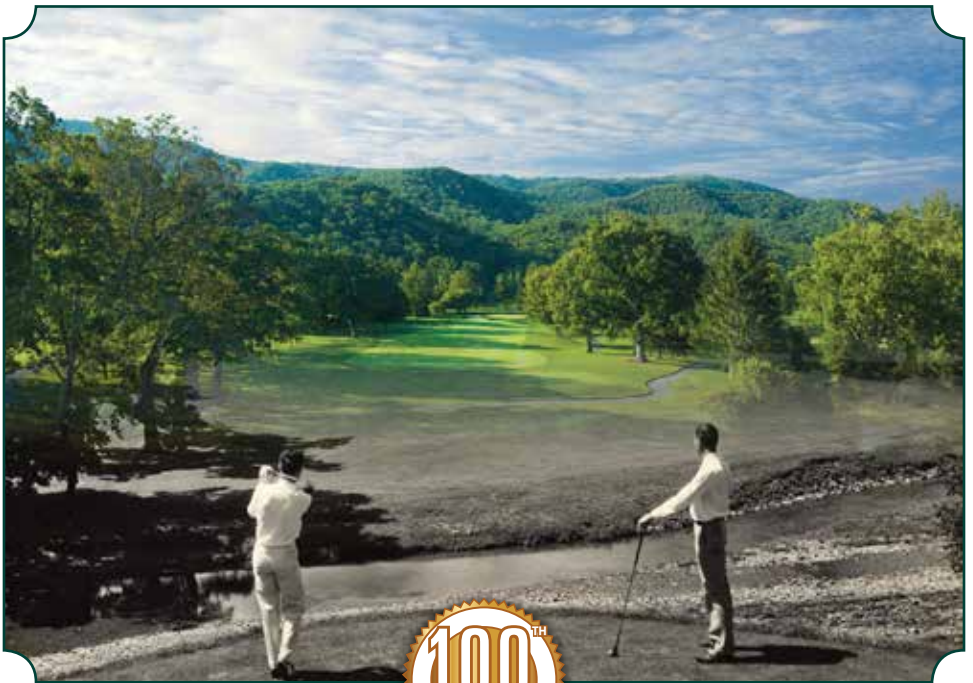


The  
*Old White*

100 Years of The Old White  
1914 – 2014



The  
*Greenbrier*<sup>®</sup>  
AMERICA'S RESORT

300 W. Main St. • White Sulphur Springs, WV 24986 • [greenbrier.com](http://greenbrier.com)

## The Early Years: 1913 – 1942



The story of The Old White truly began in 1913 with an idea by the Chesapeake and Ohio Railway and a man named Frederick Sterry. Shortly after completing the construction of The Greenbrier Hotel in 1913 the C & O Railway charged Mr. Sterry, The Greenbrier's

Manager, with finding the right man to design and build a world class golf course. Sterry, who also opened The Plaza Hotel in New York, immediately reached out to Charles Blair Macdonald, the man now known as the “father of American golf course architecture.” Along with his surveyor Seth Raynor, Macdonald set out for the mountains of West Virginia to carve out a masterpiece.

Macdonald quickly began studying the natural contours of the valley and of Howard's Creek, very different from those of Long Island, looking for the characteristics necessary to craft some of his famous hole designs. In very little time he and Raynor had a routing in place that would include such famous holes as “Redan”, “Biarritz”, “Alps”, “Punchbowl” and many others. A writer for *Golf Illustrated* commented that “Two years ago the greater part of what is now the new course at White Sulphur springs was an expanse of brown stubble intermingled with rocks and stones. Today it is as if an emerald green carpet had been spread over the whole floor the narrow valley in the heart of the West Virginia Mountains. No more beautiful surroundings exists for any golf links in any quarter of the globe.”



In 1936 an unknown kid from Hot Springs, Virginia arrived at The Greenbrier for his new job as an Assistant Golf Professional. Few knew it but this young man would



go on to become arguable the greatest golfer ever and enjoy a nearly 60 year relationship with The Greenbrier. This young man was, of course, Sam Snead. However, only a few months later Sam's tenure at The Greenbrier almost came to an abrupt end after striking his tee shot on the 335 yard 5th Hole. As Sam put it "that little dog caught some breeze and just kept going" ultimately bounding onto the green and striking the rear end of Alva Bradley, a member of the Board of Directors. Bradley was steaming mad until he learned it was Sam's tee shot, not his second shot, that had hit him. After learning this Bradley immediately hired Sam as his personal golf instructor.

### **World War II – The Greenbrier Becomes Ashford General Hospital : 1942 – 1946**

On September 31st, 1942 the United States War Department purchased The Greenbrier from the C&O Railway and converted the hotel into a two thousand bed Army hospital. Along with that transformation all of the resorts activities, golf included, became part of the "reconditioning program" for injured soldiers. Colonel Clyde Beck, Commander of Ashford General Hospital, who happened to be an avid golfer himself made sure the golf courses were kept in good shape. As the war went on a Prisoner of War camp was built adjacent to the hospital and German POW's captured in North Africa were put to work throughout the hospital, including a team of forty dedicated to maintaining the golf courses.



