

**The Litchfield Country Club
100th Anniversary History**

1892-1992

**Litchfield, Connecticut
1992**

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1878

Lawn Club

The Litchfield Lawn Club was located on the site of the present day town hall and included a long building housing two bowling alleys and one tennis court. Principal activities included croquet, bowling, tennis and social events.

1892

Litchfield Country Club Association

At the urging of Alexander McNeil the Litchfield Country Club Association was formed. The LCCA took over the property of the Litchfield Lawn Club and purchased additional property from Emily Noyes Vanderpoel. **The Articles of Association were signed on August 29, 1892.** The club was formed to “encourage the practice of athletic games and outdoor sports of every kind and the furtherance of social intercourse among its members.” This organization eventually became the Litchfield Country Club.

1893

Litchfield Club

The name of the Litchfield Country Club Association was changed to The Litchfield Club.

Litchfield Club Builds Club House and Tennis Courts

In 1893 a clubhouse was erected on the site of the Trowbridge House which had been torn down in 1892. At the same time four tennis courts were built behind the clubhouse. The Connecticut State Tennis Championships were played on these courts until 1914.

1896

Golf Arrives in Litchfield

A six-hole golf course was added to the Litchfield Club. The course was located behind the Sheldon Tavern and Tallmadge House on North Street and extended to the present day Community Field on North Lake Street.

1897

Golf Becomes Controversial

Some of the members of the Litchfield Club became proficient in the new game and wanted the course enlarged and improved but the majority of the members were more interested in tennis and social functions and would not spend money on golf.

1898

The Bantam River Golf Club

A group split off from the Litchfield Club and formed the Bantam River Golf Club. They set up a nine-hole course south of East Street extending from the rear of St. Anthony's Church over the Bantam River and built a small log cabin as a club house. The two competing clubs became known as the East Side and West Side Clubs.

1902

The Cost of the Game

1902 dues at the West Side Club were: Season Subscriber Ticket - \$25.00, Season Single Ticket - \$10.00, Month Single Ticket - \$5.00, One Week Single Ticket - \$2.00, One Day Single Ticket - \$.50

1898-1904

Litchfield Divided

In 1943 Alexis Doster spoke on the history of the club: During this period the town was, in truth, divided socially between the East and the West Side, and one's social status depended upon which club one belonged to. Some of the more diplomatic citizens belonged to both ... some new summer residents were so offended by this "Tempest-in-a-Teapot", and especially the competitive efforts of both clubs to secure their membership, that they never returned to Litchfield. No one liked this state of affairs and everyone wanted to bury the hatchet."

1904

West Side Abandons Golf

The Litchfield Club or the "West Side Club" lost many members to the East Side Club until the West Side Club was forced to add three more holes in an effort to keep their membership. However, membership continued to decline and in 1904 they abandoned golf altogether.

1904

New Golf Ball the Culprit

An improvement in the standard golf ball was one of the reasons for the abandonment of the East Side Club. The new balls had greater carry making the original holes too short. The same situation caused concern at the West Side Club since they were unable to expand the course.

1916

Alain White Saves the Day

In 1916 Alain White through the White Memorial Foundation offered the Catlin Farm and house as a site for a golf course and club house. This is the site of the present Litchfield Country Club.

Litchfield Country Club Incorporated

Litchfield Club (East Side) and Bantam River Golf Club (West Side) dissolved and former members of both organizations joined together to form the Litchfield Country Club.

On October 7, 1916 new Articles of Association were signed and the club formally opened on July 4, 1917.

According to Article 2:

“The purpose for which the said corporation is formed are the following, to wit: to promote and maintain in the town of Litchfield a Country Club for the promotion of open air and other forms of amusement, diversions and recreations, and to promote and maintain facilities for social intercourse among its members.”

Highlights from the Minute Books

1930

The Board of Governors met in New York City at the home of the President, Mr. Prentiss.

Ludlow Bull, Chair of the Tennis Committee submitted a plan for the improvement of the two lower tennis courts at an estimated cost of \$2,500.00

Alain White donated pine trees which were planted to form a westerly background for the tennis courts.

The Board of Governors met at the Club House as luncheon guests of the Present.

The active clergymen of the four churches in the borough of Litchfield were extended the privileges of the Club.

1931

The following are a new of the House Rules:

- No betting or play for stakes of any kind is allowed in the Club House.
- No intoxicating liquors shall be brought upon the Club property.
- Employees are not allowed to sell, dispense or serve liquors.

1932

The Board of Governors voted that the President's action in reducing the Greens keeper's salary 10% and the labor gang's wages \$10.00 per month, per man, is approved.

“Report was made of complaints relating to sanitary conditions at the Caddy House and after a discussion it was voted that the Treasurer be authorized to install a toilet for the use of the Golf Professional, Caddy Master, and caddies in the room which is now known as the laundry with arrangements made for access thereto from outside.”

