

A Brief History of the Griscom Cup



Griscom Cup

The Women's Golf Association of Philadelphia initiated an intercity competition when, in 1898, it challenged a group of women from the Morris County Country Club, an all-women's club in New Jersey, to a match at Merion Golf Club in Haverford, Pennsylvania. The informal relationship lasted two years.

When the WMGA was established in the fall of 1899 and began conducting competitions in the spring and fall of 1900, it assumed the responsibility for selecting an 18-member team from throughout the

Metropolitan region. That was also the year the Challenge Cup was donated by the Griscom family. Conflicting reports made it unclear whether the donation was made by Clement Griscom in honor of his daughter Frances, who was the reigning US Amateur Champion, or by Frances in honor of her father.

Most of the early Griscom Cup players were familiar with one another through their participation in the U.S. Women's Amateur Championships. In fact, in 1900, Miss Frances Griscom defeated Margaret Curtis, from Boston, for the Women's Amateur title. The next year, Boston petitioned to challenge for the Cup. Their petition was accepted in 1902, and in an interesting aside, that first three-city challenge was held at what was then called Baltusrol Links. The following year saw the beginning of the annual rotation of the tournament among the three cities.

Over the course of time, the format and scoring were modified, as was the number of players on a team. Originally, the team score was the total of the number of holes by which each player won her match. In 1910, that was changed so that one point per match was allocated. A final amendment in 1941 established the Three-Ball Match Play format used today. The number of players was reduced to 15 in 1910, to 11 in 1947, to seven in 1952, and at the Centennial Celebration at Merion Golf Club in 1998, the format was changed to eight players and an alternate.

The three cities have been remarkably competitive throughout the 116 years. New York has won 42 times, Philadelphia has won 43 times, and Massachusetts has won 28 times. Equally impressive is the fact that there have only been three ties, in 1957, 1996, and 2007. The Challenge has been conducted every year, with the exception of the World War I period (1917-1918), the World War II period (1942-1945), in 1984 because of inclement weather, and 2020 because of the COVID-19 pandemic.