

## History of the Empire State Bonspiel

On January 11,12,13, 1954 The Schenectady Women Curlers held its second annual two event Bonspiel. It was poorly attended, only five clubs entered rinks. That year the Utica Glengarries canceled their Bonspiel due to lack of entries. The Westchester Wicks held their Bonspiel, but had difficulty filling it. It was apparent that too many clubs were planning yearly Bonspiels.

Mrs. John Fitzgerald of Utica was very concerned about this and decided something should be done. She contacted the Chairwomen of the Westchester Wicks, Mrs. John Fowler, and Mrs. Timothy P. Ryan, of the Schenectady Women Curlers, to inquire if their clubs would be interested in considering a combined Bonspiel of the three clubs. The Bonspiel would rotate among the three New York State Clubs. She felt this would interest enough outside teams to have one well-attended, successful bonspiel a year.

The boards of the three clubs thought enough of Mrs. Fitzgerald's idea to arrange a meeting of representatives from each of the three clubs to be held in New York City at the same time the U.S.W.C.A. was meeting there.

This meeting was held at the Ambassador East Hotel on May 5, 1954. Present were : Mrs. Ronald Brownell and Mrs. Edgar Lortz of Utica; Mrs. Timothy Ryan and Mrs. Ashton Swick of Schenectady; Mrs. John F. Fowler, Jr., Mrs. Rene Clarke and Mrs. Lincoln Siebert of the Westchester Wicks. (Following the meeting of the U.S.W.C.A. Mrs. James Lotridge of Schenectady and Mrs. Fitzgerald of Utica joined the discussion).

The main purpose of the meeting was to formulate ideas regarding a rotating Bonspiel to submit to the respective clubs for their consideration. The name "Empire State Bonspiel" was suggested by Dr. Robert Hurd of Utica. Everyone present agreed it was very appropriate.

The following were suggestions made at this meeting:

- 1) Enter into a three-year agreement to try this plan:
  - a) 1st year, 1955, to be held at St. Andrew's Golf Club
  - b) 2nd year, 1956, to be held at Utica Curling Club
  - c) 3rd year, 1957, to be held at Schenectady Curling Club
- 2) Club Trophies:
  - a) Everyone agreed it was essential that each club maintained the identify of its own trophy and Mrs. Ryan suggested that trophies rotate with the Bonspiel. Whichever club is hostess, will have its trophy as the first event, the following hostess club will be the second event, and the last club will be the third event.
  - b) A new medal, to be known as the Empire State Bonspiel medal, shall be awarded the Bonspiel winners, in addition to the first event medal.
- 3) The dates for the first Empire were set for February 8,9,10,11,1955. The evenings are to be kept "social", with no evening curling.
- 4) There should be no limit to the number of teams invited, and the size of the Bonspiel should be at the discretion of the club involved, determined by the number of sheets available.

The club Chairwomen took these ideas to their clubs and all three accepted them. The plan was put into effect for three years.

On May 22, 1954, Mrs. Swick contacted the State for permission to use the State seal. This was denied, but it was suggested that she should get in touch with Bastion Brothers of Rochester who did work for New York State and was familiar with the restrictions on the use of the seal in its entirety. She was informed we might use a portion of the seal and they sent sketches for our approval. This correspondence took much of the summer. They hoped to have samples for the next meeting of the representatives. The second meeting was held at the Biitmore Hotel in New York City on October 19, 1954. The same representatives were present. The following happened at this meeting:

- 1) All clubs approved the design submitted by Bastion Brothers. The price of the die was \$196.00 plus \$3.69 per pin with the cost to be shared by the clubs. A three-year supply of the pins was ordered.
- 2) Mrs. Clarke presented a sketch of the Bonspiel pin to be sold to the participants of the Bonspiel. Her husband, Rene, had done the design for this pin. It was decided to use different color enamel for each club, green for Utica, blue for Westchester Wicks, and red for Schenectady. (later changed)
- 3) Each club suggested names of teams to be invited to the first Empire, which would serve as a nucleus for coming years. These were: Heathers of Chicago, St. George of Montreal, Winter Club of Quebec, The Country Club, Nashua, Toronto Granite Club, Hamilton Thistles, Indian Hill, Milwaukee Kilties, Lindsay Ontario, Madison Tories, Winchester, Wauwatosa, Skokie, plus the three hostess clubs. Alternates were Exmoor, Glenview, Ottawa, and C
- 4) Each of the three New York State Clubs was to be represented by two teams at all times.
- 5) If substitute teams were necessary, the first shall come from the hostess club, the second from the next hostess, and the third from the third hostess club.
- 6) Each hostess club was to arrange and run the social end of the Bonspiel.

(Jean Ryan compiled this history)

In 2002, the Pringles Sister's Saucer was retired. Marcia and Tom Garber replaced Utica's runner-up event medal with the Helen Hurd Trophy in honor of Marcia's mother Mrs. Robert (Helen) Hurd.

In 2003 the Clark and Seibert trophies were retired and returned to the St. Andrew Club for their history room. Charlene and Jack Fitzgerald, both members of the Schenectady Curling Club, offered to replace those trophies with the Beulah Fitzgerald Trophy and medal.

2004 saw the addition of a fourth event, the Beulah Fitzgerald Trophy and medal. These are given in honor of Mrs. John (Beulah) Fitzgerald, the person who inspired our three clubs to start this event in 1954. The medals were given to the winners of the fourth event until 2008. When Rochester became a co-sponsor of the Empire State Bonspiel, This became the 5th event medal.

In 2005, at the request of Amanda Vickerson and Dorothy Roach, The Empire State Bonspiel was pleased to welcome the Rochester Curling Club as a fourth host club. Rochester's Dorothy Roach designed the Rochester Thistle Trophy and Phyllis Bryce Ely designed the medals. The Thistle. Trophy and medals were presented as the winners' pins for the first time in 2009.

(updated 2013)