

# **The Unknown Designer of Waskesiu Golf Course: Albert Kam**



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## Preface: Despite the Stanley Thompson Preference



**WASKESIU GOLF COURSE**  
Prince Albert National Park, Saskatchewan Canada

The Stanley Thompson Society says that “The Lobstick Golf Course [at Waskesiu] was built in 1935. The course was designed by legendary

Canadian architect Stanley Thompson and is a member of the Stanley Thompson Society,” but then it explains the “extent of ‘Thompson’ work” at Waskesiu: “9 hole golf course design, then consulted on maintenance” (<https://www.stanleythompson.com/about-stanley/stanley-s-courses/western-canada/waskesiu-golf-course>).



*Figure 1 Stanley Thompson at the Seignior Golf Club, Montebello, Quebec, circa 1929-30.*

Why the discrepancy between stating, on the one hand, that “the course was designed by legendary architect Stanley Thompson,” and, on the other hand, that the extent of Thompson’s work was a “9 hole golf course design”?

Nine holes are unaccounted for.

And there is no indication whether the “9 hole course design” was for the first nine, or a later nine.

Apparently, uncertainty remains regarding Stanley Thompson’s contribution to the original design of Waskesiu Golf Course.

It turns out that there are other contenders for the title of Waskesiu’s designer: the superintendent of Prince Albert National Park from 1927 to 1938, Major J.A. Wood; the Park’s resident engineer from 1928 to 1933, J.H. Atkinson; and a hitherto obscure English golf professional named

Albert Oscar Waldemar Kam (alias Kamienski).

## Introduction

The following essay explores questions that remain about the original designer(s) of Waskesiu Golf Course.

I begin by considering the apparent basis of the Stanley Thompson Society's "Level I" confidence that Thompson provided a "9 hole course design" at Waskesiu: a 2004 letter written by a man recalling a conversation in 1950 when Thompson told him of certain problems he faced when routing nine holes at Waskesiu at some point. This intriguing letter proves difficult to interpret because of its ambiguities.

Next, I evaluate evidence offered by Dr. James M. Harris in support of his assertion that "the golf course routed by Thompson in 1927, built from 1934 to 1936, lengthened following his suggestions in 1938 and finally modified based on his 1946 report remains as a completely unaltered vintage Stanley Thompson masterpiece" (Harris, *A Stanley Thompson Masterpiece: The Waskesiu Golf Course, 1935-2010* [self-published, 2010], p. 170). As we shall see: the claim that Thompson routed the course in 1927 is based on unconvincing conjecture; construction of the course did not begin in 1934, but years earlier; the greens were designed and built by someone else; and whether Stanley Thompson routed more than nine holes at Waskesiu remains an open question (as does the question of whether the nine holes he routed were ever built, in whole or in part, or built as he intended).

I then introduce two of the other contenders for the title of Waskesiu's designer: Park superintendent J.A. Wood and Park engineer J.H. Atkinson. The construction of the golf course always occurred under Wood's supervision, and the early construction seems to have occurred under Atkinson's direction. But after his transfer to another national park in 1933, a new man was put in charge of building the nine-holes that opened in 1935, as well as the extra nine holes, the completion of which led to the opening of the eighteen-hole course in 1936: Albert Kam.

I review the two starts made on a nine-hole course at Waskesiu – the first, in 1930; the second, in 1932 – and then review the building of today's Waskesiu golf course between 1932 and 1936.

In the last half of this essay, I investigate the life and times of Albert Kam, the hitherto unknown designer of Waskesiu Golf Course, and explain how he acquired the expertise in golf course design and construction that led in 1934 to his being brought to Waskesiu by the National Parks branch of the Department of the Interior to complete the course.

## The Pinder Letter



Figure 2 Herbert C. Pinder, sr. *Star-Phoenix* [Saskatoon], 6 June 1970, p. 10.

The basis of the Stanley Thompson Society's confidence that Thompson was responsible for a "9 hole golf course design" at Waskesiu seems to be a 23 February 2004 letter sent to John D. Smith, Chair of the Archives Committee of the Stanley Thompson Society, by Herbert Charles Pinder, sr., whose family vacationed at Waskesiu virtually from the moment Prince Albert National Park was founded.

In 1935, Pinder's father Robert M. Pinder finished 13<sup>th</sup> in the first Men's Open Championship of the Lobstick Tournament, while twelve-year-old Herb caddied for the club pro, Bert Gardiner, who won that competition.

In 1950, Herb Pinder played a round of golf with Stanley Thompson on the Jasper Park Lodge Golf Course and fifty-four years later recalled (for the Stanley Thompson Society) Thompson's comments at that

time about Waskesiu Golf Course:

*He was great company and generous in his explanations of problems, particularly at Waskesiu, where he first laid out 9 holes, walking through dense forest [yes in Sask.!!!!], hardly navigable by elk, with little in the way of topographical assistance, and no aerial surveys, to design a course with no visibility from one hole to any other.*

*The biography [The Toronto Terror by James Barclay] noted that in a book on Sask golf history [Ninety Years of Golf (1987)], author Mickey Boyle of Regina questioned whether this was designed by other than Thompson. He could be partly correct as the original nine hole course, opened in about 1933, was enlarged, adding #5 to #13 opened in about 1935, possibly assisted by someone else, but certainly Stanley Thompson spoke of it fondly as his own....*

*I do remember however his emphasis on natural topography and bush and brush in explaining Jasper and Waskesiu to me and the need for economy in costly maintenance.*

*(H.C. Pindar to John D. Smith, Chair, Archives Committee, Stanley Thompson Society, 23 February 2003)*

It is an intriguing letter, but, as we shall soon see, the information that Pinder presents is very difficult to interpret because of the ambiguities that suffuse it. Still, at least one thing is certain: Thompson told Pinder that he was responsible for what the Stanley Thompson Society calls a "9 hole golf course design" at Waskesiu.

Ah, but was that “9 hole course design” executed, or was there a revision of Thompson’s nine-hole design at Prince Albert National Park, just as there had been a revision of his contemporaneous nine-hole design at Waterton Lakes National Park in Alberta?

## The Waterton Revision

At Waterton Lakes National Park, Stanley Thompson was asked to extend the nine-hole William E. Thompson course of 1921 to eighteen holes and submitted plans for doing so in 1929.

These plans were not immediately acted upon. But, as Waterton Lakes National Park superintendent Herbert Knight explained, the increasing popularity of the original course forced his hand: “The nine hole course has become more and more popular during the past few years, and such was the congestion during 1930 and 1931 that it was deemed necessary to extend the course to the full 18 holes” (*Canadian Golfer*, vol 18 no 2 [June 1932], p. 79).

The new course was ready for play in 1932. *Canadian Golfer* magazine reported in May that “The Waterton Government Park in Alberta this season will boast an up to date 18 hole golf course ... opened up from plans of Stanley Thompson” (*Canadian Golfer*, vol 18 no 1 [May 1932], p. 62).

Observing that “the layout shown on the current [2015] scorecard is still basically the same as the 1932 course layout,” Dr. James M. Harris and John D. Smith review Stanley Thompson’s twenty-year history with the course and note his frustration with it:

*Stanley Thompson’s frustration level with his ongoing involvement with Waterton finally seemed to peak in 1948.*

*In a letter dated 13<sup>th</sup> October 1948, Thompson proposed the current site be abandoned and another site ... developed .... “A good nine is better than a poor eighteen,” Thompson wrote.*

*(Dr. James M. Harris and John Smith, “Waterton Lakes National Park Golf Course: The Evolution of a Stanley Thompson Design,” Dormie [December 2015], pp. 4-5)*

According to Harris and Smith, Thompson’s 1929 plans may not have been executed in 1932 in the way he had drawn them up:

*It would seem that Stanley Thompson’s 1929 route plans may not have been followed exactly as he intended.*

*In a letter to Minister of the Interior, T.G. Murphy, dated 14<sup>th</sup> September 1934, Stanley Thompson wrote: “I am familiar with the course at Waterton Lake and it could be made much more pleasing with very little expenditure. The route, however, is wrong and before spending additional money this should be corrected.”*

*(Dr. James M. Harris and John Smith, “Waterton Lakes National Park Golf Course: The Evolution of a Stanley Thompson Design,” Dormie [December 2015], p. 4).*

We find at Waterton, then, contemporaneous with the design and building of the Waskesiu course, an instance of a national park superintendent apparently revising Thompson's routing plans for a nine-hole design.

Could the same thing have happened at Waskesiu?

Intriguingly, Thompson's 1934 criticism of the routing of the Waterton golf course was echoed in one of his 1946 criticisms of the Waskesiu course. He let it be known during his two-day visit to Waskesiu in May of 1946 that there are "too many short holes together and too many long ones together" and that it would be necessary to "rearrange the holes to remedy this weakness" (*Star-Phoenix* [Saskatoon], 14 May 1946, p. 13).

According to the logic of Harris and Smith, one might suppose that as at Waterton, so at Waskesiu: "Stanley Thompson's ... route plans may not have been followed exactly as he intended."

And so, the fact is that we simply cannot tell from the Pinder letter whether Thompson's nine-hole design at Waskesiu was executed as he intended (whether in full, partially, or at all).

## Thompson's Ownership of Waskesiu

Doing his best to remember what Stanley Thompson told him about Waskesiu Golf Course fifty-four years before, Pinder explains why he does not accept the suggestion that the golf course was “designed by other than Thompson”: “certainly Stanley Thompson spoke of it fondly as his own.”

What does it mean that “Thompson spoke of it fondly as his own”?

Note that Thompson came to regard Cutten Fields as his own. But the latter was laid out by Chick Evans and Fred Rickwood in 1929. Thompson was called in during the summer of 1930 to complete the construction. Thompson began to stamp his impression on the layout, bought the course in the late 1930s, and lived in a house on the course ever after. He had come to regard it fondly as his own (and how!), and yet the original layout was not his.

The same thing may have happened at Waskesiu over the same stretch of years.

Even if Thompson's nine-hole design had been partly, largely, or entirely supplanted by another architect's plans, Thompson subsequently stamped his own impression upon the Waskesiu course. As Harris points out in *A Stanley Thompson Masterpiece*, beginning in 1934, when he proposed to “assist with the layout for the golf course at Prince Albert National Park,” Thompson began a period of increasing stewardship of the course design that would lead to considerable changes to the layout (Letter, Stanley Thompson to T.G. Murphy, Minister of the Interior, 13 September 1934, cited in Harris, *A Stanley Thompson Masterpiece* [self-published by Dr. James M. Harris, 2010], p. 49).

According to Harris, in 1938, Thompson was responsible for advice leading to the construction of new tee boxes adding 60 yards to the third hole, 100 yards to the eighth hole, 40 yards to the eleventh hole, and 40 yards to the thirteenth hole (Harris, *A Stanley Thompson Masterpiece*, p. 64-65).

Thompson's report in December of 1946 also recommended substantial changes: a built-up area behind the 1<sup>st</sup> green; a new tee box on the 2<sup>nd</sup> hole to correct a hole “altogether too short” with a tee “at the wrong angle to the green”; a new tee and green on the 3<sup>rd</sup> hole; the conversion of the 4<sup>th</sup> hole from a par 4 to a par 3; lengthening the “too short” 5<sup>th</sup> hole to make a proper par 4; a second tee for the 6<sup>th</sup> hole; enlargement of the 8<sup>th</sup> green; banking behind the 9<sup>th</sup> green; removal of two bunkers on the 13<sup>th</sup> hole; a slope added to the back of the 14<sup>th</sup> green; lengthening the 15<sup>th</sup> hole; a new tee on the 17<sup>th</sup> hole (Stanley Thompson to James Smart, “Report, Waskesiu Golf Course,” Library and Archives Canada, Record Group

84, vol 150, PA 313, part 3 [December 1946], cited by Harris, *A Stanley Thompson Masterpiece*, pp. 78-162).

After submitting his recommendation for changes at Waskesiu in 1946, Thompson spent three years advocating for significant changes to address the “too severe climb from the tee to the green” on the 16<sup>th</sup> hole (Harris, *A Stanley Thompson Masterpiece*, pp. 152-53).

And there were other changes in the late 1940s not necessarily specified in the 1946 report, as in the spring of 1948:

*Changes, designed to speed up play during Lobstick week and to eliminate hunting for lost balls, are under way at the Waskesiu golf course.*

*These changes are mainly installation of traps or bunkers at points on different fairways where sliced or hooked tee shots find the ball rolling into the woods bordering the fairways.*

*These traps are being installed on the first, sixth, and 11<sup>th</sup> fairways, and it is possible one will be built on the fifth also.*

*The 14<sup>th</sup> fairway has been widened from the tee out over 180 yards to give a clear view from tee to green.*

*A new grass tee is being installed on the fourth. When completed, No. 4 will be a par three hole and reduce the par for the course to 70.*

*Jimmy Cripps, greenkeeper, is in charge of all construction work on the course. (Star-Phoenix [Saskatoon, Saskatchewan], 27 May 1948, p. 19)*

The widening of the fourteenth fairway and the conversion of the fourth hole to a par three had been recommended by Thompson in 1946.

Thompson visited the course again in the summer of 1949 to prepare a five-year plan for course improvements and maintenance:

***Golf Architect Visiting Waskesiu Course To Draw Up Five-Year Improvement Plan***

*A “five-year plan” of improvements to Waskesiu golf course which will bring it to a standard comparable with outstanding courses in America is being mapped this week by Stanley Thompson, Toronto golf architect who is visiting Prince Albert National Park.*

*Mr. Thompson is at present on a Canada-wide tour of National parks drawing up a report on what can be done to make courses more interesting and, at the same time, easy to play.*

*“The Waskesiu layout is one of the finest natural courses in the country,” Mr. Thompson declared.*

***Most Above 90***

*He noted that more than 85 per cent of all golfers in America play with a score above 90. But most courses are not built for the 85 per cent who support the game, but for the crack golfers.*

*Improvements planned for Waskesiu over a period of years include removal of unfair climbs and construction of new greens on the second and third holes. Fairways are also to be fertilized.*

### ***Preserving Beauty***

*During a five-year period, the whole course will be renovated and will undergo a general "face-lifting," according to present park officials, but it is intended to destroy none of the natural beauty and character of the course so familiar to tourists. (Prince Albert Daily Herald, 21 July 1949, p. 1))*

Thompson returned the next summer, too. He watched the 1950 Lobstick Tournament, participated in the awards ceremony, played a round of golf over the course one day later, and then explained in detail to Saskatoon sports journalist Walt Riddell more plans for course changes:

*Installation of a new tee on No. 1 hole, which will reduce yardage to 340 yards;*

*new tee on No. 2 hole located at right of present tee to slightly lengthen hole, and also build up right side of present green;*

*new green on No. 3 hole;*

*bank back of No. 4 green;*

*lengthen No. 5 hole from 275 to 340 yards by moving back tee;*

*bank back of green on No. 6 hole;*

*remove knoll at 200 yard mark on No. 8 fairway;*

*flatten knoll in front of tee on No. 11 fairway;*

*reduce climb to green on No. 13;*

*lower knoll on No. 14 fairway;*

*lengthen No. 15 from 280 yards to 350 yards by moving back tee;*

*lengthen No. 17 by either moving green or tee to bring distance to 340 yards;*

*and modify climb in front of tee on No. 18 fairway.*

*The new No. 3 green has been built and seeded. It should be ready for play next summer. Work on the new No. 1 tee is slated to start at once, and Mr. Thompson has recommended that the area to the right of the old tee be converted into a practice green by removing several trees. (Star-Phoenix [Saskatoon, Saskatchewan], 20 August 1950, p. 13)*

Many of these recommended changes were mentioned in his 1946 report; others are new.

Since Thompson had visited Waskesiu just weeks before he played golf with Pinder in 1950, and since at that time Thompson anticipated supervising several more years of "facelifting" work at the Waskesiu

course involving construction of new greens and improved fairways (without “unfair climbs”), Thompson’s sense of the course as “his own” (because of his increasing managerial responsibility for it) may have been at its height when he talked to Pinder.

One of Pinder’s strongest memories of his conversation with Thompson fifty-four years before was Thompson’s emphasizing the importance of controlling maintenance costs at Waskesiu: “I do remember ... his emphasis on natural topography and bush and brush in explaining Jasper and Waskesiu to me and the need for economy in costly maintenance” (H.C. Pindar to John D. Smith, Chair, Archives Committee, Stanley Thompson Society, 23 February 2003).

