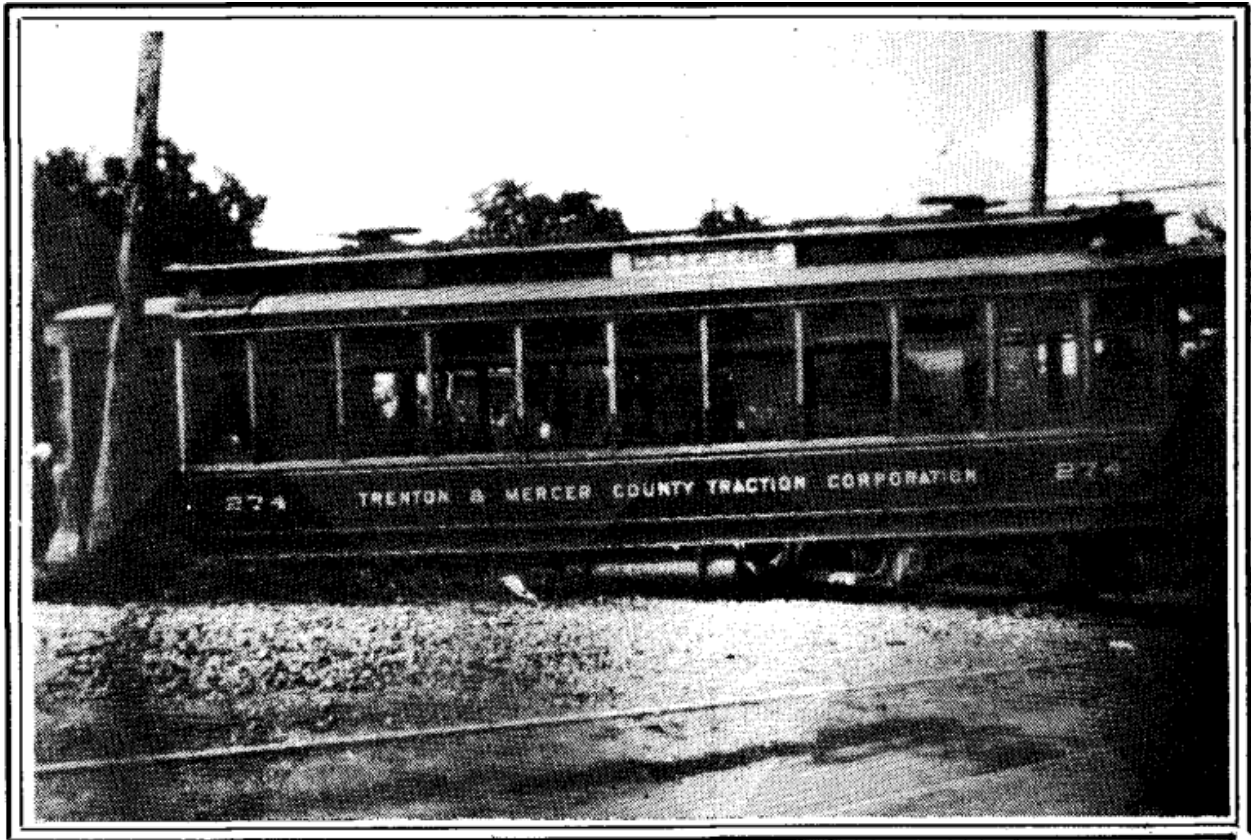


Springdale History Project

PRINCETON GOLF CLUB



The Trolley Line
(1899-1931)

Daniel C. Scheid

Springdale History Project: The Trolley Line

Have you ever wondered about the slightly raised area that runs in a straight line from near the 1st tee towards the 10th tee continuing through the woods down to the ruins of a stone bridge crossing the brook?

What you are seeing are the remains of the *Trenton and Mercer County Traction Company* - a trolley line that ran from Trenton to Princeton from 1899 to 1931. From the perspective of Springdale, the specific route taken by the trolley line is not just a historical curiosity. Perhaps more than any other single factor, the construction of the trolley line in this location influenced the layout of the golf course we enjoy today.

