

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

1. Name of Property

Historic name: Highland Country Club

Other names/site number: CP 386

Name of related multiple property listing: NA

2. Location

Street & number: 931 Alexandria Pike

City or town: Fort Thomas State: KY County: Campbell

Not For Publication: NA Vicinity: NA

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended,

I hereby certify that this X nomination ___ request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60.

In my opinion, the property X meets ___ does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant at the following level(s) of significance:

___ national ___ statewide x local

Applicable National Register Criteria:

x A ___ B ___ C ___ D

<p>_____ Signature of certifying official/Title: Craig Potts/SHPO Date _____ ___ Kentucky Heritage Council/State Historic Preservation Office _____ State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government</p>

<p>In my opinion, the property ___ meets ___ does not meet the National Register criteria.</p>	
<p>_____ Signature of commenting official:</p>	<p>_____ Date</p>
<p>_____ Title :</p>	<p>_____ State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government</p>

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4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that this property is:

- entered in the National Register
- determined eligible for the National Register
- determined not eligible for the National Register
- removed from the National Register
- other (explain:) _____

Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

5. Classification

Ownership of Property

- Private:
- Public – Local
- Public – State
- Public – Federal

Category of Property

- Building(s)
- District
- Site
- Structure
- Object

Number of Resources within Property

Contributing	Noncontributing	
<u>2</u>	<u>2</u>	buildings
<u>1</u>	<u>0</u>	sites
<u>2</u>	<u>0</u>	structures
<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	objects
<u>5</u>	<u>2</u>	Total

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Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register 0

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions

RECREATION AND CULTURE: Outdoor Recreation/Golf Course

Current Functions

RECREATION AND CULTURE: Outdoor Recreation/Golf Course

7. Description

Architectural Classification

Modern Movement: Ranch

Materials:

Principal exterior materials of the property: Brick
Wood/Weatherboard

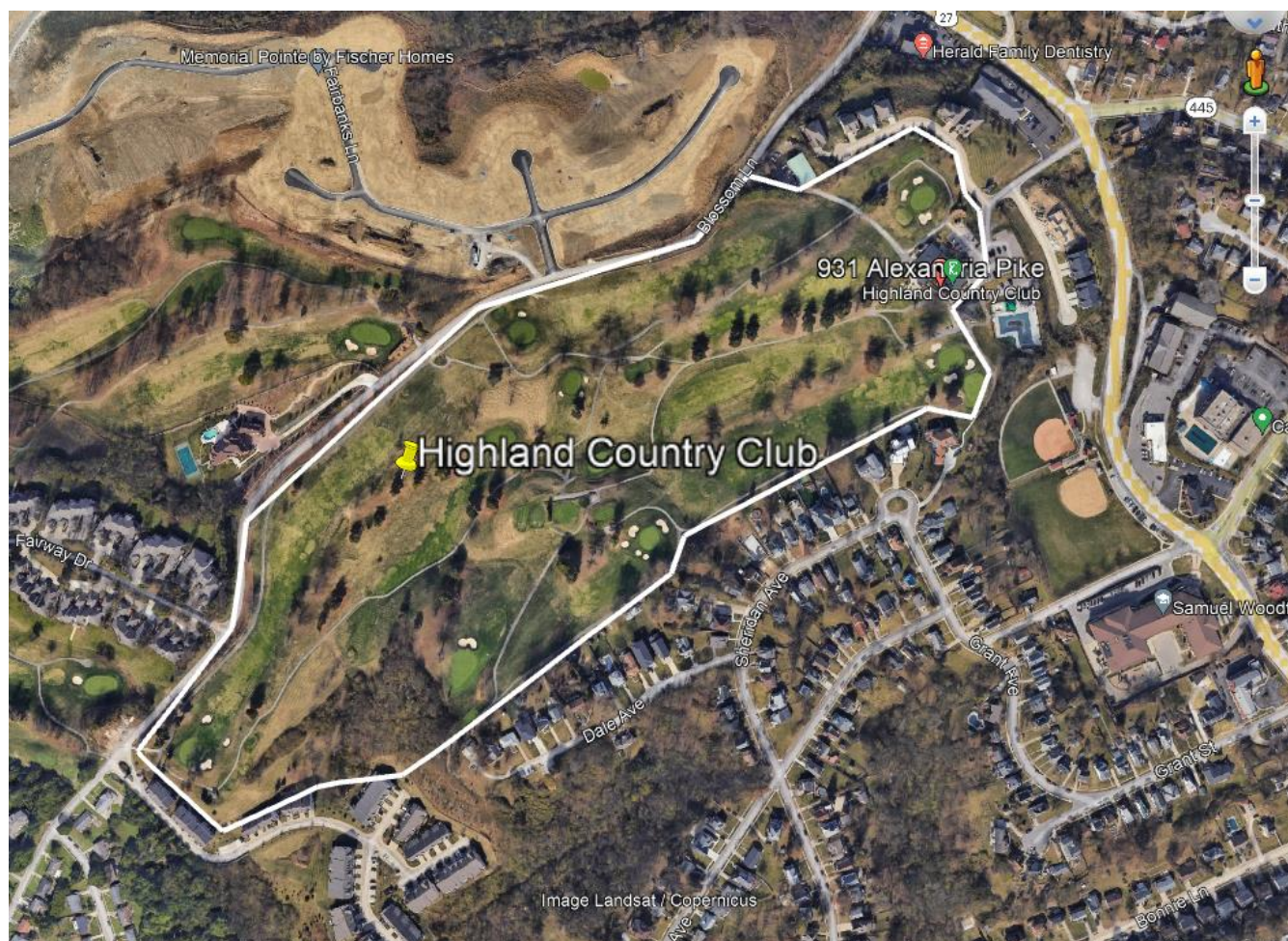
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Narrative Description

Summary Paragraph

Highland Country Club (CP 386) is a private club sited in a developed suburban area south and west of Fort Thomas. The total property owned today by the Country Club is approximately 122 acres. The area proposed for listing is approximately 55 acres, which includes the primary historic resources, and excludes buildings and land added to the property after 1969. The site was designed in 1915 by Thomas “Tom” Bendelow (1868-1936) and completed that year as a 9-hole golf course. In 1968 a fire destroyed much of the original clubhouse; only the first (ground) floor remained. A new clubhouse opened the following year, rebuilt on the footprint of the original building. This nomination is classifying the property as a historic district comprised of five contributing resources: two buildings (a clubhouse designed by F. W. Pressler and Associates, Inc., of Cincinnati in 1968 and opened in 1969; a contributing pro shop constructed c. 1968); two contributing structures (a ca. 1950 patio and a ca. 1930 brick barbecue; and a contributing site (the golf course). The proposed boundary includes two non-contributing restroom buildings on the golf course, which replaced earlier shelters/restrooms after the Period of Significance.



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Narrative Description

Highland Country Club is located in Campbell County, Kentucky, in the northernmost section of the state. The Club is within the Outer Bluegrass region of Kentucky, which has primarily limestone underlying the topsoil, helping to create a rich topsoil. The country club has top soil that is part of the “Faywood-Nicholson association,” described in a soil survey of Campbell and two surrounding counties as “dominantly gently sloping to moderately steep soils that have a loamy to clayey subsoil; on ridgetops and side slopes of the limestone and shale uplands.”¹ The historic golf course rests almost entirely on limestone on land that encompasses valleys, hills and high ridges.² This property had been farmland prior to the country club purchasing it, suggesting that the topsoil was sufficient to support crops. The timely sale of the farm, its location nearby the city of Fort Thomas, and its natural amenities of brook and woodland cutting across cleared land are probably the primary reasons why the members chose to purchase the land here.

The property is reached from Alexandria Pike/US Highway 27, a busy four-lane highway. While the property is connected to Alexandria Pike by, and sits at the end of, a short road named Highland Country Club Drive, the Country Club’s street address is 931 Alexandria Pike. On the short run of Highland Country Club Drive, between the country club and Alexandria Pike, are two off-shooting streets, South and North Pinnacle Drive, with suburban development on both sides. Highland Country Club Drive travels westerly from Alexandria Pike, and curves to the south just beyond North Pinnacle Drive as it enters the parking area of the nominated property.

The current Country Club property is approximately 122 acres. As originally executed in 1915, it was approximately 55 acres. An additional nine holes were added to the club in the 1980s, lying on the opposite (north) side of Blossom Lane from the original 9-hole course; that acreage is not proposed for listing. A small amount of acreage south of Blossom Lane, part of the original course acreage, is not proposed for listing because it contains modern features, such as a recently constructed swimming pool.

Features of the Country Club

Clubhouse, contributing building

The clubhouse sits on sloping land and exhibits features that are often found on ranch houses, as well as some Prairie style influences. The somewhat altered clubhouse is two stories on the side that faces the parking lot and one story on the side that faces the golf course. The entry to the clubhouse is placed at an angle where the south and east sides of the building meet (photo 0001, captioned as “South Façade Clubhouse” image, below). The one-story entry is sheltered by a gable-front canopy supported on four square posts that rise from stone piers. The canopy is new

¹ “Soil Survey of Boone, Campbell, and Kenton Counties, Kentucky,” <https://archive.org/details/usda-soil-survey-of-boone-campbell-and-kenton-counties-kentucky-1973/page/n73/mode/2up?q=Thomas> (accessed April 14, 2024).

