

# 100 Years of History at Soangetaha

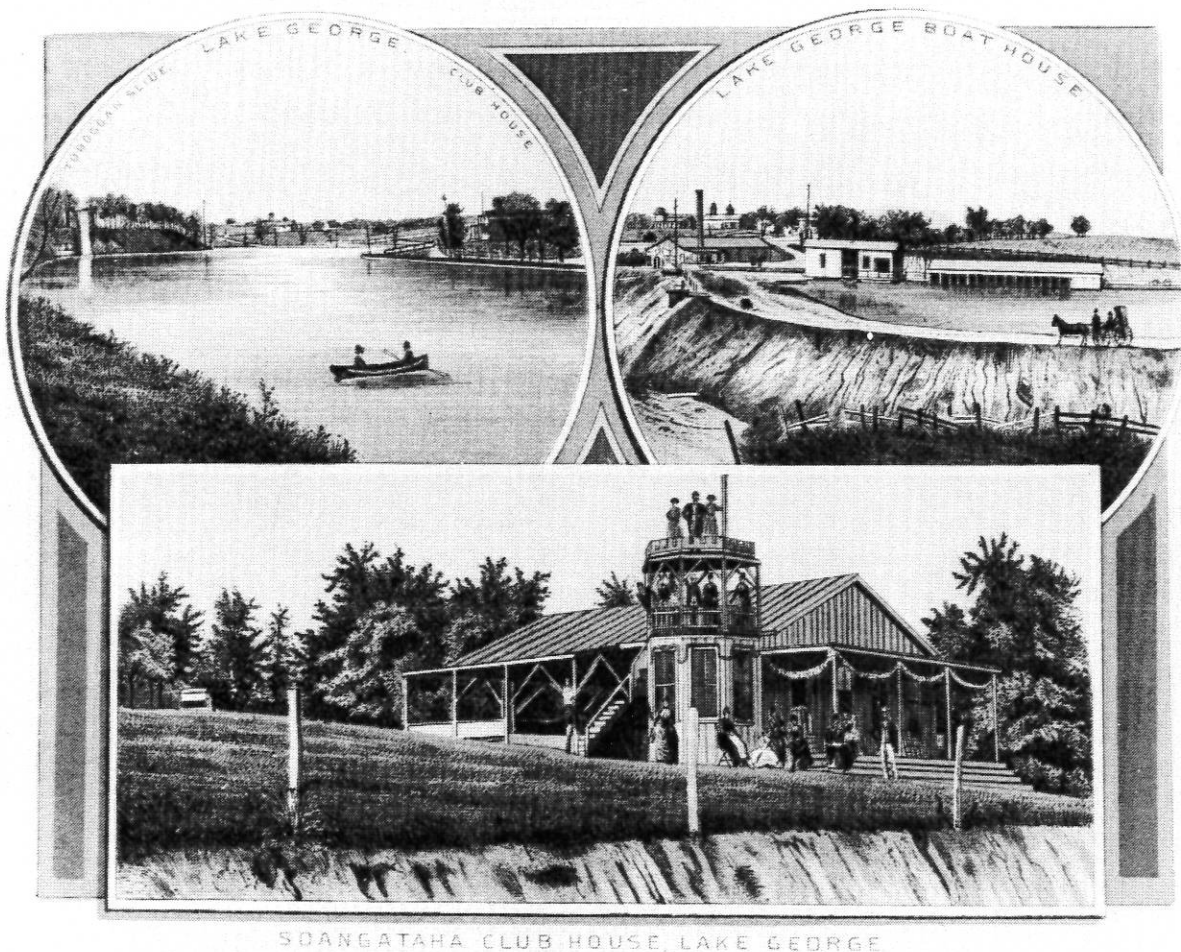
*The following information was gleaned from many sources, including the 75th Anniversary yearbook, newspaper clippings, and recollections from present members. Thanks to all who searched their attics and archives for the memorabilia displayed around the club.*

Soangetaha has changed some in 100 years!

It began in the 1880's when a group of men formed a club, described in an 1895 Evening Mail report, "as an adjunct to Soangetaha Tribe of Improved Order of Red Men" and "the most prominent organization in

George for their picnics and when the lodge ceased to function, a group of its members organized the first country club."

