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HOLE

THE GOLF COURSE

NEW CHALLENGES

Golf on the rocks outside Boston



WARREN MARR PHOTOGRAPHY

The 17th, a short par four, fits the rolling terrain hand-in-glove.

NEW ENGLAND'S trademark stone walls are not as some believe, the remnants of colonial property disputes. Rather, the soil is so abundantly rock strewn that 18th-century farmers were obligated to remove the granite hunks by hand. Having few transport options, they stacked them neatly along the roadways. Yankees are nothing if not tidy.

Some 250 years ago, one such homesteader named Cyprian Keyes farmed the land in Boylston, Massachusetts, 50 miles west of Boston. His house no longer stands, though a 19th-century wood-paneled music hall imported from England by turn-of-the-century landowners has been tastefully incorporated into the clubhouse at Cyprian Keyes Golf Club, a splendid 27-hole facility (full-sized 18 plus a nine-hole par-three course) that bears his name and takes spectacular advantage of the rugged New England countryside.

It seems Mr. Keyes didn't exactly rid the site of rock. Architect Mark Mungeam, a partner in the nearby firm of Cornish, Silva and Mungeam, was obliged to remove more than 35,000 cubic yards of granite during construction. That's two football fields, 10 feet deep. These modern times, Mungeam used dynamite. Such pyrotechnics and the designer's considerable skill have resulted in 18 impressive holes that weave their way through dense woods, traverse colorful marshlands, and play in the shade of moss-covered granite escarpments. Vertical drops of more than 80 feet make for stunning views; so stunning, in fact, the owners can't decide on a signature hole.

The par-three 11th -which plays 210 yards from a natural rock outcropping to an elegant, plateau green-is a strong candidate. So is the third hole, a double-dogleg par five that snakes through a forested valley floor to an elevated, marvelously contoured putting surface. It's hard to ignore the devilish par-four 13th nicknamed "Temptation," which plays across a marsh and says, "Bite off what you dare!" And lest we forget, there's the reachable par-five 18th, which sweeps downhill and bends gently to the right before finishing in the shadow of the clubhouse.

MUNGEAM CORNISH GOLF DESIGN, INC.

From the tips, Cyprian Keyes is not for the meek or delusional. The New England Section of the PGA has chosen to house its headquarters (and Hall of Fame) here; its members are some of the few who can handle all 6,844 yards. In other words, players incapable of honestly appraising their skill will go home in body bags. Those with a firm grip on reality, however, will find Cyprian Keyes no less striking from the forward tees (there are 5 sets in all). Architects pay a great deal of lip service these days to multiple tees and their effect on playability. Mungeam has delivered, but only if golfers cooperate.

Of course, it wasn't all blasting and mayhem during construction. Mungeam has made stylish use of the existing terrain, and putting surfaces are understated but exacting. He also managed to route the course around 50 acres of preserved wetlands, including 11 set aside specifically so the marbled salamander, an endangered species, can feed itself, procreate, and...do whatever it is that salamanders do without fear of intrusion. Indeed, the salamander has been immortalized in the Cyprian Keyes logo, a fitting reminder of man's coexistence with nature.

Somewhere Mr. Keyes is smiling. He's also wishing he'd had some of that dynamite.

Green fee is \$40 Monday to Thursday, \$50 Friday to Sunday. Walkers are welcome. Cyprian Keyes is a spikeless facility. Golf shop: (508) 869-9900.

BY HAL PHILLIPS

GOLF MAGAZINE JUNE 1998

IN THE NEWS