

History of Maplewood Country Club

The Early Days

In 1855, when Maplewood was still a remote country town, Cornelius Van Shaack Roosevelt Sr., grandfather of the future President Theodore Roosevelt, bought the first of two parcels of land on Ridgewood Road, eventually totaling about 100 acres, from the heirs of Capt. Isaac Smith, who had fought in the Revolutionary War. The property extended north-south from what is now Durand Road to Curtiss Place and from Ridgewood Road up east to the South Mountain. In 1857, “CVS” (as he was known) conveyed the land to his son, Cornelius Van Shaack Roosevelt Jr.

CVS Jr., Theodore Roosevelt’s uncle, built a large, ornate mansion called The Hickories on the property in about 1863-65. Theodore Roosevelt was a frequent visitor there in his youth, and occupied a room in the northeast wing of the house. President Roosevelt grew up in New York City, had severe asthma as a child, and visited his Uncle CVS’s country home in the summers to breathe the fresh air. His famous interest in nature, which led to his later creation of the National Parks system when President, began at this early age in the NJ countryside where he enjoyed exploring the woods and streams of the estate. As testament, a page in one of his natural history notebooks, dated Orange, NJ, Sept. 16th, 1872, lists a dozen animals and birds native to this area.

After CVS Jr. died in 1887, his wife, Laura continued to spend time at the house. After her death in 1900, the property was sold to developer William H. Curtiss in 1902. For the developers of the Roosevelt property, given the fact that Teddy had visited his Uncle’s estate in his youth, Roosevelt Park it became. The names of some roads, as they were created over the next years, were linked to the family.¹

The Maplewood Field Club Organized

In August of 1903, eighty members organized the new “Maplewood Field Club,” leasing land from William H. Curtiss on the former Roosevelt Estate, and made plans to erect a clubhouse on the property. The original officers of the newly formed club included Edward C. Balch, later known as the “Father of Maplewood” for his prominent role in founding Maplewood’s bank and designing over 200 homes in the area.² Typical of the “field clubs” of the day, in its early years the property included a variety of activities, such as, a baseball diamond and a series of golf holes.

¹ Durand-Hedden House, <https://www.durandhedden.org/>

² https://www.durandhedden.org/archives/events/the_father_of_maplewood_builder_edward_c_balch

Maplewood Field Club Organized.

Special to The New York Times.

MAPLEWOOD, N. J., Aug. 23.—The Maplewood Field Club has been organized with eighty members, and a clubhouse will be erected on the Roosevelt estate which has been leased by the organization. The officers of the club are: President, Joseph Byrne, Jr.; Vice President, Edward C. Balch, Sr.; Secretary, James R. Lake; Governors, C. B. Riker, A. R. Stoddart, G. E. Low, S. J. Herben, S. W. Baldwin.

