom colors and lettering, the clock was installed in April and had already become a popular new fixture on the property by the time of its formal dedication in May.

"It quickly became a focal point," Wurtz reports, "and the new preferred place to take photos for tournament groups and weddings."

The clock now provides the club's "official time" for both individual tee-offs and tournament starts—and while McKenzie says it has been "extremely accurate," requiring just occasional calibration with "two screwdrivers and a phone call to Verdin," there are plans to make it even more precise in the near future, by adding GPS technology that will sync the clock to satellite time.

The clock now also appears as a new symbol for Old York Road in the club's newsletter. Overall, says McKenzie, "We continue to get a lot of great, positive comments from both members and guests on how easy it now is to recognize the clock from so many parts of the property, and on what a nice statement it makes about the club and our history.

"Certainly," he adds, "a lot of credit for that has to go to Verdin. We couldn't have found anyone more knowledgeable or better to work with, to help us create something that's the right symbol for our first 100 years, and will also serve the club well as it moves forward." **C&RB**



The clock now stands as a new historical complement to farm buildings retained after Old York Road moved to its current site in 1963 (the building in background houses a pro shop, locker rooms and men's grille).