Over the years thousands of patients as well as military and civilian hospital staff enjoyed The Old White. Special tournaments were held for disabled soldiers and lessons were even offered by Corporal Peter Petroske, formerly

the Golf Professional at Meriden Country Club in Connecticut. Sam Snead even visited whenever he was in the area, regularly giving lessons, putting on clinics and demonstrations and playing the course. Even General Dwight D. Eisenhower was spotted playing The Old White several times during a visit to Ashford General Hospital in 1945.

### **The Greenbrier Resort Reborn: 1946 – 2002**



With World War II coming to a close the Army found itself without use for Ashford General Hospital. In what is considered one of the best things that has ever happened at The Greenbrier the C&O Railway quickly stepped in and repurchased the property from the

Army, immediately launching a total refurbishment of the hotel. Sam Snead, returning after his wartime stint in the U.S. Navy, renewed his position as the Golf Professional. In 1948, as part of a party to celebrate the reopening of The Greenbrier, the resort organized a golf competition. Snead and his longtime rival Ben Hogan were the stars of the show but were joined by celebrities like the Duke of Windsor, Bing Crosby and a group of Kennedy family members.

During that same celebration three-time British Open winner Henry Cotton bested Snead, Hogan and the other professionals to win his first professional event in the United States, taking home \$1,000 for his efforts. The party and the golf tournament were such a success that it was decided to repeat them annually, becoming The Greenbrier Open. The event was one of the most popular in the nation attracting professionals like Arnold Palmer, Jimmy Demaret, Gary Player, Dow Finsterwald, Billy Casper, Gene Sarazen, George Fazio, Bob Toski and many others over the years. The Duke of Windsor and Bob Hope continued to join the field for years to come. Hope even shot the best round of his career on The Old White, scoring a 76 in 1953. Sports Illustrated called the event "one of the country's two or three most glamorous pro-am tournaments."

In the 1970's The Greenbrier Course became the central focus of golf at the resort. Jack Nicklaus was selected to reconstruct one of the courses in preparation for the 1979 Ryder Cup. Many expected that project to take place on The Old White but Nicklaus stated that you "leave the best course alone and redesign the second best course, leaving you with two very good courses." Beginning in 1976 the course was completely renovated and would go on to host the Ryder Cup in 1979. The Greenbrier Course would be the home for championship golf hosting Champions Tour events in the 1980's and the Solheim Cup in 1994. If the days of The Old White being considered the "championship course" were passed it still lived on as the sentimental favorite of many.



### **The Return of The Old White: 2001 – 2014**



As The Greenbrier transitioned into the 21st Century it was becoming more clear that The Old White, once the gem of The Greenbrier, had lost some of its luster. In 2001 Robert Harris, The Greenbrier's Director Golf, presented the idea of restoring The Old White to its former glory. Harris and others

involved with the project began to develop a plan to recapture Macdonald's strategic design features and hole templates that had been lost to time. Using The Greenbrier's impressive archive of historical photos and information they were able to carefully plan out the restoration project.

Beginning in the fall of 2002 sections of the course began their transformation before reopening the course for play the following

spring. Over the next four years the dramatic transformation completely changed the look and feel of The Old White. Features like "Dragon's Teeth", distinctive mounds that had once been found throughout the course, the Biarritz green and its one of a kind contours and the distinctive mound in the middle of the 18th green had returned to The Old White. In May of 2006 The Greenbrier's newly appointed Golf Professional Emeritus Tom Watson hit the ceremonial tee ball down the first fairway. He then stepped to the podium and declared "This is my favorite opening hole in all of golf." Others agreed with Watson's praise of The Old White including Golf Digest, who named the course the "Best Redesigned Course in America" for 2007. The Old White was truly back.

In 2009 The Greenbrier was purchased by Jim Justice, a passionate West Virginian who quickly made it known that he intended to once again show off The Old White to the world by securing a PGA TOUR. In July of 2010 the best golfers in the world competed in The Greenbrier Classic, immediately making The Old White the oldest course on the PGA TOUR. In the years since praise and recognition for The Greenbrier Classic and The Old White have only continued to grow, as it is consistently noted as being on of the best courses and best events on the PGA TOUR. The games greats like Phil Mickelson, Tiger Woods, Bubba Watson, Webb Simpson and even Tom Watson have competed on this historic course.



Now, maybe more than ever, The Old White is poised to continue as the leading example of why The Greenbrier is one of the great golf resorts in the country. It has come a long way in the last 100 years, and one can only imagine where it will go over its next 100!

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