² Generalized Geologic Map for Land-use Planning, Campbell County, Kentucky https://kgs.uky.edu/kgsweb/olops/pub/kgs/mc128_12.pdf (accessed April 12, 2024).

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and not attached to the building. The entry angles outward from both sides of the building and each side of the angled walls holds four tall, thin single lights. The six-panel wooden door flanked by single-light sidelights is placed at the center of the two angled-wall sections with a projecting cornice over the door. The roof of the one-story entry is low-pitched and tiled with concrete tiles. South of the door on the eastern wall, where it is visible from this angle, the wall rises from a tan-painted concrete block foundation and first story to a wide beltline, then rises further to variegated buff brick (called "Colonial Pink in a 1969 newspaper article) on the second story of the building. The building has a deep eave and a low-pitched hipped roof clad in composite shingles.

The eastern façade of the building has a projecting bay next to the entry, a wing, and then a recessed bay. The southernmost section is a projecting bay clad in buff brick with a further new projection connected to the buff-brick wall by narrow stacked windows. The stone-clad projection holds a two-story elevator added in the 2000s. This projection is clad in stone veneer and rises to a gable roof. North of the elevator projection the brick wall is pierced by long and narrow, single light slit windows on the first story.



South façade Clubhouse (left of corner entry)



East façade of Clubhouse

The first story of the façade wing has a recessed patio area and then a walled in section flanked by brick posts; this area was originally for guests near the first location of the club's first swimming pool. That original pool was originally east of this façade but was removed c. 1990. and is now outside the historic property boundary. The remainder of the cladding on the first story is tan-painted block. The second story of this wing section of the façade has a balcony beside the projecting bay. The balcony has a latticed metal balustrade and the staircase extending to the ground is metal with metal pipe balusters. The balcony is reached from the interior by a pedestrian door with one wide, single glazing. The door is to the north of two wide, single-light, fixed-sash windows beneath wide transom windows. North of the balcony the second story of the wing holds four square openings with louvers. A recessed bay near the northern end of this façade is clad in tan-painted vertical wood siding on both the first and second story. There is one pedestrian door with no glazing in this recessed section on the first story.

The northern façade of the building continues the projecting vertical wood-clad section as described in the eastern façade description (see photo 0004). This section extends across about

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one-half of the northern façade; where it ends, the recessed façade is clad in buff brick with a paired set of single-light, fixed-sash windows beneath single-light transom windows and then a tripled set of similarly configured windows. Beneath the windows is vertical wood siding. A vented front-gable dormer is visible on the roof just above this façade. A square buff-brick chimney pierces the roof above the northwest corner of this façade. The walls rise to the deep eave which extends even further as the wall turns the corner to the western façade.



West Façade Clubhouse



North Façade of Clubhouse

The western façade, which is at the top of the rise that the building sits on, is one story with a tall water table. This section is the primary façade of the clubhouse, as it faces the golf course. It is mostly clad in buff brick (see photo 0005) over a concrete block foundation, with a beltline at the water table, and a wide cornice beneath the low roof. The northernmost section of this façade holds quadruple windows configured with the single-light, fixed sashes below single-light transom windows. As noted in the description of the northern façade, the eave on this northernmost section of the western façade is deeper than on the other facades because it shaded an original ground-floor patio on this façade. The walls of the next section hold a double entry door, each door has a large, single glazing. South of the doors is another set of quadruple windows configured identically to the set previously described. This section of the western façade has a balcony installed in 2011 (visible in photo 0020). It expands westward toward the course and has a hipped roof supported by simple, square wooden posts with y-shaped supports. The balcony rests on block piers on its northwest and southwest corners. A simple steel balustrade surrounds the new balcony section and an original concrete walkway that extends along the back of the club with ramps on both ends. South of the balcony the brick façade holds another quadrupled window set matching the others on this façade. South of this set of windows is a wide, exterior chimney which pierces the roof and has a wide concrete coping at the top. South of the chimney is another set of double doors matching the other set on this façade; south of the doors is a line of six fixed-sash windows configured like the other windows on this façade with single lights below single-light transoms.

Finally, the southern façade rises from the east, where it is two stories to the west, where it meets the one-story western façade. The first story is tan-painted concrete block rising to a wide beltline and then, on the second story, to buff brick. On the second story, the westernmost section of this façade has a set of quadruple fixed-sash windows on the second story. Beneath this set of windows, on the first story, a concrete-block planter projects from the corner of the building to a set of double doors, both with single glazings, beneath an arched fabric canopy. These doors are

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the only fenestration on the first story of this façade. East of the doors, on the second story, is another set of quadruple windows. On the roof is another gable-front dormer with louvers, matching the one on the northern façade. Next to the sidewalk that extends beside the clubhouse on this side of the building are two original metal-domed lamp fixtures installed c. 1969.

Clubhouse Interior

Entering the clubhouse from the sidewalk along the east side of the building, the first-floor lobby has a tiled floor and relatively low ceiling (photo 0010). An original floating steel staircase with wooden-treads and simple wooden rail and square wooden balusters is visible through the square opening to the north (photo 0011). The stairwell has brick walls on two sides and white-painted wooden paneling on the other two walls.

On the east wall in the lobby is the elevator. On the west wall of the entry lobby is a double door into the bowling alley area. An original curved wooden bar is on the south wall (see photo 0012) and the original bowling lanes, with an additional lane added in 1969 and retrofitted with automatic pin returns, are on the north side of this large room (see photo 0013).³ The room has concrete block walls and a dropped ceiling that hides wiring and ductwork. The men's locker room is down the hallway on the east side of the bowling lanes. Original floor tiles with the club's initials – "HCC" – are still in the shower room along the eastern wall (see photo 0014, 0015). The women's locker room is down the hall from the men's locker room. The first floor survived the fire in 1968 and remains intact from the original 1915 building.



Curved wooden bar



Bowling Alley

At the top of the floating staircase, one enters the second (or ground) floor lobby. The room has an original curved wall to the northeast and a display case to the west (see photo 0016). The floors are carpeted, walls are painted grey and trim is painted white; a door to the dining room is to the north. The dining room walls are windowed, looking north, west, and south. A fireplace with elaborate surround is on the west wall between two sets of quadruple windows. The floor is carpeted; cased beams decorate the ceiling (see photos 0017 and 0021). The kitchen is on the east wall of the dining room, next to a small banquet room. The kitchen is shown in photo 0018.

³ "Out of Ashes...New Highland Club is born," *Kentucky Post and Times-Star*, May 29, 1969, 13.

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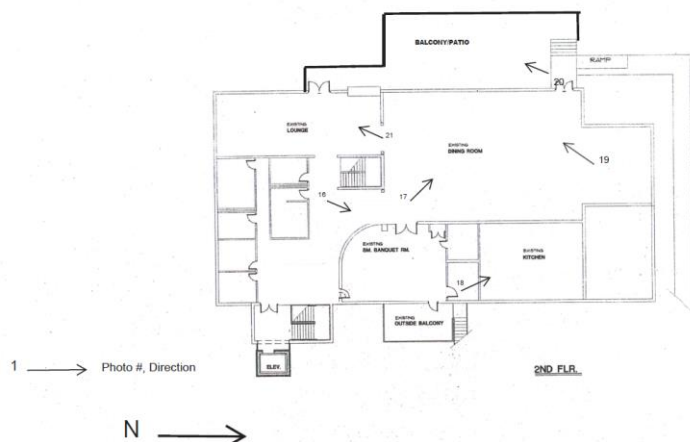
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Photo 0019 is shot from the east side of the dining room looking toward the western and southern walls and the new balcony. Photo 0020 is shot from the dining room door looking out at the original walkway along the west side of the building and the new balcony. The lounge on the southwest corner of the clubhouse retains an original small fireplace and three walls holding sets of windows; the floor is partially carpeted and partially covered in vinyl flooring. While the interior has had the cosmetic changes over the years, such as new carpet and paint, the floors of the 1969 building have always been carpeted, as per an article about the club reopening.⁴ The interior of the club has good integrity. The second floor of the clubhouse retains the original floorplan and design of the 1969 building. The clubhouse has seen alterations with the addition of the elevator box and, to a lesser degree, the west side balcony (though the balcony did not alter the building as it is resting on piers and on the other side is connected to the original concrete walkway adjacent to the building, not to the building itself). Even with these alterations, the building remains contributing to the historic district.



