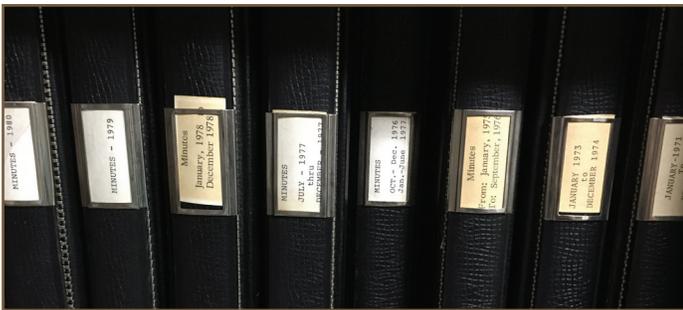




THE RIDGEWOOD COUNTRY CLUB

A MEMORABLE HISTORY OF THE RIDGEWOOD COUNTRY CLUB

A Few Minutes on the Minutes



RCC Minute Books

When RCC's Board Secretary records the minutes of meetings, he might be tempted to ask if it's worth the effort to leave a detailed record of what challenges the Board was facing at that time. In the future, will anyone really care? Kudos to past Secretaries as their work helps provide an interesting window into the Club's history.

"A horse is a horse, of course, of course..."

A previous history article explained how during the gas shortages of World War II, horse drawn carts were used to transport golfers from the Ridgewood train station to the course. The Club became actively involved in the transportation business as noted in March, 1943 the "Board authorized...purchase of horses, a wagon and other equipment to transport from the Club to bus stops." It appears that transportation duties were outsourced to local farmers because by September, 1943 authorization was given to "sell the horses."

But that would not be the last time that the Board turned its attention to equine issues. In January, 1959 there was discussion of the problems caused by "horseback riders on the course" and a suggestion was made to construct a "barbed wire fence at 5 Center." As recently as February, 1973 note was taken of "fairways and greens damaged" by horse hooves. Apparently, increased residential development and the closing of stables eventually solved the problem. *"Ohhhhh Wilbur!"*

World War II

As the country sacrificed during the war, the Club was forced to improvise. In November, 1941 it was reported that the "Traffic Advisory Committee of the War Office was making a survey of trucks available in case of emergency. The Club's trucks were deemed to be "available."

The aforementioned horses helped solve the problem of getting members to the Club while fuel was scarce. But the horses may have been snowbirds because in January, 1943 "after a thorough discussion of the new regulations prohibiting the use of gasoline for pleasure driving it was unanimously decided the only course left to the Directors was to temporarily close the clubhouse."

Fuel wasn't the only item in short supply. September, 1941 is the first of several entries describing a shortage of a pesticide, arsenate of lead. This problem was finally solved in August, 1947 where note was taken of the "approval by the United States Department of Agriculture and other authorities of a substitute for arsenate of lead for treating the course." The substitute was DDT Solution.

Golf Carts

The first recorded discussion of motorized golf carts appears in October, 1958 when the Golf and Greens committees came out squarely against them. By October, 1961 a letter was read requesting "carts be allowed for those of age or physical disability who can no longer play 18 holes on foot." (No attempt was made to define at what "age" a cart would be appropriate.) In August, 1964 a committee was formed to explore their use. The breakthrough came in June, 1965 when it was announced that the first golf cart would arrive for use on the upcoming July 4th weekend.

It didn't take long for the complaints against carts to begin flowing. In September, 1965 "the Chairman made an appeal for regulations that would prohibit carts when frost is on the ground." By May, 1970 the Board was seeking stronger actions against flagrant violators of cart policy. "Violators will be deprived of use of carts for 30 days." In April, 1972 feelings reached a fever pitch as Chairman Martinson "recommended the use of paid rangers on weekends and at outings." The Board did not agree and believed that the problem should be addressed through letters and the Tee Leaf. In June, 1975 a study was commissioned to explore creating new pathways to lessen the effects of carts.

Danger on 1 West

The RCC Paramus courses opened for play in 1929. By August, 1939 it was "suggested that a screen be set up to protect members and caddies being struck by golf balls driven from the 1 West tee." In April, 1953 it was "suggested as a safety measure, a rustic fence about six feet high be erected along the West course tee below the first tee box." It is not clear when the first fence was built but by May of 1963 there was a discussion about replacing it.

Unrelated to the danger issue, a change was approved in December, 1959 to convert the first 100 yards of 1 West fairway to rough.

