

## **The Country Club**

**The residents of Litchfield appear to have become interested in summer sports, particularly tennis and golf, at an early date. The “Gay Nineties” marked the beginning of this movement and at one time Litchfield boasted two Sport Clubs, the West Side and the East Side Clubs. The former had a golf course in the present Community Field area, crossing North Lake Street and using part of the north end of Elm Ridge. Apparently this was the older Club but differences of viewpoint among its members led to the establishment of a second course on the east side, in the area behind St. Michael’s Church. In the end, the West Side Club gave up its course and the East Side furnished the golfing facilities for Litchfield.**

**A Tennis Club was established in 1893 on West Street, and the Playhouse, designed by S. Edson Gage, of West Morris, was built in front of its courts. But, as the years went on, it was realized that in a community the size of Litchfield, there was no need for two clubs and that it would be desirable to bring both the tennis and golf interests together at one site and in a single organization. Accordingly, in October, 1916, the present Litchfield Country Club was incorporated, and both golf and tennis facilities were provided on its grounds.**

**At the south end of the main north and south ridge on which the borough of Litchfield is situated, and at the end of Old South Road, or High Street, as it was formerly called, lies a fertile meadow known as Catlin’s Farm. This was acquired by the White Foundation and leased to the Country Club for a nominal sum. On this stretch, a fine nine-hole golf course was laid out and four excellent tennis courts built, soon after the incorporation of the Country Club, and since that time, these summer sports have been established on a firm basis in Litchfield.**

**Starting from the level upland, the course takes the player down to the beautiful tree-bordered meadows through which the Bantam River twists and turns to form several water hazards. The stream is crossed by foot bridges which add effectively to the beauty of the vistas, particularly on the seventh fairway. A number of truly remarkable elms along the banks of the River give welcome shade, and their long shadows, in the late afternoon, add a deeper hue to the bright green of the fairways.**

**Small shelters have been provided against summer showers at the far ends of the course – at the fourth and seventh greens. The ninth hole brings the player back on the high ground near the Club House.**

**For the expert golfer, the Litchfield Course offers no especial difficulties, while for the beginner its frequent water hazards and annoying roughs add rapidly to the score. All players, however, recognize the great natural beauties of the site, which, together with the excellent fairways and greens, plus the exercise of the game and the climb from the lower reaches to the upper levels as the game progresses,**

make the course one of the most intimate, interesting and charming in the Litchfield Hills.

Alain White served as President of the Club during its first year and was followed by F. Kingsbury Bull who was active in planning the golf course, designed by Robert D. Pryde, of New Haven, and constructed under the supervision of R. Dunscombe Sanford, of Litchfield. In 1921, the late George Richards became President and devoted his efforts to the development of the Club, by giving much of his time and making numerous gifts to it. No history of the Club should fail to emphasize the contributions to its success accorded by the interest and enthusiasm of Mr. Richards during the five years of his presidency. He was followed, during the boom days of the Coolidge-Hoover era, by Samuel H. Fisher. Under his presidency, new features were added, such as bridges and shelters, and the course was stiffened, but the Club wisely decided not to expand unduly. It still remains a small local Club, emphasizing the intimate "family" qualities which it has cherished since its beginnings. The old Arthur Catlin home still serves as the Club House and encourages this normal, simple atmosphere of friendliness.

About 1929, the Governors became interested in a movement to make the golf facilities of the Club more generally available to the business men and women of Litchfield. A special form of membership was established which has made it possible for an enthusiastic group of Litchfield residents to use the golf course after business hours and has thus done much to increase the community values and interests of the Club.

Under the leadership of Marshall Prentiss and Ludlow S. Bull, the Club not only weathered the depression, maintaining its buildings and grounds in excellent condition, but, from time to time, rebuilt some of the greens, reconstructed its tennis courts, and greatly improved the general aspect of the grounds.

During the last few years, the Club has continued successfully under the presidencies of Frederick H. Wiggin and William S. Walcott.

In the first twenty-one years of its existence, the Club had two devoted Treasurers. Cornelius R. Duffie, for thirteen years, until his death in 1929, gave generously of his time and tact to the handling of the problems of the Club's finances, and, during the next eight years, the careful business-like administration of this office by Alexis Doster has helped to keep the Club in a sound financial condition, which the recent Treasurer, Charles B. Curtis, maintained. Walter Howe has just been elected to this office.

The Foundation has been interested in the Club as it makes this part of its property available to members of the Club and others, but, at the same time, it has made no attempt to influence the Club management or policy. It has, however, been greatly pleased and much gratified in seeing the Club carry out, in such an effective manner and under so many efficient leaders, a policy which has made it an asset to the community and a summer sports center of the most desirable type for the men, women and children of Litchfield. With none of the objectionable features of many

**modern country clubs, and with intangible assets which many such clubs totally lack, we believe the Litchfield Country Club has well merited the support of the Foundation and is a valuable asset to both the summer and the full-time residents of the vicinity.**

**J. Kip Finch**