Views of the Dining Room

Highland Country Club, Campbell County, Kentucky
Floor Plan with Photo Locations

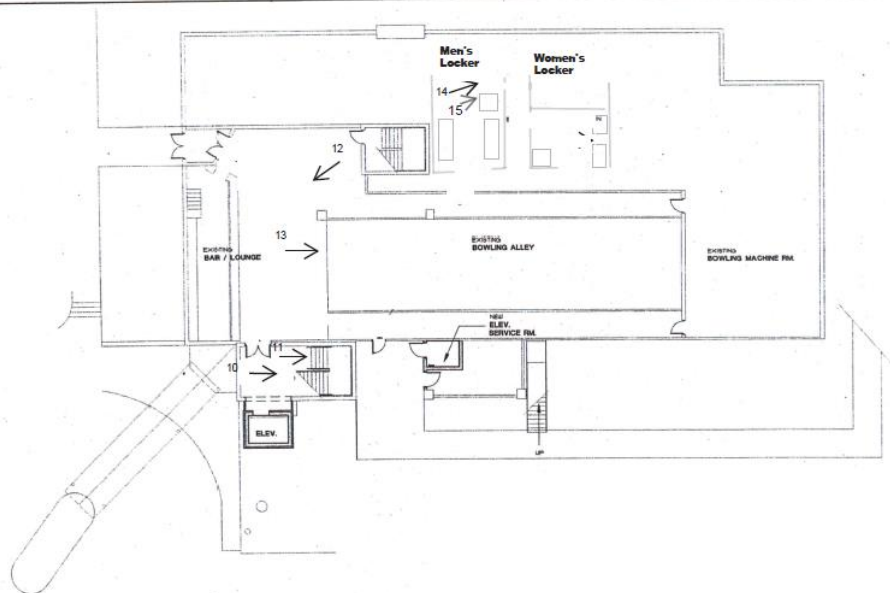


⁴⁴ “Out of Ashes...New Highland Club is born,” *Kentucky Post and Times-Star*, May 29, 1969, 13.

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**Highland Country Club, Campbell County, KY
Floor Plans with Photo Locations**



1ST FLR.



Pro Shop, Contributing Building

South of the clubhouse is the pro shop constructed c. 1968. Its primary façade faces west toward the golf course. The front of the building sits on a poured concrete pad; the rear, down the slope, is on concrete piers. A wooden sill spans the façade on the concrete pad; the façade of the building is clad in wide clapboard siding; this cladding may be wood or concrete-fiber.



West Side of Pro Shop



Rear (Eastern) side of Pro Shop

From north to south across the façade fenestration includes a fixed-sash, single light window, then a single-glazed pedestrian door. South of the door is a rectangular opening that had been a

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window and is now filled with painted plywood; south of this opening is another door with a short single light and south of this door is a quadruple opening with cork boards for holding information behind glass. A wide cornice is beneath the low-pitched hip roof that extends to form a “porch” on the front of the building. The roof of the porch is supported by Tuscan posts on stone veneer piers; the piers are replacements from 2008, but the porch dates to at least 1975, according to former golf pro, Jay Lumpkin who began his career at the club in 1975.

The rear (eastern) façade faces the new swimming pool; the pool is outside the historic property boundary. A second-story balcony with a tall stone veneered foundation and low-pitched hipped roof was added to the eastern façade of the pro shop in 2008. A canopy over the balcony is supported by the same type of simple, square wooden posts with y-shaped supports, as found on the new balcony on the eastern façade of the clubhouse. Although the rear balcony has been added to the pro shop in the 2000s, the building remains contributing.

Patio and barbecue (contributing structures)

On the northwest side of the clubhouse is a patio and a barbecue (see photo 0009). The egg-shaped scored-concrete patio is visible on the 1955 aerial. New concrete sections have been poured on the east side of the original patio to connect it to the walkway on the western side of the club. A large random ashlar barbecue is just north of the original patio. It was probably constructed c. 1930s. It has a tall center section with a stone hearth in front and an arched opening with voissiors and a center key at the front of the firebox. Original cast-iron andirons are inside the fire box. Stone-capped buttresses are on both sides of this section and then the center section is flanked by shorter cube-shape sections with square openings in front for storing wood. Both the patio and barbecue retain integrity and contribute to the historic district.



Patio and Barbecue

Golf Course, contributing site

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The golf course at Highland Country Club dates to 1915. It was designed by Tom Bendelow. The original nine-hole golf course retains its original routing and largely retains original design (see descriptions below), which made use of the natural hilly topography. The greens are composed of the original grass-covered dirt mounds and all have a back-to-front slope. Every green has at least one trap or bunker near it, many of these are in virtually the same locations as seen in the 1955 aerial of the course. While some bunkers have been moved or have dropped out of play—a common practice is to move bunkers every 12-15 years, according to course superintendent, Jeff Brenneman—the depressions remain visible from many of the earlier bunkers. Many golf course superintendents planted large numbers of trees on the courses in the 1960s-1980s, however, Highland is not overplanted; due to natural losses and removals, the course looks very much as it did in the 1955 aerial.



1955 Aerial View of Golf Course

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Play on the course:

- Hole 1 from the tees directly behind the clubhouse (see photos 0022 and 0036). This hole is a straight 365 yards and a par 4.
- Hole 2 is a short hole, only 146 yards and a par 3.
- Hole 3 is 336 yards, a par 4 and relatively straight shot from tee to green (photo 0023).
- Hole 4 has a wavy fairway and is 426 yards and a par 4 (photo 0024 and 0025).
- Hole 5 is the longest on the course at 540 yards with a slight dogleg left and a par 5 (photos 0026, 0029). This hole also has some of the most interesting topography with a long ridge along the fairway (photo 27).
- Hole 6 is 432 yards with a slight dog leg left and par 4 (photo 0028 and 0030). The Hole 6 green was moved c.1960s for safety reasons to create a greater separation between it and the Hole 2 green. The direction of play remained the same, the shift moved the green only a few yards, and the change occurred in the historic period, according to former golf pro, Jay Lumpkin.
- Hole 7 is a straight shot from tee to green, only 204 yards and par 3 (photos 0032 and 0033).
- Hole 8 has a somewhat wavy fairway that borders the southern edge of the course. It is 276 yards and a par 4 (photo 0034).
- Hole 9 is a straight 374 yards and a par 5 with a wide fairway. The green is on the southeast corner of the course (photo 0035).



Hole 1



Hole 4

Two restrooms, 2 non-contributing buildings

The two restroom buildings on the golf course date to c. 1980s but at least one is located where an earlier one sat. They are constructed with small porches to shelter players in inclement weather. The porches have square wooden posts on the two corners which support the front of the hipped roof. The walls are clad in stone veneer on the primary facades and clapboard in wood or cement fiber on the other facades. Because the current restrooms were constructed outside the Period of Significance, they do not contribute to the district's sense of time and place.

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Modern Restroom, from Shot 0028

Resources in the Highland Country Club Historic District

Resource name	Type	Construction Date	Evaluation
Clubhouse	Building	1969	C
Pro Shop	Building	1969	C
Restrooms	2 Buildings	Ca. 1985	NC/NC
Golf Course	Site	1915	C
Patio	Structure	c. 1950	C
Barbecue Grill	Structure	c. 1930	C

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8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria

- A. Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- B. Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- C. Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- D. Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

Criteria Considerations

- A. Owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes
- B. Removed from its original location
- C. A birthplace or grave
- D. A cemetery
- E. A reconstructed building, object, or structure
- F. A commemorative property
- G. Less than 50 years old or achieving significance within the past 50 years

Areas of Significance

RECREATION & CULTURE/Outdoor Recreation

Period of Significance

1915-1974

Significant Dates

1915
1968
1969

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Significant Person

NA

Cultural Affiliation

NA

Architect/Builder

Pressler, Frank W. and Assoc.

Bendelow, Tom

Wilson, L. H.

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Statement of Significance

Summary Paragraph

The Highland Country Club (CP 386) golf course meets National Register Criterion A and is significant within the Area of Recreation and Culture. Its initial significance is understood within the historic context “Golf Course Design in the United States, 1884-1975.” Golf has risen as a pleasurable American pastime because of its recreational benefits, its physical demands, and the social status it confers. Highland Country Club chose a nationally renowned golf course designer, Tom Bendelow (1868-1936) to lay out its course in 1915. Bendelow, a proselytizer of golf, a teacher and designer of over 600 courses, was an early practitioner of the “strategic” school of golf course design. The majority of historic golf courses designed in the strategic school manner have been altered or totally redesigned by country clubs who wished to show their affluence by having designs by popular course architects offering the more fashionable approaches to course design. Highland Country Club resisted this trend. Two major events did lead the Club to change. One, a tragedy—a severe fire in 1968—the other, success—an expansion of the course in the 1980s, were two moments that the 1915 design could have fallen prey to the temptation to modernize the property and update what some might have considered an old-fashioned course design. The continued use of the course testifies to the long-term significance of the sport among local recreational options. The ongoing decision by the Club to retain the course’s historic design, and to build around it, gives reason to regard the Period of Significance as an era rather than as a single year. The clubhouse, pro shop, patio and barbecue, all defer to and build upon the significance of this special feature of landscape design from before the First World War.

