



THE RIDGEWOOD COUNTRY CLUB

A MEMORABLE HISTORY OF THE RIDGEWOOD COUNTRY CLUB

July 19, 2012 – RCC During the Depression



After a Bird Shoot at RCC

It can be argued that the timing of the club's move to Paramus could not have been better. The former property in Ridgewood and Glen Rock was sold at the top of the Coolidge prosperity market in the late 1920's while the Paramus property was purchased at an attractive price. A case can also be made that the timing could not have been worse! A mere five months after the club's opening day tournament in late May came Black Tuesday, October 29, 1929, the beginning of the Great

Depression. Saddled with a high debt burden, a torrent of member resignations, and a collapse in the price at which new memberships could be sold, Ridgewood was in danger of joining the swelling ranks of country clubs that faced insolvency in the 1930s.

Ridgewood's survival was made possible by a brave and capable Board of Directors, skilled and determined management, and a small number of enthusiastic members who made it their mission to prevent membership decline. President Bob Stout served the club from 1931 -1940, by far the longest term of any president. True to his name, under his leadership the club operated at a profit every year. Believing the club should not just survive but thrive, a commitment was made to a new capital project every year. The new fairway watering system was completed in 1934 at the height of the Depression at a cost of \$20,000. The Club was run so efficiently that dues were actually decreased from \$200 to \$180 in the 1936 season.

Stout's legacy went beyond helping to save the club. A successful banker, he would later become the principal founder and president of The Valley Hospital in Ridgewood.

As the club worked its way through the Depression, it continued to evolve in other ways. In 1937 the board passed a resolution forbidding dogs from accompanying their masters in the dining room. There was more than one way to get a "birdie" at Ridgewood as bird shooting and trap shooting were popular activities.

Finding a caddie was not difficult as some 400 sought work at the club. A typical caddie averaged one loop per week.

In 1939 the tennis courts were built. The original blueprint called for their construction at the site of what is now the maintenance area. Fortunately, more forward-looking members prevailed. Don Budge, the leading tennis player in the world, played an exhibition at Ridgewood in 1940 as 1,500 spectators filled temporary bleachers.

Finally, rules on member attire underwent a key change. In 1941 club rules were changed to allow men to swim in topless bathing suits. Restrictions on women covering their tops were also eased; they would no longer be required to wear bathing caps!

