

# March 2022 - Did You Know? History of our Golf Building

*"Not a week goes by without my learning something new about golf. That means, of course, that I was ignorant of eight things about golf two months ago. Extend that process back nearly twenty years and the result is an impressive accumulation of ignorance."* PETER DOBEREINER

The topic this month is our pro shop and locker building. DYK can usually dig up some reliable information about Blythefield CC's history, but this month I'm sort of stumped. Searches and interviews about the origin of our golf building left some holes. One story I heard, but am not confident of, is that the golf building was built long before Blythefield CC was founded, when our property was the Plainfield Auto Club. I was told that it originally was a garage for cars of auto club members. Maybe as the building is demolished this month there will be some evidence uncovered.

Let's try to cover what I've been able to discover. Even though there is uncertainty on the details, I hope you enjoy the old photos.

There have been many changes to our "golf building" over the years. The footprint as well as functions of the various rooms have changed several times over the years, except for the locker rooms. The ladies' locker room has always been the south wing. The men's lockers have always been on the north side, on a wing set at an angle. The men's locker room also a stag bar and shoe-shine area. It has been renovated over the years but is still the locker room, albeit without a stag bar. The angled part is still there, but the angle has been hidden by later additions on the north side. The pro shop was originally between the locker rooms, with a nice fireplace for ambiance. Some years earlier it had been moved to a separate pro shop structure to the north, and then later moved back.

Here are a couple 70-year-old aerial photos of our clubhouse facilities before the pro shop building and cart barns were added. You can see that the north part of the golf building was at an angle. This angled part on the north end of the golf building was before the later additions of a separate pro shop structure and cart barns.



date unknown, but before 1953

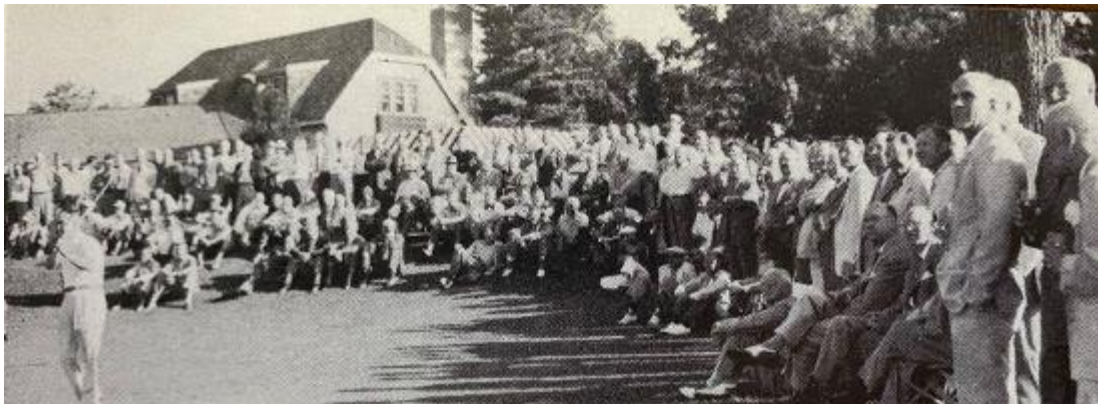


date unknown, but before 1953

From the first photo, you can also see that the original drive into the club was a sweeping arc. This driveway into the club was changed in the late 1960's to make room for our current swimming pool area. (Our original pool was where our tennis courts are now.)

No cart barns were needed originally but were added with the advent of riding carts. Blythefield didn't have golf buggies until the 1950's, and not many were used back then because walking – with a caddie or trolley – still ruled. Over time two cart barns were built to the north of the new pro shop building that had been added north of the men's locker area. The original cart barn had a sloped, lean-to roof. It was ugly. Later it was expanded with another lean-to addition, also ugly! That's how we ended up having two separate cart storage areas. (I could find no photos of the separate pro shop structure or the lean-to cart barn additions.)