Historic Context: Golf Course Design in the US, 1884-1975

Golf came to the United States from Scotland in the 1880s. Most of the earliest courses here were designed by Scots such as Tom Bendelow, or by players who had played at Scottish courses. Among the oldest courses established in the nation, according to the Professional Golfers Association (PGA), were the Dorset Field Club course designed in 1886 in Dorset, Vermont and the Quogue Field Club in Quogue, New York, in 1887 (both redesigned).⁵ Golf was part of a new appreciation for nature and its importance in creating a healthier citizenry that arose near the turn of the 20th Century and gave birth to an increasing interest in physical culture. This manifested on the country’s landscape with the establishment of city parks, national parks (in 1916), and the construction of golf courses. In this new leisure environment, golf became a popular activity and country clubs important venues for the game. By 1916, one year after Tom Bendelow designed the course at Highland Country Club, there were fewer than 1000 golf courses in the United States.⁶ Americans spent more money on golf, in the years following

⁵ Oldest golf courses in America <https://www.pga.com/story/oldest-golf-courses-in-america> (accessed April 20, 2024).

⁶ Foster Rhea Dulles, *A History of Recreation* (New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, 1965), 319.

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World War I, than on any other sport and by 1930, the number of courses had increased to 5,856.⁷

Historians of golf divide course design into three “schools:” penal, strategic, and heroic. The penal design took a rather direct approach to course design and play. From tee to pin, success was a product of hitting the ball in a straight line; the term “penal” refers to the added strokes, or the penalty, that players had to deal with if their shots went awry from the straightest hit. Early courses in America tended to be these penal designs; they were laid out to penalize players who could not hit long, straight shots.

The second era of course design was the “strategic,” in which designers introduced landscape elements that required golfers to evaluate the best course to the hole from the tee. These strategic courses did not reward straight, long shots as much as thoughtful consideration of where to place the shots in order to reach the hole in the lowest number of strokes. The Strategic School of golf course design arose in the first decade of the 20th Century. By 1910 or so, the earlier “penal” school of design had been replaced by the “strategic school,” and it was this strategic design which guided Tom Bendelow’s layout of the course at Highland Country Club.

The difference between the two types of early course design, is summed up well on a golf design website:

With penal course design “there is a right way to play a hole. Hit the required shots, which are typically straight down the middle, and get rewarded. Errant shots are punished proportionate to the degree of error. . . [Whereas strategic design meant that] taking on risk by flirting with a hazard or challenging a contour, and pulling off the shot, gains the player an advantage on the next shot. Safe play is an option but comes at the cost of disadvantage.”⁸

A golf historian wrote of strategic course design; “a lower scoring possibility should be more dangerous than the longer, safer route.” The “Strategic” period of course design, from roughly the 1910 to 1930, is now considered the “Golden Age of Golf Course Design.”⁹ Tom Bendelow designed Highland Country Club’s “Golden Age” course with the principles of the strategic school during the Golden Age.

The “heroic school” appeared around the time of World War II, more than 20 years after Bendelow designed the strategic school course at Highland. Player/course designer Robert Trent Jones was a major promoter of the heroic school. Heroic school courses are usually more difficult to play because they require golfers to take much higher risks to clear significant water hazards or for longer distances than were designed into most strategic school courses. While the heroic school courses do not remove the need for strategy that was built into the design of the strategic school courses from the Golden Age, they call their players to undertake much higher investment in their own skills. If the player succeeds, his or her score is greatly enhanced over

⁷ *Ibid.*, 345, 357-358.

⁸ Jason Way, “The different schools of golf design,” *The Fried Egg*, <http://www.friedegg.co/golf-courses/schools-golf-design> (Accessed December 20, 2023).

⁹ Geoff Shackelford, *Grounds for Golf*, (New York: Thomas Dunne Books, St. Martins Press, 2003), 281.

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the opponent who cannot meet that same test. The winner of the hole or the round isn't just a strategist, but one who takes heroic chances, and rises to the challenge.¹⁰

While Highland Country Club considered a course redesign, that would have rerouted and altered the Bendelow course, as well as adding nine holes, in the 1960s, per plans in the club's files, the club never instituted this plan. Although current Highland Country Club's General Manager, David Shearer, says that the primary reason the change never happened was simply because the club "lacked the funds" to make significant changes. When the funds were secured in the 1980s, the club added a new nine holes in newly-acquired acreage. These new 9 holes are more in keeping with the heroic school and made a full 18-hole course, but Highland retained the original Bendelow course intact as the front nine because the strategic school course remained "fun and challenging," according to Shearer, and in keeping with the tenets of the strategic school. In this way, the course offered challenges to players of all skill levels, making Highland Country Club a place that encouraged players to advance their skills to the highest level of golf performance.

Tom Bendelow's place in golf course design:

Born in Aberdeen, Scotland, on September 2, 1868, Tom Bendelow began to play golf as a child. At age 24, he moved to New York to work at a newspaper, but Bendelow soon recognized America's growing interest in golf, as well as its limited facilities.¹¹ He had laid out his first course in the U.S. at least as early as 1896, when he staked the Wilkes-Barre Country Club in Pennsylvania.¹²

Thomas Bendelow made a name for himself in his adopted country by the turn of the century and opened the first indoor school for golf in New York City when he was working for the A. G. Spalding & Brothers Sporting Goods Manufacturing Company. Most of the early U.S. golf course "designers," like Bendelow, were Scottish players who could lay out a simple course quickly for novice American players.¹³ The Spaulding company had expanded into golf from its original baseball focus and the firm used Bendelow to help them create new markets for their golf equipment, advertising both his school and his expertise in "laying out golf courses."¹⁴

Bendelow was a proselytizer of golf in his adopted homeland. In addition to his school, which spawned imitators, and his work for Spaulding, he also wrote articles about golfing. *Metropolitan Magazine* published an early Bendelow article in 1898, and others followed. A newspaper article in the *Sandusky Star* [Ohio] in 1899 claimed that he had, by that time, set a world record for having laid out 150 golf courses.¹⁵ The numbers would continue to rise and, by

¹⁰ *Ibid.*; The Three Schools of Golf Explained, <https://golf.com/travel/3-schools-golf-course-architecture/> (accessed April 20, 2024)

¹¹ Stuart W. Bendelow, *Thomas 'Tom' Bendelow: The Johnny Appleseed of American Golf*, Savannah, Georgia: Williams & Company Publishers, 2006), 23-27.

¹² *Wilkes-Barre Record*, May 23, 1896, 7.

¹³ Bendelow, *Thomas 'Tom' Bendelow*, 38.

¹⁴ Spaulding advertisement quoted in *Ibid.* 56-57.

¹⁵ *Sandusky Star* [Ohio], January 18, 1899, 2. Quoted in Bendelow, *Thomas (Tom) Bendelow.*, 61.

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1916, a year after he came to Highland to route the course there, he had designed more than 640 courses across the nation, at a time when historians have stated that there were fewer than 1,000 courses in existence.¹⁶ The sheer number of courses attributed to Bendelow, out of the total known to exist by 1916, leaves no doubt of Bendelow's significance and importance in spreading the game of golf across the U. S. According to a biography of Bendelow, he was "without question the most active designer of golf courses in the U.S."¹⁷

In 1915 *The American Golfer* magazine announced that Tom Bendelow, "the Chicago expert, has planned a course . . . for the new Highland Country Club, at Fort Thomas, Cincinnati [*sic*]. Par will be 37. Play will start near the end of July."¹⁸ This was exciting news for the golfing community of Fort Thomas because Bendelow was a highly sought-after course designer.

When Tom Bendelow designed the original 9-hole golf course for the Highland Country Club in 1915, he would have laid it out in the same way that Scottish course designers had done--by walking the land, noting the natural topography, wind, and water, and staking the locations of green and tees as he walked. According to his grandson Stuart Bendelow, in his biography of his grandfather, Tom Bendelow believed that "using the natural setting made for the best result and the least expense. His goal was to give the client the best possible golf layout he could within the client's budget. This often meant doing without extensive ground movement, water hazards, heavy trapping or other features costly to build and maintain. Small, flat greens are far cheaper to install and keep up than large undulating ones." When Bendelow called for greater amounts of earth to be moved, crews would employ mules and manpower to build the courses that he routed.¹⁹ Luckily for Bendelow the landscape and topography of the Highland land, formerly farmland, brought an agreeable mix of natural hazards and a beautiful location.

In 1914, the year before he designed the Highland Country Club Course, Bendelow wrote about course design for the Spalding *Official Golf Guide*. Many of the principles he prescribed in the article were applied to the course design at Highland Country Club, beginning with: "The acreage necessary for a nine-hole course of an average length of about 3,000 yards is about 45 acres. This will give about two or three acres space for clubhouse and the amenities thereof." Highland's 9-hole course, at 3,099 yards surrounding the clubhouse, provided the perfect amount of space that Bendelow looked for; less yardage would have required him to compromise his design.

In the article Bendelow also wrote: "The ideal land for a golf course, be it a 9- or 18-hole one, is land of an undulating nature, having some natural attractions in the nature of a stream meandering through it, or some good elevations which can all be used to splendid advantage. . . a good golf course may be laid out on nearly any kind of farm land. Of course, the exercise of a

¹⁶ "Golf History: Lost then found Again," The Hickory Golf Hub <https://golclubatlas.com/feature-interview/stuart-bendelow-september-2002/> (accessed April 20, 2018); "Clubs on Coast to Join WGA?". The Chicago Daily Tribune. New York, New York. 11 January 1916; Foster Rhea Dulles, *A History of Recreation* (New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, 1965), 319.

