

4D Green

A Dominant Landscape Component

The green is the fourth component of the artist's nomenclature of golf course landscape. It is something that is human made consisting of subcomponents of putting surface, aprons, and collection areas. It may be decorated as a landscape effect or in a composition of other components that may be designed or contrived landscape effects. Almost everything made by man is decorated in some way. Depending upon man's creative manipulation of artistic features of line (outline, footprint shape) form (undulations, vertical dimension), and composition (other components—bunkers, structures, margins, fairways and water), a green may have many looks. Compare Wogan's #14 green at Webhannet, pg. 4D-9 with Raynor's #11 green at Camargo, pg. 4D-22. Where did these ideas of shape and form come from? Ideas come from nature and the works of others. The ideas for the two extremely different greens came from two different sources: Wogan's ideas and background in use of natural terrain and as an apprentice to Donald Ross who never resorted to landscape effects in the line of play, and Raynor's background in engineering, soils mechanics, and steam shovel techniques in shaping large quantities of earth.

There has recently been a renaissance by designers who have used practical ideas based upon nature. Regarding greens, designers walk the site and may find more than 100 natural green sites that require little cut and fill. A natural but prosaic looking green site, but possessing a little slope or a set of subtle crowns may be crafted with imagination and little alteration into a stunning green.

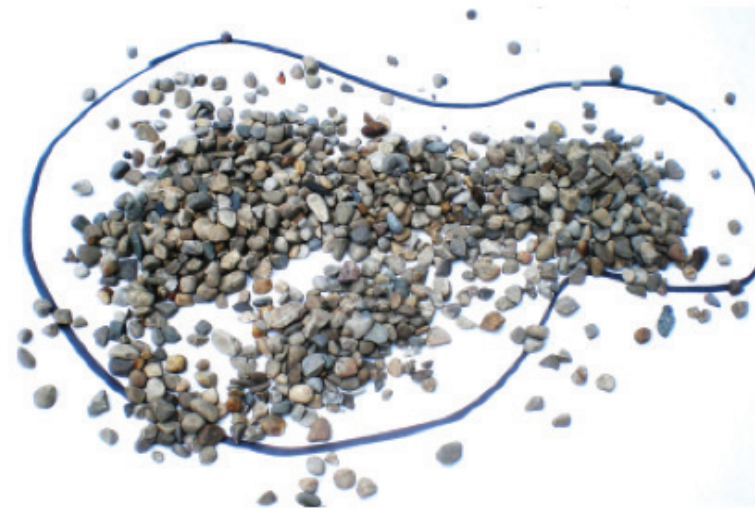
Original square greens with slightly flat surfaces remain today. Many that were square have changed. The changes were not primarily to improve maintenance or strategy but to escape the scourge "ugly and unaesthetic" that Colt and MacKenzie, proponents of curved greens, had disdainfully laid upon square-shaped greens.

Until quite recently, if you said a designer "borrowed," it was an accusation. He or she lacked creativity, using someone else's talents. This myopic vision of a creative act persists even though it is evident that virtually all societies before our own treated the past as an integral part of the present. With this view of creativity, many artists still, unfortunately, feel the need to be original, while in actuality they will copy and disguise, torturing the art form until rendering it less purposeful. Vitruvius, the Roman engineer-architect, produced a literary work on art and architecture that has come down to us from antiquity. His *Ten Books on Architecture*, 15 B.C., gives us a practical attitude toward borrowing: "What could not happen in the original would have no valid reason for existence in the copy." (D2) The best ideas were "borrowed" to make templates (patterns) for golf holes back in America. Discussion of demerits and inferior holes got into the British press. Such comments were controversial, for it left proud British writers wondering why these Americans would even question U.K. courses by stating that they could make improvements to already perfect, existing golf holes.(D1)

Ideas for the earliest American courses came from playing golf in Scotland and England then analyzing and critiquing the greens and other components. Borrowing might be considered plagiarism; however, the famous American wit and architect Addison Mizner rationalized borrowing and copying others work in his architecture saying, "Copying from one is plagiarism, copying from many is research."

