OUR HISTORY

It all began in 1921 as the result of efforts by Congressmen Oscar E. Bland and O.R. Luhring of Indiana. They felt the need for a Club where Members of Congress could meet socially with businessmen. Chevy Chase and Columbia Country Clubs were both in existence but they were mostly for Washingtonians and did not specialize in members of Congress. The idea was taken to Herbert Hoover, who at the time was the Secretary of Commerce, and he agreed to help wholeheartedly.

Next, a Founders' Club was established to draw up plans. A prospectus was written and circulated to Members of Congress and the business community on a nationwide basis inviting lifetime memberships for $1,000 each. An architect was commissioned to create a model so those prospective members would be able to see what the future clubhouse would look like. This model has been taken out of storage, rehabilitated and is displayed in History Hall. In a few months, enough memberships were sold to make the dream come true. Among some of the early members were John D. Rockefeller, the duPonts, Walter Chrysler, William Randolph Hearst, Harvey S. Firestone, James W. Gerard, Mrs. Rockefeller McCormick, Howard E. Coffin, Bernard B. Baruch, Eugene G. Grace, John J. Raskob, Edward L. Doheny, Julius Rosenwald, A. Mitchell Palmer, Thomas Fortune Ryan, Harry E. Sinclair, O.P. VanSweringen, Larz Anderson and Charles C. Glover and son.

Construction of the Club took just two and one-half years from conception to completion. On May 23, 1924, Congressional Country Club opened its doors to more than 7,000 persons of national and local prominence invited to the Gala Opening. Back in those days BYOB accompanied invitations instead of RSVP's. At the time, Washington had only two streetcar systems. Such notables who managed to make it to the party were President and Mrs. Coolidge and Chief Justice (formerly the 27th President) William Howard Taft, not to mention the Marine Band that greeted the arriving guests at the entrance to the Club.

The Club has a rich history of U.S. Presidents being members or visiting the Club. Presidents Coolidge, Taft, Hoover, Wilson and Harding were lifetime members of the Club. President Eisenhower and his Cabinet regularly retreated to the Club's greens. In recent times, Presidents George H. W. Bush, Bill

Clinton, and Barack Obama have visited the Club.

The Club, in its early years, had no real budget and for the most part was operating beyond its means. After much financial negotiation, the Club got back on its feet in 1941 and went bravely on. Then, in 1943 the Club was leased to the Government. The Office of Strategic Services moved in and trained its men in espionage, sabotage, parachuting and other skills.

The Club was returned to its members in 1945 where it presently remains. The Club's original purpose has been transformed to that of a family club with excellent facilities for golf, tennis, swimming, bowling and dining. Being one of the few clubs in the Washington area with an indoor swimming pool, Congressional now stands as the number one Platinum Club in the Nation. During the following years, the Club and its members, as a tribute to the game of golf, which had rendered so much enjoyment to the membership, graciously offered its facilities to several major golfing events. In 1959, the USGA Women's Amateur was hosted. In 1964, the entire membership and staff worked diligently to make the 1964 U.S. Open an unforgettable event. In 1976, the 58th PGA National Championship was played at Congressional which, due to the hard work, talent and esprit de corps of the membership and staff, went down in history as the biggest PGA Championship ever.

In the summer of 1977 the Club completed nine additional holes to meet the demand of its golfing members, thus providing two challenging 18-hole golf courses. From 1980 to 1986 Congressional Country Club hosted the prestigious and nationally televised PGA TOUR event (Kemper Open). In 1995, Congressional was host to the U.S. Senior Open.

The 1997 U.S. Open was a particularly memorable event. Jack Nicklaus concluded his 150th major tournament since 1957 at this event. Other notable golfers at the event included Tiger Woods, Arnold Palmer, Ernie Els, Tom Lehman, and defending champion Steve Jones. Ernie Els was the winner of the 1997 U.S. Open. In 2007-2009 & 2012-2013, Congressional hosted the AT&T National, a PGA Tour Event. In 2011, Congressional was honored once again to host the U.S. Open. The championship was ultimately won by Rory McIlroy. In 2014 and 2016 Congressional hosted the Quicken Loans National. In September of 2018, Congressional partnered with the PGA of America bringing Major Championships back to Congressional. In addition to representing America for the 2036 Ryder Cup, Congressional will host five Major Championships and two National Championships over the next two decades.

Congressional is a Club with a storied past and a bright future.

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