¹⁷ Bendelow, *Thomas (Tom) Bendelow*, 57.

¹⁸ *The American Golfer* Vol. 14, 1915.

¹⁹ "Country Club to have 18-hole Golf Course; Buys More Ground," *The Morning Republican*, December 14, 1928, 15.

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little judgment is absolutely necessary as to the placing of the greens to the best possible advantage.” The hilly nature of the land on which Bendelow laid out the Highland course was well-suited to provide those “good elevations.”

Tom Bendelow was extraordinarily prolific during his working life in the U. S., from around 1896 to 1931, and has been called the “Johnny Appleseed of Golf” for his role in planting courses across the nation. He designed hundreds of courses over his career. After his death in 1936 and over the ensuing years, most of Bendelow’s designs were replaced as golfing clubs hired up-and-coming course designers to expand or revise their original 9-hole courses. Especially as 18-hole courses became popular, most Bendelow 9-hole courses were rerouted and redesigned. For many years golf writers scoffed at the early walk-and-stake process followed by Bendelow (and most other early course designers). But during his active years, Bendelow was famous in his field and much-admired.²⁰ In more recent years, appreciation for his work has risen again with clubs now touting their Tom Bendelow courses, whether or not they retain historic integrity. Probably his most famous design, the Medinah Course #2 near Chicago was restored to Bendelow’s original design and features in 2016, as mentioned on the club’s website.²¹ In the ultimate recognition of his designs, Bendelow’s work has been recognized by listings on the National Register of Historic Places, including the Medinah Temple Terrace Golf Course, Florida, (NR #12000888); Wing Park Golf Course, Illinois, (NR #09000027), and Findlay Country Club Golf Course, Ohio, (NR #100004705). The Highland Country Club golf course exemplifies a well-maintained Tom Bendelow mid-career course with good integrity.

Early History of Highland Country Club, its Course and First Building

The early history of the golf club that became Highland Country Club is convoluted and full of fits and starts. In 1890 Samuel Bigstaff, an officer with the local streetcar company, incorporated the Highland Park Land Company to encourage housing development in what was then called the District of the Highlands. To draw residents to the area, the organization laid out the 9-hole Inverness golf course in the area.²² The name Inverness, after an ancient city in Scotland, was a nod to the history of golf, which began centuries earlier in that country; the Old Course in St. Andrews, for instance, was established in 1400. By 1903 Inverness Golf Club boasted nearly 400 members.²³ By this time only about 1,000 courses had been laid out across the country, mostly for private clubs and individuals.²⁴

In 1905 five golf clubs, including Inverness Golf Club, formed a golfer’s league, the Greater Cincinnati Golf Association, to promote the game.²⁵ Three years later, in 1908, Inverness Golf

²⁰ See, for instance: “Praise for the New Golf Links,” *Detroit Free Press*, March 23, 1909, 9; “Work rushed on New Home of Highland Club: Planned by Tom Bendelow,” *Indianapolis News*, April 2, 1909, 23; “Noted Golf Architect Here to layout Local Course,” *Benton Harbor News Palladium*, August 3, 1923, 17; Edited by Tom Bendelow, *Spaulding’s Official Golf Guide*, 1914.

²¹ About Medinah, <https://www.medinahcc.org/club/scripts/public/public.asp?GRP=26389&NS=PUBLIC&APP=0> (accessed February 3, 2024).

²² “Celebrating 75 Years of Golf,” *Highland Post*, June 18, 1990, clipping framed at Highland Park Country Club.

²³ Old Course, <https://standrews.com/golf/courses/old-course> (February 25, 2024).

²⁴ Kenneth L. Hopkins, *Cleveland Area Golf*, (Charleston, S.C.: Arcadia Lib Ed, 2004), Introduction.

²⁵ *Highland Country Club, 1915-2015: The First Century*; self-published, 2015, 7.

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Club members realized they had outgrown their original course and on November 30, 1908, the *Kentucky Post*, reported that the members had purchased land for a new course. But they did not move forward with development at that location.²⁶ Then, in 1910 an explosion caused a fire that destroyed the clubhouse at Inverness, leaving the members without a clubhouse and with hopes for a new golf course.²⁷

In Spring of 1915, Harry Stegeman, a city councilman and president of the Wadsworth Watch Case Co., Frank Stegeman, also an officer at Wadsworth Co., both of whom were previously members of the Inverness Golf Club, and Hugh L. Head, their brother-in-law and also an officer at Wadsworth Co., signed papers incorporating a new club, the Highland Country Club, with \$200,000 in capital and 78 current members. They planned to limit membership to 200. On May 7, 1915, *The Kentucky Post* published notice that the club had purchased the Graziani farm for a golf course.²⁸ By May, “experts had drafted all plans” for the golf course.²⁹ The expert planning the course was Tom Bendelow, information published in the July issue of *The American Golfer*.³⁰ In September, the club bought 70 acres of land for a clubhouse.³¹ Members hired architect, L. H. Wilson of Newport, Kentucky, to design the clubhouse in September; by then membership had climbed to 112.³² The new building was projected to cost \$12,000.³³ The golf course opened at Highland Country Club, on September 6, 1915. That day, *The Kentucky Post* reported, “A number of visitors from the surrounding cities were present and gave it as their opinion that the golf grounds . . . were as fine as they are around Cincinnati. The plans for the clubhouse have been approved and work on its construction will be started as soon as possible.”³⁴

In January 1916, the club hired its first greensman and golf professional, Alexander Baxter. The club had hired him away from East Hills Country Club in Cincinnati with a pay “advance of considerable proportion” and he had previously worked at Little Falls Country Club in New York. Club Secretary, Hugh Head, considered Baxter “one of the best to be found in the country.” He was tasked with preparing the grounds and the greens for the new season and the club’s 115 members and he and his family would live in a little house on the country club property.³⁵ When the clubhouse opened on May 29th of that year, a reporter for *The Kentucky Post* described the “expanse of the most beautiful, graceful, rolling country anywhere.” He described the “deep-gullied hazards here and there. . . a fringe of fruit trees. . . aggravating bunkers and, in all, a golf territory of 70 acres . . . one of the finest, most technical and beautiful in the country.” The article gave a short description of the new clubhouse, which was not quite finished, but “downstairs are bowling alleys, billiard tables, and men’s showers and lockers.”³⁶

²⁶ “Celebrating 75 Years of Golf,” *Highland Post*, June 18, 1990, clipping framed at Highland Park Country Club.

²⁷ *Ibid.*

²⁸ “Transfer Golf Grounds,” *The Kentucky Post*, May 7, 1915, 3.

²⁹ “A Hurrying Work,” *The Kentucky Post*, May 26, 1915, 3.

³⁰ *The American Golfer* Vol. 14, 1915.

³¹ “New Club to Elect Board Monday,” *The Kentucky Post*, April 24, 1915, 1.

³² “Tournament for Country Club Opening,” *The Kentucky Post*, September 2, 1915, 1.

³³ *The Kentucky Post*, September 2, 1915, 1.

³⁴ *The Kentucky Post*, September 6, 1915, 2.

³⁵ “Baxter will start at KY Club March 1,” *The Kentucky Post*, January 27, 1916, 3.

³⁶ *Ibid.*

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There were no women's lockers at that time because there were no women members of the club; the sole accommodation for women was a restroom on the second story.³⁷

History of Outdoor Recreation at Highland Country Club over the Years, and a new Clubhouse

As the only country club and the only golf course in the area of Fort Thomas, Highland became a center of recreation in the small city with a population of about 5,000 at that time.³⁸ Highland golfers wasted no time setting about enjoying their new course and new clubhouse. Players hit the course on opening day on September 6, 1915, and continued in-season play from that day forward. On July 4th, 1918, the club celebrated its 16 members who were serving in the army during World War I. An all-day reception, a "patriotic meeting and the raising of the service flag" and then a golf tournament "on the picturesque course" were all part of the day's activities.³⁹

In 1922, the last tournament of the year was held on Labor Day and a newspaper article published beforehand reported that there were 75 participants registered. The winner would be awarded the Frank Stegeman trophy, a wristwatch. As the club approached the course closing for the season club pro, A. Baxter, recalled the various tournaments that had been held that year, one of the course's busiest to date. Among them were women's tournaments, caddies' championship the club awarded caddies Charles Omering and Gale Owen a set of clubs and a bag, D. L. Stapp won the Youman trophy, H. L. Head took home the Fuhrman Cup, and H. S. Stewart established a new amateur record on the course.⁴⁰ Two years later, the club hosted its first invitational tourney, "The Highlander." A 36-hole extravaganza, the tournament was reported as "one of the most interesting affairs ever staged in Greater Cincinnati," by the *Kentucky Post*. De Witt Balch, of the Cincinnati Country Club and Sidney Sharwood, Highland's player, were the final two battling it out on the beautiful Bendelow-designed course after three days of play. Sadly for the home team, Balch took home the inaugural tourney honors.⁴¹ Undeterred by the disappointing result, Highland Country Club continues to host the annual Highlander tournament to this day. By 1926, the club was hosting the Kentucky amateur golf championship. Highland's player, Darwin Stapp, lost in the final round of the 36-round tourney to Louisville player, Chris Brinke.⁴² Despite his loss, by 1933 Darwin Stapp had moved on in his golf career and was the golf professional at Twin Oaks Country Club in Covington, Kentucky, spreading the love of golf that was awakened for him at Highland Country Club, to new players in the state.⁴³

The decade of the 1930s brought new play at the Highland course and, as was true across the country in all aspects of life, new financial woes for the country club. In 1930, club member Johnny Fischer was the state amateur champion after beginning a stellar and lasting golf career at his home course of Highland. His wins across the decade brought much positive attention to the

³⁷ "Beautiful Highland Club on Inspection," *The Kentucky Post*, May 29, 1916, 1.

