

Golf Links to West Long Branch, An Historical View



Robert J. Fischer

**GOLF LINKS to WEST LONG BRANCH,
An HISTORICAL VIEW**

Robert J. Fischer

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West Long Branch Historical Society Inc.



Dedication

The West Long Branch Historical Society dedicates this work to the memory of Charles H, Maps. He was most valuable in the publication of our previous work, *Norwood Park*. His photographic techniques have also been applied here, the history of golf in West Long Branch, The photographs collected and used were made possible through his efforts. Unfortunately, Charlie passed away before this text was completed. As West Long Branch Historian and Vice President of the Historical Society, his expertise had been sought and used in most all West Long Branch historical publications as well as in this one, for this we are grateful.

Acknowledgments

Appreciation is given to those individuals who gave useful information used in the preparation of this booklet. They told of their experiences related to the Norwood Golf and Country Club.

Those who have passed away before the printing of this publication: Chester Dennis. John DeBruin, Russel Pingatore. and Anthony Colagouri.

Alden West and the former caddies who belong to the Old Guard of Long Branch, who sketched the fairways of the Norwood Golf and Country Club.

Mary Gibbons Showler who worked in the office of the Norwood Golf and Country Club. Her daughter Kathleen Showler Elfner, recorded her mother's memories at Norwood and that record is reproduced in this publication.

In addition, the personnel at the Golf House Museum and Library of the U. S. Golf Association (USGA) headquarters located in Far Hills, New Jersey had been helpful in obtaining photographs and information for this work.

Mary Ann Kiernan of the Monmouth County Archives who readily locates deeds and filed Building Permits for any search.

Cover

The cover photograph was taken from *Harpers Golf Guide of 1899*; it shows the residents of *Norwood Park* attending the opening day of the Norwood Field Club golf course and clubhouse.

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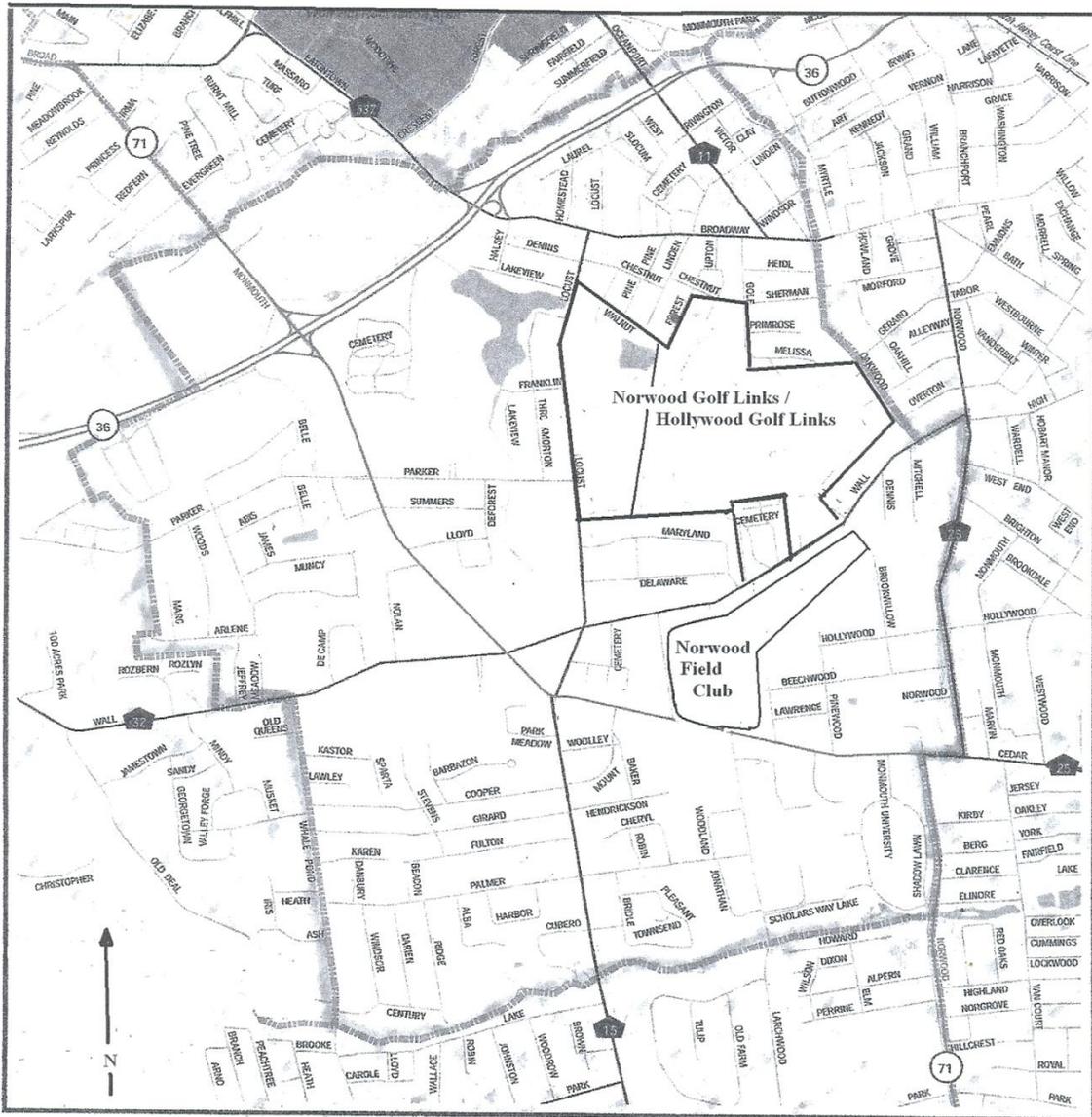
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WEST LONG BRANCH Monmouth County, New Jersey