On May 23, 1888, they agreed to erect a clubhouse for social activities. George W. Brown, head of the Corn Planter Works, offered to build a clubhouse for \$1,000 if Andrew Harrington and Lake Sanborn would agree to underwrite the rent. This clubhouse sat in front of the land now known as Picnic Point, and the site was later flooded when the height of the dam was raised. "Lake George"



*\$1,000 clubhouse and other structures on Lake George.*

the city." The October 5, 1923 Evening Mail reported that Soangetaha Country club had its origins "when the order of Redmen lodge ... surrendered its charter in 1898." "The lodge brothers had long used the shores of the Lake

was named for George Brown, who had previously owned the lake and surrounding land until the 1880's.

In the summer of 1895 the lawful incorporation of Soangetaha Country Club was

completed under the initial presidency of E. S. Gunnell, chief of the O. T. Johnson Co., and Dick Howard, of Frost manufacturing Co. as secretary. Other incorporators were William Wolfe, M. J. Daugherty, George W. Brown, Henry Murphy, F. W. Wolfe, W. H. Pankey, Harry Spear, E. S. Mason, and Albert Jacobi. On July 19, 1895, the official incorporation date, there were 130 members.

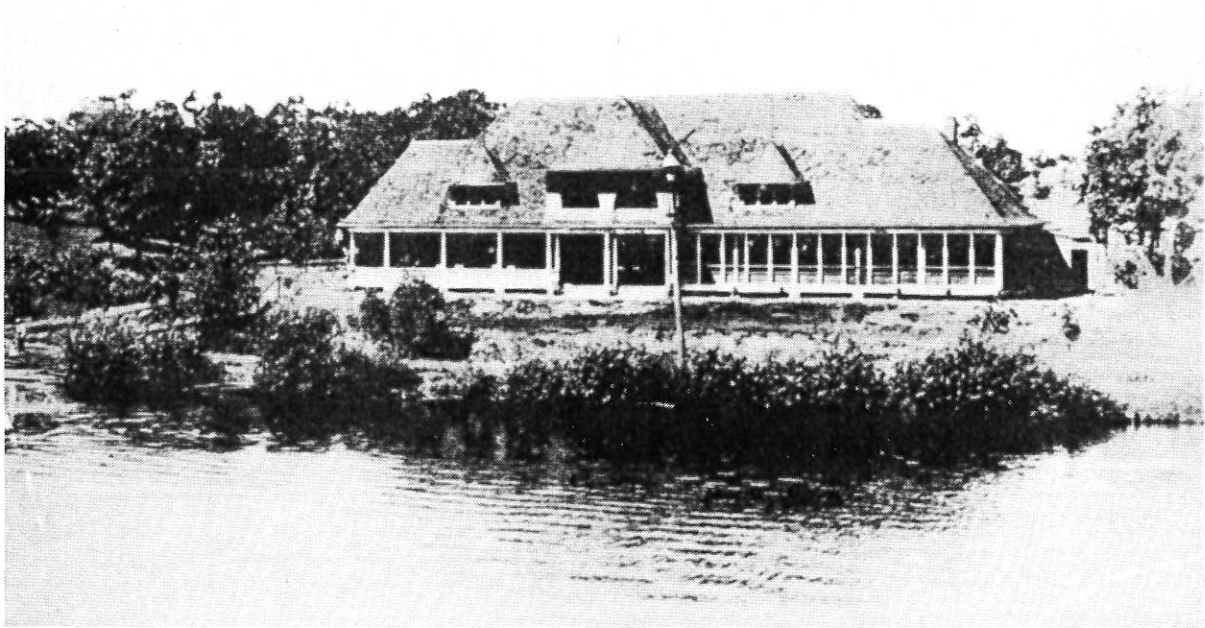
At a dancing party on August 28, 1895, a lamp caused a fire that burned the \$1,000 clubhouse to the ground. Two weeks later, contracts were let for a new \$2,600 clubhouse. The high cost included electric lights, a dancing floor, a limited parcel of indoor plumbing, and a kitchenette, where members could cook their own hamburger sandwiches. This clubhouse sat on the site of the former swimming beach and was years later relocated up the hill to its present location.

It was in 1895 that a group of Knox College professors, alumni, and students formed a local Kill Bogie club and land surrounding Lake George was used to start a golf course. In the

movement were Professors John Cushing, Charles Thwing, William A. Phillips, James Needham and Ralph T. Edwards; young alumni and students around town such as Curly Arnold, Phillip Post, Alvah Green, Horace Strain, Ferris Gettemy, George Lawrence, Payson Willimas, and Juddy Holland. Originally, only 9 holes were built, with the members providing most of the physical labor.