And so, Thompson’s having come by 1950 to speak of the Waskesiu course as his own is perfectly compatible with the suggestion that he may not have laid out the original golf course, but, through his growing managerial responsibility for it, nonetheless came to speak of it as his own.

Unfortunately, then, Pinder’s certainty that “Stanley Thompson spoke of it fondly as his own” in 1950 tells us nothing about who might originally have designed Waskesiu Golf Course.

## Pinder Assumes

Wracking his brain in an attempt to provide the Stanley Thompson Society with helpful information about the origins of Waskesiu Golf Course, Pinder unfortunately writes a letter rife with ambiguity, as in the paragraph below:

*The biography [The Toronto Terror by James Barclay] noted that in a book on Sask golf history [Ninety Years of Golf (1987)], author Mickey Boyle of Regina questioned whether this was designed by other than Thompson. He could be partly correct as the original nine hole course, opened in about 1933, was enlarged, adding #5 to #13 opened in about 1935, possibly assisted by someone else, but certainly Stanley Thompson spoke of it fondly as his own.*

*(H.C. Pinder to John D. Smith, Chair, Archives Committee, Stanley Thompson Society, 23 February 2003)*

An important ambiguity here concerns grammar: it is impossible to know for certain the referent of Pinder's pronoun "it": "certainly Stanley Thompson spoke fondly of it as his own."

On the one hand, within the sentence in which he uses this pronoun, antecedents to which "it" could technically refer include the noun phrase "the original nine hole course" and perhaps the rather awkward noun phrase "#5 to #13." On the other hand, in the two-sentence paragraph in which the pronoun "it" occurs, it seems to refer to the same thing as the pronoun "this": the entire eighteen-hole layout.

If Pinder is indeed referring to the entire Waskesiu course with his pronoun "it," and is thereby saying that he felt Thompson spoke fondly of the entire layout as his own, then the information that Pinder conveys in his paragraphs about Waskesiu must be interpreted carefully.

We can see that the overarching impression that Pinder received from Thompson was that the Waskesiu golf course was "his own." Pinder obviously believed that Thompson had designed all eighteen holes. Yet he does not say that Thompson ever said so during their time together. In fact, Pinder implies that Thompson did not make this claim, for Pinder offers as refutation of the suggestion that the course "was designed by other than Thompson" not the explanation that Thompson said he designed all eighteen holes, but only the impression that "certainly Stanley Thompson spoke of it as his own."

And what that means is just not clear.

Pinder may simply have assumed that Thompson had designed two nine-hole layouts because of the latter's proprietary way of talking about the course as a whole.

And if Pinder's belief that Thompson laid out all eighteen holes at Waskesiu is indeed based merely on the proprietary way Thompson talked about the course, Pinder can be seen at a number of points in his letter to be actively and passively assimilating all information he received about the golf course (both from Thompson in 1950, on the one hand, and later from Barclay and Boyle, on the other) within the terms of his assumption that Thompson was the designer of all eighteen holes.

Note, for instance, Pinder's phrase "first laid out nine holes":

*He was great company and generous in his explanations of problems, particularly at Waskesiu, where he first laid out 9 holes, walking through dense forest [yes in Sask.!!!!], hardly navigable by elk, with little in the way of topographical assistance, and no aerial surveys, to design a course with no visibility from one hole to any other.*

*(H.C. Pindar to John D. Smith, Chair, Archives Committee, Stanley Thompson Society, 23 February 2003)*

Where does the word "first" come from?

There is no indication that the phrase "**first** laid out 9 holes" was spoken by Thompson (emphasis added).

If Pinder merely assumed that Thompson had laid out all eighteen holes at Waskesiu, his identification of Thompson's forest work as the occasion when the **first** nine holes at Waskesiu were laid out becomes suspect. Pinder may simply have assumed that Thompson's discussion of a struggle to lay out nine holes through dense forest must have been a reference to the routing of the first nine holes.

And since it is not clear that Thompson spoke to Pinder about more than one nine, there is no way of knowing (from what Pinder recounts) whether Thompson was talking about the first nine or the second nine, for the second nine holes were also routed through the same dense forest as the first nine. Indeed, an anonymous 1937 reviewer pointed out the density of the forest on the new nine in his description of the sixth hole: "The first half of the long, wide No. 6 is lined with poplar and birch, the second half is lined with a heavy growth of spruce so thick a man would have to crawl on his hands and knees under the lowest branches in search of his ball in case of a slice off the fairway" (*Star-Phoenix* [Saskatoon, Saskatchewan], 23 June 1937, p. 13). Stanley Thompson routing a golf course on his hands and knees would have been a sight to see.

It is possible, that is, that Pinder did not understand that when Thompson talked about his difficulties routing nine holes at Waskesiu, he was talking about routing holes "#5 to #13" – perhaps the only nine

holes Thompson routed at Waskesiu. And so, it may be that Thompson “first laid out 9 holes” at Waskesiu sometime after someone else had laid out the first nine holes.

Note also that in the next paragraph of his letter, one can see Pinder actively at work trying to fit new information from 2000 into his 1950 belief that Thompson designed all eighteen holes:

*The biography [The Toronto Terror by James Barclay] noted that in a book on Sask golf history [Ninety Years of Golf (1987)], author Mickey Boyle of Regina questioned whether this was designed by other than Thompson. He could be partly correct as the original nine hole course, opened in about 1933, was enlarged, adding #5 to #13 opened in about 1935, possibly assisted by someone else, but certainly Stanley Thompson spoke of it fondly as his own.*

*(H.C. Pinder to John D. Smith, Chair, archives committee, Stanley Thompson Society, 23 February 2003)*

Recollecting that Barclay (citing Boyle) had raised the idea that Thompson had not designed Waskesiu, Pinder is a bit baffled as to what to do with such a suggestion. He uses the preposition “but” to coordinate the opposing ideas that Waskesiu “was designed by other than Thompson” and that “Stanley Thompson spoke fondly of it as his own.” That is, he uses the latter idea to oppose the former idea: it is all he has got to refute Barclay and Boyle.

Pinder generously and obligingly responds to the Stanley Thompson Society’s request for information about his conversation with Thompson.

Obviously, he made no notes of that conversation: when playing golf with Thompson in 1950, he did not anticipate that fifty-four years later he would be asked to recall and collate bits of information from that conversation (in which no dates seem to have been mentioned) that might help to determine the timeline of Thompson’s possible role in designing Waskesiu.

And he did not necessarily know that Thompson had visited Waskesiu over many years (1950, 1949, 1946, 1938, perhaps 1934, and probably – as we shall see – sometime before the fall of 1933), so Pinder probably did not know that the various anecdotes and bits of information offered by Thompson in 1950 might have referred to different visits over many years.

As opposed to the assumptions that Pinder makes and the speculation that he offers, the unambiguous information that he provides (that Thompson spoke fondly of Waskesiu as his own and that he talked of laying out nine holes) is perfectly consistent with the possibility that Thompson routed no more than nine holes at Waskesiu (which may or may not have been built as intended), but then, through his

growing managerial responsibility for the entire course (leading to a number of significant changes, especially to the original nine), came to speak fondly of the course as his own in 1950.

Perhaps the Stanley Thompson Society sees the same ambiguities in Pinder's letter that I discuss above: it specifies the "extent of 'Thompson' work" at Waskesiu as a "9 hole golf course design," after which Thompson was "then consulted on maintenance."

## 1927?

Dr. James M. Harris spends the first four chapters (46 pages) of *A Stanley Thompson Masterpiece* making the argument that Stanley Thompson designed a golf course at Waskesiu in 1927 for Sir Henry Thornton, president of the Canadian National Railway company (CNR). The next three sections of this essay will explain why his argument is unconvincing.

He focuses on the year 1927 because of his interpretation of an ambiguous piece of information in the Pinder letter.

Harris interprets the fact that Thompson recalled laying out nine holes “with ... no aerial surveys” as indicating that Thompson was at Waskesiu before the Department of the Interior arranged for aerial photographs of northern Saskatchewan to be taken in 1928.

Apparently assuming that the meaning of Pinder’s letter is self-evident, Harris does not explain his interpretation of any part of it. But he occasionally paraphrases parts of the three paragraphs cited above, as in the example below:

*Thompson recounted the story of his first Waskesiu visit to long-time Waskesiu cottager Herb Pinder Sr. when the two met at the Totem Pole Golf Tournament at Jasper Park Lodge Golf Course in September 1950. Stanley Thompson and his wife met Pinder and his wife Shirley at a pre-tournament evening social reception. That evening Thompson invited Pinder to join him in playing a practice round the next day on the Jasper Park Lodge Golf Course. After the round of golf was concluded, Herb and Shirley Pinder had drinks and dinner with Stanley Thompson and his wife. During their time together that day Thompson explained to Pinder that one of the biggest difficulties that he had to face in routing Waskesiu Golf Course was that he had to work without the assistance of an aerial survey (aerial surveying of the park was not done until 1928). (Harris, *A Stanley Thompson Masterpiece*, p. 42)*

Although his paraphrase here of Pinder’s letter is potentially misleading insofar as Pinder wrote that Thompson spoke not of difficulties in “routing Waskesiu Golf Course” as a whole, but of difficulties in routing “9 holes” only, more important is an unexplained manoeuvre that begins with the parenthetical insertion here of the claim that “aerial surveying of the park was not done until 1928.”

Harris subsequently elides his paraphrase of Pinder’s observation that Thompson “had to work without the assistance of an aerial survey” with Harris’s own claim that “Thompson designed Waskesiu Golf Course before aerial surveying was completed” (Harris, *A Stanley Thompson Masterpiece*, p. 210). Harris seems to regard Pinder’s observation as entailing Harris’s own assertion here. Yet it does not (as we shall see shortly).

Without ever being explicit, Harris implies the following train of thought: since aerial surveys of Prince Albert National Park were begun in 1928, for Thompson to have been working without them must mean that he was routing holes at Waskesiu in 1927.

This logic is not sound, and neither are some of the facts asserted to support it.

Even if we allow for the sake of argument that an aerial survey of Waskesiu had been conducted in the summer of 1928, it is not clear why one should identify 1927 rather than 1928 as the year when Thompson was routing holes without aerial surveys: Thompson would also not have had photographs in hand were he in the woods at Prospect Point at any time in 1928.

Oblique aerial photographs – three taken simultaneously, every 1.5 miles, along parallel lines six miles apart, one taken in the direction the plane was flying, one taken to the left, and one taken to the right – overlapped considerably, but the scales in each photograph varied from directly beneath the plane toward the horizon, so thousands of photographs had to be tied together by common reference points within them and the variances in scale corrected, all with a view to plotting the information on maps (see the discussion of the process in *Star-Phoenix* [Saskatoon, Saskatchewan], 16 June 1928, p. 19).

The photographs were collated in Ottawa, a large team of experts using the photographs to create detailed topographic maps for those interested in exploiting natural resources in northern Saskatchewan (and remote regions in other provinces, as well). The Department of the Interior's priority was not to send out aerial photographs to golf course architects, but rather to make maps from the photographs. What Pinder recollects Thompson as having said – that he worked “with little in the way of topographical assistance, and no aerial surveys” – hints that Thompson well understood the interconnection between aerial surveys and the production of the topographic maps he used.

Who knows when aerial photographs taken by the Department of the Interior in the summer of 1928 would have been made available to Thompson? 1929? 1930?

Even later?

And is it even the case that aerial photographs of Waskesiu itself were taken by the Department of the Interior in the summer of 1928?

In 1928, the Department of the Interior announced plans “to make aerial surveys this summer of three blocks of territory, each 100 miles square in area – one in the neighbourhood of Lac la Ronge, a second east of Lac la Ronge ... and a third in the neighbourhood of Reindeer Lake” (*Leader-Post* [Regina], 17 April

1928, p. 11). The Department's purpose was to facilitate exploitation of mineral resources in northern Saskatchewan.

The "100 miles square" area to be surveyed around Lac la Ronge was the only survey area close to Waskesiu, which is located about 80 miles (135 km) to the southwest of the southernmost tip of the lake in question. If Lac la Ronge was at the centre of the "100 miles square" aerial survey area, Waskesiu would not have been included within the area photographed.

And so, Harris's assumption that an aerial survey of Waskesiu itself was conducted in 1928 needs to be explained: it certainly requires to be justified by more than a gesture toward the three aerial surveys conducted well north and east of Waskesiu that summer.

One must know precisely when an aerial photograph of Waskesiu itself might have been available to Thompson before one can begin to date his walk in the woods in relation to the availability of such a photograph.

To this end, consider whether it is really the case that there were no aerial photographs of Waskesiu before 1928.

On the one hand, in advance of the creation of Prince Albert National Park, the federal government surveyed the park area in 1927: "An aerial survey of the territory 60 miles north of Prince Albert to be set up as a national park of about 850 square miles will be made in the spring"; this area included "Red Deer Lake" – that is, Lake Waskesiu (*Leader-Post* [Regina, Saskatchewan], 7 January 1927, p. 1).

On the other hand, Prince Albert National Park superintendent J.A. Wood was given his own aeroplane to map the new park in mid-1927:

***Starts Work on National Park***

*J.A. Wood, the new superintendent of the Prince Albert National Park, is now in Prince Albert and is starting at once to carry on the development of the park.*

*He has at his disposal an aeroplane, which will operate from Red Deer Lake [i.e. Lake Waskesiu] in the park and is for the purpose of mapping out the park area. (Leader-Post [Regina, Saskatchewan], 27 June 1927, p. 5)*

Wood was showing his photographs to various people, including members of the press, by October: "In possession of some splendid photographs taken during the past summer, when, with J.B. Harkin, Commissioner of National Parks, he travelled throughout the area by canoe and aeroplane, Mr. Wood

can show areas of lake, beach, and bushland of remarkable beauty” (*Star-Phoenix*, 22 October 1927, p. 15). Why would he have withheld aerial photographs of Waskesiu from Stanley Thompson?

And so, regardless of when aerial photographs of Waskesiu were first taken, or would have been made available to Thompson, Pinder’s information about Thompson’s working with “no ... aerial surveys” may simply mean that when Thompson was working at Waskesiu, whatever aerial photographs were available to him were simply of no use – for whatever reason: perhaps the quality of the particular photograph he wanted to use was inadequate in some way (because of interference with the image he needed because of forest fire smoke, or a cloud, or a cloud’s dark shadow, all well-known problems in aerial surveying), or perhaps the impenetrability of the dense forest where the golf holes were to be routed at Prospect Point prevented Thompson from acquiring useful information from an otherwise perfectly adequate aerial photograph.

Thompson could have been walking in the woods at Waskesiu “with little in the way of topographical assistance, and no aerial surveys,” at any time before the final nine holes were “being cut out” in the fall of 1933 (*Leader-Post* [Regina, Saskatchewan], 16 December 1933, p. 8).

In the end, one cannot know what Thompson meant during his conversation with Pinder in 1950:

*“I worked with no aerial surveys because they had not been taken yet”;*

*“I worked with no aerial surveys because the photographs recently taken were not yet available”;*

*“I worked with no aerial surveys because the photographs available were useless for my purposes.”*

Any of these situations might have led Thompson to recall for Pinder that he worked at Waskesiu “with little in the way of topographical assistance, and no aerial surveys.”

The bottom line is that on the basis of what Pinder recalls about Thompson’s reference to aerial surveys, one can draw no definite conclusions about when Thompson was routing nine holes through dense forest at Waskesiu: nothing in the Thompson reference to aerial surveys authorizes Harris’s assertion that “Stanley Thompson would later remember ... his first trip to Waskesiu **in 1927**” (Harris, *A Stanley Thompson Masterpiece*, p. 41, emphasis added).

The year of Thompson’s first visit to Waskesiu remains known.

## The 1928 Waskesiu Townsite Map

Harris also makes much of the fact that the words “GOLF COURSE” are marked on a 1928 plan for the Waskesiu townsite, apparently believing that this fact supports his assertion that 1927 was the year of Thompson’s first visit to Waskesiu.

