Looking back on the last year of the 19th century it seems that many things were poised to happen. Theodore Roosevelt would be elected Vice president in the fall election and would be President by September of the next year; the American League was in the process of organizing for their first season; within 3 years Henry Ford would found the Ford Motor Company. On April 14, 1900 a group of outdoorsmen filed the papers necessary to incorporate the Rockwell Springs Trout Club. Thus began the development of what has grown to be one of the finest Clubs of its kind in the United States.

Located on approximately 125 acres, about two miles southwest of the village of Castalia, Ohio, the Club’s greatest asset is its stream. Fed by an aquifer that surfaces as a spring at the far eastern end of the property, the Club’s water flows from the spring at a constant 50°. While the flow does vary somewhat, it is consistent enough that the water stays cool throughout even the hottest summers and remains essentially ice free during even the coldest winters. After exiting the Club’s grounds the stream is known as Little Pickerel Creek, which flows northwest from the Club for a few miles until it enters Sandusky Bay.

Trout were first introduced to the streams fed by the springs of the Castalia area in the late 1800’s. A group known as the
Bellevue Trout Club fished the mill stream on the property before the current club was formed. By 1903 the Club had constructed the first sections of the meandering stream that are still in use today. For the next 60 years the stream changed very little.

In the 1960’s the Club was able to acquire an additional 25 acres that adjoined the main grounds. That acquisition led to a major stream expansion, adding five sections of stream as well as four large pools. The 1980’s brought another expansion when the point where the stream passes under Vickery Road to enter the main grounds was moved about 100 yards to the east. Another half mile of stream was added,

increasing the length of stream on the main grounds to about two miles. Between 1995 and 2004, an extensive renovation project was undertaken on the original 1903 stream. Those streams were relatively uniform in both width and depth and had mud bottoms. Some areas were widened, others narrowed and many sections of the bottom were lined with river gravel. These changes have greatly increased both the amount and the variety of aquatic animal life in the stream, helping to create a more natural habitat for the trout. The stream renovations were also accompanied by a substantial increase in the amount of natural trout reproduction occurring in the stream.

During the 1980’s a mechanical aera-

tion device was installed over the spring at the stream’s source, allowing fish to thrive in the sections of stream north of the main Club grounds. The first year of the 21st century saw a major development of this area of the stream with the addition of three pools and the reconstruction of the connecting sections of stream. The streams from the spring to the main grounds, known as Grinton’s Gulch and Sadler’s Meadow, are set aside as strictly catch and release areas. These areas provide a bit more isolated and challenging fishing experience than the streams of the Club’s main grounds. A catch and release option is also available for most of the streams on the main grounds.

Within a year or two of the Club’s founding, in addition to the 1903 stream, a club-
house was built that contained kitchen and dining facilities, as well as eight overnight rooms on the second floor. At about the same time another building was constructed, on the site of an old grist mill. The ground floor of that building served as a lounge area while the basement housed a hatchery to supply fish for the Club. Today that building anchors the current Clubhouse with the lounge area now known as the Fireplace Room. There was also a small barn on the property that housed some chickens and a cow or two which provided eggs and dairy products for the Club dining room. The barn still stands on the property, although it was converted to provide overnight accommodations over 50 years ago and is now known as the Streamside Cottage. The 1960’s additional acreage also included a small home that was converted into overnight accommodations. In the late 1980’s another overnight building, “The Willows”, was added and the overnight rooms on the second floor of the old Clubhouse were retired. In 2003 the “Oxbow Lodge” was built overlooking a section of the Sadler’s Meadow stream north of Vickery Road. It has four bedrooms that share a lounge area featuring a fireplace and a big screen television.

The Club built a new Clubhouse in 1995 that features a dining room seating 75, a private dining/meeting room that will seat up to 25 for a meeting or 36 for a meal and a bar seating up to 30. The Clubhouse also has a well stocked Orvis tackle shop, fly tying room, television room and, of course, the 100 plus year old Fireplace Room. There is also a spacious locker room on the lower level as well as a billiards room in the space originally occupied by the Club hatchery. A new parking lot and main entryway were completed in 1998.

Rockwell Springs has always been restricted to fly-fishing, and only trout are stocked in the streams. The majority of the fish that are stocked are rainbows, with both brook and brown trout also present. Sources of food to sustain the trout are varied and plentiful, typical of what one finds in a spring creek. Sculpins, sticklebacks, crayfish, scuds, cress bugs and several varieties of caddis are common. Midges
are abundant and there are a few mayflies present, mainly blue-winged olives. Members and their guests fish throughout the year and many have found the winter months to be their favorite time to fish the Club’s ice free streams.

Fly-fishing for trout is what the Club is about, but even fly-fishers eat and sleep, and some occasionally have a drink or two. The Club operates a full service, chef supervised, restaurant that is open daily from 7:30 am through 9:00 pm. Four buildings contain overnight accommodations, totaling 18 rooms with 32 total beds. There is also a well stocked bar where members can tell fish stories while honoring the Scottish roots of fly-fishing by sampling our collection of single malts.

The Club, as it exists today, is incorporated as a non-profit club, owned by the whole of the membership, governed by a Board of Directors, with a membership of about 875, from 20 different states. The Club is open all year, operating seven days a week in the summer, six days a week in the spring and fall and five days a week in the winter. Club facilities are available only to Club members and their guests, and are not open to the general public.

Rockwell Springs is known as a quiet, peaceful haven where it’s members and their guests can come to relax and escape from the stresses of everyday life. Over the years, many Club members have taken to heart the message on the bronze plaque in the Club’s bar. The plaque carries a quote from the naturalist John Burroughs that reads:

“I come here often to find myself. It is so easy to get lost in the world.”

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