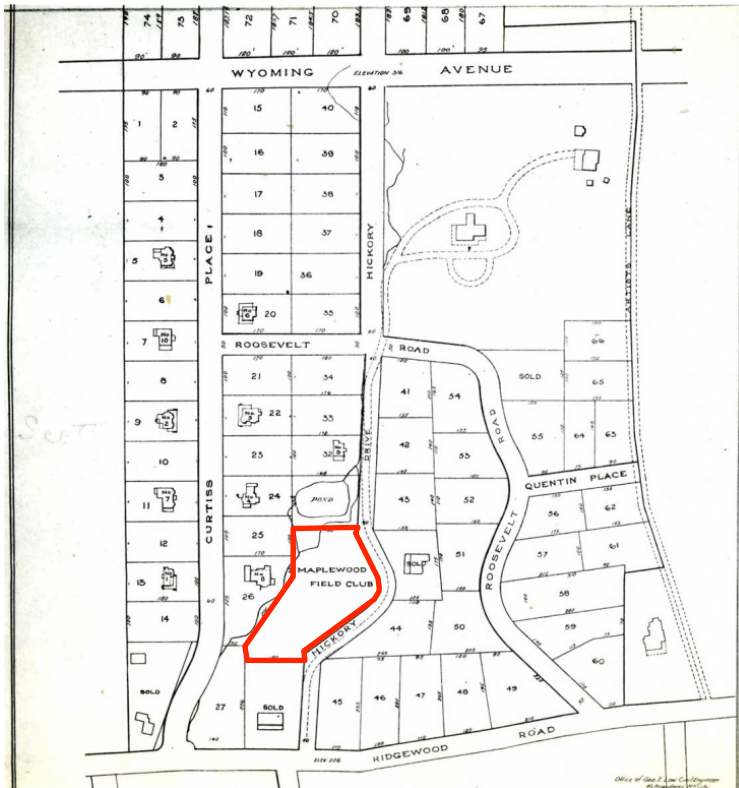
The New York Times

Published: August 24, 1903

Copyright © The New York Times

3

Roosevelt Park Plot Plan, early 1900s:



4

³ New York Times

⁴ Durand-Hedden House, <https://www.durandhedden.org/>

Move to Baker Street

From its beginnings in 1903, the Field Club prospered but needed more land. On March 2, 1908, the club leased 11 acres of property from Charles De Grasse located on the south side of Baker Street, west of Valley Street. The holdings were later expanded to 50 acres, occupying the land bounded by the Lackawanna Railroad, Baker Street, Valley Road, and Oakley Road. The club built tennis courts and a baseball diamond on new the property with membership competing against other local clubs. An existing frame barn was converted into the new clubhouse.

In 1911 the club was formally incorporated, but it was not until decades later that this date was incorrectly adopted as the origination date of Maplewood Country Club. That is why today 1911 is seen on the club logo.



The Maplewood Field Club, predecessor to the Maplewood Country Club, stood right on the edge of Baker Street near the site of the present clubhouse. This photograph taken about 1910 shows the boys in knickers and caps, the style for this period. Before the use of the present site in Memorial Park, many of the township's Fourth of July celebrations took place behind this clubhouse (see p. 110).

5

Golf Course Built

In March of 1919, the club raised \$16,500 to secure additional land and build the first nine holes of the golf course. To design and construct the course, the club turned to Alfred Williams. Mr. Williams served his apprenticeship under Peter Lees of Mid-Surrey in England, who was known as being one of the most capable greens keepers in his country. In 1911, Williams came to the United States and entered the employ of the Garden City Golf Club as their greens keeper. Later, he became an associate and protégé of Willie Park, a prominent Scottish golfer who won the British Open twice before becoming a world

⁵ Images of America: Maplewood. Arcadia Publishing: Charleston, SC. ISBN 0752412795.

renowned golf course architect. Park and Williams collaborated on a number of U.S. golf courses, including the well-known Atlantic City Country Club in NJ and Woodway Country Club in CT.

Hartford Courant, March 7, 1915



Golf Illustrated June 1923

GOLF COURSE CONSTRUCTION
ADVISORY WORK WATER SYSTEMS

Twenty-five years' experience as
ARCHITECT AND CONSTRUCTOR

HARTFORD G. C., Hartford, Conn.
WOODWAY C. C., Springdale, Conn.
MAPLEWOOD F. C., Maplewood, N. J.
ATLANTIC CITY C. C., Northfield, N. J.
PRINCESS ANNE C. C., Norfolk, Va.
LINWOOD C. C., Linwood, N. J.
CANTERBURY G. C., Cleveland, Ohio, Etc.

AL. WILLIAMS
135 West 72nd Street New York, N. Y.

The course opened for play on August 30th, 1919 and quickly became one of the most popular attractions at the club.

**GOLF NOW REALTY
FOR MAPLEWOOD**

Field Club Opens New Nine-Hole Course With One Hundred Members

Golf is now a reality in Maplewood. The Maplewood Field Club's new nine-hole course was opened Saturday and every day since both men and women members of the organization have taken advantage of the sport. A special program will mark the tomorrow at the links.

William Deering, with a mark of 97 for eighteen holes, holds the record of the course and Harry N. Hatch by covering the nine holes in 44 strokes, scored the lowest one-round tally on the opening day.