Golf was proving popular and the Kill Bogie members looked longingly at the palatial \$2,600 clubhouse as a location for the parties their wives yearned to give, and as a shelter from rain and the sharp eyes of the W.C.T.U. So a merger was promoted with Soangetaha taking in the Kill Bogie members at face value plus \$15 a head, as of April, 1906. Officers of the "new" club were Dick Howard, president, J. W. Tryon, secretary-treasurer, and directors: H. M. Holland, H. W. Murphy, W. S. Purington, and W. E. Phillips. Obviously, it was thought access to the clubhouse was more important than access to the golf course!

Railroads were playing their role in the



*\$2,600 clubhouse on its original site.*

development of Galesburg, and in 1901 the CB&Q purchased the lake and woodlands to use the lake as a source of water and ice. The railroad continued to allow the ground to be used for recreational purposes, and the lake was renamed Lake Rice to honor Fletcher C. Rice, who was Illinois superintendent of the "Q" and also a Knox College trustee. In 1907 the land was leased by the club for \$500 per year. The remaining nine holes were added in 1923.

Under the railroad's benevolent patronage, Soangetaha Club activities and membership prospered and expanded through the next 60 years. By 1961, however, diesel locomotives had replaced steam power and the water from Lake Rice was no longer required. The railroad deeded all 252 acres to Knox College, stipulating that all funds derived from the property be applied to a permanent endowment fund for scholarships. President H. C. Murphy wrote: "We have always wanted to strengthen . . . the important small colleges located on our railroad. Since our relationship with Knox College is unusual, in that the college donated property for our station and yards in Galesburg over a century ago, I am particularly happy that we can return a favor."

The college then turned a favor to Soangetaha Club by selling the golfing / lake area for modest payments of \$1,800 per year for

50 years at no interest. For the first time, Soangetaha owned its clubhouse and golfing links which the membership had been faithfully developing for over 70 years.

The club had joined the Central Illinois Country Club Association by then and participated in golf and tennis tournaments across Illinois.

Soangetaha has played host to numerous golf championships: in 1959 and 1972 we hosted the National Left Handed Golfers Tournament; the men's state amateur in 1947, 1969, and 1983; the women's state amateur in 1982 and 1991; and the women's junior state amateur in 1952. Joining us in 1994 was the men's state senior amateur, and in 1995 we will host the women's state senior amateur.

Our fine golf course has been a source of pride for its members. In the early 60's, Interstate 74 was constructed which divided an adjacent farm land in two. 87 acres were purchased which provided space for 3 new golf holes (holes 1, 2, & 3) and 68 building lots along the new fairways. A new parking lot was constructed where hole #1 had been and Hole #2 became the driving range. Because of drainage problems from the new highway, ponds were constructed on No. 5. Later, a new sprinkling system for tees and greens was installed.





In the 70's a new golf shop / cart barn, maintenance shed, and half-way house were constructed. Six greens were rebuilt (5, 7, 8, 11, 14, and 16), and drinking fountains were added to the course. The memorial tree program was also introduced during this decade and continues to provide beautiful plantings for the golf course. Recent changes include cart paths, bridges on holes #15 & #16, tees, sand traps, and shelters.

The grounds surrounding the clubhouse and pool reflect progression through the years. At present, beautiful flowers, trees, and shrubs form a appropriate frame for the clubhouse, which still has the charm and personality of another era. Over the years, it was remodeled as needed without sacrificing any of its traditional appearance.

In the 50's, air conditioning was added, while in the 60's, major work was done to the clubhouse, a swimming pool was constructed in response to health concerns about swimming in

ft. to the north side, enlarging the mixed grill and cocktail lounge. The kitchen was modernized with several pieces of new equipment and this allowed the staff to better serve the Soangetaha members. In the 80's, with the sale of land and development of Ottawa Trail, Soangetaha Country Club paid the remaining amount owed to Knox College. For the first time in almost 100 years, the land was finally owned by the same group of people who derived so much pleasure from its use.

In preparation for this Centennial, the Ball Room has been restored to its original condition, new furniture added, and historical memorabilia displayed throughout. We are especially proud of our new Hall of Presidents with pictures of each president and their tenure hung on the wall. The Club is lovely, with each generation contributing new ideas.