Borrowing from the excellent research done by Malcolm McKinnon, we know Moses Taylor Pyne, Stephen Palmer and Cornelius Cuyler purchased 240 acres on behalf of the Springdale Association in 1899 to move the Princeton Golf Club from its initial site in the Stockton Woods to a new location on the Stockton Farm closer to campus.

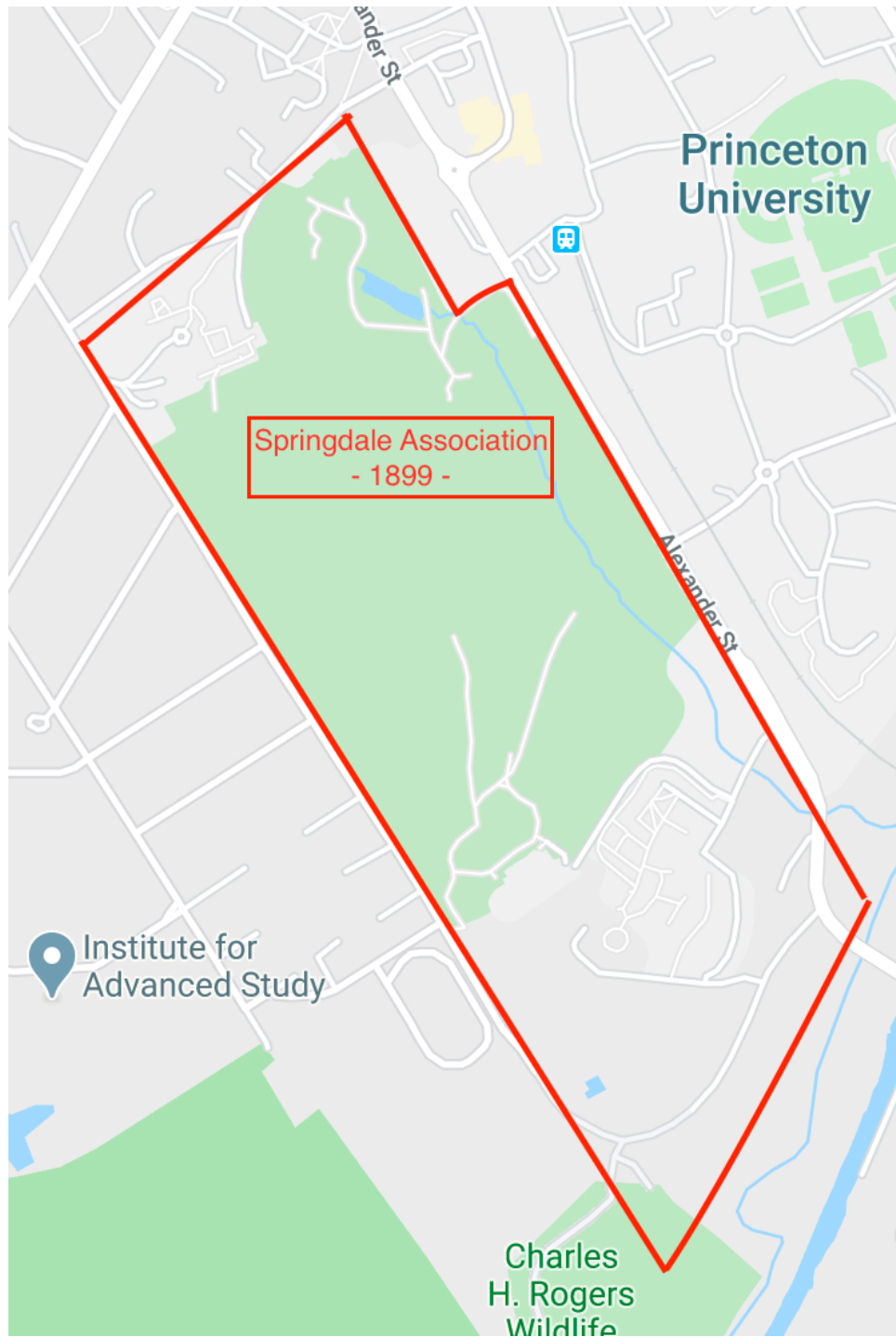
NEW GOLF LINKS.