This map has been modified to show the locations of the three golf links in the borough. It also shows the lands acquired by the Norwood Golf and Country Club that were added to the original Hollywood Golfing grounds



Introduction

The game of golf was introduced to the New Jersey shore vacationers during the last decade of the nineteenth century. Instead of the golf links being laid out along the extended seashore, they were located a mile or more inland. (In the earlier days, in Scotland, golfing grounds had been constructed on the barren edges of a body of water, linking the developed land with the water; the word, links, referred to such golf courses and has been used since.). Sea Bright, Monmouth Beach, Elkwood (Long Branch), Norwood Park, Deal, Hollywood, Red Bank, Spring Lake, and Lakewood were golf clubs that were established in the Shore Area by the turn of the century. The golf game became a popular pastime among the wealthy vacationers to the Long Branch area of the New Jersey shore, where they formed the private golf links.

In those days there was no motorized lawn cutting machinery, but horse drawn cutting blades and later horse drawn rotary mowers as pictured. It was necessary to maintain draft horses for the course maintenance. Leather boots were required for the horses' hooves to



prevent tearing up the turf. The golfers' equipment included golf balls of gutta percha, (from 1848 through the early 1900s a rubber-like material that comes from evergreen trees in East Asia was used). At the turn of the Century, a tightly wound rubber thread ball was introduced by the B, F, Goodrich Co. which improved the scoring. The balls were teed up by shaping mounds of sand at the driving tee; it wasn't until 1899 that the wood golf tees were patented, but not until 1920 that they were marketed. Wooden golf club shafts were turned from hickory wood. The heads were made from steel or hard woods. The golf clubs were referred to as a

brassie, spoon, cleek, mashie, mid mashie, or niblick, according to the angle of loft, before a 2-wood, 4- wood, a 5 iron, or 3 iron was used to designate the different golf clubs. The golf bags were small since fewer clubs were used. With the less refined golf course conditions and golfing equipment, championship scores were closer to 80 than in the mid 60s for 18 holes which the professionals are able to score today. A golfing scene from those early days is shown in this picture obtained from the Durnell Collection in the Long Branch Public Library.

The Boro of West Long Branch was founded in 1908. Included within the boundaries of the current Boro were two golfing grounds; one developed in 1896 and the other in 1902. Eatontown



Township governed then. The Norwood Field Club was formed in 1895 with a nine hole golf links located within the summer cottage colony, Norwood Park. In 1902 the Hollywood Golf Club moved from the West End section of Long Branch to the farmlands of Chamberlain and others to establish their new 18 hole golf links. After Hollywood left West Long Branch during 1912, those farmlands, now an established golf course, were taken over by the newly formed Norwood Golf Club. This club after several years was renamed the Norwood Golf and Country Club which flourished with golf, tennis, polo, and sporting events into the 1930s before it became a victim of the depression years.