The five professors would be proud of the legacy they started and we dedicate our Centennial in their memory. We appreciate the many members who have given of their time



*A view of the eighteenth green and the clubhouse beyond.*

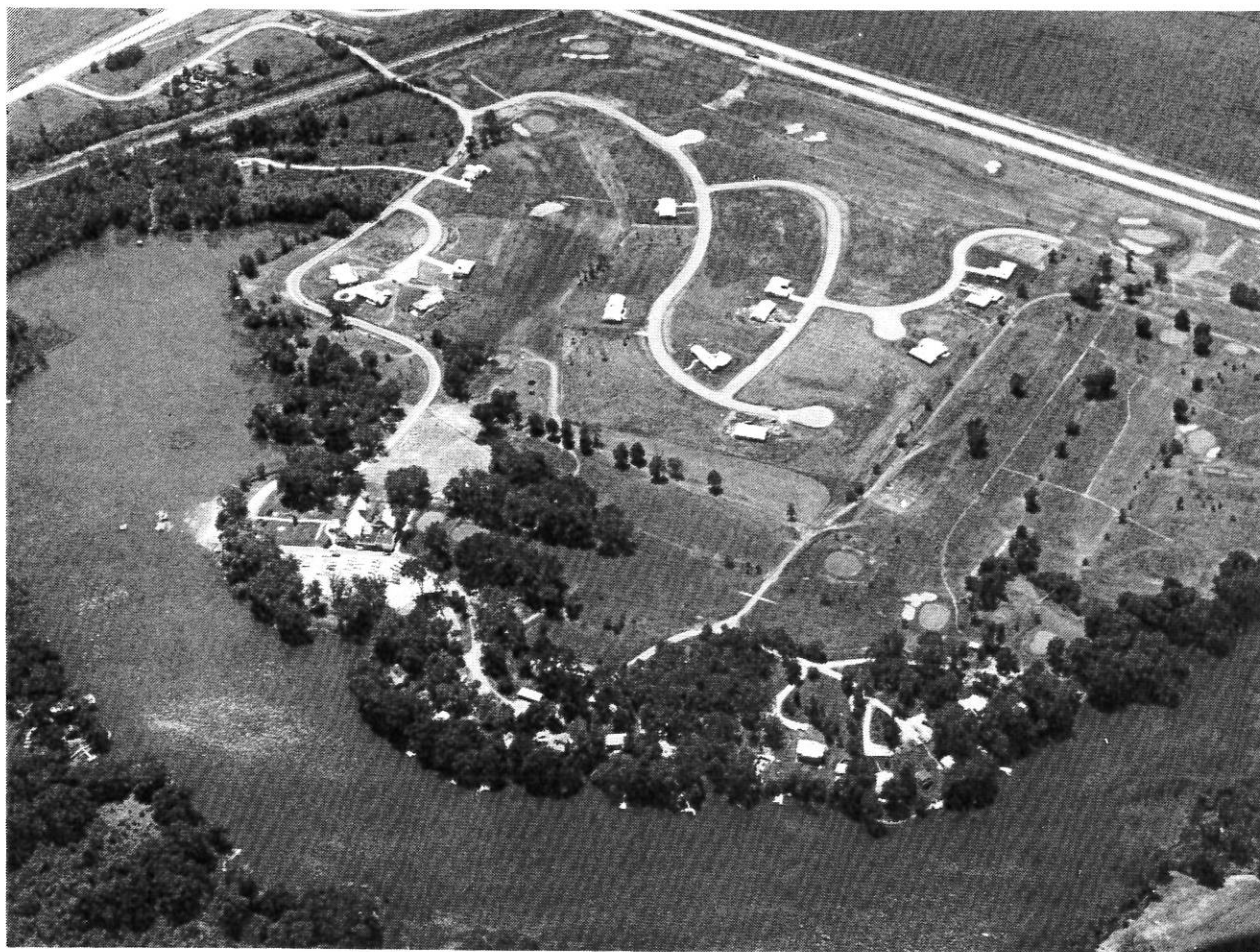
the lake, and a sanitary system was installed.

The 70's saw annexation to the city of Galesburg, which provided better fire protection and insurance benefits, and clubhouse remodeling with the addition of 12

and talents to make this a better place, and we salute our excellent staff who have served us beautifully over the years.

Our club is always challenging and always traditions.  
changing, and we are proud of its heritage and

## One hundred years and still going strong!



*Circa. 1965 aerial view of "this side of the lake".*