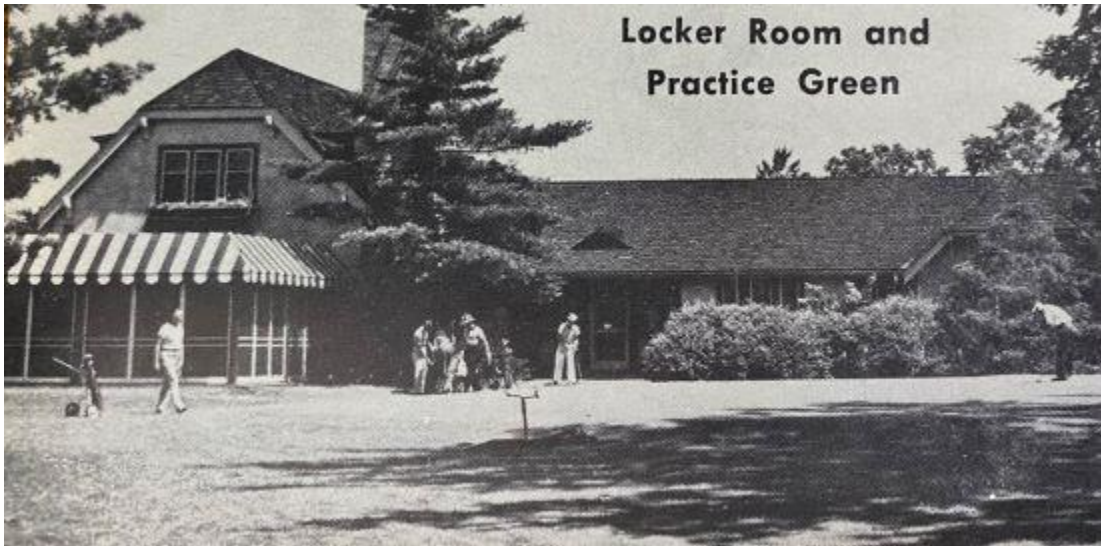
In the 1950's there were screened porches on the west side of the golf building, near the putting green.



from the 1953 BCC Yearbook, with legend: "The Famous Pen-Blythefield Stag" (golfer swinging is likely BCC head pro John Barnum)



from 1953 BCC Yearbook; note the old style pull carts a/k/a trolleys



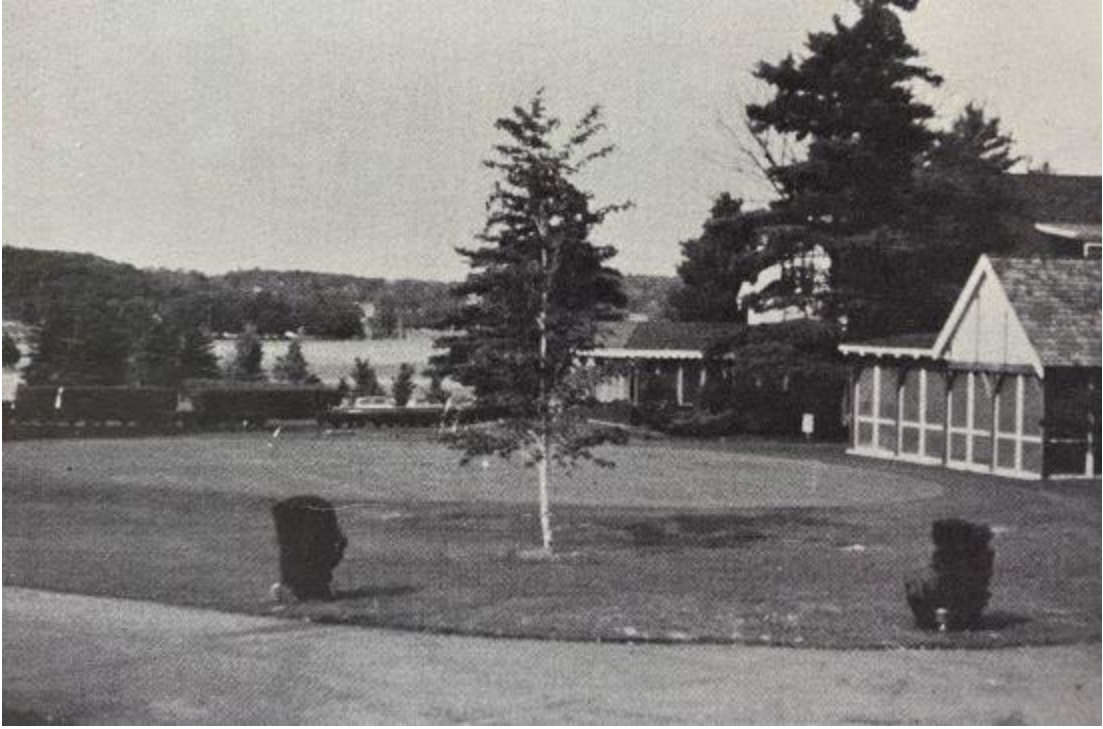
from 1955 BCC Yearbook; men's screened porch with striped awning; it wasn't called the golf building back then