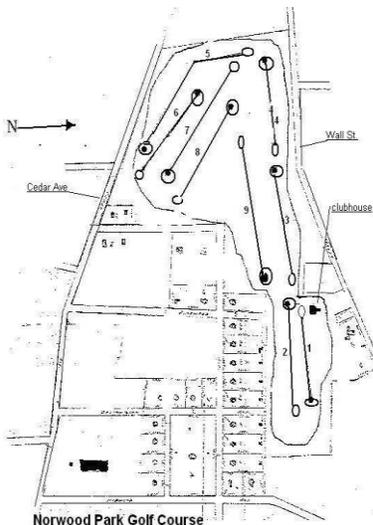
The Norwood Field Club

The field club was organized in 1895 and incorporated in 1896 with a membership of 65 members. The president was John A. McCall; vice-president, P. Stanford Ross; secretary, J. W. Albaugh, Jr.; treasurer, H. K. Browning; captain, H. B. Billings; governing committee, the above officers and W. D. Harper and F. C. Goodspeed; greenskeeper, L. D. Rindsley. The annual dues was \$25. In July 1896 a formal agreement was made between Mrs.

Henrietta E. Munro, the owner of The Norwood Park Cottage Colony, and The Norwood Club, a golfing and baseball endeavor, to be located on the vacant land included in Norwood Park. John A. Mc Call, a resident of the colony who would later build Shadow Lawn, the estate that now locates Monmouth University, signed the Agreement for the Norwood Club. The Agreement allowed for the construction of a clubhouse and defined the golfing area to



be located “150 ft. to the Northeast and 200 ft. South and West of the clubhouse”. The clubhouse has been deduced to have been located as indicated on the following map. A newspaper print of the clubhouse can be found in *The Long Branch Record*, August 18, 1901; it could not be reproduced clearly. An excellent photograph of the clubhouse and cottagers on opening day is shown. This picture was reproduced from *Harpers Golf Guide of 1899*. In addition to the physical requirements of the Agreement, Mrs. Munro insisted that undesirables to be kept out, no liquor or malt liquors allowed, and no golf or other sports be played on Sunday.



Since the description of the golf grounds was vague in the Agreement, the vacant land was outlined and is assumed to have been the

location of The Norwood Club golfing grounds. The given distances from the clubhouse defined the open area that was available from 1895 until 1901. The *Harpers Golf Guide* does list the 9 holes that comprised the golf course: 1st hole 285 yds. 2nd hole 315 yds. 3rd hole 325 yds. 4th hole 150 yds 5th hole 435 yds. 6th hole 195 yds 7th hole 205 yds. 8th hole 300 yds; and the 9th hole 380 yds. The amateur record for 18 holes was 86, made by W. D. Vanderpool in July 1898. The club champion for 1899 was A. Mc Clane. The Agreement required that the club put up the prizes for each season. The club held membership in the North Jersey Shore Golf League and the USGA.

The Norwood Field Club golfers didn't do well in matches with neighboring golf clubs. In 1900 the *Long Branch Record* gave a golf standings summary where the Norwood Field Club won one match and lost six from clubs such as Deal, Hollywood, Sea Bright, Monmouth Beach, and Red Bank. During the 1901-1902 period the original Agreement for the golfing grounds had expired, Norwood Park had changed ownership, and plans were being made for further development of the cottage colony. With those conditions the Norwood Club Golfing Grounds were abandoned.

The Hollywood Golf Club

The Hollywood Golf Club was founded in the fall of 1898 by a group of prominent New York City businessmen. J. J. O'Donohue Jr., president, Walter Beer, P. Bruner, M. M. Sternberger, C. H. Randebrook, W. H. Rolston, F. J. Hennessy, C. D. Bernheimer, and T. J. O'Donohue, secretary. The Hollywood Golf Club was incorporated as a New Jersey stock corporation. They leased the land for their golfing grounds from the Hollywood Hotel & Cottage Company located in the West End section of Long Branch. The land was owned and operated as a cottage colony by John Hoey and his son, Fred Hoey. The leased land included the West Farm Acres that bordered the railroad tracks as

far south as Park Avenue, Elberon. In addition the club leased Hoey's cottage number five for their clubhouse. They became a member of the North Jersey Shore League which included the Norwood Club; they also joined the USGA as well as the Metropolitan Golf Association . This attracted national golfers from as far as Chicago and international golfers, such as Taylor and Vardon from Great Britain. United States Vice President Garret Hobart was elected as an honorary member in 1899; he had been spending the summer at the Normahurst Mansion at Norwood Park. In 1908 incoming President Taft was also presented an honorary membership.

In the same 1901-1902 period, the Hollywood Golf Club was given a notice similar to the one given to the Norwood Club. The Hollywood Hotel & Cottage Company decided to expand their cottage colony and not renew the lease to the golf club. This forced the golf club to search for acreage to build a new 18-hole golf links. By early 1902 the Hollywood Golf Club had leased 140 acres of farmlands that bordered by High Street (Wall Street) and Oakwood Avenue in Eatontown Township (after 1908 West Long Branch) for a 5 year period. These included the farms of: H. Chamberlain 44 acres, E. R. Slocum 51 acres, G. Jeffrey 18 acres, W. Chamberlain 27 acres. James Lloyd & Son again was engaged to prepare and maintain the golf grounds as he was employed at the West End links.

