

# Hill Stadium

Thornton Academy boasts a long and storied athletic history that dates back to the 1890s when the first interscholastic sports teams began competing with other area schools in a variety of activities. In its rich tradition of athletic excellence, some of Thornton's greatest performers and most memorable moments are linked with Dr. Paul S. Hill, Jr. Stadium, the school's main outdoor competition venue. In operation since 1980, Hill Stadium has been home to the school's football, soccer, field hockey, cross country, outdoor track and field, and lacrosse teams and is generally regarded as one of the top high school playing venues in southern Maine.

Named in honor of Dr. Paul S. Hill, Jr., a prominent Saco physician who also served as President of the Thornton Academy Board of Trustees and was a major benefactor of the project, Hill Stadium became home to many Thornton Academy teams beginning in the fall of 1980. Previously, the Maroon and Gold played football games and held track meets across the street at what is currently Rite Aid.

Dr. Paul S. Hill, Jr. was born in Saco in 1906 and graduated from Thornton Academy in 1923. After attending Bowdoin College and Johns Hopkins Medical School, he eventually became Chief of Staff at Webber Hospital and owned the former Trull Hospital in Biddeford.

One of Dr. Hill's greatest passions was his service to his alma mater. He joined the Board of Trustees in 1938 and became president in 1966. During his time he was considered to be one of the city's leading citizens. At the time of the stadium dedication in 1980, one resident noted, "[There is] no one more appropriate than Doc Hill for whom to name the new stadium."

The first athletic contest played on the new Hill Stadium turf took place on September 6, 1980, when Thornton Academy faced long-time rival Biddeford in an exhibition football contest. Later in the 1980s, Thornton fans entering Hill Stadium were met with a familiar sight: the maroon and gold colored archway that had served as a ticket booth and entry point for football goers on the opposite side of Main Street from the time of the Great Depression through 1979 was moved to its current location.

Given the quality of its playing surface and other amenities offered by the facility, including two large grandstands and a modern concession stand, Hill Stadium has been selected on numerous occasions to host major events in football and track and field, including the very first Maine Shrine Lobster Bowl in July 1990 and numerous league and state championship track and field meets. On two

occasions Thornton Academy has hosted the New England Track and Field Championships and now hosts this event on a tri-annual basis.

Beginning in the spring of 2011, Thornton Academy embarked upon a new journey by replacing the original sod of Hill Stadium with artificial turf and by adding new track and field lights to this venerable home of Thornton athletics. Although the stadium has a markedly different look and will be utilized for night contests in the future, many aspects of the project reflect the spirit of generosity of Dr. Hill and his fellow trustees who approved the original project in the first place. A portion of the financing for the project included funds originally generated by Dr. Hill and his colleagues in the early 1980s.

Today Hill Stadium remains the envy of schools in southern Maine and throughout New England and is one of the top on-campus athletic playing facilities in the region. The vision of Dr. Hill and his associates to provide a high quality playing facility for Thornton Academy student-athletes has entered an exciting new phase. For the current generation of Thornton Academy student-athletes and fans and those who will follow them, it is a source of great pride and will continue to be a scene of great memories.