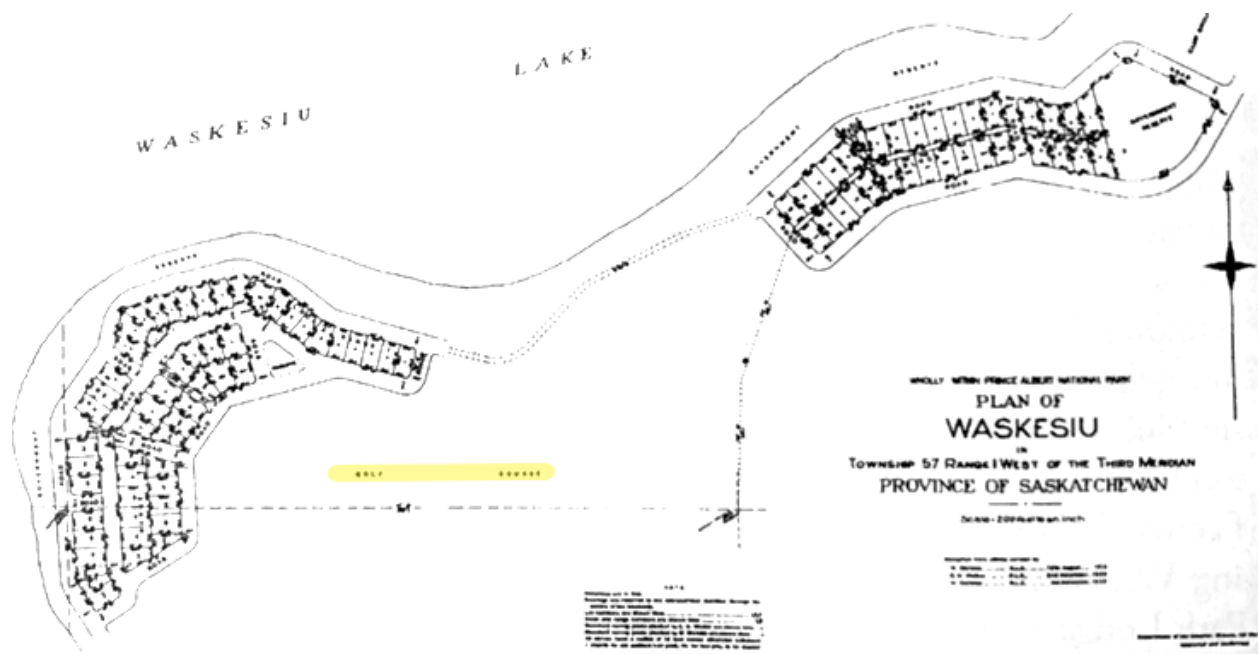


Figure 3 "Initial survey of Waskesiu townsite by Mr. C.M. Walker, Dominion Land surveyor." Harris, *A Stanley Thompson Masterpiece*, p. 42. I highlight in yellow the words "GOLF COURSE."

Of course, the printing of the words “GOLF COURSE” on the townsite map no more indicates that a golf course had been laid out before 1928 than the marking of lots for villas on the same townsite map means that the villas had been built before 1928. They had not. The townsite map indicates plans for future development. Harris presumably knows this.

But Harris inaccurately claims that “On that 1928 plan, between 400 and 500 acres were set aside for what is simply labeled as ‘Golf Course’” (Harris, *A Stanley Thompson Masterpiece*, p. 43). In fact, the words “GOLF COURSE” (as they appear on the townsite map he reproduces, seen above) are marked on a section of the map where just the first nine holes would be laid out, and the area through which these nine holes were routed is no more than 100 acres in size.

It is not clear why Harris refers to the area “set aside” for the golf course as four to five times larger than it actually is on his map.

Into this extra space, however, he introduces a hotel, which is important to his argument:

*The location of the Waskesiu Golf Course was already established before there was any other development within the park as shown on the first Waskesiu townsite survey that was completed in 1928.*

*On that 1928 plan, between 400 and 500 acres was set aside for what is simply labelled as "Golf Course."*

*We know from Stanley Thompson (and others) that only about 150 to 200 acres are required to build an 18 hole golf course. It seems likely that the area labeled "Golf Course" on the 1928 survey is also an area that would have accommodated the future CNR lodge and its grounds when it was built.*

*(Harris, A Stanley Thompson Masterpiece, p. 43)*

"The future CNR lodge"?

Harris believes that Sir Henry Thornton, president of the Canadian National Railway company (CNR), planned to build a big hotel at Waskesiu and had already hired Stanley Thompson to lay out a golf course for it in 1927.

## The Big Hotel Idea

In his wide-ranging historical contextualization of the development of Prince Albert National Park in the first four chapters of *A Stanley Thompson Masterpiece*, Harris notes that both the Canadian National Railway company (CNR) and the Canadian Pacific Railway company (CPR) were talking in 1928 and 1929 of running rail lines 140 miles (235 km) north from Prince Albert to Lac la Ronge to access recently discovered mineral resources in that area. He introduces Stanley Thompson into this story, suggesting that CNR hired him to lay out a golf course at Waskesiu in the fall of 1927.

Harris draws attention to a banquet held in Prince Albert in July of 1928 in honour of the president of CNR, Sir Henry Thornton, at which a number of proposals were put to Thornton by the president of the Prince Albert Board of Trade, Hugh Sibbald. For instance, the Board of Trade wanted the train tracks moved from the centre of Prince Albert:

*The terminal facilities at our disposal at the present time are inadequate .... The tracks are level and rather dangerous, and, situated as at present, are cutting the city in two.*

*The plan we have in mind, he continued, is to have the tracks moved back to the hill and have an overhead roadway into the center of the city....*

*He also remarked that the C.N. might wish to retain the old property for the purpose of building a hotel. (Prince Albert Daily Herald, 27 July 1928, p. 5)*

Sibbald also proposed that Thornton build “a C.N.R. lodge in the Prince Albert National Park to accommodate the many tourists who were already coming to the new playground” (*Star-Phoenix* [Saskatoon, Saskatchewan], 28 July 1928, p. 15).

When it was his turn to speak, Thornton began with a joke: “Our motto is courtesy and service. Courtesy perhaps in the rejection of proposals” (*Prince Albert Daily Herald*, 27 July 1928, p. 5). Then he courteously rejected Sibbald’s proposals concerning the Prince Albert train tracks and a CNR hotel:

### ***Answers Proposal***

*Sir Henry thanked Mr. Sibbald for his cordial remarks and stated that as the latter proceeded manifesting such a degree of satisfaction in the northern part of the province, he was becoming alarmed, feeling that Prince Albert might not have anything to ask.*

*Prince Albert is one of many cities on the C.N.R. that merits a hotel, and the proposal for moving the terminal is a meritorious one, he said, and, continuing, stated that without making rash promises, he could say with a reasonable degree of security that when the necessity for a new hotel appears in Prince Albert, we will move the terminal to the hill. (Prince Albert Daily Herald, 27 July 1928, p. 5)*

But Thornton did not extend the courtesy of a reply regarding Sibbald's request for the building of a CNR lodge in the new park. He certainly did not indicate that he had already had a big hotel in the planning stages for a year and that a golf course for it had already been laid out by his favourite architect.

Harris does not mention that there was explicit resistance at this banquet to the idea of a big hotel being built in Prince Albert National Park. Also speaking that night was the director of publicity for Canada's National Parks, J.C. Campbell, and he seems to have tried to nip Sibbald's hotel plan in the bud:

*Although not wishing to discourage Prince Albert citizens, Mr. Campbell emphasized the fact that "we must have something on which to sell the Prince Albert park."*

*The factors which will sell the Prince Albert park are the beauty of the northern lakes, with their inimitable surroundings, and the lure of the north land, and the [fact that] people wanted to get away from the big hotel idea. They want to rest, for which purpose the Prince Albert National Park can scarcely be excelled anywhere.*

*Under present conditions, tourists must provide their own accommodation. (Prince Albert Daily Herald, 27 July 1928, p. 5).*

Prince Albert National Park would indeed be "sold" as the antithesis to the "big hotel idea" – especially to the Prime Minister. When Saskatchewan's Provincial National Park Association delegation met with Prime Minister Mackenzie King in November of 1929, "the delegation expressed the belief that Banff and Jasper were rapidly becoming playgrounds for the 'millionaire' class and that Prince Albert park should be developed in such a way as to make it accessible to the average citizen without the spending of a small 'fortune'" (*Leader-Post* [Regina, Saskatchewan], 4 November 1929, p. 8). King assured the delegation that "anything that could be done for the national park at Prince Albert would be gladly attended to," and "the premier said he was particularly impressed with the reference to Banff and Jasper as 'millionaires' resorts' and expressed the hope that the Prince Albert park could be kept for the average man" (*Leader-Post* [Regina, Saskatchewan], 4 November 1929, p. 8).

Still, Harris argues that a big hotel for Waskesiu was actively being planned a year before Sibbald's mid-summer 1928 proposal to the CNR president, and he says that CNR planned to build a railway line into it from the railway line to Lac la Ronge that was being mooted:

*There seems little doubt that the CNR had a nascent plan (short-lived though it was) to partly offset the costs of building a rail line north to the mineral wealth around Lac la Ronge by building a short side loop of track that would run into Waskesiu.*

*That rail line would carry passengers to the grand CNR lodge or hotel that Sir Henry would be constructing in the newly minted Prince Albert National Park.*

*The new grand CNR lodge at Waskesiu like the other railway resort lodges would not have been complete without an accompanying golf course designed by Stanley Thompson. (Harris, A Stanley Thompson Masterpiece, pp. 39-41)*

Harris imagines many things here on the way to placing Stanley Thompson at Waskesiu in 1927, but there is little reason to believe any of this is true.

There are no documents referring to any plan for a CNR “side loop of track” to Waskesiu. And so, how Harris determined that the imagined “side loop of track” was planned “to partly offset the costs of building a rail line north” to Lac la Ronge is a mystery. Furthermore, there are no documents referring to a plan for a “grand CNR lodge or hotel” at Waskesiu. And no documents refer to a plan for a CNR golf course at the imagined hotel.

Certainly no documents refer to a plan to have Stanley Thompson build the imagined golf course at the imagined hotel at the terminus of the imagined railway line.

In the end, none of the arguments for placing Stanley Thompson at Waskesiu in 1927 is persuasive.

## The Golf-Mad Superintendent



Figure 4 Major James A. Wood. Saskatoon Daily Caller, 24 December 1927, p. 15.

The first superintendent of Prince Albert National Park, Major J.A. Wood, literally put Waskesiu Golf Course on the map: the Waskesiu townsite map of 1928. He then presided over the process that took the golf course from idea to material fact.

When the first nine holes of Waskesiu Golf Course opened for play in 1935, Henry (“Harry”) Holroyde (1888-1969), Prince Albert businessman and member of the Board of Trade, President of the Prince Albert Golf Club, and longtime friend of Park superintendent Wood, said that “great credit is due to Mr. Wood in planning and creating the Waskesiu course” (*Prince Albert Daily Herald*, 3 June 1935, p. 1).

A reporter for the *Prince Albert Daily Herald* asserted that “Major J.A. Wood ... designed the course and superintended construction throughout” (*Prince Albert Daily Herald*, 3 June 1935, p. 1).

I doubt that it is technically correct to attribute to Wood architectural responsibility for designing and planning the course, but that he was even described in such a way attests to the local golf community’s sense of his primary role in the creation of Waskesiu Golf Course.

One of the first things that Wood did when he was appointed the superintendent of Prince Albert National Park in 1927 was to set up headquarters in Prince Albert. Next, he joined the Prince Albert Golf Club.

At the club’s annual meeting in October of 1928, he was elected a director (*Prince Albert Daily Herald*, 19 October 1928, p. 8). At the same meeting, he was also appointed to the greens committee, which was tasked with overseeing the construction in the new year of four new holes for the existing nine-hole course as the club proposed to take the first practical steps toward developing an eighteen-hole course (this work was not in fact undertaken for many years). He was also elected a member of the executive committee in 1930 (*Prince Albert Daily Herald*, 20 March 1930, p. 8).

“Jim” Wood loved golf, and so did his wife, Emily Irene Chestnut (who had married him in 1919). She was a good golfer, too, and would later participate in competitions at Waskesiu.

James Alonzo Wood was born in 1888 in Upper Melbourne near Richmond, Quebec. He attended local public schools and then Richmond’s St. Francis College, after which he enrolled at McGill University to study science. During these years, he came to be “considered one of Canada’s top amateur hockey players” (*Calgary Herald*, 23 August 1949, p. 9).

He served as vice-president of Prince Albert’s Mintos hockey club in the mid-1930s, and he supported other sports as well:

*Sport: he revels in it.*

*Hockey is his first love, but football claims him. He is to be seen in the bleachers at baseball.*

*He finds his way to the golf course when any match of note is on.*

*In fact, he is a sportsman from the shoes up.*

(*Prince Albert Daily Herald*, 31 December 1934, p. 9).

Wood graduated from McGill University in 1914 with a B. Sc. degree in Electrical Engineering. He joined the head office of the Post Office in Ottawa in 1915, but the next year he enlisted in the Canadian Overseas Expeditionary Force. He sailed for England with the 10<sup>th</sup> Field Company of Canadian Engineers, being awarded the Military Cross in August of 1917 “For dangerous reconnaissance under an intense fire” (*Evening Mail* [Halifax], 21 August 1917, p. 12). Over the course of his three years in Europe, he was promoted from the rank of lieutenant to captain to major.

In the trenches of Belgium and France, he was wounded on three occasions, including a gun shot wound to the head and another to the right forearm near the wrist and thumb. The latter injury reduced the grip strength of his right hand by approximately 25%, but he was still able to play golf after the war. He was also injured by exploding shells, which produced a fractured left arm and a severely fractured right leg, as well as skin injuries. Army doctors technically designated the skin injuries “superficial” because muscles and bones were not severely affected, but Wood nonetheless had to be evacuated to England where skin was grafted from his thigh to his forearm.

Upon demobilization, Major Wood joined the National Parks branch of the Department of the Interior as a junior engineer. In 1920, he was posted to Banff, where he served as assistant superintendent for seven years and enjoyed the golf course that existed before Stanley Thompson began to work his magic there in 1927. Wood was elected the Captain of the golf club in 1925.

After a ten-year stint as Park superintendent at Prince Albert National Park (1927-1938), he was made superintendent of Jasper National Park. He was awarded an O.B.E. (Order of the British Empire) in 1947 and served at Jasper until called to Ottawa in 1948 to become Assistant Controller of the National Parks branch.



Figure 5 Major J.A. Wood, circa 1940s. Photograph kindly supplied by Dr. James M. Harris.

In 1949, however, shortly after his move to Ottawa, Major James Alonzo Wood died unexpectedly at sixty-one years of age.

At that time, newspaper obituaries noted that throughout his life, his “favorite occupations were golf and riding” (*Calgary Herald*, 23 August 1949, p. 9).

Between 1927 and 1938 at Prince Albert National Park, every aspect of the design and construction of Waskesiu Golf Course occurred under his supervision.

## Wood Pitches a National Park Golf Links

Late in September of 1932, when a campaign was organized to pressure the federal government to provide funds to build a golf course at Waskesiu, Wood explained that “Plans decided on three years ago included golf facilities” (*Prince Albert Daily Herald*, 24 September 1932, p. 1). His reference to plans “decided on three years ago” points to the fall of 1929.

In that year, an organization designed to promote the interests of national parks in the province of Saskatchewan was organized:

*The [Prince Albert Daily] Herald unites with all public spirited citizens in felicitating the boards of trade of the four major cities of Saskatchewan upon their decision to form an advisory body – most probably to be known as the Saskatchewan Provincial National Park Association – which will have as its primary purpose the promotion of the Prince Albert National Park’s development as a recreational centre. (Prince Albert Daily Herald, 5 September 1929, p. 10)*

The editorial board of the *Prince Albert Daily Herald* noted the need immediately at Waskesiu for running water, electricity, camping facilities, and a breakwater, but it also observed that “additional recreational facilities such as a sports ground for tennis, softball and other games, and a golf links, loom as essentials for the near future” (*Prince Albert Daily Herald*, 5 September 1929, p. 10).

This seems to have been the first mention of the golf course in Saskatchewan newspapers.

The Provincial National Park Association made itself top-heavy with representatives of Prince Albert’s Board of Trade. Members of the latter were named vice-president and secretary, and the president of the Prince Albert Board of Trade was also appointed to the executive committee, along with three other Prince Albert Board of Trade members, including barrister John G. Diefenbaker, a future Prime Minister of Canada. Prince Albert National Park superintendent J.A. Wood was also named to the executive committee.