³⁸ Census.gov. <https://www2.census.gov/library/publications/decennial/1920/bulletins/demographics/population-ky-number-of-inhabitants.pdf> (accessed January 3, 2024).

³⁹ *The Kentucky Post*, June 25, 1918, 4.

⁴⁰ "Golf Winners," *Kentucky Post*, September 2, 1922, 1.

⁴¹ "Sharwood and Balch," *Kentucky Post*, July 26, 1924, 12; *Ibid.* July 28, 1924, 11.

⁴² "Louisville Boy beats Stapp," *Courier-Journal*, June 20, 1926, 66.

⁴³ Bill Hagedorn, "On the Links," *Kentucky Post*, July 7, 1933, 9.

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country club.⁴⁴ Daily play for men, women and juniors filled the calendar, along with major tournaments hosted by the club. In 1935 golf writer for the *Kentucky Post* called that year's Highlander tournament the "cream of the crop" of golf in the state. That year 150 players were slated for play.⁴⁵ The course provided Highland Country Club with its reason for being and provided players with a salubrious environment in which to enjoy their sport. Times were good for Highland—until they weren't. In 1938, like so many private businesses across the nation, Highland Country Club was sunk in debt. The county sold the property at a public auction on the steps of the Campbell County Courthouse that year when the nation was in the depths of the Great Depression. But stockholders sold their existing stocks in the old club, repurchased new stock in a newly reorganized Highland Golf Club and the president of the new club, R. L. Wadsworth, made the successful bid of \$31,000 to repurchase the property at the auction.⁴⁶ Golf writer, Bill Hagedorn, covered the financial sleight-of-hand and the improvements that were planned, in the *Kentucky Post*. "The Highland course has been ranked for many years among the foremost greater Cincinnati clubs and this year, under a reorganization, promises to be one of the club's most successful seasons." The course "with its par 35 for the nine holes, offers a real test. It's [sic] rolling fairways, dotted with various hazards, makes the Ft. Thomas course one of the most sporty. A player will encounter practically every known shot in golf in negotiating the course. The greens are among the largest of the Greater Cincinnati clubs and are well trapped." The renovation of the grill and locker rooms and plans for the redecoration of the main lounge and ballroom" recently took place. "Under the reorganization, the name of the Highland Country Club has been changed to the Highland Golf Club. Randolph L. Wadsworth was elected president." The new Highland Golf Club purchased the building from the old Highland Country Club. Wadsworth told the newspaper that "with very few exceptions the members of the old Highland club have already joined. We are receiving many applications for membership from new residents" of Ft. Thomas and surrounding areas. By the end of the decade, the club was on good financial footing.⁴⁷

In the 1940s and 1950s the golf course was part of daily life for Highland members, their visitors and tournament participants. Highland hosted a pro-am tournament in July 1941, which was attended by a large gallery of community residents.⁴⁸ In February 1945, during World War II, the club hosted 25 enlisted men for an evening. The troops were convalescing at the nearby AAF Convalescent Home and young members of the club, "the collegiate set," according to the newspaper coverage, planned the evening.⁴⁹ A few months later in July, Highland members defeated members of the Maketewah Country Club in Cincinnati in a Greater Cincinnati tournament.⁵⁰ In May 1954, the men of the Lexington Episcopal Diocese played golf at the club when the organization gathered in Fort Thomas for its 59th annual convention.⁵¹ In 1958, the annual "Ladies Open Day" drew a record field of 114 women golfers.⁵² High school golfers from

⁴⁴ Bill Hagedorn, "On the Links," *Kentucky Post*, July 20, 1930, 11; *Courier-Journal*, May 13, 1938, 39.

⁴⁵ Bill Hagedorn, "Cream of the Crop," *Kentucky Post*, July 19, 1935, 13.

⁴⁶ "It's a Gaze-into-Crystal Ball," *Kentucky Post and Times-Star*, December 7, 1968, 9.

⁴⁷ *Highland Country Club, 1915-2015: The First Century*; self-published, 17.

⁴⁸ *Kentucky Post*, July 14, 1941, 3.

⁴⁹ *Kentucky Post*, February 16, 1945, 10.

⁵⁰ *Kentucky Post*, July 13, 1945, 10.

⁵¹ "Lexington Episcopal Diocese," *Kentucky Post*, May 8, 1954, 5.

⁵² "Record Field," *Kentucky Post*, June 6, 1958, 9.

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public schools were playing on the course by 1959. Two matches with players from 10 schools were scheduled on the course for April 2 that year.⁵³ At mid-century Highland Country Club continued to play an important role in the game of golf in Fort Thomas. Indeed, it remained (and remains today) the only golf course in the city. The clubhouse and grounds contributed to the experience at Highland Country Club. In the clubhouse, members and guests enjoyed dinners after golf tournaments, dances, bridge games and bowling. The patio and barbecue added outdoor spots for small-group hangouts overlooking the course.

By the mid-1960s, the Highland Country Club golf course had offered strategic play for 50 years. The clubhouse had added indoor socializing to the outdoor experience and shower rooms on the ground floor for golfers who had to return to work after their games, and a bowling alley for indoor activities. But in 1968, tragedy struck. On March 14th a fire started in the kitchen and quickly spread through the frame structure of the old clubhouse building. “Flames were shooting from all sides of the building when we pulled up,” Fort Thomas Fire Chief, Ray Mueller, told the Associated Press whose report went out to numerous cities in the area, including the *Park City Daily News* in Bowling Green, Kentucky, the *Courier-Journal* in Louisville, and the *Paducah Sun* in Paducah, Kentucky. Club president, Fred Erschell, said that it would take \$250,000 to replace the building.⁵⁴

The building was partially destroyed, leaving only the ground floor intact. Still golfers were not deterred from enjoying the course. Not even two months after the fire, the *Kentucky Post and Times-Star* reported that Highland recently had hosted two tournaments, the Cline Motor handicap golf tournament for men and the Wiethorne blind bogey event for women.⁵⁵ Play continued on the course throughout the summer. By July 31, 1968, the club had selected a plan for a new clubhouse by Fred Pressler and Associates, a Cincinnati architecture firm, responsible for the modernist “Three Sisters” high-rise residence halls at the University of Cincinnati, among other projects.⁵⁶ By May 1969, just over a year after the devastating fire, the new clubhouse was completed over the remaining first floor, plus the foundation of an original porch, giving Highland Country Club a slightly larger clubhouse on the original footprint.⁵⁷ Around that time, the club also constructed a new pro shop next to the new clubhouse. Once again, Highland Country Club had not just a superb golf course to entice players, but now also a new modern clubhouse and pro shop to support the membership and the game.

Evaluation of the Significance of the Highland Country Club within the Context “Golf Course Design in the US, 1884-1975”

⁵³ “High School Golf Loop Cards Openers April 20,” *Kentucky Post and Times-Star*, April 2, 1959, 26.

⁵⁴ “Fort Thomas Country Club Destroyed,” *Park City Daily News*, March 15, 1968, 14; “Fort Thomas Country Club is Destroyed by Fire,” *Courier-Journal*, March 15, 1968, 37; “Fire Heavily Damages Highland Country Club,” *Paducah Sun*, March 16, 1968, 7.

⁵⁵ “Golf,” *Kentucky Post and Times-Star*, May 1, 1968, 15.

⁵⁶ Paul Bennet, “University of Cincinnati Architectural Tour,” 2001

(<https://www.uc.edu/news/articles/legacy/enews/2013/08/morgens-hall--ucs-high-rise-thats-more-than-just-high-style.html>)(accessed December 12, 2023).

⁵⁷ “Out of Ashes . . . New Highland Club is Born,” *Kentucky Post and Times-Star*, May 29, 1969, 13.

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Highland Country Club continues to be a significant property in Fort Thomas, Kentucky for its association with outdoor recreation, particularly golf. Members played the course since its installation in 1915. Golfers who contributed to the game of golf, such as Johnny Fischer, learned the game with the golf professionals at Highland Country Club. Visitors, both guests of members and those participating in local, regional, and statewide tournaments, also played at Highland, all enjoying Bendelow's strategic school course design. Tournaments and banquets afterwards, hosted in the new clubhouse built over the first floor of the original clubhouse, celebrated veterans, business organizations, women's groups, men's groups, club caddies and other teen players. Strong local associations with golf, with recreation, and with local social culture, have been supported by the property for more than a century.

