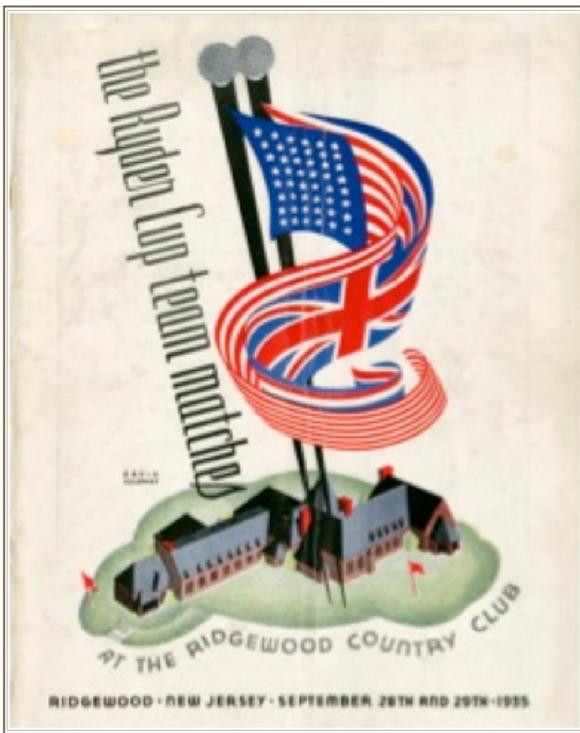




THE RIDGEWOOD COUNTRY CLUB

A MEMORABLE HISTORY OF THE RIDGEWOOD COUNTRY CLUB

September 2012 – The 1935 Ryder Cup at Ridgewood



The Ridgewood Country Club was the venue of the fifth Ryder Cup event the weekend of September 28 and 29, 1935. The British press dubbed Ridgewood a “fine selection” as its location was expected to draw ample galleries from nearby golfing clubs in the New York metropolitan area. George Jacobus, then president of the PGA, was instrumental in bringing the matches to the Tillinghast-designed Ridgewood course which was only six years old. The price of a single-day Ryder Cup ticket in the midst of the Great Depression was \$2.20. It is estimated that some 8,000 spectators watched the second day of competition on Sunday.

The United States and Great Britain were represented by teams of ten professionals. Walter Hagen captained the American team which included Gene Sarazen and Craig Wood who in later years would become a Ridgewood member. Charles Whitcombe captained the British team which included his two brothers, Ernest and Reg. While the majority of the U.S. team elected to stay in Manhattan after practice all week, Hagen and Sarazen slept in guest rooms above Ridgewood’s pro shop.

All three of Ridgewood’s nine hole courses were used.

Sarazen and Hagen teamed to win their opening match decisively and set the tone for the U.S. effort. Despite intervals of rain and drizzle, conditions most thought would favor the “Brits”, the U.S. team won three out of the four first day matches, resulting in a 3 to 1 point lead.

Sunday, according to the New York Times, was a day of glorious sunshine. The U.S. team continued their winning ways in the morning. With rising winds in the afternoon, however, the complexion of several matches changed as the British players prospered in the familiar, breezy conditions. It took extraordinary shots by Sarazen on 4 East, his second shot despite a restricted backswing resulted in a tap-in birdie after hitting the flagstick, and a forty foot birdie putt on the last hole by Sam Parks to solidify the U.S. team effort. In all, the American team won five of the eight singles and halved two others, producing a final winning score of 9-3.

The 1935 Ryder Cup marked the end of the Hagen playing era as he decided to sit out the Sunday singles competition. Hagen's decision was in response to the British captain who also elected not to play as he believed fielding all three Whitcombes was unfair to other teammates. Hagen retired from competing in an event he had helped launch with an overall 7-1-1 record.

Among those in the gallery who witnessed Hagen's last hurrah was a "young whippersnapper" by the name of Byron Nelson, an assistant PGA pro at Ridgewood. In an interview years later, Nelson revealed "I got to see these great players, and I made up my mind that I wanted to be on the Ryder Cup team." Hagen would later select Nelson for the 1937 competition which the U.S. squad won in England.