As a consequence of a meeting of this Association in Regina in October of 1929, the secretary was charged with communicating to the “Dominion government” a list of suggested “improvements” for the Park: “improvements mooted were the enlargement of the camp grounds; breakwater; golf links; play grounds, beach equipment for the kiddies; transports; additional roads in the Park itself; sanitation; water supply and sewage disposal” (*Prince Albert Daily Herald*, 22 October 1929, p. 2).

This was the second mention of the golf course in the newspapers, and it was probably brought up at this Provincial National Park Association meeting by “the Prince Albert delegation,” which included Park

superintendent Wood, himself, who happened to have been elected a director of the Prince Albert Golf Club just three days before this meeting (*Prince Albert Daily Herald*, 22 October 1929, p. 2).



Figure 6 J.A. Wood. *Saskatoon Daily Caller*, 26 May 1927, p. 5.

When a train carrying Prime Minister Mackenzie King stopped in Prince Albert two weeks later, the Prince Albert Board of Trade members who served as vice-president and secretary of the Provincial National Park Association, along with executive committee member superintendent Wood, were the three people allowed to visit King in his private railway car and present their list of desired improvements for the new Park, including a “golf links”:

#### ***Request for Golf Links***

*The provision for golf links formed another item in the [delegation’s] request for funds.*

*There is an ideal site back of Prospect Point subdivision where a few cottages are situated. A strip of land there is thought an ideal place for golf. (Prince Albert Daily Herald, 6 November 1929, p. 1)*

As he was the one most familiar with the topography of Prospect Point, where the words “GOLF COURSE” appear on the 1928 Waskesiu townsite map, superintendent Wood is probably the one who made the proposal regarding development of a golf course, the two members of the Prince Albert Board of Trade backing his pitch to the Prime Minister.

The newspaper reporter’s sentence – “a strip of land there [at Prospect Point] is thought an ideal place for golf” – is ambiguous.

In November of 1929, is Prospect Point merely “thought an ideal place for golf” by superintendent Wood, a better-than-average amateur golfer who had yet to take professional advice on the matter?

Or is Prospect Point “thought an ideal place for golf” by a golf course planner who had already inspected the property and perhaps already routed nine golf holes through this area?

Wood's suggestion to the Prime Minister of a possible location within the Park for the golf course was clearly not an off-the-cuff remark: as we know, a site for a nine-hole golf course had been marked on the 1928 map of the Waskesiu townsite.

Wood knew that the question of where a golf course might be built in a national park was related to the question of how much it might cost. Although the Canadian Pacific Railway company had allowed Stanley Thompson to spend a fortune on his golf course at Banff (which was the most expensive golf course ever built up to that time), the federal government would not allow Wood to do the same. (The economic turmoil that began in the fall of 1929 and produced the economic depression of the 1930s only confirmed the government's inclination to watch very carefully its spending on its new national park.)

So, telling the Prime Minister that Prospect Point was an ideal site for a golf course near Waskesiu served at least two purposes. On the one hand, Wood must have wanted to allay fears that building a golf course in Prince Albert National Park might incur costs that the federal government would find prohibitive. His site was already accessible by highway and already had, or was developing, the infrastructure necessary to accommodate visitors to a golf course. On the other hand, he probably also intended to recall this particular area of the Park to the Prime Minister's memory.



*Figure 7 In the centre of the photograph, Prime Minister Mackenzie King (left) and Park superintendent J.A. Wood at Waskesiu, 10 August 1928, during the ceremony to open Prince Albert National Park.*

The Prime Minister was familiar with this part of the Park. Most recently, on 10 August 1928, Mackenzie King had been driven into Waskesiu along the entire southern side of the future golf course. After officially opening the Park in a ceremony that involved opening the padlock on a symbolic entrance gate erected for the purpose,

Mackenzie King was presented with a cottage near Waskesiu which had been built for him by his constituents in the city of Prince Albert.

This was apparently the only night Mackenzie King ever spent at his cottage, but his visit to Waskesiu that day had certainly re-acquainted him with the topography of the proposed golf course site – a knowledge of the site that Wood invoked by his reference to Prospect Point.

After Wood pitched this site to the Prime Minister on November 5<sup>th</sup>, 1929, the headline in the *Prince Albert Daily Herald* the next day declared success: “King Promises to Support Improvement Schemes: Park Association Delegation Asks for Better Camping Accommodation, Breakwater, Golf Links, Tennis Courts, Water Supply, Systems of Sewers and Electric Lighting” (*Prince Alberta Daily Herald*, 6 November 1929, p. 1).

## Accounting for Golf

Every item on Wood's 1929 list of desired improvements for the Park would have had to be costed.

Anticipating that as soon as he raised the idea of building a golf course, he would have to address questions about both location and costs, Wood may already have arranged to have a competent golf course planner visit Waskesiu to provide an assessment of whether the area at Prospect Point was indeed ideal for golf.



*Figure 8 The golf course was laid out in the woods behind the Waskesiu Lodge (seen here in 1930). The 6th tee of the 9-hole course (today's 15th tee) was about 200 yards (180 metres) behind the lodge.*

Tactically, having a competent golf course designer inspect Prospect Point was the only prudent thing to do: Wood knew that from the beginning he would have to speak knowledgeably about the golf course proposal if he was going to gain support for it – whether from fellow members of the Provincial National Parks Association, from the Prince Albert Board of Trade, from the Prime Minister, or from members of the public in general.

Right away, Wood needed plans on paper, and he also needed numbers about construction costs that made sense. Given the notoriety of the cost of the Thomson golf course at Banff, the Department of the

Interior certainly would not approve appropriations for funding a golf course at Prince Albert National Park if the proposal was supported by no more than a golf-mad superintendent's amateurish fancies.

When Wood was a member of the Banff Golf Club, the National Parks branch had asked Banff's golf professional William E. Thompson (who had laid out the nine-hole Banff course in 1910-11) to lay out a nine-hole course at Waterton Lakes National Park in 1921 and a nine-hole course at Jasper National Park in 1922, so Wood knew that the National Parks branch would expect both the site for the golf course and the layout for the golf course to be decided by a person with experience in laying out golf courses.

Was a course designer such as Stanley Thompson or Albert Kam called in to route nine holes at Waskesiu at this time?

Thompson certainly did not come cheap. Regina's Northwest Ratepayers' Association complained "that \$2,000 was paid by the city in 1931 to Stanley Thompson ... to lay out a course at Boggy Creek" (*Leader-Post* [Regina, Saskatchewan], 14 September 1933, p. 3). Kam's services would have cost less. And there was an even less expensive "in-house" option.

The resident Park engineer, J.H. Atkinson, had been a golf professional in the mid-1920s, and he had also worked at that time under course designer William Thompson himself. Now that Atkinson was an employee of the National Parks branch, Wood had on site at Waskesiu an engineer competent to assess the golf prospects of Prospect Point – and he could do it at no extra cost.

What is Atkinson's story?

## James Henry Atkinson



Figure 9 J.H. Atkinson (1897-1967), circa mid-1950s. In Ray Duff, *High on a Windy Hill: The Story of the Prince of Wales Hotel (Vancouver: Rocky Mountain Books, 1999), p. 75.*

In his 1979 work, Volume III of *A History of Canada's National Parks*, W.F. Lothian describes James H. Atkinson's work at Waskesiu:

*On of the most popular recreational features at Waskesiu townsite is the national park golf course, which occupies a rolling wooded area east of Prospect Point.*

*Much of the labour utilized in clearing and developing the 18-hole layout was undertaken as an unemployment relief project.*

*The course was designed by J.H. Atkinson, the resident park engineer, who was also an accomplished golfer.*

*The first nine holes were cleared in 1932 and were opened for play in 1934.*

*An additional nine holes were cleared in 1934, and the entire 18 holes were brought into use in August 1936.*

*(See chapter 6 of W.F. Lothian, A History of Canada's National Parks, Volume III [Ottawa: Parks Canada, 1979]).*

Sprott should have said that the first nine holes were opened for play in 1935, and he should have said that the second nine holes began to be cleared in the fall of 1933, but the gist of his timeline here is correct.

More contentious for those who prefer to think that the course should be attributed to Stanley Thompson is Sprott's claim that "the course was designed by J.H. Atkinson."

Atkinson was involved in a long adventure in golf course design and construction, and his work at Waskesiu Golf Course was not the beginning of this adventure.

When his retirement from the National Parks service was announced in 1962, the *Calgary Herald* pointed out that Atkinson had established "the first golf course" at Jasper, which the *Calgary Albertan* recalled was "in Jasper on the Interlachen Flats" (*Calgary Herald*, 1 December 1962, p. 22; *Calgary Albertan*, 7 December 1962, p. 2). This seems to have been the course laid out in October of 1922 by

William E. Thompson, the Old Tom Morris apprentice who had come to Banff in 1910 and laid out its first nine-hole course (opened for play in 1911).

It is not clear whether Atkinson helped with the design of William Thompson's Jasper layout; reference to him as "establishing the first holes of golf in Jasper" is ambiguous (*Calgary Albertan*, 7 December 1962, p. 2). He may have been the one who began to build the course at the end of 1922 or beginning of 1923. Ian Andrew reports that this construction work "barely progressed because of limited resources" (Ian Andrew, "Jasper Park History" (February 2015), <https://golfclubatlas.com/in-my-opinion/andrew-ian-jasper-park-history/>). If so, this fact may explain why the *Calgary Albertan* reported that Atkinson was responsible "for establishing **the first holes** of golf at Jasper": he was apparently not able to complete all nine holes (*Calgary Albertan*, 7 December 1962, p. 2, emphasis added).

Mind you, since Charles Duncan (another St. Andrews man, who had laid out the first course for Calgary's St. Andrews Golf Club in 1912) had been hired as the golf professional of the "Jasper Lodge Golf Course" by 10 May 1924 (just before Stanley Thompson arrived to plan the present Jasper course), it seems to have been expected that the William Thompson course would open for play in 1924, so the construction work on the original course is likely to have been relatively substantial (*Canadian Golfer*, vol 10 no 1 [May 1924], p. 61). Several years later, contrasting Stanley Thompson's Jasper course with the original course, the *Edmonton Journal* observed: "The present course is a far cry from the original one established by W. Thompson, the golf professional of Banff, in 1923 and continued during the early months of 1924 under the Parks Branch at Jasper, in which time a boulder cottage was built near the course for the use of the professional" (*Edmonton Journal*, 1 September 1932, p. 10).

It may well be that Atkinson's initiation into the process of planning national park golf courses occurred under the architectural guidance of William Thompson, a go-to architect of the National Parks branch in the early 1920s. Atkinson certainly developed a close professional relationship with Thompson at this time, for the latter hired Atkinson to serve as his assistant professional at the Banff Golf Club during the summer of 1923.

Note also that at the same time as William Thompson was planning this Jasper course, he was also building the new Donald Ross course at Banff when both Atkinson and Wood were members of the Banff Golf Club. In 1921 and 1922, Atkinson and Wood will have observed the protracted difficulties in establishing healthy grass on the greens and fairways of their golf course:

*To meet the demands for increased facilities to play the game [at Banff], it became, at last, an urgent necessity to extend the course to 18 holes and the services of Mr. Donald Ross, the celebrated golf course architect, now of Pinehurst, U.S.A., were secured for laying out the ground in June 1919.*

*The outcome was the submission of a plan of an ideal course, 6379 yards long, which has been under construction ever since.*

*It is now [January 1923] nearing completion and all but ready for play.*

*The greens and most of the fairways had to be sown with grass seeds, not only once, but, in some places, three times.*

*(Canadian Golfer, vol 8 no 9 [January 1923], pp. 691-92)*

When Waskesiu's first nine holes were seeded at the beginning of 1934, Wood emphasized that "special attention had been given to securing proper grass seed for the particular type of soil" (*Star-Phoenix* [Saskatoon, Saskatchewan], 9 January 1934, p. 7). He would not make the mistakes made at Banff.

And so, Atkinson apparently arrived at Prince Albert National Park with a certain amount of experience in golf course design and construction acquired through his relationship with Thompson. More important was that he had developed a serious interest in these things.

Certainly the Jasper and Waskesiu courses were not the only courses that Atkinson built in national parks. Another was built at Alberta's Elk Island National Park just after he left Prince Albert National Park:

#### ***INSPECT NEW GOLF COURSE***

*Motor cavalcades from Vegreville, Lamont, Vermilion, Mundare, Fort Saskatchewan, and other points in these areas, are visiting Elk Island park Saturday to inspect the nine-hole golf course now under construction.*

*The course, which is being built under the direction of J.H. Atkinson, federal government engineer, will be ready for some play this fall. When completed, it is expected to be one of the finest nine-hole courses in the province. (Edmonton Bulletin, 13 July 1935, p. 13)*

The Elk Island course was built under the "direction" of Atkinson, just as the course at Waskesiu seems to have been. Does the word "direction" include responsibility for design?

It turns out that the Elk Island course had been preceded not just by the Waskesiu course but also by a course at Round Island National Park in Manitoba:

*The course [at Elk Island National Park], 3,015 yards for the nine holes, with a par of 35, was planned, and constructed by [unemployment] relief labour, under the direction of J.H. Atkinson, who for the past two seasons has been resident engineer at Elk Island and who planned the golf courses at both Prince Albert and Riding Mountain national parks. (Edmonton Bulletin, 16 July 1935, p. 14).*

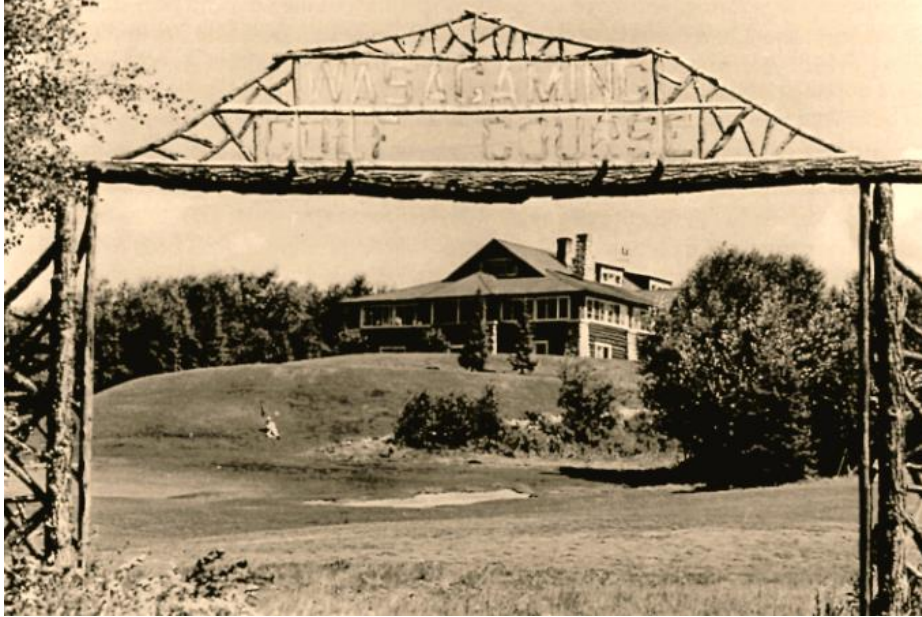


Figure 10 Entrance to Wasgaming Golf Course, circa 1932. Parks Canada Photo Services.

Although today at Riding Mountain National Park, the Clear Lake Golf Course (the present name of what was called the Wasagaming Golf Course from the 1930s until 1993) claims that its first nine were laid out by Stanley Thompson in 1928, the Stanley Thompson Society does not

acknowledge this claim. In *Manitoba Links*, J. Alan Hackett attributes the initial design of 1928-29 to George Beddell (a manager in the Forestry Branch of the Department of the Interior) and Victor Creed (J. Alan Hackett, *Manitoba Links: A Kaleidoscopic History of Golf* [Winnipeg: Gold Quill Publishing, 1998], p. 211). Creed was one of several greenkeeping sons of the superintendent of Winnipeg's St. Charles Country Club, A.W. Creed. After the establishment of Riding Mountain National Park in 1930, the original course was improved and, in 1932, a second nine, "attributed to Superintendent [James] Smart and Vic Creed," was laid out (C. James Taylor, Edward Mills, Pat Buchik, *Riding Park National Park: Built Heritage Resource Description and Analysis* [Calgary: Parks Canada, 2001], p. 153).