Mr. Hatch, after making a 44 in the first round, took 51 strokes to come in, giving him a total of 95. Deering went out in 47 strokes and came in with 48, thereby beating out

(Continued on 2 Page)

What is said to be the sportiest nine-holes course in New Jersey is open for play at Maplewood, Conn. It was built in record time, less than five months, with play on it in three months after seeding and better playing condition than many courses opened a year. The course was built by Alfred Williams, who is also building the new Atlantic City Course. Mr. Williams is connected with Peterson, Sinclair & Miller and is the inventor of the new sensational sprinkler and is also one of the grass and seeds experts of the country.

The course is over 3,100 yards and is a real test of golf. Not a hole can be reached in the second shot if drive is not good, except, of course, the two-shot holes. The ninth hole is one of the sportiest in the course, a 150-yards carry along the river bank; the river winds so that the shot is practically a carry over the middle of the river till it reaches the green, then river turns to the right making a perfect pitch shot to the green as trees are to right and one must play over river to make a perfect shot, for the slightest slice or pull is fatal.

Maplewood has plans under way for new \$150,000 clubhouse and also nine more holes which will make an 18-holes course as good as any in New Jersey.

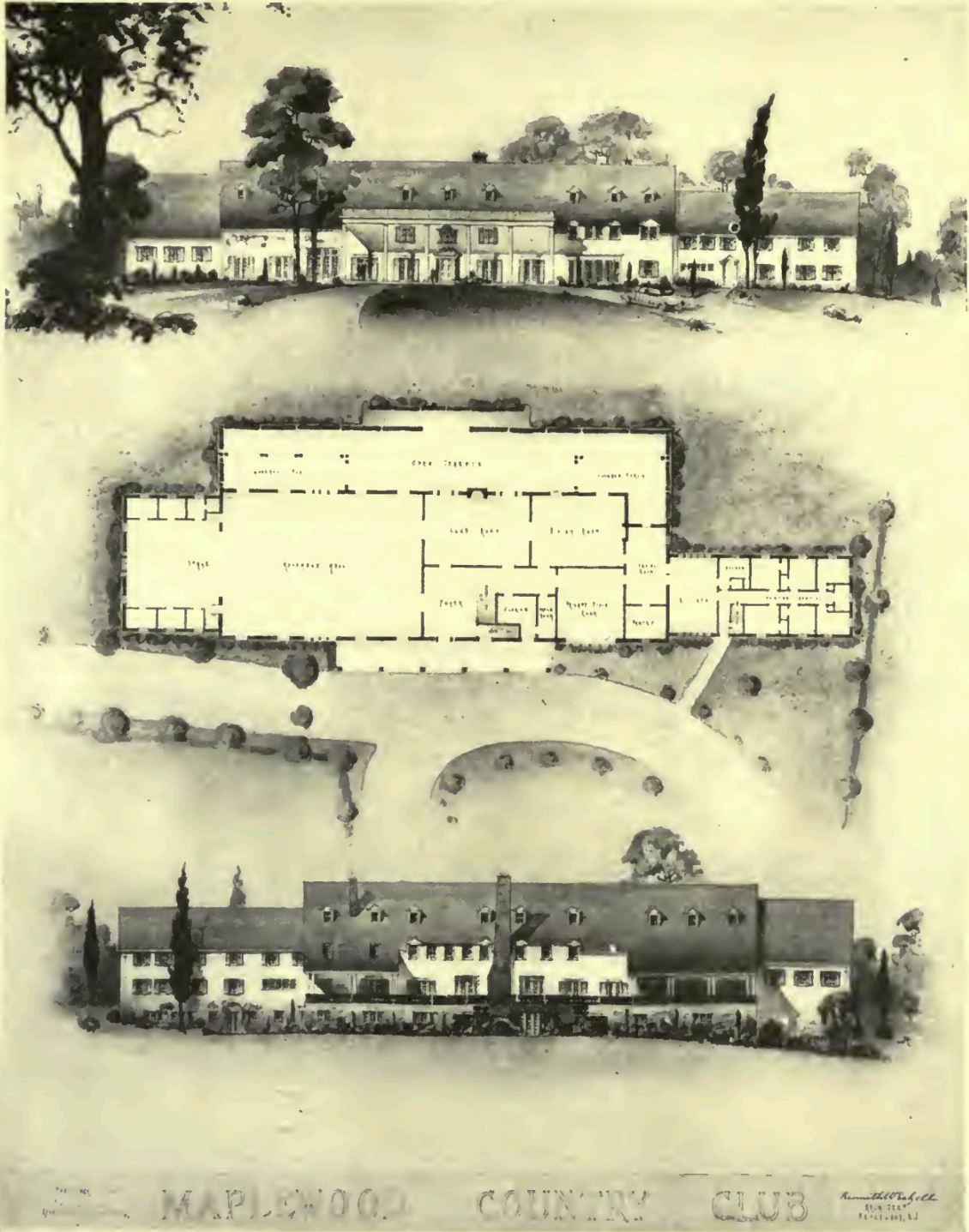
New Clubhouse and Expansion to Eighteen Holes