There is an uncertainty in regard as to who designed the golf course; however, Tom Bendelow who was a professional golfer has been mentioned aided by Lloyd and De Nyse, a local surveyor. The new golf grounds became an 18-hole course of 5653 yards. Bernard Nichols, a golf professional from Boston, became the first Pro for the new course.

The golf club, which claimed close to 250 members, contracted to have a clubhouse constructed by the first of June 1902. It was

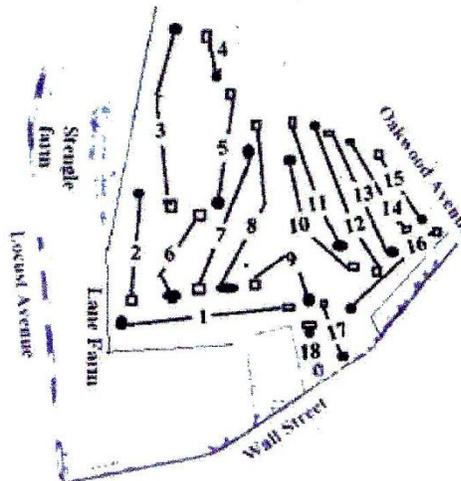


located on a hill on the Chamberlan farm that bordered the Mount Carmel Cemetery. Specifications made by architect A. C. Browne called for a two story building on a brick foundation to be constructed by I. N. Cubberly of Long Branch.

White pine clapboards covered the framed structure with a wide veranda surrounding it. The first floor, whose ceiling was twelve foot high, contained a dining room, a kitchen, a parlor, and locker rooms with the showers located in the ground level basement; the eight-foot high second floor contained 10 bedrooms. A roadway leading from High Street (Wall Street) along Mount Carmel Cemetery and parallel to the eighteenth fairway led to the clubhouse. The eighteenth green and

Hollywood Fairways

Front Nine	Back Nine
392	273
215	361
506	434
167	279
263	250
207	194
378	390
422	334
334	234
<hr/>	<hr/>
2,884	2,769
YDS	



clubhouse were clearly visible from High Street.

During the spring of 1902, with Lloyd constructing the golf links and the new clubhouse also being built, required urgency since both projects were targeted for an early June opening. The clubhouse was completed on time; in late June, nine holes were opened one weekend and the full 18 the next. The Inaugural Cup match was held on July 2. That first golfing season was an immediate success, a restaurant and bar were available, a mixed foursome tournament trophy was won by the club founder, J.J. O' Donohue and his daughter, and well known professional golfers competed amongst each other for prize money. The U. S. Open winner for 1901 and 1902, Willie Anderson, took part in those events. The course record was 72; however, the professionals scored 69 to 74 in their competition matches. At the West End links, the national and international champions scored in the mid eighties. In addition to golf, tennis courts and a croquet lawn were made available. While at the West End facilities during 1899 to 1901, lawn tennis was very popular, and Hollywood's lawn tennis team was chosen to compete in England. The club continued its support for tennis at the new facility; it hosted major tournaments scheduled by the United States Lawn Tennis Association, and in 1906 the club sent a team to England to compete for the Davis Cup.

In 1906 the second Metropolitan Open was played on the ninth and tenth of August on the Hollywood course. A strong field of thirty-five starters including eight amateurs played on a soft turf made soggy by rain. Some champion Pro golfers lost strokes by their golf balls being partially buried in the mud and their putting was hampered by the mud clinging to the ball. George Low, the professional of Baltusrol Golf Club, led the field with a first day score of 71-74, 145, and on the second day held on to win the 72 hole tournament with a score of 294. Alec Smith, the U. S. Open champion, came in second with a score of



1906 Competitors

296. Jack Hutchinson of St. Andrews finished third with a score of 297. Some of the other notable golfers who participated in the tournament were: Walter J. Travis, three time winner of the U. S. Amateur and the 1904 British Amateur Champion, Jerome D. Travers, the current Metropolitan Amateur Champion, Isaac Mackie, the professional from Fox Hill Golf Club of Long Island, and J. J. O' Donohue the Hollywood Golf Club champion. Travis and O' Donohue withdrew after the second round. Hollywood, the hosting golf club, put up \$800 in prizes, \$150 to the winner, \$100 for runner-up, and \$75 for third place. In addition a \$25 low score prize was given for each morning round, each afternoon round, and for each day's total. Amateur Jerry Travis, who halved the final round at 71 with Alec Smith, waived his claim for his portion of the prize in favor of Smith.