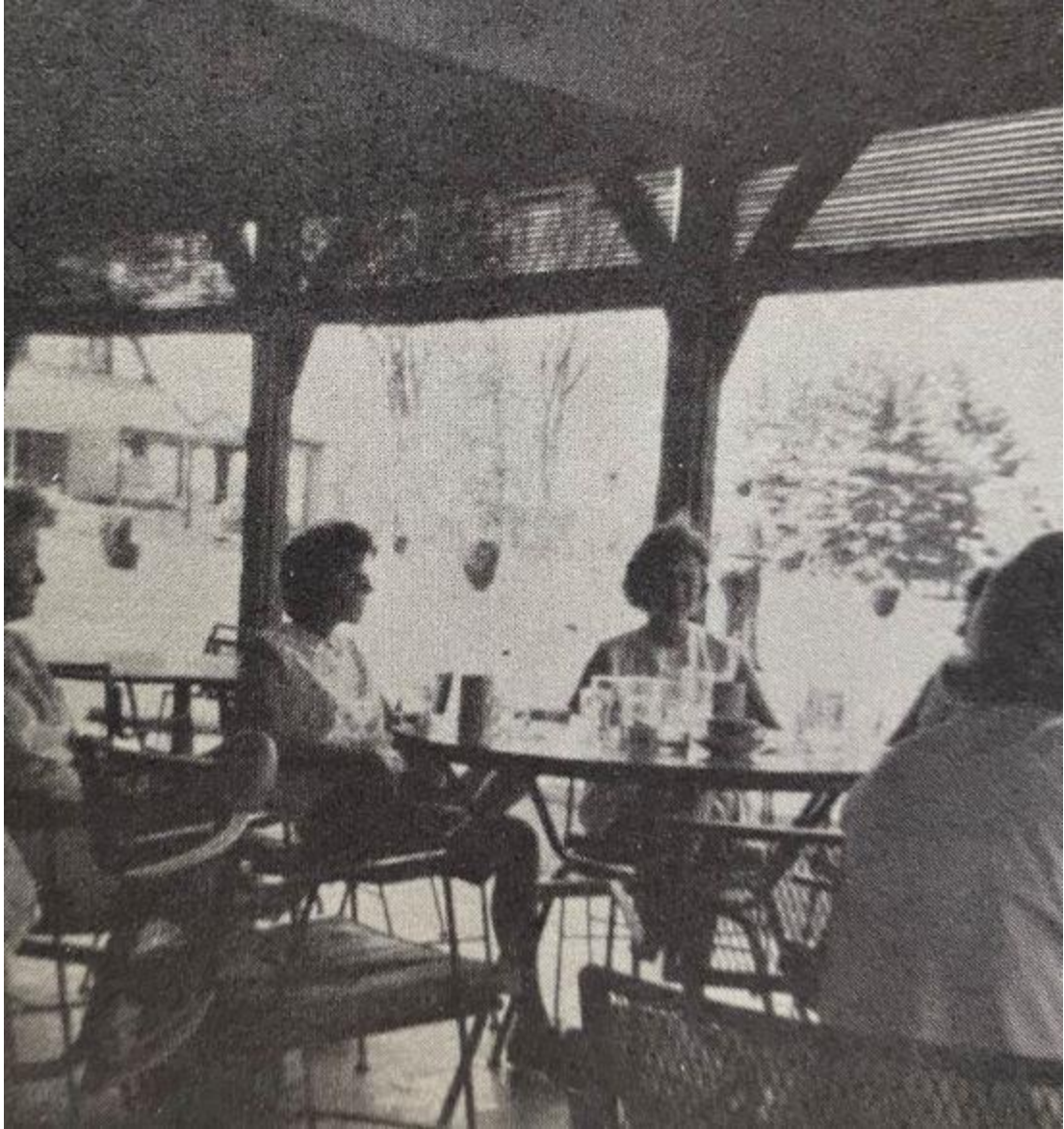
from 1956 BCC Yearbook; porch for ladies, on right, had been added (no pavement behind the first tee; not needed before golf carts)



1961 Western Open, first tee with golf building in background



putting green & porches, 1963 Yearbook



Ladies screened porch, 1964 BCC Yearbook



1964 BCC Yearbook (Sam Greenawalt in middle; does anyone know the other two?)

According to our 1963 yearbook: “New washroom and toilet facilities for the boys [i.e., caddies] have been provided in the rear of the new Pro Shop building. Recreational facilities are being planned, so they will have something to do while waiting to caddie.” From this we can surmise that the pro shop addition was built in the winter of 1962-1963. The pro shop had a porch going out to the first tee. The floor of the porch was wood, which often had to be replaced due to damage from metal spikes. Does anyone miss those? Do young golfers even know of them?

