



THE RIDGEWOOD COUNTRY CLUB

A MEMORABLE HISTORY OF THE RIDGEWOOD COUNTRY CLUB

August 2012 – Almost Near Misses and Hole Changes

“Well done Mr. Tillinghast, but would you please reconsider the following holes...”

With so much to appreciate about the Ridgewood golf course and property, it is interesting to note that the club has dodged bullets that might have resulted in unthinkable changes. These “near misses” and a review of holes that could have been built differently are the subject of this article.

In 1948 application was made to construct a midget auto racing track in Paramus, west of Route 17 between Midland and Ridgewood Avenues. The project would have included a parking facility for 5,000 vehicles. The club joined with its neighbors to defeat the proposal.

During the mid 1950s the nation’s highway expansion program threatened our golf course. There was fear that construction of the Garden State Parkway would cut through club property. 3 and 4 East would have been lost completely, and portions of 5 East and both 5 and 6 Center taken away. Fortunately, the club lost only 1.5 acres at the southeast corner and no holes were affected. Arcola and Upper Montclair did not fare as well; parkway construction forced major redesigns of their courses.

In the early and mid 1960s the club’s property was again threatened as the creators of Bergen Community College sought a development site. Making matters worse, the mayor of Paramus wanted to seize the rest of the club’s property and make it part of the municipal Paramus golf course. Nine golf holes were lost, but fortunately they were taken from the formerly 18-hole, Bergen County-owned Orchard Hills course.



5 East in 1935

In 1973 high taxes and rising expenses prodded some board members to discuss defraying expenses by moving the club to a different site or building condominiums along the fairways!

The club has made many changes to the course in recent years. A common theme has been a desire to, as much as possible, restore Tillinghast's original layout. It is interesting to note that several holes differ significantly from the architect's early drawings.

Center was to finish with a par-3 directly in front of the clubhouse. But the members and directors felt that none of the nines should end with a "one-shot" hole. As a result, 8 Center was conceived and 9 Center was redesigned.

Two possibilities were reviewed for bringing East to par 36. Originally 4 East was envisioned as a dogleg and the second of back-to-back par 5s with the green set in what is currently the wooded area. The plan was scrapped because the equipment of the day was inadequate to work in the swampy soil conditions. Moving the 4 East green 100 yards forward to its present location thwarted a plan to make 5 East a par 5.

Consideration was given to making 5 East a par 5 and locating the tee box next to the current 6 Center (Nickel Dime) tee area. But there was concern that errant tee balls would pass dangerously close to the moved-forward 4 East green.

3 Center was going to be the second of three consecutive par 5s, but this idea was rejected by the board.

6 Center, arguably the club's most famous hole, was different in Tillinghast's original sketches. He favored a more conventional-length par-4 with the green located where the current restroom facility is at the top of the hill. There was also talk of building a second, alternative green a little short of the current green on the upper left hillside. This would have given the current green relief from the flood of foot traffic on its very small surface.

In the early years the 1 East tee box was farther back. In 1936 an addition was added to the clubhouse out toward the back tee. This compounded an existing problem. Directionally challenged golfers were already hitting balls into the swimming pool. Shots hit into the marsh that preceded the current lake resulted in salt being tracked on players' shoes on to the 1 East and 9 East greens and fairways. Now misguided shots to the right began passing through the windows of the new addition. To the delight of swimmers and the disappointment of local glaziers, the tee was moved forward to its present location.