Now reorganized as the Maplewood Country Club, in 1921 the club commissioned Kenneth Whitney Dalzell to design a new \$200,000⁶ clubhouse. Dalzell was a well-known architect who designed and built hundreds of houses in Maplewood between 1911 and the 1930s. Some members opposed the new clubhouse as they had just paid a special assessment for additional land to expand the golf course. However, at the annual meeting on March 20th, 1922, an assessment of \$250 per member was voted in and the new clubhouse plan was approved. At the close of the meeting President and Essex County Freeholder Arthur T. Muir, who was re-elected, asked for assessment contributions, and \$10,000 in

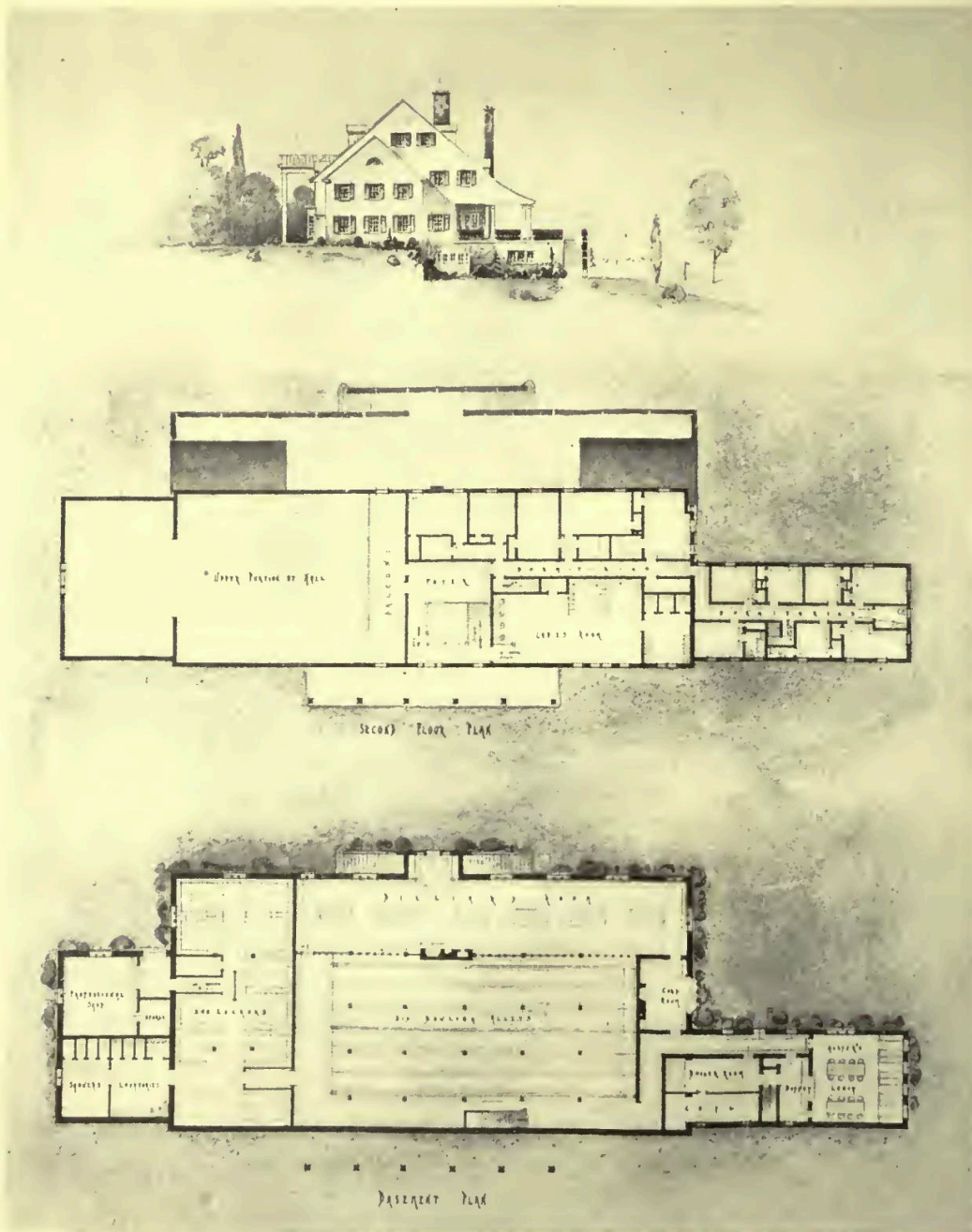
⁶ <https://www.newspapers.com/newspage/20621586/>

