



THE
RIDGEWOOD
COUNTRY CLUB

A MEMORABLE HISTORY OF THE RIDGEWOOD COUNTRY CLUB

May 17, 2012 – The Move To Paramus

After World War I, The Ridgewood Country Club membership faced a dilemma. Land values were increasing rapidly in Ridgewood. After opening the Lincoln Avenue course in 1912, the Club faced a difficult decision; expand at its present location in Ridgewood and Glen Rock or begin anew on cheaper property in nearby Paramus.

In 1926, a committee was formed to review options. There were many reasons to seriously consider relocating. The clubhouse, rebuilt after the 1919 fire, had a cramped kitchen and inadequate locker room space. The course,



Last day at the old Lincoln Avenue clubhouse before the move to Paramus

while visually pleasing, had dangerous, narrow, parallel fairways. The layout fiercely punished hook shots while slicers paid almost no penalty. Billy goat slopes were tough on golfers' legs and difficult to maintain. The three water holes on the front 9 contributed to slow play. Perhaps most irksome, players had to traverse Lincoln Avenue four times and avoid being hit by the increasing stream of horseless carriages.

Surprisingly, the committee did not advocate in favor of staying or moving, but it did make a firm recommendation. In the event of a move, the Club should acquire sufficient land to design 36 holes, build 18 holes first and maintain the Lincoln Avenue course until the new venue was ready for play.

Interest in the Club's decision went beyond the membership. A 1927 NY Times article reported that the property has been inspected by golf architect, A. W. Tillinghast, who has presented a plan for three 9-hole courses. A subsequent article suggested that dodging motor cars on the Lincoln Avenue course had made a strong impression on the membership. "No roads will be cut through the new land and the only one to be constructed will be the main artery to the clubhouse in the northwest corner, but even that one will traverse the land for only a short distance."

Among the nine parcels of land reviewed by the committee, three finalists emerged. Ironically, the two tracts not chosen eventually became golf courses. These include the present Orchards Hills and "the Saddle River public courses off Paramus Road." It is not clear if these "Saddle River courses" are today's Paramus Golf Club or a different course that was lost to development.

The membership endorsed the Board proposal to purchase the property in 1927.

Construction of the golf courses began immediately but clubhouse construction was put off until 1929. Tillinghast was retained. His fee was 10% of the \$165,000 earmarked for golf course construction. Forty-five acres of woodland were cleared to make room for fairways.

A minor hiccup ensued when the low-bidder building company retained to do the construction missed payroll and fell into bankruptcy in 1928. Tillinghast supervised the completion using funds from the bonding company that took over the bankrupt builder. The new course opened for play with a Decoration Day* 27-hole members tournament on May 30, 1929.

A future article will tell the story of the clubhouse construction and the early days in Paramus.

*Decoration Day was a precursor of Memorial Day. The former marked a day when people would bring flowers to decorate the graves of fallen Civil War soldiers. For a time both Decoration Day and Memorial Day were celebrated. In 1968 Congress passed the Uniform Holidays Bill which moved the celebration dates of four holidays, including Memorial Day, to Mondays to create three-day weekends. Memorial Day, previously May 30th, henceforth would be observed on the last Monday in May.