Highland Country Club is significant for the fidelity it showed to Bendelow's 1915 design for the many years of its use. It filled a vital role in the Cincinnati area, providing a course to players who had progressed beyond the penal school course level, to hone their skills in strategic play. Eventually, the Cincinnati area included courses that were designed by practitioners of the heroic school, which enabled golf's best area players to reach their maximum potential. For any one area to develop the highest level of golfing quality, individual golfers required that all three schools of design—penal, strategic, and heroic—were available, to enable those with the greatest skills potential to find places to compete and refine their game.

On a symbolic level, the three schools of golf course design correspond to American notions of what brings success in a variety of social and cultural pursuits, whether in business, romantic relationships, social conduct, or innovation. That is, all practitioners in a field must know and master the field's basic rules (the penal phase). Some participants never progress beyond that point. However, some of the capable in the penal phase, find higher levels of success in their field by recognizing creative ways to apply those basic skills (strategic phase) to the competitive arena. Among those who master the skills and strategies of their field, the greatest rewards are given to those who are willing to face the greatest dangers and succeed by taking the greatest risks (heroic phase). In this analysis, golf course design becomes a metaphor for America's mythic meritocracy. The significance of the Highland Country Club, then, is an affirmation of its value in golf, in encouraging players to master basic skills and applying them with savvy toward the pursuit of ongoing excellence, which parallels the path by which one lives a satisfying and rewarding life.

Evaluation of the Integrity Between Highland Country Club's Significance and its Physical Situation at Present

Highland Country Club has integrity of **location**; no elements of the district have been moved. It also has integrity of internal site **setting**; the course looks essentially as it did in the 1955 aerial photograph of the property. Aside from the move of a few yards of the Hole 6 green, the course setting looks generally as it did historically with traps and bunkers, greens and fairways in generally the same location and routing and order of play as originally laid out. The topography of the course has not been altered and the course celebrates the hilly land found in this area not far from the Ohio River. The clubhouse, pro shop, patio and barbecue also retain integrity of setting. The clubhouse remains facing the parking area on the east side and the golf course on the

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west, the setting in the historic aerial shows the original clubhouse but the current building was constructed over the footprint of the original building and retains the same setting as do the pro shop, patio and barbecue, all of which retain their relationship to the clubhouse and the course.

The Highland Country Club has integrity of **materials, design, and workmanship**. The materials used to construct the course remain in use today. Pushed-up dirt greens, dug out bunkers and sand traps remain. The clubhouse and other less important contributing features also retain original materials, with the original first floor from the 1915 building and the second floor of the 1969 building. The materials include brick and vertical wood cladding on walls, original windows, planter box and even some exterior lighting. The interior retains the original floor plan, exposed beams in the dining room, fireplace, bowling alley, and even original tile in the men's shower rooms. The original materials also remain on the pro shop, patio and barbecue. The design of the course is virtually identical to the course as shown on the 1955 aerial, and there is no suggestion on the land or in the historic record that significant changes were made (only the Hole 6 green was moved slightly). The original workmanship of the course is revealed to be intact by the lack of alterations. The design of the 1969 clubhouse remains intact, although additions of an elevator on the east side and a balcony on the west side of the clubhouse occurred, these did not destroy the original materials, design or workmanship as both were added with some attention to differentiating the new features from the original and the new features are merely placed on the outside walls of the original building, not resulting in major interior changes; the floor plan is the same and the construction methods used remain intact in the exterior cladding, windows, chimney, and interior features. The other contributing resources: pro shop, patio and barbecue also still display original design and workmanship.

The Highland Country Club also has integrity of **feeling**. The golf course, in particular, retains its feeling of a special location dedicated to the enjoyment of game that requires thoughtful placement of their shots. The clubhouse also retains the feeling of a building intended to support the course on its east and north sides. Standing in front of the clubhouse a visitor or member knows immediately the purpose of the building and that it was constructed in the latter half of the 20th Century. The country club retains its historic **association** with the pursuit of golf; both in terms of the design on the land and built environment that created the golf course and clubhouse and other features, and in the events that took place here that supported and promoted the game of golf in Fort Thomas, Kentucky. Significant in outdoor recreation (Criterion A), the Highland Country Club retains integrity of location, setting, design, materials, workmanship, feeling and association, thereby possessing the tangible qualities at the heart of eligibility under Criterion A. It qualifies for listing in the National Register of historic places.

Epilogue: Clearing up club lore and misattribution

Because there is much misinformation about the golf course architect of Highland Country Club, the following information is included as an epilogue to reveal why this information was not treated as part of the club history or significance. Indiana golf course designer William (Bill) Diddel's alleged connection with the design of Highland Country Club began by the 1960s. Jay Lumpkin remembers that the club scorecard included William Diddel's name as course designer when he began as the assistant golf pro at Highland in 1976. Lumpkin later became the club

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professional in the 1980s and worked at Highland Country Club for 43 years until retiring in 2019. Lumpkin and a friend have made a concerted effort over the years to determine if there is any evidence that Diddel did any design work that was installed at the club. He has never found any evidence that supports that claim, nor has the author of this nomination. However, the country club's own website states that Bill Diddel designed the original course in 1915, an impossibility since that date is a full seven years before Diddel may have first dabbled in golf course design at Highland Golf and Country Club in **Indianapolis, Indiana**.⁵⁸ Interestingly the Indianapolis club claimed to have a course designed by William Diddel until a National Register listing in 2021 (NR 100007174), written by the author of this nomination, showed that there is no evidence to support this claim and that, in fact, it was a course designed by Willie Park, Jr. (this was Diddel's home course and he may have been one of the club volunteers who helped install the Park design). What is supported by historical information and Diddel's own words is that he established his career as a golf course designer at the Ulen Country Club course in Lebanon, Indiana (NR 15000591) in 1922. It is not a possibility that William Diddel designed the Highland Country Club course in 1915, when, by the way, he was still a college student.

Other misstatements of Diddel's connection to Highland Country Club: the Golf Pass website cites Bendelow as designer in 1915 and then lists William Diddel in 1954 (suggesting a redesign by Diddel).⁵⁹ Ron Kern Golf Architect blog lists several Diddel courses and includes the Highland Country Club course in Fort Thomas as a Diddel design, also with the date 1954. (It is worth noting that Ron Kern is also the source of the information stating that Diddel designed the Indianapolis Highland Golf and Country Club course, based, he claims, on hearing from Diddel that he had done so—see above information about that course's designer). It is likely that the Golf Pass website gathered its information from the Kern list, or vice versa. However, there is no evidence that Diddel redesigned the Highland Country Club in Fort Thomas. It is important to also state that the activities at Highland in Fort Thomas were extensively covered in newspapers, in particular the *Kentucky Post*, later renamed the *Kentucky Post and Times-Star*, which reported on the formation of the country club, the construction of the course; construction of the clubhouse; course and clubhouse opening day; improvements at the club in the late 1930s; ongoing play at the course over 100 years, including talk about its beauty and design; the fire at the country club building; new plans and new construction of the country club building and its opening day. What is never mentioned in all that reporting is William (Bill) Diddel's name. Kentucky papers, including the *Kentucky Post and Times-Star*, did report on Diddel's design activities over the years, his design work at courses in Kentucky and Indianapolis, including his own course in 1953. The article that mentions Diddel's own course states that he was in the process of redesigning a course in Lexington, Kentucky.⁶⁰ Indianapolis newspapers report that in 1954 (the same year that the Kern website and the Golf Pass website claim that he redesigned the Highland course in Kentucky), but do not mention Highland Country Club. That year Diddel also was designing Westchester golf course and redesigning Coffin golf course, both in Indianapolis, and the *Herald-Times* of Manitowac, Wisconsin, states that he was designing the Lakeside

⁵⁸ Highland Country Club, <https://www.hcc-ky.com/Golf> (accessed February 4, 2024).

⁵⁹ Golf Pass, <https://www.golfpass.com/travel-advisor/courses/6631-highland-country-club> (accessed February 4, 2024).

⁶⁰ See "Golf Architect Designs Own Course after Years of Planning for Others," *Lexington Leader*, August 15, 1953, 8; *Indianapolis Star*, January 23, 1954, 15.

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Country Club course in that city.⁶¹ These articles note other work that Diddel is involved in, but none mention Highland Golf Course in Fort Thomas, in fact, a search of William or Bill Diddel or Diddle (common misspelling) in the historic newspapers on the newspapers.com website turns up zero results in Kentucky newspapers in 1954. Since the 1955 aerial shows a course that has the same design as the current course, any alterations made to the design had to occur before 1955, but no mention of any changes to the design were ever reported in Kentucky newspapers.

Finally, in the collection at Highland Country Club, there are numerous plans and blueprints, among them are drawings for a master plan prepared in 1964 by CBBN, a Cincinnati firm. These plans, which were never implemented, largely because the country club could not afford the changes, show an 18-hole course, including a redesign of the original 9-hole course. There are no plans by William Diddel in the collection at Highland Country Club. Common sense suggests that the club would not have solicited plans from CBBN in 1964 if Diddel had redesigned the course only a decade earlier in 1954, particularly since the club did not expand the course to 18 holes until 1983.