checks were handed to him with pledges of \$5,000 more by April 1. Charles R. Tyson, a wealthy member, said he would give \$5,000 for those who might be unable to pay the assessment.⁷

⁷ New York Evening World 1922-03-21



COUNTRY CLUB, MAPLEWOOD, NEW JERSEY
KENNETH W. DALZELL, ARCHITECT

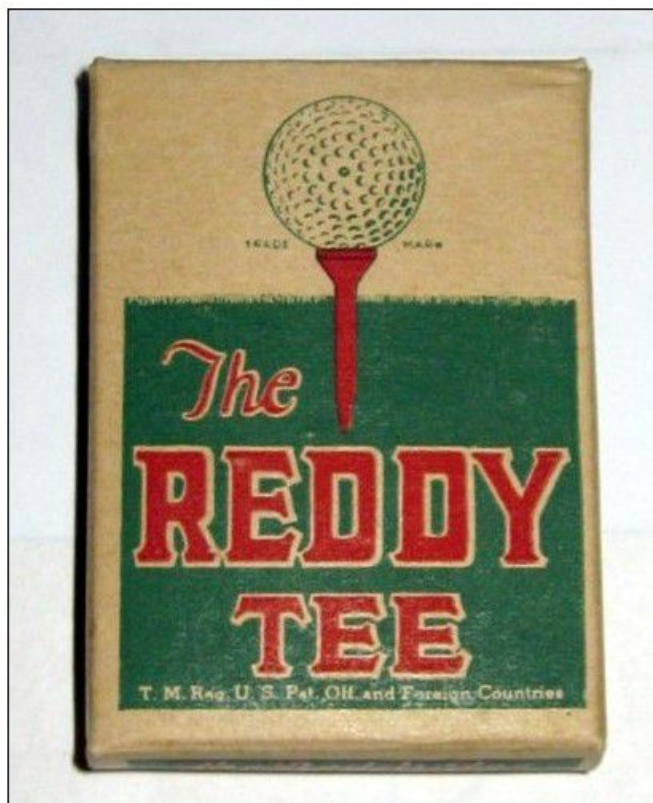


COUNTRY CLUB, MAPLEWOOD, NEW JERSEY
KENNETH W. DALZELL, ARCHITECT

In addition to the clubhouse plans, in late 1921 the club acquired additional land to expand the golf course to eighteen holes which opened for play on Memorial Day, May 30th, 1922.