No Out-of-Bounds on 3 East

When the professionals play this hole during the Barclays tournament, there are no white stakes along the left side boundary. Some members would prefer to play the hole the same way. As it turns out, this issue was first raised in June, 1931 as "discussion took place relative to penalty for lost ball in woods left of 3 East. The majority opinion was the stroke and distance penalty be continued."

Speaking of 3 East, the Sprout Brook used to follow a meandering course in the woods on the left of this hole. At some point in the 1930's, probably as a result of a WPA project, the brook was straightened. In July, 1954 a letter was received from the Buehler Engineering firm introducing the first of a flurry of problems as the midpoint of the brook had served as the boundary line between the RCC property and its neighbors on Route 17. New boundary agreements had to be reached with numerous property owners.

Colored Flags

It was only two years ago (2012) that the Club did away with the red-white-yellow flags to alert golfers regarding the pin positions on the greens. When the idea of colored flags was initially raised in 1984, the Board was opposed. It was not until February, 1987 that colored flags were approved in the hope that they would speed up play.



Tennis

The “sport of kings” did not always receive royal treatment at Ridgewood. Although included in the original plans for Club’s Paramus location, it was not until April, 1937 that “a committee was formed to consider the possibility of constructing the tennis courts.” Due to the high cost involved, it was put off indefinitely at the June, 1937 meeting. The Board must have reconsidered because by August, 1939 the tennis courts were “now practically completed.” In May, 1952 the Board reaffirmed the decision to abandon tennis. It was not until February, 1970 that the Club was investigating the return of tennis; in 1977 “redoing of old tennis courts” was still under discussion.

1 East Back Tee

An earlier history article made mention that a 1 East tee farther back than the current one was in use until the new addition (Tillinghast Lounge) was built in the late 1930s. This former tee appears to have put golfers at odds with swimmers from the very beginning. In June, 1930, thirteen months after the Club opened, it was decreed “The back tee on 1 East will not be in use when the swimming pool has water in it.” For further protection and perhaps privacy, “a privet hedge...was approved along the right side of 1E tee.”

Winter/Temporary Greens

Anyone wishing to launch a spirited discussion need only offer an opinion regarding whether the greens should remain open over the winter or be closed in favor of temporary greens. This debate began early. In December, 1934, “a petition was read in regard to keeping the greens open throughout the winter.” In February, 1935, “Mr. Stout (RCC president) referred to the use of the greens in winter time and stated that the opinion of experts and the Agriculture Department of (NJ) was against keeping the greens open after the frost sets in. For this reason the Board decided to close the greens for the winter.”

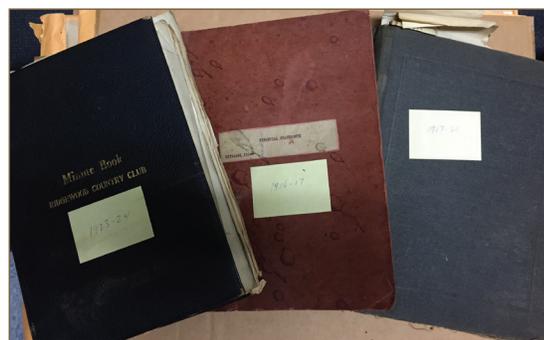
Brewster Proposal

Over the passage of time RCC has developed an ever-greater reverence for the genius of A. W. Tillinghast. This is evidenced by the study of old drawings and photos to restore the course as closely as possible to what was envisioned by the legendary architect. There was a time, however, when the Club came harrowingly close to painting over the architect’s masterpiece.

In September, 1953 the Board gave serious consideration to an idea that would have irrevocably altered the course as we know it. Board member, Jack Anderson, introduced a proposal to “restore this course to a Championship course.” Oddly, the reasons why some Board members believed a restoration was necessary were not recorded. If the proposal had passed, a developer named Brewster would have been permitted to remove 550,000 cubic yards of fill from the 3rd, 4th, 5th and 6th holes of the Center course in exchange for a payment of \$100,000. The result would have been a digging away of most of the hilltops on these holes and redoing them as flat canyon holes! Although the Board never engaged an architect to oversee the restoration, they did discuss which architects should be considered.

Several different but equally scarring soil removal proposals were considered. Fortunately, major problems were identified. “Slopes were to be cut on a base 1.5 feet to 1 foot which would be very steep.” The new design “would have two holes passing through a trough like fairway difficult to maintain.” Recognizing the Club did not need the money, the Board asked the ultimate question: “Would it be a better course after the change and restoration of the holes?” They decided against it.

Ironically, the holes that were under consideration for restoration are all included in their original form in the current Championship course. The next time we are tempted to criticize a Board for doing nothing, remember Brewster!



RCC Minute Books, 1923-23, 1916-17, and 1917-18