The golfing season began in May and lasted until October. There was a farmhouse located near the middle of the course by the 4th-hole border. It was used to house the domestic help, and in the winter for a caretaker for the course and property. During the winter of 1908 West Long Branch constable William Klopper was hired to look after the clubhouse and grounds; he was allowed free rent for his family living in the farmhouse as well as \$25 a month. In the ten years that the Hollywood Golf Club, located at the West Long Branch site, grew in membership and attracted more members from the New York City financial and mercantile districts. For example, the early memberships included the Irish O' Donohue and Mc Aleenan along with the Jewish Berheimer, Sternberger, Content, and Seligman. The membership evolved into predominately Jewish members.

By early 1912 the club was to decide to continue with the current lease at increased rentals, or move to a new location and build a new and larger golf course. The membership decided on the latter; their president, Harry Content, was already working on a deal with George Young of the Deal Golf Club. Young owned 155 acres

adjacent to Deal Golf Club and was experiencing financial difficulties. He was married to the famous opera singer, Madame Nordica, and built a fine log cabin bungalow and swimming pool for her on his land off Roseld Avenue. She arranged for a substantial loan for him through her bank in Maine. Madame Lillian Nordica died from pneumonia after a shipwreck off Java after a world operatic tour. Before her death, she removed Young from her will deepening his financial problem. Harry Content arranged for Hollywood to purchase from Young and his mortgagees' title to the lands, buildings and improvements for the 155 acres off Roseld Avenue in Ocean Township. Hollywood's mailing address was changed from West End (the mailing address while at West Long Branch) to Deal N. J. in 1913.

The Norwood Golf Club

The Norwood Golf Club was incorporated in 1914 with James A. Goldsmith as president, Martin Beck vice president, I. M. Dittenhoffer secretary, and Morris Heimerdinger treasurer. "The purpose of the Club was to provide social and athletic recreation". The charter certificate was amended in 1915 and again in December 1926, when the name was changed to Norwood Country Club. The 1915 membership list included many members who retained their Hollywood membership as well. Very few West Long Branch residents became members of Hollywood or the Norwood Golf Club; however, Leopold Stern, who was president of the Norwood Park Company and resided on Cedar avenue, was a member of the Norwood Country Club. In the late 1920's and early 1930's Harold Spier, who maintained an estate off Cedar Avenue was also a member of Norwood. Other notable members were Munroe Eisner, a Red Bank manufacturer, Abram Feist, a realtor, George Grumbach, a fine brush manufacturer, and other businessmen who were members of the New York Stock Exchange. Almost all members were summer visitors from New York City. They owned or rented estates in Elberon, Deal, West

End, Long Branch, Oakhurst, and Allenhurst; they occupied them during the summer season

The former golfing grounds of the Hollywood Golf Club at West Long Branch became the golf course for the newly formed Norwood Golf Club. Hollywood's leases for the West Long Branch course were still in effect so Norwood made an agreement to sublease some of the properties in 1914, as well as signing their own rent agreements for the remaining farms that made up the golfing grounds. The Golf Club became a member of the USGA, the New Jersey State Golf Association, and the Metropolitan Golf Association. By 1930 Norwood had joined the Women's Metropolitan Golf Association, the Women's Eastern Golf Association, the Metropolitan Association of the A. A. U., the U. S. Polo Association, and the U.S. Lawn Tennis Association.

The fine clubhouse that served Hollywood for ten years was purchased from Edward E. Lloyd, who had held a lease on the building. Though minor maintenance improvements were necessary at times the structure remained the same from Hollywood's ownership. The brick walled basement contained the men's showers, a property room, a wine cellar, repair shop, and a barbershop. The men's locker room remained on the first floor even though the showers were in the basement. In addition, the first floor included a large entrance hall and a 20x50-foot café. The clubhouse served 250 Hollywood members and a similar number of Norwood's memberships. In 1916 it was decided to repair the worn sections of the building; a New York City architect, Harry Allan Jacobs, was engaged to supervise the work to be done by the local contractor, R H. Hughes. Extensive alterations and improvements cost over \$ 25,000; they included a new hardwood floor, new stair rails and banisters, new windows with window seats were installed, interior lath and plaster was replaced, some interior doors were re-glazed with cathedral glass, new electrical outlets connected with BX cable, and all interior painting consisted

of three coats of good oil paint. The remodeling was completed after the 1917 season.