Walter Hagen and The Golf Tee

Dr. William Lowell, a local dentist and member of the Maplewood Country Club, played his first round of golf at age 59 and was unhappy with the messy teeing method of using sand and water, finding it soiled his clothing. At his South Orange office, he used his dental tools to create a tee from gutta-percha, a material used in making false teeth (as well as golf balls) but found it was not strong enough. He then whittled one out of a flagstick and brought the prototype to a woodworker to replicate the device. Initially a run of 5000 tees were made from white birch and colored green but he decided to paint the tees red to better see them against the grass, marketing them as the Reddy Tee. They were not very popular until Walter Hagen used them during his 1922 tour, receiving a \$1500 endorsement fee to do so. Following the endorsement, they became wildly popular. Hagen described what happened after he and Kirkwood used the tee at an exhibition match in Groton, Connecticut. "Joe and I strutted around the course with the bright, red tees stuck behind our ears. At each tee we used them... and I left them. Kids scrambled on the course grabbing them as souvenirs." Collecting the discarded tees became so popular that clubs found it necessary to rope off the tee boxes and fairways to control the gallery and the crowds seeking to collect the tees. This is considered the first time in U.S. golf history that gallery ropes were used. Lowell quit his job as a dentist and formed the Reddy Tee Company and obtained a patent on his design. By the mid-1920s the company was grossing over \$300,000 annually with the F.W. Woolworth Company alone ordering a billion tees.



9


An Exhibition of Champions

Walter Hagen and Joe Kirkwood met at Pinehurst in 1921 where they played together in the North and South Open. At the end of the event, Kirkwood put on a trick-shot demonstration for hotel guests, earning over \$700 in tips. Hagen was very impressed and suggested that they team up for exhibitions. The new partnership would contract to play a thirty-six hole match against local pros or amateurs and Kirkwood would put on a trick shot exhibition following the match. An ad in *American Golfer* in 1923 noted that between July 1, 1922 and April 10th, 1923 the team had played in 115 exhibition matches, winning 97, losing 14, and tying on 4.

⁹ <https://www.thoughtco.com>

American Golfer, May 5th, 1923 Ad:

Do You Know Them?



Walter Hagen
and
Joe Kirkwood

This famous golf team will play exhibition matches in the United States and Canada during July, August, September and October of this year.

From July 1, 1922 to April 10, 1923 Hagen and Kirkwood played 115 exhibition matches. They won 97, lost 14, and tied 4.

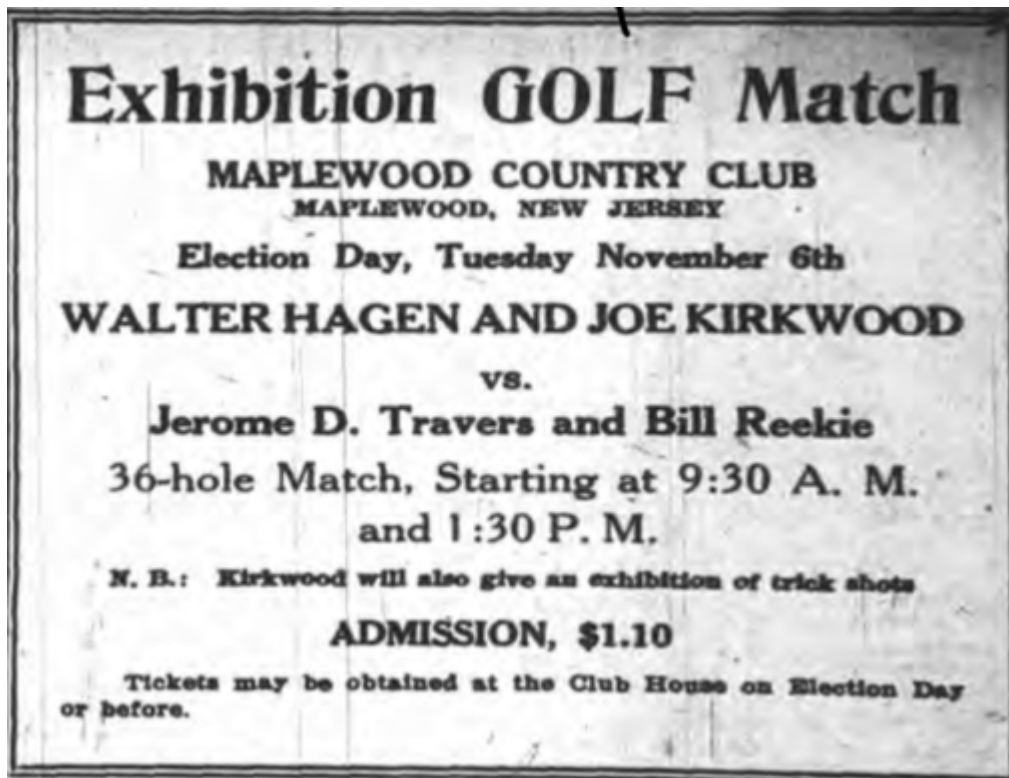
Since January 1, 1923, Hagen and Kirkwood have started in seven open tournaments, winning all of them: Hagen winning 4 and Kirkwood 3.