Not only is there no evidence connecting William Diddel to either the design or redesign of the 9-hole golf course at Highland Country Club in Fort Thomas, there is common sense evidence that Diddel was not involved in any work at Highland Country Club. The most likely explanation for the misassigning of Diddel's name to Highland Country Club probably rests in the oft-repeated claim of Diddel's connection to the similarly named Highland Golf and Country Club in Indianapolis, a connection which is itself at least overstated. The claim that William (Bill) Diddel was involved with the design of the original 9-hole course at Highland Country Club in Fort Thomas, Kentucky, is not supported by any evidence whatsoever and should be laid to rest.

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⁶¹ "Aerial view of the 18-hole Course of Lakeside Country Club," *Herald-Times*, June 26, 1954, 11.

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Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested
- previously listed in the National Register
- previously determined eligible by the National Register
- designated a National Historic Landmark
- recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # _____
- recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # _____
- recorded by Historic American Landscape Survey # _____

Primary location of additional data:

- State Historic Preservation Office
 - Other State agency
 - Federal agency
 - Local government
 - University
 - Other
- Name of repository: _____

Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned): CP 386

10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of Property Approx. 55 acres

Latitude/Longitude Coordinates Datum if other than WGS84: _____

- | | |
|------------------------|-----------------------|
| 1. Latitude: 39.060646 | Longitude: -84.453835 |
| 2. Latitude: 39.062228 | Longitude: -84.456407 |
| 3. Latitude: 39.057782 | Longitude: -84.462657 |
| 4. Latitude: 39.057142 | Longitude: -84.461787 |

UTM References Datum (indicated on USGS map):

NAD 1927 or NAD 1983

- | | | |
|----------|-----------|-----------|
| 1. Zone: | Easting: | Northing: |
| 2. Zone: | Easting: | Northing: |
| 3. Zone: | Easting: | Northing: |
| 4. Zone: | Easting : | Northing: |

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Detail of 1955 Newport KY quad map showing location of Highland Country Club

Verbal Boundary Description (Describe the boundaries of the property.)

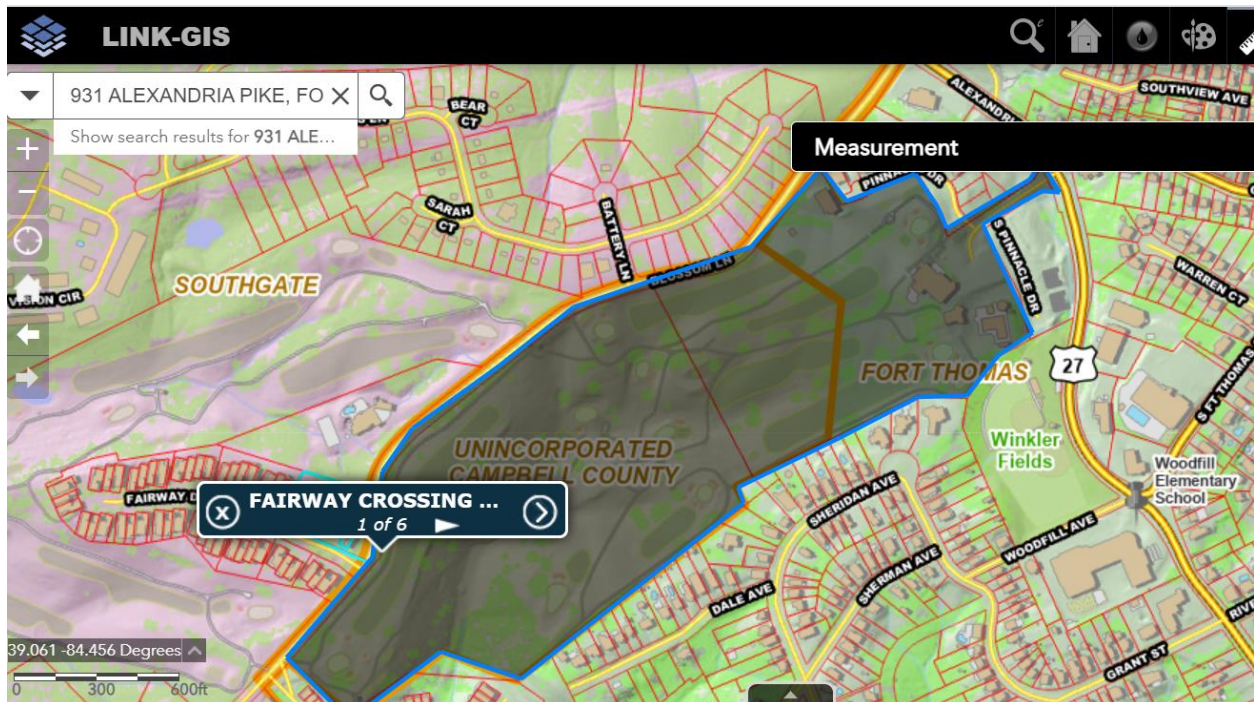
The historic property boundary of the Highland Country Club includes parcel 999-99-18-709.00, with the legal description, as shown on the parcel details report: “31.4 Ac Remainder Of Parcel 3 MCDB 13/18 Pt Lot 2 Joseph Stillwells & Pt Lot A Remainder From Db 388/244 Xfered From 14-237.00 To Keep Contiguous Parcel” and parcel 999-99-14-237.00, with the legal description, as shown on the parcel details report: “22.1634 Acres Remainder of Parcel 1 & 2 MCDB 13/18 Part Lot28 & 29”.

Boundary Justification (Explain why the boundaries were selected.)

The historic property boundary includes the original 9-hole golf course and all contributing resources and excludes modern non-contributing resources owned by Highland Country Club, such as a maintenance building and swimming pool, which were not part of the historic property and are on the outside of historic pathways at the country club.

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Property Boundary Map from Campbell County Property Valuation Administrator

11. Form Prepared By

name/title: Connie Zeigler
organization: C. Resources
street & number: 119 Cumberland St.
city or town: Harrisburg state: KY zip code: 17102
e-mail conniejz@gmail.com
telephone: 317.908.6046
date: February 10, 2024

Photographs

Photo Log

Name of Property: Highland Country Club
City or Vicinity: Fort Thomas
County: Campbell
State: KY
Photographer: Connie Zeigler
Date Photographed: October 19, 2023*

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*All of the above-noted information is identical for all photographs described below.



Description of Photograph(s) and number, include description of view indicating direction of camera:

Looking northeast at clubhouse entrance.
1 of 36.

Looking southwest at the eastern façade of clubhouse.

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Looking north from the balcony on the eastern façade at the louvered openings and glass door.

3 of 36.

Looking southeast at the northern façade of the clubhouse.

4 of 36.

Looking east northeast at the western façade of the clubhouse.

5 of 36.

Looking northeast at the southern façade of the clubhouse.

6 of 36.

Looking east at the western façade of the pro shop.

7 of 36.

Looking southwest at the eastern façade of the pro shop showing new porches.

8 of 36.

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Looking southwest at the exterior patio and brick barbeque on the western side of the clubhouse.
9 of 36.

Looking north from the entrance at the first-floor lobby of the clubhouse.
10 of 36.

Looking north at the floating staircase in the first-floor lobby of the clubhouse.
11 of 36.

Looking south east at the bar in the bowling alley on the first floor of the clubhouse.
12 of 36.

Looking north at the bowling lanes on the first floor of the clubhouse.
13 of 36.

Looking northwest at the 1969 tile of the men's locker room on the first floor of the clubhouse.

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Looking north at the women's locker room on the first floor of the clubhouse.

15 of 36.

Looking northeast at the second floor lobby of the clubhouse.

16 of 36.

Looking northwest toward the fireplace in the dining room on the second floor of the clubhouse, showing beamed ceiling and windows.

17 of 36.

Looking northwest at the kitchen on the second floor of the clubhouse.

18 of 36.

Looking southeast at the small banquet room of the clubhouse showing small fireplace.

19 of 36.

Looking southwest on the second-floor balcony from the door of the dining room.

20 of 36.

Looking southwest at the lounge on the second floor of the clubhouse, showing fireplace.

21 of 36.

Looking northwest on the golf course at Hole 1.

22 of 36.

Looking east northeast on the golf course toward the clubhouse.

23 of 36.

Looking northeast on the golf course on Hole 4 fairway.

24 of 36.

Looking west southwest toward the green of Hole 4.

25 of 36.

Looking southwest at Hole 5 fairway from tee.

26 of 36.

Looking southwest at ridge on Hole 5.

27 of 36.

Looking southeast toward the NC restroom building near Hole 6 tee.

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Looking northeast from Hole 5 green.
29 of 36.

Looking northeast toward Hole 6 green and sand trap from cart track.
30 of 36.

Looking southwest toward Hole 7 green from fairway.
31 of 36.

Looking northwest at dip on Hole 7 green.
32 of 36.

Looking northeast from Hole 7 green down the fairway.
33 of 36.

Looking northeast on cart track on the southern edge of the course and the edge of the Hole 8
fairway.
34 of 36.

Looking northeast on cart track on the southern edge of the course, showing Hole 9 green.
35 of 36.

Looking east northeast toward the clubhouse and pro shop from Hole 1 fairway.
36 of 36.