The reconditioned clubhouse was enjoyed by the membership for a year and a half; then, on March 28, 1919 a spectacular fire completely destroyed it. The caretaker discovered the fire at 7 in the evening, and despite a driving rain the fire raged until midnight. The limited fire apparatus in West Long Branch's two fire companies required more assistance; a motorized firetruck from the Oceanics Fire Company of Long Branch quickly responded. According to lifetime resident of West Long Branch, Chet Dennis who witnessed the fire and saw the firetruck become stuck and slide on the rain soaked hillside trying to lay hose to the fire. The Independents Fire Company from Long Branch also fought the blaze. The fire was so intense and rapid that none of the furnishings were saved, and many of the golfer's golf clubs and accessories were lost. Gale force winds fanned the fire that rapidly brought down the luxurious Norwood Golf Club clubhouse.

The loss of the clubhouse was estimated to be over \$100,000, but it was partially covered by insurance. The 1919 golfing season wasn't completely lost; Hollywood Golf Club located in Ocean Township offered their facilities for social functions as well as for golf. Norwood's major problem was to build a new clubhouse. They decided to change the location for the new clubhouse from the charred hill to the level land facing Locust Avenue. The change of location of the clubhouse also required a change in the location of the first tee and the eighteenth green. Usually the first fairway pointed away from the clubhouse and the eighteenth fairway led to the clubhouse. Three months after the fire, July 3, 1919, a building permit was issued for the new Clubhouse. Harry Allen Jacobs, the architect who restored the old clubhouse in 1917, was engaged to design and oversee the construction; I. R. Taylor & Co. of Asbury Park was contracted to build the new clubhouse which today, houses the West Long Branch Community Center, the Library,

and the 2009 Police Headquarters.



Locust Avenue Entrance

and for a professional's house.

Excavation work was required for the boiler room, bathroom facilities, and shower rooms.

Specifications were extensive for the masonry work and materials, in fact there were 51

pages of specifications for excavation, carpentry and materials, a cedar shingle roof, fireplaces and flues, trim and finish, tile and marble, and painting. It is interesting to note that three 5ft diameter dry wells were located to catch water run-off from the roof leaders; the tile sub drain around the entire building was omitted from the original specification. Such an omission may have contributed to the current mold problem in the Police Station. An outdoor dining hall was located where the West Long Branch Library is attached to the building. The Front Porch to the clubhouse is framed with red oak logs to capture the rustic look that carried out throughout the building; the rafters exposed in the mens locker room were hewn from the chestnut or red oak logs as specified.

The clubhouse was required to be finished and made available by April 1, 1920. The construction cost was \$ 93,929 for the stone and stucco single floor structure consisting of a dining hall, ladies locker room, mens locker room



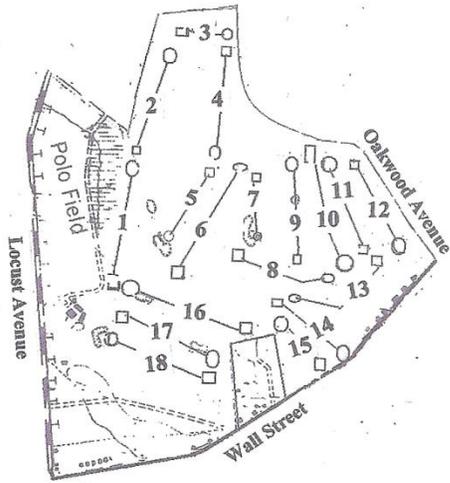
Mens Locker & Sunken Garden

The golf course was completely remodeled by rearranging the first and eighteenth holes and accentuating well bunkered greens. The course was redesigned by A. W. Tillinghast who was regarded as one of the major golf course designers in the Country through the

1920's. He lived in Northern New Jersey and worked out of his office in New York City. In the Metropolitan area he designed as many as 40 courses including the Championship Winged Foot and Baltusrol layouts as well as The Glen Eagles Golf Course at Fort Monmouth. His expertise was recognized across the Country , Somerset Hills in San Francisco and Baltimore's Five Farms golf course . Winged Foot and Baltusrol were included in Golf Magazines 100 greatest courses in the World. Though Tillinghast redesigned Norwood's new layout, it never developed a reputation during the 1920 - 1935 period.