Where does Atkinson fit into this story?

Atkinson may have been brought to Riding Mountain in 1932 to improve the original nine and design the second nine. Note that the editor of the *Prince Albert Daily Herald* complained in the fall of 1932 that "work is progressing on the second nine holes at Riding Mountain National Park, whereas Prince Albert National Park does not even possess a putting green" (*Prince Albert Daily Herald*, 24 October 1932, p. 2). The editor may have acquired his knowledge of what was happening at Riding Mountain from Atkinson.

The word "planned" in the 1935 *Edmonton Bulletin* item above is significant: the Elk Island course "was planned" by Atkinson, and he also "planned the golf courses at Prince Albert and Riding Mountain national parks." The phrases "to plan a course," "to design a course," and "to lay out a course" were

effectively synonyms in the 1920s and 1930s. And so, we find above a contemporary attribution to Atkinson of the Waskesiu design (as well as the Riding Mountain and Elk Island designs).

It seems that because of his work at Jasper, Riding Mountain, and Waskesiu from the 1920s to the early 1930s, Atkinson's expertise in golf course design, construction, and maintenance became well-known and respected within the National Parks branch: he had become something of an in-house golf architect and landscape engineer, so to speak.

In 1933, for instance, when the new eighteen-hole course at Waterton Lakes National Park (which was, as we know, "opened up from plans of Stanley Thompson" in 1932) needed attention, Atkinson "visited the park in connection with golf problems" (*Lethbridge Herald* [Alberta, Canada], 1 June 1951, p. 7).

The person Atkinson will have worked with on these "golf problems" was Edward H. Wagstaff, the Park's greenkeeping superintendent and golf professional.



Figure 11 The 1st tee of the golf course at Waterton Lakes National Park circa mid-1920s.

"Teddy" Wagstaff had begun work at Waterton Lakes National Park in 1920 as a clerk, but he was appointed in 1921 as "sub-foreman" and charged with the task of building the nine-hole William E. Thompson course.

Thereafter, Wagstaff superintended golf course maintenance until the early 1930s (Ian Allison Ludlow

Getty, "The History of Waterton Lakes National Park, 1800-1937," A research paper prepared for the National and Historic Parks Branch [University of Calgary: March 1971; revised February 1972], p 176). In *Canadian Golfer* magazine, Wagstaff was also described as the Waterton golf professional between 1926 and 1932.

Wagstaff soon deployed elsewhere the skills acquired in building the William Thompson Waterton layout, being hired in 1933 to build a course in Cardston:

*E.H. "Teddy" Wagstaff was a Saturday visitor in the park from Cardston, where he has just completed the installation of a nine-hole course for the Cardston Athletic Association.*

*Although the entire course is only 40 acres, Mr. Wagstaff has put in a splendid nine-hole course with sand greens, fairways all mowed and graded, bunkers and other hazards and, in fact, has established what will shortly be as attractive a golf course as one will find anywhere in the south."*

*(Lethbridge Herald [Alberta, Canada], 13 May 1933, p. 3).*

Wagstaff would leave Waterton the next spring when he was hired to build yet another course: "E.H. Wagstaff will shortly be leaving the park to reside in Raymond, where he was been engaged to install a nine-hole course this spring" (*Calgary Herald*, 19 March 1934, p. 12).

At Waterton in 1933, when Atkinson "visited the park in connection with golf problems," he was presumably asked to confer with Wagstaff about design and construction problems on some of the new Stanley Thompson holes being built. The full eighteen-hole course would not be completed until 1935, and even then, the course was not really finished, for plans were immediately drawn up at that point "to improve the tees, to put in bunkers, and to level and widen the fairways" (Getty, p. 176).

Perhaps Atkinson, by his advice in 1933 regarding Waterton's "golf problems," was the one responsible for the routing about which Stanley Thompson would complain in 1934.

Now if Stanley Thompson was not, in fact, the designer who laid out the first nine holes at Waskesiu sometime before Wood's first detailed reference to the golf course in the spring of 1930, then Atkinson's work at Waterton in 1933 may represent his first engagement with Thompson's architectural work.

More than twenty years later, Atkinson (now superintendent at Waterton Lakes National Park) encountered Thompson's work at Waterton again, where Thompson had developed renovation plans for the layout in the late 1940s and early 1950s. A few years later, Atkinson reflected on the difference between working with Thompson himself and Clinton E. ("Robbie") Robinson, who had trained under Thompson:

*Mr. Robinson ... is a well-informed person and I found him most helpful and considerate. He knows golf and golf courses, and his approach to our problems was more constructive and instructive than we have previously experienced.*

*He was long associated with the late Stanley Thompson, who was considered an authority, but I would say there is little comparison between the value of a visit from Mr. Robinson and from the late Stanley Thompson, who visited us over many years with little if any benefit to any course with which I am associated.*

*(J.H. Atkinson, Note dated 6 October 1955, Waterton Lakes National Park Archives, photocopy supplied by Dr. James M. Harris, email to the author, 3 January 2024)*

Atkinson, of course, may have met Thompson at Waskesiu in the early 1930s (perhaps even before Atkinson's 1933 visit to Waterton to deal with "problems" arising with that park's new Thompson course), and so one wonders if Waskesiu Golf Course is included in his complaint that Thompson was insufficiently "constructive and instructive" when consulted about golf course "problems" and his complaint that Thompson provided "little if any benefit" to courses with which Atkinson was associated.

That is, one wonders whether Atkinson and Thompson had crossed paths at Waskesiu – and perhaps even crossed swords there.

Just when Atkinson left Prince Albert National Park is not clear. At some point in 1932 he may have visited Riding Mountain, and he says that at some point in 1933 he visited Waterton to deal with problems with its golf course. He seems to have been working at Elk Island National Park by September of 1933, when he shows up as a competitor in the nearby city of Edmonton's Open Golf Championship in mid-September. While he was at Elk Island, Atkinson played golf regularly as a member of the Edmonton Golf and Country Club until the Elk Island course was opened.

In the years that followed Atkinson's work at Waskesiu, almost everywhere he was assigned as a National Park engineer or superintendent, he became involved in golf course design, construction, or maintenance. Even though he had no part in the creation of Stanley Thompson's Green Gables Golf Course in Prince Edward Island National Park, for instance, he absolutely embraced the responsibility of maintaining it from 1948 to 1951: "Atkinson confesses to being an enthusiastic golfer and speaks with pride of the Green Gables Golf Course in the park" (*Lethbridge Herald*, 1 June 1951, p. 7).

And when posted next to Alberta's Waterton Lakes National Park in 1951, he again presided over a Stanley Thompson golf course, which, as we know, was an old Thompson design about to be renovated by Thompson himself, who expressed optimism about his redesign plans about four months after Atkinson had taken control of the Park:

*A vast rebuilding program has been announced for the scenic 18-hole Waterton course by Park officials here. Work has already commenced and it is expected that the course will have been completely renovated within three years.*

*According to Stanley Thompson, famous golf architect, the Waterton course will rank with the best in North America when alterations have been made.*

*(Lethbridge Herald, 13 September 1951, p. 1)*

Atkinson seems to have been actively involved in subsequent course changes at Waterton:

*An enthusiastic golfer, Atkinson was closely involved in Waterton's course improvements in the early 1950s which were being orchestrated by famed Canadian golf course consultant Stanley Thompson.*

*It was Atkinson who suggested a bunker be built between the 9<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> fairways which was informally known as "Mount Atkinson."*

*(Superintendent Biographies, Waterton Lakes National Park, <http://parkscanadahistory.com/publications/waterton/superintendents-bios.pdf>).*

It is likely that Atkinson's introduction to golf occurred in England, where James Henry Atkinson was born 4 April 1897 in the village of Ganton, near Scarborough, Yorkshire. At that time, young Harry Vardon, golf's first superstar, was the Ganton golf professional. Vardon won three of his six Open Championship titles while at the Ganton Golf Club from 1896 to 1903. It was presumably on the Ganton course – a combination of links land and heath land – that young Atkinson was introduced to the game of golf.

Atkinson was said to have been educated in both England and Ireland, but, as for so many young people of his day, his life plans were radically altered by the outbreak of World War I in August of 1914 when he was still a teenager (*Calgary Herald*, 1 December 1962, p. 22). He enlisted in the 10<sup>th</sup> Hussars and soon saw action in the trenches of Belgium and France, being wounded in the Battle of the Somme.

His service during the war was about as long as was possible, for although the Armistice was signed in Europe on 11 November 1918, Atkinson volunteered early the next year to go to Siberia as a Corporal in the 45<sup>th</sup> battalion of the Royal Fusiliers to fight the Bolsheviks from June to September of 1919 as part of the North Russian Relief Force. As he would later recall: "I'm one of the few people in Canada who has had a chance to fight the Bolsheviks" (*Lethbridge Herald*, 1 June 1951, p. 7).

Atkinson immigrated to Canada in September of 1920. Upon his arrival, he indicated to port authorities that his profession was that of "estate manager." Perhaps he had acquired a taste for outdoor life during his army service. In Canada, he quickly took up typically Canadian outdoor recreations, becoming "an ardent golfer, rider, skier, and skater" (*Calgary Albertan*, 7 December 1962, p. 2).

Less than a year after his arrival in Canada, Atkinson began his career-long employment with the National Parks branch of the Department of the Interior in June of 1921.

That year, he met Banff assistant superintendent James Wood for the first time and built part of what would become the Banff-Jasper highway. In 1922-23, he built the Jasper-Edmonton highway. He was also responsible at this time for the construction of several major bridges in the Rockies, and (as noted

above) the first golf course at Jasper. His work at Prince Albert National Park would also involve highways and a golf course.

It was at the William Thompson and Donald Ross golf course in Banff, however, that Atkinson began a brief professional adventure in golf (several years before Stanley Thompson arrived to lay out today's famous golf course). After his original highway work for the National Parks branch, Atkinson was "employed at the Banff golf links during the summer" of 1923 (*Calgary Herald*, 27 September 1923, p. 12). He parlayed this opening at Banff into a two-year term as the club's assistant professional under William Thompson.

And he turned his Banff adventure in Parks Branch engineering and professional golf into a lifetime of wedded bliss:

#### ***BANFF GOLF PRO IS MARRIED TO SCHOOL TEACHER***



*Figure 12 Alberta and James Atkinson. Lethbridge Herald, 1 June 1951, p. 7.*

*A wedding of more than local interest was solemnized on Tuesday evening in St. George's Church when Alberta Margaret Umphrey of Ryley, Alberta, became the bride of James H. Atkinson, of Banff....*

*The bride has been a resident in Banff for the last six years, being a member of the teaching staff at the Banff school....*

*Mr. Atkinson is well known to many Calgary people, also visitors to Jasper Park.*

*For two seasons he was assistant pro at Banff golf course and later was in the engineering service at Jasper Park.*

*(Edmonton Journal, 29 December 1927, p. 6).*

The happy couple honeymooned in Calgary at the beginning of 1928 and then the school teacher and the golf pro began a life together that would lead to their "calling themselves 'park people'" (*Lethbridge Herald* [Alberta, Canada], 1 June 1951, p. 7). Their first stop (on their way through eleven national parks by the early 1960s) was Prince Albert National Park, where there were highways to build to facilitate access to the new national park that was scheduled to open in August.

Atkinson represented Banff as a professional in both the 1923 and 1924 Alberta Open Golf Championships (*Calgary Albertan*, 31 August 1923, p. 8; *Edmonton Journal*, 28 August 1924, p. 17). In 1926, he was elected to the executive committee of the Banff Golf Club – not a position for which a golf professional was usually considered in the 1920s. Also a member of the club (and its Captain in 1925)

was his future boss, J.A. Wood. They played on opposite sides in the President versus Vice-President team contest that kicked off the 1926 season in April of that year (*Calgary Herald*, 22 April 1926, p. 17)

When Prince Albert National Park was created in 1927 and he became its resident engineer, Atkinson immediately joined the Prince Albert Golf Club and, like Wood, was elected a director of the club in the fall of 1928. And at the same club meeting, again like Wood, he was appointed to the greens committee. He was elected a director and appointed to the greens committee again in 1930 (*Prince Albert Daily Herald*, 20 March 1930, p. 8). In the President versus Vice-President team competition to mark the opening of the 1930 season, Jim Wood was drawn against Jim Atkinson (*Prince Albert Daily Herald*, 22 May 1930, p. 5).

At the 1928 Northern Saskatchewan Championships held at the Prince Albert Golf Club, apparently now playing as an amateur, Atkinson won the long-driving competition (with a hit of 245 yds), and he tied for second place in the Open Championship with local golf professional Hubert Cooke (*Prince Albert Daily Herald*, 4 September 1928, p. 8). In 1930, he won the Northern Saskatchewan Open Championship held at Prince Albert: "J.H. Atkinson ... in spectacular last hole play on Saturday defeated W. Kinnear, professional from Saskatoon, by one stroke. Atkinson made the last hole in two by sinking a 35-foot putt" (*Prince Albert Daily Herald*, 2 September 1930, p. 5).

Atkinson's golf game clearly stood up well against the games of Saskatchewan's golf professionals.

And he continued to play at a high level for many years in both Saskatchewan and Alberta, winning the First Flight competition at the Northern Saskatchewan Amateur Golf Championship held at Prince Albert in 1945 (when Atkinson was once again a member of the Waskesiu Golf Club).

By the late 1920s, Jim Wood and Jim Atkinson had been golf buddies for the better part of a decade. When they made Prince Albert their base in 1928 and 1929 as they got the Prince Albert National Park up and running, they and their wives stayed at the same residence in the city, the Avenue Hotel.

Since the building of a golf course in a new national park was a usual thing in those days, one wonders if Park superintendent Wood had requested that good friend and golf buddy Atkinson be appointed as his resident Park engineer because even before the Park was officially opened in 1928, Wood had in mind co-ordinating with Atkinson on the building of a special golf course.

## The Prince Albert Board of Trade



Figure 13 Leader-Post [Regina, Saskatchewan], 24 June 1952, p. 9.

In 1952, a Prince Albert Board of Trade booklet attributed Waskesiu Golf Course to J.H. Atkinson and Albert Kam (cited by James A. Barclay in *The Toronto Terror: The Life and Works of Stanley Thompson* [Ann Arbor, Michigan: Sleeping Bear Press, 2000]).

Credence is lent to this claim by information contained in newspaper article published when the golf course opened in 1935.

That year, we recall, the *Edmonton Bulletin* attributed the course to Atkinson. Subsequently, of course, Lothian named Atkinson the designer in 1979, and in 1986, a Saskatoon newspaper recalled that “The course was constructed by J.H. Atkinson, the resident Park engineer, who also used his skills as an accomplished golfer to attain the proper feel” (*Star-Phoenix* [Saskatoon, Saskatchewan], 7 June 1986, p. 81).

In 1935, the *Prince Albert Daily Herald* observed that Albert Kam had been hired the year before as sub-foreman by the National Parks branch and was “given a free hand in designing the greens along with some other architectural work in connection with the course” (*Prince Albert Daily Herald*, 11 January 1935, p. 2).

It is not surprising that as late as 1952 the Board of Trade possessed knowledge of the roles of Atkinson and Kam in designing Waskesiu Golf Course.

For decades, Board of Trade newspaper advertisements promoted the Park and its golf course, offering brochures upon request: “For information write: The Prince Albert Board of Trade.” In fact, through the Board of Trade, business leaders in Prince Albert were actively involved in promoting the development of a golf course at Waskesiu from the beginning.

When the first superintendent of the new national park arrived in Prince Albert in 1927, he immediately invited the Board of Trade to back the park's development:

*Just what the Prince Albert National Park meant to the city of Prince Albert was pointed out by J.A. Wood.*

*The businessmen, he said, should take care to inform themselves as to the needs of the tourist who would, he felt sure, come in large numbers and would be outfitting for the trip through the park.*

*To this end, he advised that as many as possible make the trip themselves.*

*Prince Albert, he said, is the natural starting point to the park. Already the city has gained advertising from this fact, but the citizens must get back of the idea that the tourist traffic would be a large source of revenue and would repay them according to the effort they made to advertise the beauty of this national playground.*

*(Saskatoon Daily Star, 14 October 1927, p. 13)*

The Board of Trade Board heeded this call and promoted the Prince Albert National Park vigorously.