The room where we now have exercise equipment used to be the men’s stag bar. No women and no boys under age 14 were allowed. There was a mahogany bar on the west side, with a screened porch for the guys behind the bar. After the pro shop was moved to the new addition on the north, a new mixed-use bar was built in the old pro shop area (between the locker rooms) and a small kitchen was also added. Most of the old pro shop became a mixed grille.

There was still a stag area as part of the men’s locker room, humorously named the “Rogue Room”. People assumed that name came from the river that runs through our golf course. Nope! It was (ahem) *a tribute* to some former members, guys who some may have considered to be *rogues*.



Here's the story of the Rogue Room. There were several colorful characters who were a big part of our club. For several decades probably going back before the 1950's, Blythefield had a reputation as a guys' club. These guys were mostly good players; a few of them played somewhat fast and loose with rules and etiquette. Stories of these "colorful" golfers abound, but here are a couple amusing ones (without revealing names of the not-so-innocent):

- One BCC character would drive his cart near his opponent's ball and, just as the opponent was in his backswing, squeeze a whoopie cushion that he was sitting on. He of course would innocently say, "Excuse me".
- Another BCC character would drive his cart up no. 16 hill before his opponent played to the green, so he could make sure his ball was below the hole and his opponent's ball was above it. Moving the balls would be part of this, if necessary, all before his opponent could see what was going on.

(There are many stories like these. More will be shared in future DYK's about BCC when it was mostly a "man cave", and about the origin of weekend guys' games called "the gangsome". But now, back to the golf building.)

There were more renovations in the late 1970's. The screened porches were removed, and the pro shop building on the north side was connected to the rest of the golf building with access directly from the men's locker room. (Women had to exit the golf building to get to the pro shop.) The second cart barn might have been added around then. Here are some photos from around that time.



from BCC files, 1977



from BCC files, 1977



from BCC files, 1978



from BCC files, 1978



from BCC files, 1978



from BCC files, 1981

The lean-to look of the cart barns was eliminated in the major renovations to the golf building that began in the winter of 1992-93. The lean-to's got remodeled roofs, and the separate pro shop to the golf building was connected to the men's locker room. Also at that time the interior of the original men's locker room was redesigned, with more locker space. The upstairs area that had been for storage was repurposed with lockers, and showers were added. The previous outside space between the old pro shop and the golf building became an interior hallway leading from the new bag drop circle to the pro shop and porch. Both locker rooms got new wooden lockers. The old men's bar and the Rogue Room lost their male-only status. The first year after this there was a bit of consternation among the guys as women could get to the pro shop by walking through what used to be a stag bar. (Horrors!) A new bar was built in what used to be the mixed grille between the locker rooms.

Interestingly, the Rogue Room losing its stag-bar status was courtesy of our state government at the urging of advocates for women's rights. Lobbying pressure resulted in legislation eliminating sex segregation in private clubs. The new Michigan law did not make stag bars illegal. Instead, the liquor licensing law was amended to deny a license to any club with sex-segregated facilities. Blythefield and other Michigan clubs had this choice: either integrate or no booze. Like most clubs,

Blythefield decided to keep its liquor license. The stag bar was no more; this was a big deal for a short while but like most clubs we adapted.

In the early 1990's before this renovation is when the board of directors first began discussions about replacing the golf building. The concept was for a new building for lockers, carts and pro shop, all as an addition to the east side of the clubhouse. Eventually the decision was made to keep the golf building but remodel it.



1993 aerial, after the renovation

In 2012, the top of the golf building had a cosmetic change. Over the years the old HVAC was sorely in need of replacement. The new system was installed on the roof of the Golf Building, making the view of the roof unattractively cluttered with HVAC which could be seen as players approached the greens on nos. 9 and 18. A parapet was added at the top of the roof, seen here in Terri's photo.





2013, courtesy of Terri Pippin-Grannis

In 2017 the pro shop moved back to its original location between the locker rooms. Food and beverage service that had been there ended. What had been the bar area for many years became the pro shop counter. What had been the service kitchen for the mixed grille became the golf professionals' office. The former pro shop on the north side was used by the staff for the Meijer LPGA Classic. What had earlier been the men's grille became a work-out facility. Here is a recent photo.



February 2022, just before demolition

And now we say goodbye to the golf building. Soon new locker rooms, pro shop and golf cart storage will be built on the east side of the clubhouse. What had started as an idea back a few decades ago is about to happen.

*Brent Rector*

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