The deeds for the new golf links were signed yesterday, and Messrs. M. Taylor Pyne '77, C. C. Cuyler '79, and Stephen S. Palmer are now in possession of the land which they hold in trust for the subscribers to the fund. Already about one thousand dollars have been expended in the work of laying out the course, and it is estimated that two thousand more will be spent during the winter. James B. Swan, the professional in charge of the arrangement of the links, has gone over the rough table of distances made out by Willie Dunn, and, changing this in some respects, has made out the following corrected list of distances:

The first hole is 310 yards; second, 354; third, 233; fourth, 566; fifth, 280; sixth, 300; seventh, 295; eighth, 210; ninth, 340; tenth, 489; eleventh, 367; twelfth, 150; thirteenth, 391; fourteenth, 400; fifteenth, 274; sixteenth, 308; seventeenth, 290; eighteenth, 214. This will make, in all, a total of 5771 yards playing distance.

In changing the locations of some of the holes, the advantage of having a good nine-hole course, as well as one of eighteen holes, have been kept in view.

The map below shows the approximate outline of the land purchased by the Springdale Association to build the new 18 hole golf course:



However, at the time of the purchase, a potential conflict already existed as a proposed trolley line crossed the initial design for the 18 hole course as laid out by Willie Dunn in 1899.

WORK ON THE GOLF COURSE.

The Green's Committee of the Princeton Golf Club held an important meeting at the residence of Professor Allan Marquand yesterday. It was decided to commence work upon the new golf links on Monday. The plan of the immediate work was laid out and it was proposed that the ground be harrowed and seeded down at once. The nine holes of the course which lie nearest the club house will be finished at as early a date as possible, and the remainder of the course as soon afterward as practicable.

Owing to the fact that the proposed line of the trolley company will cross the course as now staked out, the committee decided to endeavor to persuade the company to change its proposed line so as not to interfere with the play. Professor Marquand, J. P. Kellogg '00, J. Stuart '00, and Chester Griswold '99, were present at the meeting.

In typical Princeton fashion, a conflict between the competing interests ensued as reported in a 1982 article published in the *Princeton Recollector* on the history of the trolley lines. And, in what might have been considered an upset at the time, the seemingly underdog trolley company won out over the interests aligned with the University and local powers-that-be. It is interesting to note that in this reporting, the motivation of Moses Pyne (along with others) in purchasing the land was described as trying to keep the trolley line out of Princeton - for reasons we might find suspect today - rather than to build the golf course.

Moses Taylor Pyne, a wealthy landowner and a trustee of Princeton University, purchased three large farms in a futile attempt to keep the Mercer County Traction Company out of Princeton. Although the new routing was more roundabout than originally planned, the company finally succeeded in securing a right-of-way across Stockton's Springdale Farm to Alexander Street. Property belonging to Benjamin Lombard and Charles H. Olden was condemned by the New Jersey Supreme Court after the two landowners had refused to negotiate with the trolley company for a strip of land needed for the right-of-way.

The map below again shows the outline of the land purchased by the Springdale Association along with the path of the trolley line across the property. As a result, the land available to build the golf course was substantially reduced. A subsequent, but smaller, reduction in the area of land occupied by the golf course occurred with the construction of the Graduate College in 1915 which required changes to three of the nine holes of the Willie Dunn-designed course that opened in 1901. The net impact of these changes was to reduce the total area occupied by the golf course down from a contemplated 240 acres to approximately 100 acres. Both the Gerard Lambert-design of 1915 and the William Flynn-design of 1926 were laid out to fit in this smaller footprint making Springdale a most compact golfing gem and contributing very significantly to the walkability of the course we so much appreciate today.



For those interested in learning more, the March 1, 1982 and June 1, 1982 issues of the *Princeton Recollector* report in detail the history of the two trolley lines connecting Princeton to Trenton in the early 20th century. While the first of these two lines, the *Trenton & Mercer County Traction Company*, crossed the current site of Springdale and very significantly impacted its layout, the second trolley line also has a Springdale connection. The *Trenton-Princeton Traction Company* opened in 1901 and its tracks directly crossed the original Stockton Woods location of the Princeton Golf Club which had been abandoned only one year earlier.