They have broken numerous course records, including Hagen's remarkable 62 in the Florida West Coast Championship at Belleair, a United States competitive record.

Kirkwood has developed several new trick shots for his exhibition with which he has entertained thousands of golfers.

For bookings write

ROBERT E. HARLOW
Room 905, Winthrop Building
7 Water Street Boston, Mass.



Maplewood Record, November 2nd, 1923

In 1923, Hagen and Kirkwood took their talents to Maplewood.

It was Election Day in Maplewood New Jersey, Tuesday November 6th, 1923. The weather was expected to rise from the mid-40s to the low 50s with a chance of some rain. This was the day of a highly anticipated exhibition match that pitted world-renowned professional golfers, Walter Hagen and Joe Kirkwood against amateur golfers Jerome Travers and William Reekie in a thirty-six hole match. This was a classic battle of the time: professional against amateur.

Walter Hagen at this point in his career held two wins at the U.S. Open as well as wins at the British Open and PGA Championship. His partner, Joe Kirkwood, was the winner of both the Australian and New Zealand Opens and most recently the Houston Invitational. Jerry Travers was one of the most prominent amateur golfers of the 20th century and regarded as one of the finest match play golfers of his time. He won the U.S. Amateur in 1907, 1908, 1912 and 1913, the U.S. Open at Baltusrol in 1915, the New Jersey Amateur three times, and the Met Amateur five times. He paired with William Reekie, a New Jersey State amateur title holder who would go on to win the Met Amateur in 1924 and 1926.

In the end, Hagen and Kirkwood finished the morning round 2 up and then held on in the afternoon round to defeat the amateurs by a score of 3 up with 2 holes to play. Kirkwood played the low 18 hole score of 71, even par. The medal scores were:

Kirkwood, 71, 72 – 143

Hagen, 74, 76 – 150

Reekie, 79, 73 – 152

HAGEN AND KIRKWOOD WIN.

Defeat Travers and Reekie 2 Up in 36-Hole Match.

Special to The New York Times.
MAPLEWOOD, N. J., Nov. 6.—Walter Hagen and Joe Kirkwood today defeated Jerome D. Travers, former national and amateur open champion, and William M. Reekie, former New Jersey State amateur title holder, by 3 up and 2 to play, in a thirty-six hole match on the Maplewood Country Club course. A special prize for the day's best individual medal score for eighteen holes was won by Kirkwood, who shot a 71 in the morning. Hagen and Kirkwood finished the morning round 2 up.
The medal scores follow:
Kirkwood, 71, 72—143.
Hagen, 74, 76—150.
Reekie, 79, 73—152.
Travers, 74, 78—152.

The New York Times
Published: November 7, 1923
Copyright © The New York Times

10

Early scorecard, 1924:

Maplewood (N.J.)