From the beginning, the Prince Albert Board of Trade had a thorough knowledge of what was going on at the new park. It developed a close and efficient working relationship with the National Parks branch of the Department of the Interior – from the resident Park superintendent to Ottawa's Controller of the National Parks branch of the Department of the Interior, as well as the Minister of the Interior himself.

James Shortt reveals the fundamental role of the Prince Albert Board of Trade in the development of the Waskesiu golf course in his 1977 study of the history the Park:

*In no small way, the Prince Albert Board of Trade was directly responsible for determining the direction of relief work, and hence, the type of facilities that would be available in the park.*

*It was therefore of no coincidence that Superintendent Wood occupied an ex officio seat on the Board [and] that matters pertaining to the development of the park were discussed and approved or rejected first by this body before Ottawa was consulted.*

*In addition to lobbying against a minimum standard for cottages, or "shack-tents" as they were later aptly called, erected within the park, the Board was responsible for encouraging the construction of a golf course, tennis courts, riding stables, beer parlour, boat liveries and other assorted facilities.*

*(James Shortt, "A Survey of the Human History of Prince Albert National Park, 1887-1945" [Department of Indian Affairs, Parks Canada, 1977], p. 25)*

In addition to serving on the executive committee, Wood also served from the late 1920s to the early 1930s on the "National Park" committee, "Aviation Committee," "Tourist Study" committee, "Publicity" committee, and "Entertainment" committee.

In a sign of the Board of Trade's influence on the National Parks branch, when "J.M. Wardle of Ottawa, chief engineer of the National Parks branch," came to visit the Park in the spring of 1934, he made sure that before he did so, he "held a brief conference with the Prince Albert Board of Trade" (*Star-Phoenix* [Saskatoon, Saskatchewan], 11 June 1934, p. 5). He informed them of projects underway at the Park: a new subdivision being laid out, new kitchens and new tennis courts being built, 200 "single relief men" being retained for other summer projects, and so on. He also responded to the Board of Trade's "complaint of a low appropriation for Prince Albert Park" (*Star-Phoenix* [Saskatoon, Saskatchewan], 11 June 1934, p. 5). Finally, "in regard to the golf course, Mr. Wardle gave his opinion that no finer course would be found throughout the country" (*Star-Phoenix* [Saskatoon, Saskatchewan], 11 June 1934, p. 5).

And so, the Prince Albert Board of Trade had its fingerprints all over Waskesiu Golf Course from the moment it was first publicly discussed, through its long construction phase, to the opening of the first nine holes in 1935.

In 1952, the Board's "publicity and tourist promotion committee" was producing its annual booklet at a special time: that year marked the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Park's creation. An important resource for the committee's statements about the origins of Waskesiu Golf Course will have been those among the Board's 300 members in 1952 who had been on the Board when it promoted the golf course in its earliest days – perhaps the most important of these long-serving members being Harry Holroyde, who served as chair of the Board's "Aviation committee" in 1952 (a committee that he had first chaired in 1929).

On the one hand, Holroyde knew the story of the creation of Waskesiu Golf Course through this experience with the Board: he had been an active and prominent member of the Board from at least 1928 until the mid-1950s. On the other hand, he knew the story of the creation of the course through his personal relationship with Park superintendent Wood.

From the moment of Wood's arrival in Prince Albert, Holroyde had been a good friend of the Park superintendent he called "Jimmy," serving with him on the executive committees of various sports organizations in Prince Albert, and also serving alongside him on the committee organizing the Lobstick Tournament at Waskesiu from 1936 to 1938. Wood was transferred to another national park in 1938, but Holroyde continued to serve on the Waskesiu tournament committee, and he continued to compete in the Lobstick Tournament into the mid-1950s. (He probably met Stanley Thompson at the 1950 Lobstick Tournament, at which Thompson participated in the awards ceremony.)

Holroyde was born in Winnipeg in 1888, where he attended school and became an accomplished lacrosse player. He moved to Prince Albert in 1914, living with his sister and brother-in-law while he established a career as a real estate agent and insurance broker. He volunteered for service in World War I in 1916, going overseas as a lieutenant with the 188<sup>th</sup> battalion of the Canadian Expeditionary Force and then being seconded to the Royal Flying Corp in 1917. In 1928, he founded an airplane service in Prince Albert that became an innovator in flying people into their remote cottages and in developing an airmail service.

But his passion was golf.

Holroyde was “one of the original members of the Prince Albert club” (*Star-Phoenix* [Saskatoon, Saskatchewan], 29 June 1956, p. 20). He was elected vice-president of the golf club in 1924 and served regularly on the executive committee in the 1920s and 1930s, including four consecutive years as president from 1934 to 1937, when he arranged for the City of Prince Albert to take over the golf course (in 1935) and add nine new holes.

With resources such as Harry Holroyde available as the Board of Trade produced its 1952 booklet, it is hard to believe that the attribution of Waskesiu Golf Course to Atkinson and Kam was a mistake.

Furthermore, given that the Board of Trade’s goal all along was to bring to the Prince Albert community the tourist dollars mentioned by Wood all those years ago, if Stanley Thompson were known by the Board of Trade to have been the presiding figure behind the original design of Waskesiu Golf Course, its 1952 naming of Atkinson and Kam as the ones who had laid out the course would have been curious – not to say perverse.

Thompson was well-known in Canada’s golf community from the early 1920s onward. When newspapers published an item mentioning that Thompson was in town to design a golf course, they always referred to him as the “well-known” or “noted” Toronto golf expert. The *Prince Albert Daily Herald* had certainly covered his visits to Waskesiu Golf Course in 1946, 1949, and 1950 and it reported about the changes to the course that he recommended. In 1949, *Maclean’s Magazine* lionized Stanley Thompson for an audience far beyond Canada’s golf community (see Richard Lawrence, “He Built a Better Trap,” *Maclean’s Magazine*, 1 May 1949).

In 1952, Stanley Thompson was better known than ever before.

At that time, however, Atkinson and Kam were virtually unknown as architects beyond the people in Prince Albert who remembered them: no one would be drawn to play Waskesiu Golf Course by the naming of Atkinson and Kam as its designers. One presumes that the Board of Trade attributed the course to them not because it preferred to do so, but simply out of regard for fact.

## The Original Nine-Hole Design

On 2 June 1930, Wood for the first time described for the press the plan for building Waskesiu Golf Course:

*It is ... hoped to start the construction of a golf links this year, although this is not expected to be completed for use this summer.*

*Grubbing and clearing are to go ahead between the Prospect Point subdivision and the business subdivision [where Waskesiu Lodge stood], the links to extend out to the highway [Highway 263].*

*This golf course, which is to be laid out by competent engineers, will be one of the most beautiful in the west.*

*With an elevation of from 75 to 100 feet above the level of Waskesiu, the lake will be visible from every tee.*

*(Prince Albert Daily Herald, 2 June 1930, p. 1)*

One suspects that Wood's comments above are informed by a report that he had received regarding the laying out of a golf course at Prospect Point.

Indicating that he knows where every tee box will be located, Wood implies that he knows where every fairway will be laid out. And so, his reference to "grubbing and clearing" refers not to a clear-cutting of the forest between, on the one side, the subdivisions in question, and, on the other side, "the highway." Rather, the grubbing and clearing will occur fairway by fairway.

And Wood speaks in precise terms of the course rising from 75 feet to 100 feet above the lake. Had the fairways been formally surveyed?

The *Prince Albert Daily Herald* reported in January of 1931 that a "survey of a nine-hole golf course" had indeed been conducted at Waskesiu in 1930 (*Prince Albert Daily Herald*, 31 January 1931, p. 7). And in another confirmation of the detailed knowledge of the early days of the Waskesiu course that resided within the Prince Albert Board of Trade in the 1950s, a Board of Trade booklet from 1954 also recalled that in 1930, "survey work began on the first nine holes of the golf course" (*Prince Albert Daily Herald*, 31 March 1954, p. 13A).

Wood is reported above to have indicated: "This golf course ... is to be laid out by competent engineers" (*Prince Albert Daily Herald*, 2 June 1930, p. 1).

Does the phrase “laid out” refer only to the physical construction of the course?

If so, for the building of the golf course, Wood perhaps had in mind from the beginning the use of the “competent engineers” of the National Parks branch rather than the engineers of an architectural company such as Thompson’s: the building of Wakesiu Golf Course would be a “do it yourself” operation, so to speak.

Or does the phrase “laid out” refer to the designing of the course?

If so, the newspaper reporter may have slightly garbled an indication by Wood that the course would be laid out by the resident Park engineer who was competent in golf course design and construction.

Wood seems to have been optimistic about rapid progress on construction of the golf course: his statement that the course “is not expected to be completed for use this summer” implies that he expects it to be completed in 1931. Regina’s *Leader-Post* shortly thereafter reported a calendar target: “the parks department hopes to make a start on construction of a nine-hole course which it is hoped to complete for use by July 1931” (*Leader-Post* [Regina, Saskatchewan], 4 June 1930, p. 10).

Optimism certainly prevailed in the fall of 1930:

***Golf Course Started***

*A fair start was made on the nine hole golf course and a tentative layout decided on.*

*It is expected that the fairways will be all cleared and grubbed this fall, placing the parks department in a position to go ahead with the actual seeding first thing in the spring.*

*(Prince Albert Daily Herald, 20 October 1930, p. 8)*

But this optimism was misplaced: there would be no clearing of fairways at all in the fall of 1930, let alone grubbing, nor any seeding in the spring to follow.

## “A Tentative Layout”

Recall the language of the report about the golf course in the fall of 1930: “**Golf Course Started:** A fair start was made on the nine-hole golf course and a tentative layout decided on” (*Prince Albert Daily Herald*, 20 October 1930, p. 8).

What does it mean that “a tentative layout [was] decided on”?

If Wood already had in hand a design drawn up by a course planner such as Thompson or Kam, what was it about such a plan that was “tentative” and what questions about the plan had to be “decided on”?

Had the designer offered options within his plan – say, options for routing fairways, for locating greens, for locating tees? Was it matters of this sort that had been tentatively **decided on**?

Or, rather than simply following a designer’s intentions, had Wood and/or Atkinson **decided** to follow their own inclinations in the routing of fairways and so on?

If the original nine-hole design was Thompson’s, we recall the “Waterton Revision” (Waterton authorities apparently departed from Thompson’s routing plans), and we also recall Thompson’s 1946 complaints about the original routing of Waskesiu Golf Course. But regardless of whether Thompson or Kam or someone else might have provided the original design, we know that Park superintendents made their own decisions about golf course design and construction.

Perhaps the designer of this 1930 “layout” was Atkinson, and perhaps he was proceeding across Prospect Point **decision** by interconnected **decision**. This might explain why the 1930 layout was said to be “tentative” – that is, not certain, not fixed, merely provisional: Atkinson was working out his ideas in the field and may have been changing his mind from time to time about this and that; in October of 1930, he was still keeping certain options open.

Mind you, considering the cost in dollars and days of clearing a fairway through the dense forest at Waskesiu, Wood could not afford to start work on a fairway whose status was merely tentative. Perhaps certain decisions could be deferred for a while about the par three holes (the 2<sup>nd</sup> and the 7<sup>th</sup>, the latter being today’s 16<sup>th</sup>): with less clearing of fairway required for them, one could postpone final decisions about the precise location of tee boxes and greens on these two holes. Otherwise, at most, one might defer for a while questions of a fairway’s final length, width, or degree of dogleg, but setting out on the

clearing of a fairway required certain knowledge of what one was doing, and especially where one was going through the forest.

Who would make the final decisions about the layout to be built?

Superintendent Wood was presumably the ultimate “decider,” but he no doubt relied heavily on advice from engineer Atkinson.

## No Money, No Frills, No Golf

In February of 1931, the national park committee of the Prince Albert Board of Trade announced its list of recommended general improvements for the Park, including “the completion of the nine-hole golf course” (*Prince Albert Daily Herald*, 26 February 1931, p. 1).

But in 1931, government grants were decreased for national parks all over Canada.

Acknowledging that “there will be little, if any, development work done in Prince Albert National Park this year,” an April editorial in the *Prince Albert Daily Herald* regretted that “a hitch in plans prevented the water works system from being installed last year” at Waskesiu and opined that, with limited financial resources available in 1931, “to carry out this project is vastly more important than building a golf course or supplying other frills” (*Prince Albert Daily Herald*, 24 April 1931, p. 2).

The editor made the same point three months later: “Frills such as a golf course may be left for another year” (*Prince Albert Daily Herald*, 15 July 1933, p. 2).

There was no funding for golf course construction in 1931.

Nonetheless, at the end of the spring, a report about the golf course published in the *Prince Albert Daily Herald* indicates that plans for the layout were still under discussion:

### ***Golf Course Planned For North Park ....***

*An excellent area has been chosen for the construction of a golf course, this area having many unique natural features which can be embodied in the course proper.*

*It is the intention of the Department [of the Interior] to construct a nine-hole course as soon as possible, this being enlarged to an eighteen-hole course when the demand is sufficiently large. An area for its extension has already been set aside and will be reserved for that purpose.*

*The course will be unique in that each hole will be entirely different from any other hole.*

*The tees are being located in such a manner as to provide excellent views of the lake and surrounding country and greens are to be located in such a manner as to provide views and shade for those desiring to rest.*

*With the natural features which are available, it is felt that a very beautiful course, providing holes that will require careful play and yet not be too difficult for the average player, can be constructed.*

*It is not the intention of the Department to construct a course for the experts but rather to construct a course that will provide enjoyment for all golfers.*

*(Prince Albert Daily Herald, 17 June 1931, p. 12)*

Note that the *Prince Albert Daily Herald* reporter may have misreported part of what he or she had been told about the course design by Park authorities, for it certainly would not have been the plan of the Waskesiu architect or landscape engineer to locate greens “in such a manner as to provide ... shade for those desiring rest”: golf greens are not built in locations where they are shaded from sunlight. Whatever consideration had been made in the golf course plans to provide shade for golfers, it would have been separate from strictly architectural considerations about the location and design of putting greens.

But the newspaper report is presumably accurate in conveying the impression that the nine-hole layout described in 1931 was just as much a “tentative layout” as the one described in the fall of 1930: the locations of tees and greens were still being “decided on.” Despite talk in the fall of 1930 about the golf course being ready for seeding in the spring of 1931, the layout clearly remained in the early stages of planning in June of 1931.

Another newspaper report in the spring of 1931 misleadingly implied that golf facilities were available at Waskesiu when the “Young Men’s section” of the Saskatoon Board of Trade visited Prince Albert National Park in June and “James Wood, park superintendent, was on hand to welcome the Saskatonians and to offer the facilities available”: “Fishing, boating, and dancing contributed to a first-class outing for the Saskatoon visitors to the park.... Some of the youngest members of the party enjoyed horse riding, which, along with golf and tennis, are new features of the park” (*Star-Phoenix* [Saskatoon, Saskatchewan], 8 June 1931, p. 7). Wood must have mentioned to the Saskatonians that a golf course was being planned, but it is doubtful that any work on the layout was visible to Park visitors at this time – with the possible exception of surveyors’ stakes.

When the Minister of the Interior, T.G. Murphy, made his first ever visit to the Park in August of 1931, he noted the potential of the course being planned: “There are prospects for a fine golf course above Prospect Point” (*Prince Albert Daily Herald*, 17 August 1931, p. 1). The next year, however, when questioned in the House of Commons about “how much ... progress had been made with the golf course” at Waskesiu in 1931, “Mr. Murphy replied ... that very little progress had been made on the golf course” (*Star-Phoenix*, 6 April 1932, p. 6).

No money having been provided for golf course construction in 1931, would 1932 be different?

In February of 1932, Wood provided a cautious report about the golf course to the *Prince Albert Daily Herald*:

### ***Golf Course Indefinite***

*Superintendent J.A. Wood said today no definite word had been received from Ottawa as to whether or not the proposed nine-hole golf course at Waskesiu lake had been included in the national park's department estimates.*

*If the course is included, the plowing of fairways, etc., will be done this year and the ground will be ready for use next year.*

*Should this work not be begun until next year, the course would not be ready until 1934.*

*The proposed site is between the Prospect Point residential subdivision and the business subdivision. (Prince Albert Daily Herald, 19 February 1932, p. 3)*

Alas, for the second year in a row, no money was provided for golf course construction.

For promoters of the golf course, the lack of any progress after two years was dispiriting. And so, in the fall of 1932, in the context of the "indefinite" status of the Waskesiu golf course since the fall of 1930, early promoters of the course reflected wistfully on the failure to build the original layout.