1920 Norwood Fairways

Front Nine		Back Nine
420		455
404		304
137		210
375		518
386		380
475		186
167		475
390		374
384		420
<hr/>		
3140	Yards	3322



Experiences at Hollywood and at Norwood As Told from Personal Interviews

The research for the Hollywood and Norwood Golf Clubs was aided by interviews with persons who recalled their experiences with them. Chet Dennis of West Long Branch was a young boy when the Norwood Golf clubhouse burned down on the stormy evening of March 28, 1919. He recalled that the Long Branch pumper truck being mired in the mud on the hill approaching the clubhouse to lay hose. After the Golf grounds were rearranged and the new clubhouse built at its new location, polo fields were laid out on the low land to the north of the club house on Locust Avenue. Mr. Dennis said loads of fill dirt was brought in from Eatontown to construct the polo fields to a favorable elevation. Another interviewed, Russ Pingatore ,a local amateur and an Old Orchard Club champion golfer who lived in Long Branch and caddied during his youth , recalled the Hollywood Golf Clubhouse situated on the hill at the same location where his former home is located on Fairway Avenue in West Long Branch. Fairway Avenue would define the 18th fairway for Hollywood and the Norwood Golf Clubs before Tillinghast's reconstruction. According to Pingatore the driveway leading to the Hollywood Golf Clubhouse ran along the Mount Carmel Cemetery border and parallel to the 18th fairway and turning right on the hilltop to the front steps of the clubhouse which faced Wall Street. He also said that after the closing of the Norwood Country Club, a group of Red Bank businessmen managed to keep the golf course playable from the late 1930's until the War years.

In order to establish the layout for the Norwood Golf and Country Club, a former caddy from the late 1930's, Alden West, was contacted. He is a member of The Old Guard of Long Branch and

the West Long Branch Historical Society. Fortunately the majority of the Old Guard members caddied at the Norwood golf course in the later 1930's, and a consensus of those members allowed Mr. West to prepare a sketch of the golf course for this history. By the 1950's and the mid 1960's the entire golf grounds were replaced by the Oakwood Manor housing development, the West Long Branch Estates tract developments, and the Peter Cooper Village Senior Citizens Housing.

John De Bruin, whose father, in the early 1930's, was caretaker on the Cedar Avenue estate of Mr. Harold Spier, led Spier's polo ponies from the Cedar Avenue estate across the fields of Norwood Park, Wall Street, and the vacant farmland west of Mt. Carmel Cemetery to the Polo Grounds. Mr. Spier was a member of The Norwood Country Club and was active in the polo matches. Anthony Colagouri of Long Branch worked as a locker boy in the Clubhouse locker room which now houses the 2009 West Long Branch Police Station and the former Town Hall adjacent to the Sunken Garden. Colagouri shined the polo players' boots in the locker room; on the polo field he held peeled oranges for the mounted players to snatch from his outstretched hand during Chucker breaks. He also served as a busboy at the Gala Dinner Dances held both indoors and outdoors during the Season.

Mary Gibbons Showler worked in the office for the Norwood Country Club during the golden years 1926 to 1935; a concise account of her memories for those years has been recorded by her daughter, Kathleen Showler Elfner of West Long Branch:

*Norwood Country Club
West Long Branch, New Jersey*

The Norwood Country Club was one of the most exclusive clubs at the Jersey shore. It boasted an 18

hole golf course, two polo fields, tennis house and courts, golf shop and clubhouse, which were all in the English Tudor Style. Polo matches were arranged with other clubs in the area such as Suneagles.

The golf course was designed by the famous architect, A.W. Tillinghast, better known as "Tillie". He designed hundreds of courses in his career including Winged Foot and Bethpage. George L. Fotheringham was the head golf pro and John W. Showler was the assistant golf pro. In those days the head pro was older and ran the golf shop. The assistant gave lessons, repaired golf clubs, and played in the pro golf tournaments with funding from the club. In 1922, Norwood was awarded the New Jersey Amateur, beating out several well known clubs that were competing for the honor.

The membership rolls included such names as the Gimbels and the Guggenheims. Many families summered at the Jersey shore and spent their leisure days at the club, golfing, playing tennis, precipitating in polo matches or watching them. The club had plenty of nightlife also. There was a sunken garden off of the long dining room's wall of French doors, a wooden floor was laid down and a band shell put up for the orchestra. Many famous bands of the era were hired to entertain, and dancing went on to the wee hours of the morning. Bands such as Guy Lombardo, Lester Lanin, and Eddie Duchin could be enjoyed on many summer nights.

As you entered the club, there was a large blue rug with the club seal. The office was on the left. Mary Gibbons worked in the office and eventually married

John Showler, the assistant golf pro. The stairs to the ladies locker room was on the right and it was done in salmon pink. Beyond the foyer was a huge room where the members came and met. There still remains the massive fireplace on the left. Here too were large rugs with the club seal. The men's locker room was above the kitchen and there was also a barber, masseur, shoeshine boy and valet boys who were dressed similar to bell hops in the full uniform with matching caps. Above the dining room, there was an apartment for the manager, the last one being a gentleman by the name of Schwartz. The kitchen employed both a chef and a pastry cook. Off the kitchen was an alcove in which all the staff had to have their meals. Any mingling with the members was not allowed. Ironically, however, the club sent one of their club cars to pick up and bring home office worker, Mary Gibbons every day!