In his extensive research of British golf holes, C.B. Macdonald had problems in recording green contours. He had made no suitable records of the greens in order to replicate the surface undulations in configuring greens at National Golf Links of America (NGLA). The acknowledged world's premier design theorist, Englishman Horace Hutchinson, Macdonald's friend, was invited to the United States to consult. Hutchinson's instructions were this: "Cast pebbles about on a scale plan of the green. The outcome will be the model for nature's undulations."

(D3) Shown left.



Hutchinson's Adaptation of Nature's Process

Among the most famous holes that Macdonald researched was the Redan at North Berwick, Scotland. Ben Sayers, North Berwick professional at Berwick told Macdonald that his copy of the Redan was superior by virtue of a consensus of many experts that the original had too many bunkers. By 1996, there were 26 Redan holes in the New York

Metropolitan area. (D4) Thankful for tradition, millions of golfers have played many versions of the unique Redan design with pleasurable excitement.

National Golf Links of America, No. 4 Southampton, NY

The No. 4 Redan at the NGLA, right, is the first of probably 100 Redan hole variations that now, a century later, populate the United States. I was attracted to this scene of the green combined with colorful surrounding features. There is a beauty more than visual; it is the pleasurable excitement of playing the hole in a way that requires negotiating the sloped terrain, aprons, and putting surface. As in many Redans there are too many unnecessary bunkers that are strictly aesthetic landscape effects, especially those blocking out run up shots of high handicappers as shown in the NGLA No. 4. The impression shown uses the time multi-view point device.



National Golf Links of America, No. 4

The borrowed vistas of the waters of Bulls Head Bay and Peconic Bay are a pleasing dimension to both the fourth and the 16th holes. These borrowed views sent Robert Hunter, Alister MacKenzie's design partner, into raptures when he first saw Macdonald's masterpiece set between these two waters. Hunter in his writings of Macdonald's new course consistently cited the beauty of individual holes, but only those holes surrounded by beautiful "borrowed" landscape/seascape views. No such level of eloquence of visual beauty was proclaimed where the view was "contained."

**Shinnecock Hills GC No. 7, C.B. Macdonald & S. Raynor, Designers
Southampton, NY**

The #7 hole at Shinnecock Hills is one of the holes by C.B. Macdonald and Seth Raynor left untouched by William Flynn in his later remodeling of the course. The hole would be better without the unnecessary landscape effect of the front bunker. My interest in painting this Redan was to capture the line and form of the green by exposing a little more of the putting surface. This was done by the use of multi view-points similar to the NGLA #4 depiction that conveys the essence of the Redan design—a green sloped away and down from the players' line of approach. I also wanted to accent the dominance of the Redan No. 7 green by framing it in the rough's interesting colors of yellows, greens, tans, browns, and reddish browns.

Macdonald was exposed to current English ideas in fine arts and literature through his attendance at St. Andrews University and his grandfather's association with leaders of British society, government, the arts, and religion. Macdonald lists dozens of their names and professional status in his book.

Landscape gardening was one of England's important fine arts, both as a source of aesthetic pleasure, and the pride of owning beautiful gardens. Landscape in some degree was in every home, from modest dooryard gardens to grandiose landscapes of estate grounds. Hutchinson wrote about landscape and where he applied its ideas and principals to the links he termed it "linkscape." Later, Macdonald would attribute his ideas of eclectic design that he applied to his NGLA to the influence of the great English landscape designer, Humphry Repton and the world-leading English art of landscape gardening. Macdonald passed his advice on to aspirants to golf course architecture, saying, ". . .they should learn by heart and absorb the spirit of the following lines from *The Art of Landscape Architecture*," (sic) (1797) and as written by Repton, "I can only plead in my excuse that true taste, in every art, consists more in adapting tried expedients to peculiar circumstances. . ." (D5) Macdonald referred frequently to the importance of landscape principals. Asked what skills were required in the making of an ideal golf course, he replied, "experience, gardening and mathematics." The skills of gardening



Shinnecock Hills GC No. 7, C.B. Macdonald & S. Raynor, Designers

were basic tasks that involved contouring earth, drainage control of water, and growing great lawns. Macdonald followed the advice, borrowing ideas that were proven and methods that had been successfully applied in achieving "true taste, in. . .adapting tried expedients."