A past president of the Provincial National Park Association, F.R. McMillan (since become a Saskatchewan M.P.), recalled his early activity on behalf of the Association to promote development in the park, confessing with frustration that "He ... had thought he had the golf course built, when it 'slipped away.' He hoped that something would be done soon to meet the pressing needs" (*Prince Albert Daily Herald*, 24 September 1932, p. 3). McMillan may well have been the source of the optimistic report in the *Prince Albert Daily Herald* that the original layout would be cleared and grubbed in the fall of 1930 and seeded in the spring of 1931.

Like McMillan, superintendent Wood bemoaned the collapse of the plans for the 1930 layout: "Plans decided on three years ago included golf facilities," he said, "lack of which drew Saskatchewan people to parks out of province" (*Prince Albert Daily Herald*, 24 September 1932, p. 1).

Wood and McMillan had both spoken at a meeting in the fall of 1932 designed to pressure the federal government to fund construction of a nine-hole course at Waskesiu. The campaign begun then would soon produce results.

## Building Waskesiu Golf Course: 1932-36

### 1932

In the summer of 1932, frustrated by the fact that two years had passed with no more work on a golf course, the Prince Albert Board of Trade began to organize a campaign to pressure the federal government to supply funds to begin construction: “the board of trade will endeavor to get boards of trade at Regina, Moose Jaw, and Saskatoon to cooperate in passing resolutions urging the government to construct a suitable golf course at the park at the earliest moment” (*Prince Albert Daily Herald*, 27 July 1932, p. 1).

In August, the *Prince Albert Daily Herald* encouraged this campaign, publishing an editorial calling for funding of the golf course despite the financial stringencies caused by the economic depression:

#### ***Wanted – Golf Course***

*In normal times we believe there would be no difficulty in inducing the Dominion government to provide a golf course at Waskesiu in Prince Albert National Park. Golf has become of such importance today that it may truthfully be said that no summer resort can be considered complete unless facilities are provided for pursuit of this out-door pastime.*

*Under present [economic] conditions, however, can one feel justified in supporting the presentation of such a request to the Dominion government?*

*After carefully considering the matter, we have concluded that the cost of providing a golf course is so slight when measured against the helpful recreation it will provide the thousands who visit the national playground that we have no qualms about supporting the proposal ....*

*The creation of the national park has enabled many to take a holiday who otherwise could not have afforded one. The Dominion government has expended hundreds of thousands of dollars at the park north of here and the expenditure of a few thousands more in providing a golf course would make the park attractive to so many more thousands that we believe the expense fully justified....*

*As it is, so we are informed, some Saskatchewan residents are going to Riding Mountain national park in Manitoba in preference to Prince Albert national park because there is a golf course at the former resort centre. There is a sufficient number of golf enthusiasts in the province, we believe, to justify the expense of providing facilities for pursuit of this game at Waskesiu. We suggest that the Dominion government immediately undertake this development as an unemployment relief measure. (Prince Albert Daily Herald, 8 August 1932, p. 2)*

In September, the Prince Albert Board of Trade entertained 100 members of the Saskatoon Board of Trade, and, among the things requested of the Saskatonians was “support in bringing pressure to bear on the federal government to have [golf course] clearing work done on the relief program this winter”

(*Prince Albert Daily Herald*, 6 September 1932, p. 3). Shortly afterwards, “the national park committee” of the Prince Albert Board of Trade itemized “work to be done under the relief program this winter,” including the “laying out of recreation grounds, including a golf course” (*Prince Albert Daily Herald*, 9 September 1932, p. 3). At its subsequent general meeting, the Board decided “to take action on securing improvements in Prince Albert National Park”: among other things, it recommended “the setting aside by the Department [of the Interior] of recreational grounds for golf” (*Prince Albert Daily Herald*, 17 September 1932, p. 1).

Later in September, the board hosted a banquet for the newly appointed federal Minister of Agriculture (Robert Weir) at which several speakers asked him to support appropriations for the golf course. Two days later, members of the Board of Trade took the Saskatchewan Minister of Railways, Labour, and Industries to Waskesiu to lobby for an allotment of unemployment relief labour to work on the golf course:

***Proposal For Golf Course At Park Aired ....***

*Nothing definite is forthcoming regarding the board of trade’s pilgrimage to the national park during the weekend. Hon. J.A. Merkley, provincial minister of railways, labour and industries, accompanied about 14 members of the board on the trip.*

*The board is pressing for the construction of a golf course at the park. The matter was discussed at the park by the party, but as neither Mr. Merkley nor anyone else here knows what the federal appropriation for relief work will be this winter, the conference did not terminate with anything definite.*

*The golf course proposal is the principal thing being urged by the board insofar as relief work is concerned at the park, C.H. McIntosh, the board’s president, stated here this morning. (Prince Albert Daily Herald, 26 September 1932, p. 3)*

The editor of the *Prince Albert Daily Herald* spoke up again in the fall of 1932, expressing impatience: “work is progressing on the second nine holes at Riding Mountain National Park, whereas Prince Albert National Park does not even possess a putting green” (*Prince Albert Daily Herald*, 24 October 1932, p. 2).

This was the second time he had compared work on the golf course at Riding Mountain to the lack of work on the golf course at Waskesiu. I wonder if the editor’s information about work on the course at Riding Mountain had come directly from Atkinson (or indirectly from Atkinson via Wood). Recall that in his original editorial called “Wanted – Golf Course,” the editor had written: “As it is, **so we are informed**, some Saskatchewan residents are going to Riding Mountain national park in Manitoba in preference to Prince Albert national park because there is a golf course at the former resort centre” (*Prince Albert Daily Herald*, 8 August 1932, p. 2, emphasis added).

At the end of October, Wood finally announced the approval of plans to use unemployment relief labour on construction of the golf course:

*Relief work at the national park is to be commenced at once, according to information received here by J.A. Wood ....*

*This includes camp ground extension to the north and south, underbrushing the roads and lake shore, the clearing of the golf course ....*

*Should the mild weather continue, Mr. Wood believes a great deal of grubbing and clearing can be done to the golf course area this year.*

*Depending upon the amount of [unemployment relief] labor supplied, it is believed possible that golf could be played on the new nine-hole course at the park by the beginning of August. (Prince Albert Daily Herald, 25 October 1932, p. 1)*

Note, mind you, that Wood expected the course to open in August of 1933 “with temporary greens” (*Prince Albert Daily Herald*, 4 November 1932, p. 6). Compared to the preparation of fairways, construction of permanent greens was of a different order of difficulty.

This October 1932 report virtually duplicates the October 1930 report: “It is expected that the fairways will be all cleared and grubbed this fall, placing the parks department in a position to go ahead with the actual seeding first thing in the spring” (*Prince Albert Daily Herald*, 20 October 1930, p. 8). In each case, a fall of clearing and grubbing was expected to have produced a golf course ready for seeding the next spring, and ready for play the next summer. In both the fall of 1930 and the fall of 1932, Wood expected construction of a playable golf course to take about nine months.

It is as though Wood was starting golf course construction all over again in the fall of 1932.

Under the headline “Golf Grounds and Brush Clearing to Be Done by Penniless Men,” a Saskatoon newspaper reported that the Prince Albert Board of Trade would not let up its pressure on the federal government to get Wood the labour he needed to expedite this work:

*J.A. Wood, superintendent of Prince Albert National Park, returned to the city [Prince Albert] this morning following a conference with the Department of Labor at Regina in regard to employment of men at the park this winter....*

*One hundred and fifty men will be employed in preparing a golf course, clearing and underbrushing the park grounds.*

*Dissatisfaction with the number of men to be employed at the park is expected by the Prince Albert Board of Trade who will continue its efforts to have the number increased. (Star-Phoenix [Saskatoon, Saskatchewan], 28 October 1932, p. 3)*

In November, Wood was excited finally to be able to start work on the course: “‘This is an excellent time of the year to start clearing out underbrush for the Prince Albert National Park golf course’ .... Mr. Wood said underbrush could be cut out and burned at this time of the year without danger” (*Leader-Post* [Regina, Saskatchewan], 10 November 1932, p. 2).

### 1933



Figure 14 Unemployment relief labour on the first fairway at Waskesiu circa 1935. Harris, A Stanley Thompson Masterpiece, p. 52.

The Prince Albert Board of Trade came through for Wood: it secured an allotment of 1,050 men as unemployment relief labour for work in in the Park during the 1932-33 winter.

They were stationed at ten camps at various locations throughout the Park, two of which were at Waskesiu.

By the third week of January in 1933, significant progress on

the golf course was reported:

#### ***National Park Golf Course Is Being Cleared ....***

*Two fairways have been cleared on the national park nine-hole golf course, and the boundaries of the remaining seven cut out.*

*There is every prospect of the course being ready for play later this summer.*

*(Prince Albert Daily Herald, 23 January 1933, p. 1).*

Returning to Prince Albert from Waskesiu less than a week later, Wood reported:

#### ***National Park Golf Course Is Almost Cut Out ...***

*By tonight it is expected the entire nine fairways on the new golf course at the national park will have been cleared, J.A. Wood, park superintendent, stated this morning.*

*He declared as much work will be done on the course this winter as it is possible to do, and the completion of it hastened considerably.*

*The course will be a tricky one and at the same time one of the most picturesque in western Canada ....*

(Prince Albert Daily Herald, 28 January 1933, p. 1)

Wood was so confident of continued good progress that he made a prediction: “by spring the course will be ready to receive the finishing touches. Provided government appropriations are made to cover the completion of the course, summer visitors this year can toss their golf clubs in their cars, knowing they will have ample opportunity to use them when at Waskesiu” (*The Leader-Post* [Regina, Saskatchewan], 30 January 1933, p. 15).

In April, the Board of Trade fought to enable Wood to retain the unemployment relief labour that had been allotted to him for work on Park projects during the winter, and it specified the work to be done on the golf course that spring and summer:

*The local Board of Trade is persistent in its efforts to secure the retention of a body of men at the Prince Albert National Park to complete projects now underway.*

*Strong representations have been made to both federal and provincial governments.*

*A list of the work has been mailed to interested parties.*

*It is pointed out that the great percentage of this work utilizes man power.*

*The program is the stumping of one acre of fairway on the golf course and the breaking and seeding down and bunkering of the whole course.*

(Prince Albert Daily Herald, 5 April 1933, p. 6)

But the predictions by Wood and the Board of Trade that play would be possible in the summer of 1933 turned out to be far too optimistic.

At the end of June, those packing golf clubs in the trunks of their cars were disappointed by information emerging from the Park: “Already a start has been made on a golf course .... Inasmuch as the terrain consists entirely of tree hazards, this will be quite a task, and it is not expected that it can be completed this year” (*Star-Phoenix* [Saskatoon, Saskatchewan], 30 June 1933, p. 46).

Still, by August, it was clear that impressive progress was being made, and a detailed report outlining facts about the first nine holes emerged:

*Laid among the green rolling hills whose summits bring to the eye a picture of Waskesiu’s blue, wind-flecked waters to the north and the warm wealth of coloring of pine and willow on the height of the land to the south, Waskesiu’s nine-hole course will rank, after its completion, among the most beautiful sporty courses on the continent.*

*A jaunt over the 2,600 yards now being disced and cleared of roots in preparation for seeding next month will convince the most critical of the scenic grandeur and sportiness of the course.*

*Long, straight fairways, up hill and down;  
one or two short holes;  
a dog's leg shot;  
long shadows from tall trees that border the course;  
water hazards that are like blue gems on the green fairway;  
a rustic bridge, built from natural twisted limbs of poplar and willow;  
a rustic lookout and shelter, made from small limbs of birch and poplar, a work of art in itself –  
these will make Waskesiu's course one of the most popular in the Dominion.*



*Figure 15 The "rustic bridge, built from natural twisted limbs of poplar and willow." Waskesiu Golf Course website photograph, 2023.*

*The site for the clubhouse to be erected next year is on top of the highest hill along the highway between Waskesiu Lodge and Avenue A, which runs immediately back of the residential subdivision on Prospect Point.*



Figure 16 Waskesiu Golf Course clubhouse. *Prince Albert National Park Brochure* (1936), p. 14.

*The course itself lies between these two landmarks....*

*The entire course has been plowed, is at present being treated with disc harrow and root drag, and will be seeded the second week in August, according to word issued from the park's office today. (Star-Phoenix [Saskatoon, Saskatchewan], 1 August 1933, p. 10)*

Having said that the course would be seeded during the second week of August in 1933, Wood provided an update in September: "The course is being seeded at the present time and will be completed by next July [1934]" (*Star-Phoenix* [Saskatoon, Saskatchewan], 25 September 1933, p. 7). A report in October, however, indicates that seeding had not yet occurred: "trapped and bunkered, the park course is ready to receive the seed that will produce green swards dear to the hearts of golfers" (*Prince Albert Daily Herald*, 17 October 1933, p. 2). A mid-December announcement confirmed that seeding had not occurred in 1933 (*Leader-Post* [Regina, Saskatchewan], 16 December 1933, p. 8).

Work on completing the first nine holes may have been delayed in 1933 by the demands of new work on the golf course, for when the Park suffered a drop in visitors in the summer of 1933, the Board of Trade argued to the federal government that a major reason for decline in attendance was the "lack of golf facilities" and therefore recommended "the completion of the golf course and the addition of nine holes" (*Star-Phoenix* [25 September 1933, p. 7). The government immediately took up the Board of

Trade's recommendation such that by the end of 1933, "an additional nine holes [were] being cut out" (*Leader-Post* [Regina, Saskatchewan], 16 December 1933, p. 8).

## 1934

Work in 1933 may also have been complicated by the fact that by the end of the summer, Atkinson had been transferred from Prince Albert National Park to Elk Island National Park (where he was clearing fairways for a new golf course by February of 1934) and he had been replaced at Prince Albert National Park by a young engineer named John Mould, who had no experience of golf course construction.



Figure 17 John Mould. *Star-Phoenix* [Saskatoon, Saskatchewan], 20 May 1932, p. 19.

Born in Alberta in 1907, Mould held a 1930 Bachelor of Science degree and a 1932 Master of Science degree in civil engineering from the University of Saskatchewan. He had previously worked briefly for the Saskatchewan Department of Highways. When the course was poised for opening in June of 1935, Mould and superintendent Wood jointly welcomed reporters to inspect the course: "It is with pride that the park superintendent, Major J.A. Wood, and J. Mould, engineer, escort visitors to the clubhouse" (*Star-Phoenix* [Saskatoon, Saskatchewan], 30 May 1935, p. 15).

At that 1935 opening, Mould had taken a place beside Wood that, in retrospect, one could argue properly belonged to Albert Kam, who had been hired in 1934 as "sub-foreman" by the National Parks branch and "given a free hand in designing the greens along with some other architectural work in connection with the course" (*Prince Albert Daily Herald*, 11 January 1935, p. 2).

# Waskesiu Course Ready This Year

**Albert Kam, Who Constructed Greens and Assisted in Widening Fairways, Believes Golfers' Paradise Will Open in July**

Figure 18 *Prince Albert Daily Herald*, 11 January 1935, p. 1.

As "sub-foreman," Kam was presumably in charge of the unemployment relief labour dedicated to golf course construction. I suspect that Kam had been hired to take over Atkinson's role in directing this workforce because young Mould had no

experience either in golf course construction or the management of a large group of workers.

In January of 1934, Wood addressed an audience in Saskatoon about development underway in the park in general, and he provided particular details about the eighteen-hole layout:

*The nine-hole course was started in 1932 and now was ready for seeding, while another nine holes were being laid out.*

*The course, Mr. Wood assured, was 6,150 yards long and of championship calibre. Placed between Prospect Point and the townsite, it was a sporting course with each green well bunkered.*

*Special attention had been given to securing proper grass seed for the particular type of soil.*

*(Star-Phoenix [Saskatoon, Saskatchewan], 9 January 1934, p. 7)*

With Kam in charge, momentum toward the completion of the golf course finally reached a critical mass.

There was news of the new nine holes at the beginning of February: “clearing for the additional nine holes of the golf course is almost done” (*Prince Albert Daily Herald*, 5 February 1934, p. 1).

Wood was excited.