The Crash of 1929 hit the members of the club very hard because they had invested very heavily in the stock market. Eventually the club went bankrupt. It laid dormant for years, until the Lions Club purchased it in 1953. The main part of the club was renovated and given to the residents in 1954 and became the West Long Branch Community Center. Although only a part of the club remains, the fireplace in the main room stands as a monument to remind all of the bygone era of the leisure lifestyle of the rich and famous.

Kathleen Showler Elfner

The Tennis Courts and Polo Fields

Tennis and Polo were significant activities at the Norwood Golf and Country Club. The courts were located along Locust Avenue to the South of the clubhouse. There was a small tennis house adjacent to the courts that was run by the tennis professional. Many of the of the membership signed on for tennis only. There



were two Polo Fields located along Locust Avenue North of the clubhouse that extended to Walnut Place. One of the fields was limited to practice only. Most of the polo players also played some golf.

The Clubhouse Becomes the West Long Branch Community Center Complex

With the start of World II the Norwood golf course and clubhouse were abandoned, and through neglect the Golf course was over grown; the clubhouse



fell into disrepair and was vandalized. The clubhouse property was privately owned when purchased by the West Long Branch Lions Club in 1953 for use by the community. The Lions Club, with borrowed funds and volunteer work, repaired the building for use. The West Long Branch Community Center Inc. took control of the building from

The Lions Club in 1954, and assumed the mortgage and debts that the Lions Club had acquired from the project.

The renovated Norwood Country Club clubhouse contains an addition to the right of the front entrance and to the Library in the rear. The south wing of the Community Center was purchased by the Borough in 1956. The Borough administrative offices and Police Station were moved from Monmouth Road into that location, and in 1957 the West Long Branch Library also became part of the Municipal Complex.



Community Center in 2000

To the rear of the complex are the entrances to the Police Station (plans call for moving to the new Borough location on Broadway) and the Borough Hall offices (the Borough Hall has been relocated to its existing location on Broadway).



West Long Branch Police Station



Former Boro Hall Offices 2000

The West Long Branch Library is also located in the rear of the complex; it was built on the outdoor dining patio of the original clubhouse. The wooden panel siding and modern entry defines it from the remainder of the building.



West Long Branch Library

The Norwood Country Club Lands Are Developed for Housing

The acres of the golf grounds and polo fields were developed into housing tracts and a Senior Citizens Housing Development. The polo grounds along Locust and Poplar Ave. are occupied by ranch style homes built in the early 1950's as the first section of the West Long Branch Estates several tracts. The golf grounds bordered by Wall Street and Oakwood Ave. were developed as Oakwood Manor, a tract of split -level homes. They were finished by the mid 1950's. The Peter Cooper Village Senior Citizens Housing Development was completed in the late 1960's. The last section of the West Long Branch Estate homes were completed during the 1970's along the Northeast border of the former Norwood Golf Course.

Impact on West Long Branch

The former golfing grounds of the *Norwood Field Club*, *Hollywood Golf Club*, and the *Norwood Golf and Country Club* have been developed into family homes and the Peter Cooper Village Senior Citizens Housing Units. The only clubhouse that remains has been converted into the West Long Branch Community Center and Municipal Complex. The Golf Clubs'

membership lists included many notables such as John McCall, the Guggenheims, the Gimbels, and the Strauss'. Honorary memberships were given to United States Presidents starting with Taft, and to Vice President Hobart, under Mc Kinley. A *touch of class* has been introduced to the former farmlands of West Long Branch; it was initiated by Norman L. Munro with the Norwood Park Cottage Colony, the presence of the *Golf Links*, and Monmouth University today.

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Long Branch 1902. architect, A.C. Browne, owner, Hollywood Golf Club. (New clubhouse on Wall Street on Chamberlin Farm in Eatontown, now West Long Branch, but listed as Long Branch.)

Long Branch 1916. architect, Harry Allan Jacobs, owner, Norwood Golf Club, (Refurbish above clubhouse)

Long Branch 1919. architect, Harry Allen Jacobs, owner, Norwood Golf Club, (Build new clubhouse on Locust Ave. The structure now exists as the West Long Branch Community Center, Library, and Police Station.)