1934

Greens Fees were agreed upon: \$2.00 for golf and \$1.00 for tennis, per day, every day.

The June 2nd Governors meeting was held at the Club House at 5:00 in the afternoon. The meeting was adjourned to the Sanctum where it reconvened at 8:00 the same evening.

“Non-members who are residents of Litchfield may not be invited to the Tuesday Ladies Luncheon more than once a month.”

The Dance Committee was authorized to retain a balance of \$175.00, to lessen the cost to members for the 1935 dance series.

1935

“The Green Committee is authorized to rebuild one green, whichever it deems best, performing the work with as little outside help as is possible and that the Green Committee arrange for the raking up and burning of all leaves under the elm trees on the club property as a precaution against disease.”

The President appointed a committee to be in charge of tree planting on the golf course.

The Treasurer was instructed to appear before the Board of Relief of the Town of Litchfield, at its next meeting, with the object of lowering taxes now paid on the club properties: \$503.36.

House Membership was created with privileges limited to the use of the house, cafe, and putting green.

The House Committee was authorized to purchase a radio set at a cost not to exceed \$30.00.

The regulations regarding the use of wine and liquors were amended to read:

- “Men who are of age may keep spirits in their lockers to be consumed only in the locker room.
- After 7:00 p.m. spirits supplied by members may be served in the Club House to dinner guests. This applies only to persons who are of age.”

1936

The following suggestion was made by members at the Annual Meeting and referred to the Green Committee for action:

“That means to be taken to keep nets at all times on all water holes. It was particularly suggested that consideration be given to the employment of a boy to take charge of the nets, placing them in the morning, collecting them at night and keeping them in repair. It was further suggested that he be on duty at the river on the 7th hole.”

1937

The Club was elected as an active member in the Connecticut State Golf Association.

“The matter of undesirable guests who attended the recent dance gave rise to prolonged discussion. The President was requested to write to the member of the club said to be responsible for the presence of those guests and reluctantly promised that he would so do.”

The 7th green was damaged by geese and vandals.

William H.J. Fischer Jr. and his assistant Ted Dodge returned as golf professionals.

It was agreed to allow the Litchfield High School golf team to use the course during the day until June 15th.

1938

A notice was placed at the telephone: “All toll calls must be charged to members’ home telephones.”

The Dance Committee reported that the dances had been well attended. Attendance exceeded expectations.

The Entertainment Committee reported a failure. The entertainment by the magician from Saks Fifth Avenue had netted \$1.00.

The Tennis Committee reported that two interclub matches had been played with Waterbury and Washington and that the Litchfield players had won both matches.

1940

Oswald Marrin was made a junior member of the club.

The Board was requested to allow liquor to be served at club dances. Liquor was rejected – “but beer was probably okay.”

1941

“The enlargement of the porch outside seems very desirable and under a committee of efficient women, it would multiply the opportunities for social activities that would attract our younger members.”

Dues increased to \$50.00 per year for non-golf playing members. The five o'clock membership would be retained at \$10.00 per year.

1942

The title of Greens keeper Emeritus was given to Lawrence Doyle, who had been the greens keeper since the Club opened in 1916.

Resident Family Membership was increased to \$40.00 per year.

1943

President Alexis Doster said he thought that the construction of a new 18 hole golf course on the White Memorial Foundation's Dykes property was not feasible at this time. The club would save \$175.00 per year by relinquishing the lease.

1945

The special five o'clock membership was eliminated. There were only three members and the Board felt that they should pay regular fees.

The Club relinquished the Dykes property lease.

A committee was formed to investigate the possibility of constructing a swimming pool.

“Because of the work involved, the Secretary/Treasurer was given a family membership for free.”

1950

Peter Dranginis was hired as golf and tennis instructor.

1952

A liquor license was obtained for the Club – “to make the Club more active”.

The White Memorial Foundation agreed to the addition of the present dining room to the club house.

1953

The purchase of a record player, “for the club membership's enjoyment” was approved by the Governors.

The President explained that some of the members had agreed to earn their 1954 dues by painting the club house the next spring.

New By-Laws were adopted. Green fees for guests were raised to \$2.00 on weekdays, \$3.00 on weekends.

1955

The great flood caused considerable damage to six holes. President Fellows was empowered to spend \$4,000.00 for a new 3rd green and tee, and new 4th tee.

1956

The Governors lowered the bar prices because many members had complained that the bar prices were too high.

1959

The pool opened.

1960

Watering the fairways was a frequent topic at meetings.

1961

A full family membership was increased to \$290.00.

1964

The Green Committee wished to build a practice tee between the 4th green and the pool.

1966

A new green at the 3rd hole on the west side of the Bantam River was installed.

The Board of Governors voted to have two membership categories – family and house. Those over 65 or under 36 were given reduced rates.

The “cocktail area” was expanded. The east porch was closed in which allowed additional seating for 36 people.

The White Memorial Foundation lent the Club \$10,000.00 at 6% to be paid back over 10 years.