Macdonald's idea of beauty was different than visual beauty. Macdonald's sense of beauty was ". . .beauty of the game is brought out by men having to play from any stance. . ." (D6) The idea of visual beauty in scenes contained within the boundaries of a course was not what interested Macdonald. The essential attributes that would afford beauty were intellectual, physical, and emotional contemplations derived from strategizing, then executing a well-played shot from hanging lies and in different wind conditions.

While Macdonald was building his library of templates, the idea of visual beauty through landscape effect was being developed by innovative early British designers. Where they did not have the luxury of available seaside sites to accommodate the burgeoning game, they were forced to go inland. Here on less-than-choice sites they would perfect strategic play theories and aesthetics, working with unfamiliar forms of trees, foliage, and fairway margins heretofore not found on seaside courses.

Macdonald built America's first 18-hole course, Chicago Golf Club, in 1894 in Wheaton, Illinois with mostly all square-shaped greens. Seth Raynor, in 1922, was brought in to remodel the course. He had use of maps of English designer H.S. Colt who disliked straight lines. (D7) Raynor and the members were not bent by the fashions of curved-shaped greens; the square greens remain at Chicago GC today.

In 1901, reading a London Golf Illustrated survey of the best holes in the United Kingdom, Macdonald was intensely interested in the controversial discussions of holes selected from hundreds of courses. He remarked then about the obsessive and subjective rationale for placement of the bunkers (D8) Today, there are just too many of them, especially too close to greens with broad, steep flashes of white sand where designers have conventionalized their use for the purpose of framing the green in an aesthetically pleasing composition.

The London Golf Illustrated survey produced an interesting issue, the conflict between subjective and objective judgment that related to course playability. Macdonald later attempted to resolve the persistent arguments in his course ranking system: Evaluation System for an Ideal Golf Course. Macdonald vowed to build a classical golf course on American soil to serve as an incentive for the elevation of the game in America. He claimed it the first effort in establishing golfing architecture. (D9)

Macdonald made several trips to the United Kingdom to study famous holes. He made thirty to forty drawings of holes he thought worthwhile. These became his valuable templates that would serve to guide his future adaptations of the holes of subsequent courses that would be built on different terrain. He stated that not even St Andrews had 18 first-class holes, but his course would. He completed his course in 1909 and gave it the prestigious name The National Golf Links of America, befitting to the prestige of its designer.

Macdonald appended his news clippings March thru August 1874, to his book; *Scotland's Gift Golf* (1928), stating proudly, "With pardonable pride I hereby append the record of the London Field." (D10) The Field, the world famous sports magazine, reported golf matches. Charles Blair Macdonald included news clippings of his wins and near wins over famous golfers.

Darwin wrote in a tribute to Macdonald at his death, "He wanted it his own way. . . he wanted it for no selfish ends but for the glory of golf."

Camargo Club, No. 15 Cincinnati, OH

The Redan hole, #15 at the Camargo Club, is another adaptation of a template that Macdonald brought back from Scotland of which he passed on to Raynor. The #15 attracted my attention because it is a unique version and has no front bunker to penalize slightly miss-hit shots. There is also a unique undulation, a ridge that runs through the green that makes Camargo's Redan unlike others. My friend Kevin had a hole in one at 15. He did it again the next year whereupon his friend Scott asked me to do a commemorate painting for Kevin. These were two wonderful years.

In addition to being a famous Redan, it is a contained scene. Although stands of grasses to the right with their backlighting are stunning, the green continues to dominate the scene. It is typical of the Camargo course. The sight lines of most every hole are contained; one does not see any part of an adjacent hole while playing another. One cannot help but take notice. Your focus is forced upon charming colors and forms in the variety of foliage and tree specimens, all out of the line of play.



Camargo Club, No. 15