<p style="text-align: center;">LOCAL RULES</p> <p>Out of Bounds—Loss of Distance only.</p> <p>Out of Bounds is outside of club property and on No. 1; No. 2 fairway (or adjacent rough except within 25 yds. of No. 1 pin.)</p> <p>U. S. G. A. Rules will govern all other play.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">CUTTING IN PROHIBITED</p> <p>It is the duty of every golfer to see that divots are replaced and footmarks in bunkers and traps filled up. Walk around the traps, not through them.</p> <p>In single matches 3-4 of the difference between handicaps should be taken.</p> <p>In foursomes 3-8 of the difference between the aggregate handicaps on either side should be taken.</p> <p>Fractions of one-half or over count as one; smaller fractions, nothing.</p> <p>Ball on "ground under repair," must be lifted and dropped on the fairway not nearer the hole.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Maplewood Country Club</p> <p style="text-align: center;">SUGGESTIONS TO PLAYERS</p> <p>Take plenty of time playing your strokes; walk fast between strokes.</p> <p>Don't try your putts over.</p> <p>Don't waste time on practice swings.</p> <p>Don't argue about the number of strokes taken before you putt out.</p> <p>Don't stand on the green marking up your score. Do it, if you have the honor, after you have driven from the tee.</p> <p>Be ready to step on the tee as soon as your partner has driven.</p> <p>Don't walk on when your partner's ball is lost - help him to find it.</p> <p>If you signal a match to pass, step to one side—WAIT—do not keep on playing.</p> <p>If you find it difficult to keep your place, you will find it more pleasant to start late.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">PLEASE REMEMBER THERE ARE OTHERS ON THE COURSE.</p>
--	--

STYMIE MEASURE

¹⁰ New York Times, November 7, 1923

THIS IS YOUR COURSE				RAK	leave Brown	X Skoford	REPLACE DIVOTS LEVEL FOOTPRINTS IN BUNKER				Course 188		
Holes	Yds.	Par	Hcp.	K	B	S	Holes	Yds.	Par	Hcp.	K	B	S
1	300	4	14	4	5	6	10	157	3	17	2	5	6
2	280	4	15	4	6	9	11	322	4	13	5	5	5
3	340	4	10	5	5	7	12	380	4	7	4	6	7
4	376	4	8	5	6	6	13	389	4	6	5	7	6
5	490	5	1	6	6	9	14	332	4	11	6	6	7
6	425	4	3	4	5	5	15	396	4	5	4	6	8
7	328	4	12	5	6	5	16	105	3	18	4	4	4
8	186	3	16	5	5	5	17	488	5	2	5	6	8
9	405	4	4	6	5	7	18	365	4	9	5	5	5
Out	3130	36		44	48	58	In	2934	35		40	50	56
RR + Z R K + A Day _____ Date 8/15/24 Certified by _____							Out	3130	36		44	48	38
							Total	6064	71		84	98	114
							Hcp.						
							Net						

11

The Original Member Guest

The first annual invitational tournament took place in June of 1933. The event, renamed the John F. Roche Memorial Member-Guest tournament in 1935, attracted teams from all over the country.

¹¹ USGA Museum Archives, Far Hills, NJ

LESTER-RADEL TRIUMPH.

Win Maplewood Golf Tourney
After Three-Hole Play-Off.

Special to THE NEW YORK TIMES.

MAPLEWOOD, N. J., June 25.—Robert A. Lester of Baltusrol and Frank J. Radel of Maplewood won the Maplewood Country Club's first annual invitation tournament today after a three-hole playoff.

Lester and Radel tied with the metropolitan champion, Mark J. Stuart of Fox Hills, and Carl Good of Maplewood at 142. After halving the first two holes of the playoff, Lester won with a 3 on the third hole.

Rudy Knepper, representing the Onwentsia Club of Chicago, won first prize in individual scoring with 72, 76—148.

The New York Times

Published: June 26, 1933

Copyright © The New York Times

12

This 1953 Golden Jubilee token was given to members to celebrate the club's 50th anniversary, 1903-1953.



¹² New York Times, June 26, 1933

The Modern Era

Today Maplewood Country Club is still member-owned and retains its classic charm in combination with modern amenities. The course layout has largely stayed the same through the years with only changes to the order with which the holes are played. There have been many other improvements over the years including tree removal, green expansion, and irrigation enhancements. The par remains at 71 and the course now plays to 6425 yards from the back tees.

History Written by Michael Davidson, 2018