1968

The Board of Governors voted that “a single child of a current member will be allowed to continue in his parent’s class of membership until the January 1 immediately following his 25th birthday.”

1978

The Annual Meeting was changed to February from October.

A \$15.00 monthly house minimum was initiated.

1980

“We will use paper towels where possible! Because the laundry bill is too high.”

Members are not paying their bills on time! Note: See the President’s letter of January 1993 – a never ending problem.

A special membership meeting was held to reduce the membership to 155 from 165. Because of a tie vote membership was not decreased at this time.

1981

“Because of the heavy snow, the Paddle Tennis Committee purchased two brooms for paddle tennis use.”

1982

The house minimum was raised to \$20.00 per month.

1983

The first club handbook was printed.

The Board of Governors discussed giving away a new care for a “Hole in One” contest during the member-guest golf tournament. The Board felt that it might give too much of a “carnival atmosphere” to the Club.

The reduced “72 year old” membership category was eliminated.

1985

“We must do something about expanding the kitchen” – finished July 1992.

1986

House members were included in minimum billing requirements.

1987

“A 30 year-old tractor expired during the busiest time for Club maintenance. It was necessary to replace this tractor with a dependable machine costing \$13,000.”

The membership was increased from 165 to 175.

The lower paddle tennis court was removed because of its poor condition.

1988

The annual dues were raised to \$1,380.00 for regular members and initiation fees were equal to one year's dues.

“The Annual Meeting will be held some time in October each year.”

The waiting list for the club stood at 13.

1989

“Efforts are being made to make sure guests are properly registered and proper tennis attire is used on the courts.”

“An older pool – unlike an historic home or a vintage wine – does not improve with age.”

40 hardwood trees were planted throughout the golf course.

1990

A new aluminum paddle tennis court replaced the two old wooden courts.

1991

“The lifeguards will be directed to keep children at the pool under control and from making too much noise.”

“Goldman-Sachs will use the club on September 16th for a golf tournament at which Mickey Mantle will be in attendance.”

Club membership is full with 10 families on the waiting list for regular membership.

1992

Both pools, the pool area and the kitchen underwent significant renovations at a cost of approximately \$96,000.00.

The noise from the new kitchen fan bothered many tennis players.

“After much discussion, the Board voted to impose an assessment on regular members amounting to \$50.00 per month for the next five months and \$15.00 per month on house members.

The first annual Kitchen vs. Green Tennis Tournament was held. The Kitchen prevailed 10-7 and holds the trophy.

Centennial Celebrations were held over Labor Day Weekend with a dinner dance, a family afternoon of tennis, golf and swimming competition, and a tennis tournament with teams who combined ages were 100 years or more. The oldest team was 147 years old. They did not win.

**The Litchfield Country Club 100th Anniversary
1892-1992**

**The Centennial Prayer
Delivered by Richard K. Beebe**

September 5, 1992

God of the evening hour, as we come together in this familiar place for our centennial celebration, we pause and give thanks for breath, bread, and for time made precious by its passing. Accept our gratitude for good fellowship here that brings delight and laughter in our troubled world. Praise is on our lips now for recreation that recreates and renews, especially for the royal and ancient, and the courtly games we play. Hear our thanks for all those known or unknown, remembered or long forgotten, who – through the years and one or another – ably served our club for its well-being and its welfare. Above all, we are profoundly thankful for happy memories associated with this pleasant place, while we remember all those whom we have liked, loved and lost awhile.

Amen

The Litchfield Country Club

1991-1992

Officers

President	Stephen Curry
Vice President	Charles Marshall
Treasurer	Roderick McAlpin
Secretary	Gregory Oneglia

Governors

Term Expiring 1994

Barbara MacDonald
Elizabeth Merz
Andrew Roraback

Term Expiring 1993

Donald Goss
Louise Guion
Paul Hinkel

Term Expiring 1992

Emory Cleminshaw
James Lamond
Gerard Smith

Committee Chairpersons

Golf Events	Donald Goss
Green	Gerard Smith
Pool	Elizabeth Merz
Tennis	Barbara MacDonald
Paddle Tennis	Emory Cleminshaw
Membership	Andrew Roraback
Ladies Golf	Louise Guion
Maintenance	Paul Hinkel
Senior's Men's Golf	Richard Beebe
House	James Lamond

Centennial Committee
Barbara MacDonald, Chair
Dick Brickley
Cathy Fields
Don Goss
Jim Lamond
Priscilla Lamond
Ned Pearson
Betty Merz
Mary Lou Reid
Jack Sepples

The Litchfield Country Club 100th Anniversary History
Prepared by
Cathy Fields
Barbara MacDonald
Ned Pearson

The Centennial Committee would like to thank:
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Gail Marciano
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Larry Rand
The Litchfield Historical Society
And
All Our Members!

We apologize for missing years in the timeline. Not all the minute books are available.