In the middle of April, he seems to have brought the plans for the Waskesiu course to the clubhouse of the Prince Albert Golf Club, where he was spotted by “Dusty”, the pseudonym of the sports columnist who wrote “Found in the Sports Basket” for the *Prince Albert Daily Herald*: “We saw .... J.A. Wood poring over the plan of the new golf course at Lake Waskesiu and talking baseball and hockey at the same time” (*Prince Albert Daily Herald*, 16 April 1934, p. 5). Was this “plan of the new golf course” an old plan that had been on paper for some while, or was it a new plan drawn up by Albert Kam for the greens and other architectural work over which he had been given a “free hand”?

Fertilization of the fairways of the original nine-hole course began on Monday, 14 May 1934, with seeding scheduled to follow shortly afterwards (*Prince Albert Daily Herald*, 12 May 1934, p. 1). It was said that “the soil was worked up and heavily fertilized” (*Leader-Post* [Regina, Saskatchewan], 23 August 1938, p. 13).

On May 24<sup>th</sup>, believe it or not, people were playing golf on some of the putting greens: “Golfers yesterday played on seven of the greens at the Waskesiu Lake golf course in Prince Albert National Park” (*Prince Albert Daily Herald*, 25 May 1934, p. 3). That these greens were ready for play by May of 1934 suggests that they had probably been built and seeded by the fall of 1933. And since the *Prince Albert Daily Herald* declared that Kam “built the rolling greens of the new golf course,” it may well be that Kam had been working on green construction at Waskesiu in 1933 – that is, even before he was “engaged ...

as sub-foreman” by the National Parks branch in 1934 (*Prince Albert Daily Herald*, 11 January 1935, pp. 1).

I discuss more fully the question of when Kam began working at Waskesiu, and the question of the various design features for which he may have been responsible (as well as Stanley Thompson’s reaction to these features), in a later section called “Waskesiu 1934-35” at pp. 135-39.

Optimism was in the air by June: “The new golf course is coming along splendidly” (*Star-Phoenix* [Saskatoon, Saskatchewan], 19 June 1934, p. 6). An editorial in the *Prince Albert Daily Herald* was enthusiastic:

### ***Waskesiu Golf Course***

*One of the most picturesque golf courses in western Canada, and one which will delight the hearts of golf addicts, is in the making at Waskesiu.*

*No effort is being spared to make the course an interesting one to golfers and nature has done her bit by providing a setting of lake and forest which can only be equalled in the mountains.*

*Those who have had the opportunity to inspect the first nine holes which are complete except for the finishing touches have been agreeably surprised by what they saw.*

*The course will be a credit to all those who had a hand in its making.*

*(Prince Albert Daily Herald, 25 June 1934, p. 2)*

All depended on the grass: “Nine holes of a golf course have now been seeded and are expected to be ready for play toward the end of the summer, depending on the catch of the grass” (*Star-Phoenix* [Saskatoon, Saskatchewan], 26 June 1934, p. 20). The *Prince Albert Daily Herald* reported that “Everything is ready for the final touches and only the fact that the grass must get a thorough hold before playing is allowed keeps them off the greens and fairways now” (*Prince Albert Daily Herald*, 28 June 1934, p. 7).

At the end of June, however, the author of the “Seen N’ Heard Among the Golfers” column in the *Prince Albert Daily Herald* revealed that he had learned from Wood that the anticipated opening in 1934 would not happen:

*We just heard all about the new course under construction at Waskesiu Lake.*

*Evidently, it’s going to be a humdinger. Eighteen holes. The long hole is 590 yards. They tell us that there’s a water hazard and that one hole goes straight up hill.*

*Then they talk about the beauty of it.*

*The eighteenth green will be one of the prettiest in the west, says Jimmy Wood.*

*But golfers needn't begin to get all excited. The course will not be played on this year.*

*(Prince Albert Daily Herald, 26 June 1934, p. 6).*

Funds dedicated to the completion of the second nine holes at Waskesiu were approved late in August of 1934 (*Prince Albert Daily Herald*, 25 August 1934, p. 1).

By September 1st, a start was being made on the clubhouse, and all but stumps and roots had been removed from the fairways of the second nine: "There will be a fine golf course opened next year, with a clubhouse ready for the opening, nine links being in shape while stumping [the removal of tree stumps and roots from the soil] is going on over nine more" (M.L.A. W.F. Kerr, *Leader-Post* [Regina, Saskatchewan], 1 September 1934, p. 7).

This work progressed quickly.

In fact, on 13 September 1934, the very day that Stanley Thompson wrote a letter to the Minister of the Interior proposing that he visit Waskesiu in a few weeks to "assist with the layout," it was announced: "fairways for the extra nine holes have been cleared, stumped, and are now being ploughed" (Letter, Stanley Thompson to T.G. Murphy, Minister of the Interior, 13 September 1934, cited in Harris, *A Stanley Thompson Masterpiece*, p. 49; *Prince Albert Daily Herald*, 13 September 1934, p. 3).

The Prince Albert Board of Trade had succeeded in securing for Wood a large contingent of relief labour for work on Park projects during the winter months of 1934, and it arranged that these men would also work at the Park during the spring and summer:

*Under the new public works construction, there are some 258 men at work in the park, according to the superintendent.*

*Some 120 of these are employed on the highways and the rest at Waskesiu engaged in completion of a golf course, work on four new tennis courts, a recreation field and a children's playground.*

*Traffic in the park this Summer topped last year's mark by some 2,000 visitors, Mr. Wood said. With the completion of the new golf course, it is expected that the tourist traffic will jump to new high marks next season.*

*(Star-Phoenix [Saskatoon, Saskatchewan], 27 September 1934, p. 4)*

## **1935**

Wood once again received a large contingent of unemployment relief workers at the beginning of 1935:

*It has become known ... that 450 single and destitute men will be stationed in the northern playground this winter and will be employed in clearing lots and building roads.*

*It is expected also that considerable work will be done in connection with the golf course at Big Beach, Lake Waskesiu.*

(Prince Albert Daily Herald, 5 January 1935, p. 3)

Anticipation by Saskatchewan golfers of the opening of the first nine holes of the golf course grew steadily through the winter and spring of 1935.

The *Prince Albert Daily Herald* observed in January:

*Waskesiu's new golf course with prospect's of becoming one of the finest in western Canada today lies under a two-foot blanket of snow.*

*But despite wintry winds and frigid temperatures sweeping the principal resort in Prince Albert National Park, keen interest in the new layout is being evidenced by those who spend most of their spare time during the warmer months following the sometimes erratic course of a little white ball around freshly mown fairways and the "rough" which borders them.*

(Prince Albert Daily Herald, 11 January 1935, p. 1)

Down in Saskatoon, a golf writer observed: "No dates have been announced by the genial Jimmy Wood of Prince Albert for the official opening of the new golf course at Lake Waskesiu. Local golfers are considerably interested in this event and are looking forward to a round over the new layout" (*Star-Phoenix* [Saskatoon, Saskatchewan], 25 April 1935, p. 15).

And then there was a date: "The golf course at Waskesiu probably will be ready for play by June 1 .... Superintendent Jimmy Wood tells us that the fairways and greens came through the winter without a patch" (*Prince Albert Daily Herald*, 21 May 1935, p. 6).



Figure 19 Prince Albert Daily Herald, 31 May 1935, p. 1.

And, indeed, June 1<sup>st</sup> it would be.

Golfers began arriving at the Park before the scheduled opening of the golf course (the photograph to the left shows play on the ninth green at the end of May).

And there were plans in place to host the even larger crowd of golfers expected to show up on Saturday and Sunday:

*The majority came from Prince Albert, Regina, and Saskatoon, and preparations had been made for a large influx over the weekend.*

*Major J.A. Wood, superintendent of the park, teed off at the first hole and within a few minutes after the inaugurating ceremonies, the course was spotted with golfers as they played their shots down the perfect fairways and to the carpetlike greens....*

*The clubhouse will not be ready until next week, it was learned by telephone from Lake Waskesiu.*

*The course itself, however, could not be in finer condition for the opener.*

*(Prince Albert Daily Herald, 1 June 1935, p. 6)*

## **1936**

Little was published in Saskatchewan newspapers about work on Waskesiu Golf Course during 1936.

Construction was probably completed by the end of the 1935 season. The new nine holes presumably merely awaited a good catch of the grass to enable play in 1936.

In January of 1936, sports writer "Dusty" (in his column in the *Prince Albert Daily Herald* called "The Sport Overflow") wrote: "Did you know that the remaining nine holes of the Lake Waskesiu golf course will be ready for play about July 1? Superintendent Jim Wood gave us that information today" (*Prince Albert Daily Herald*, 18 January 1936, p. 6).

We read at the end of May that "Work already has commenced on the second nine holes which will be in shape for initial strokes sometime in July" (*Prince Albert Daily Herald*, 22 May 1936, p. 6). By this point, readying the new nine holes for opening seems to have been a matter of applying finishing touches.

The full eighteen-hole course duly opened in July.

## And Stanley Thompson Fits in Where?

The first contemporary document associating Stanley Thompson with Waskesiu dates from 1934, when in September the Department of the Interior approved Thompson's proposal (in a letter dated September 13<sup>th</sup>) "to assist with the layout for the golf course at Prince Albert National Park" (Letter, Stanley Thompson to T.G. Murphy, Minister of the Interior, 13 September 1934, cited in Harris, *A Stanley Thompson Masterpiece*, p. 49).

We now know that the person Thompson was proposing to "assist with the layout" in 1934 was Albert Kam. The latter had by then designed the greens and widened fairways, and he had also been responsible for certain other architectural decisions.

In his September 13<sup>th</sup> letter, Thompson had indicated that he expected to set out for the west two weeks later, so, at the earliest, he may have been at Waskesiu by the end of September or beginning of October in 1934 – if, that is, he visited Waskesiu before he went to the other golf courses in the west (such as the one at Waterton Lakes National Park) that he also proposed to visit. As we know, by this point, the nine-hole golf course at Waskesiu had long been seeded and was virtually ready for play, so any Thompson visit to Waskesiu in the fall of 1934 was certainly not in time to "assist with the layout" of the first nine holes in any substantial way.

And the fairways of the second nine holes had already been cleared by this point: obviously, he cannot have assisted **in the fall of 1934** with decisions about the routing of the second nine holes cut out of the woods a year before.

And it is not even certain that Thompson actually showed up at Waskesiu in September or October of 1934.

In any event, three months after Thompson's possible visit to Waskesiu in the fall of 1934, Kam seems to have indicated in his subsequent interview with the *Prince Albert Daily Herald* that he still possessed in January of 1935 "a free hand in designing the greens along with some other architectural work in connection with the course" (*Prince Albert Daily Herald*, 11 January 1935, p. 2). That is, any Thompson visit the previous fall does not seem to have affected Kam's free hand regarding remaining work on green designs and certain other architectural questions.

Although it is unclear whether Thompson visited Waskesiu in the fall of 1934, Pinder's memory of Thompson's having described the difficulties of routing nine holes "through dense forest" at Waskesiu seems to place Thompson at Waskesiu at some point before the fall of 1933, for there is no reason for Thompson to have been routing holes **through dense forest** at Waskesiu after a second nine holes were cut out of the woods at the end of 1933, after which all eighteen fairways were cleared of trees (as on the occasion of Thompson's possible 1934 visit, when all that remained to be removed were stumps and roots).

The question remains, however, whether Thompson's walk in the woods sometime before the fall of 1933 was to route a first nine or a second nine, and the question remains whether his routing plan was followed.

If Thompson designed nine holes sometime before superintendent Wood first described the course in June of 1930, but Thompson did not thereafter return before the fall of 1934, who laid out the "additional nine holes ... being cut out" in the fall of 1933 (*Leader-Post* [Regina, Saskatchewan], 16 December 1933, p. 8)?

If Thompson designed only the second nine holes (sometime before the fall of 1933), who designed the first nine?

Could Thompson have visited Waskesiu twice before 1934 and designed two nine-hole circuits?

If Thompson designed even nine holes at Waskesiu, however, how does the Prince Albert Board of Trade come to attribute the Waskesiu course not to Thompson but to Atkinson and Kam?

Half of the Board's assertion is supported by the fact that in 1934 Kam was "given a free hand in designing the greens along with some other architectural work" (*Prince Albert Daily Herald*, 11 January 1935, p. 2). And the other half of its assertion is supported by a 1935 newspaper article that says Atkinson "planned the golf courses at both Prince Albert and Riding Mountain national parks" (*Edmonton Bulletin*, 16 July 1935, p. 14).

Clearly, we must take seriously the Board of Trade's attribution of Waskesiu Golf Course to Atkinson and Kam, and we must also take seriously its silence about Thompson, Canada's internationally renowned architect.

## How Many Layouts?

As we know, “plans decided on” in the fall of 1929 “included golf facilities” and nine holes were surveyed and tentatively laid out in 1930 (*Prince Albert Daily Herald*, 24 September 1932, p. 1). We also know that locations for tees and greens were still being planned in mid-1931. But these early plans for a golf course “slipped away” (*Prince Albert Daily Herald*, 24 September 1932, p. 3).

Proper construction work on today’s Waskesiu Golf Course began only in the fall of 1932 – a full two years after the original “tentative layout” was “decided on” – and work on the golf course was continuous until the 1936 opening of all eighteen holes.

These facts give rise to a question: was the early tentative layout of 1930 the same as the 1932 layout?

On the one hand, recall the news from the fall of 1930: “A fair start was made on the nine hole golf course and a tentative layout decided on. It is expected that the fairways will be all cleared and grubbed this fall, placing the parks department in a position to go ahead with the actual seeding first thing in the spring” (*Prince Albert Daily Herald*, 20 October 1930, p. 8). These expectations were disappointed, of course, and virtually no more work was done on this layout.

On the other hand, note that Wood later said: “The nine-hole course was started in 1932” (*Star-Phoenix* [Saskatoon, Saskatchewan], 9 January 1934, p. 7). If the nine-hole design of 1932 was the same as the “tentative layout” of 1930, one might wonder why Wood did not say the nine-hole course was started in 1930. Why did he ignore the “fair start” on this design reported in the fall of 1930?

And recall how news of the Board of Trade’s determination in the fall of 1932 to promote the building a golf course was reported.

In September, “the national park committee” of the Prince Albert Board of Trade recommended “work to be done under the relief program [that] winter,” including the “**laying out** of recreation grounds, including a golf course” (*Prince Albert Daily Herald*, 9 September 1932, p. 3, emphasis added). At its subsequent general meeting, the Board decided “to take action on securing improvements in Prince Albert National Park”: among other things, it recommended “the **setting aside** by the Department [of the Interior] of **recreational grounds for golf**” (*Prince Albert Daily Herald*, 17 September 1932, p. 1, emphasis added).

Talk of “setting aside ... recreational grounds for golf” and of “laying out” a golf course makes it sound as though a golf course was being planned from scratch.

Such a scenario would explain why work on the first nine holes at Waskesiu was said to have started twice.

Could it be that the “tentative layout” of 1930 was designed by Thompson?

If so, it may be that beginning in 1932, Atkinson, and then Kam, departed so significantly from the tentative Thompson plans of 1930 that Wood regarded the 1932 layout as a new one, and so both the original nine-hole course and the extra nine holes came to be attributed by the Board of Trade solely to Atkinson and Kam.

But who knows?

## Designer Reviews, of a Sort

When the full eighteen holes of Waskesiu Golf Course opened for play in 1936, its design was widely celebrated.

One of the earliest reviews celebrated the course as the epitome of “modern golf architecture”:

### ***Modern Golf Architecture in Course at National Park***

*The accomplishments of all the artifices of modern golf architecture are noticeably reflected in the regulation 18-hole golf course which lies in Prince Albert National Park.*

*For the past few years, play has been limited to the first nine holes only, but in 1936, the full course, which has a total length of 6,185 yards, will be playable.*

*Many golf enthusiasts contend that the course in Prince Albert National Park compares favorably with other well-constructed courses in other parts of the Dominion.*

*(Leader-Post [Regina, Saskatchewan], 18 June 1936, p. 33)*

Four years later, there was a similar celebration of the unnamed designer:

*Pride of the Prince Albert National Park and often described as one of the most beautiful of 18 hole golf courses on the continent is the Waskesiu golf course...*

*That most fairways are referred to in terms of some particular characteristic, rather than by the number of the hole, attests to the ingenuity exercised by the designer in retaining the natural features that add to the individuality of the course.*

*Few courses anywhere can offer so great a variety of playing conditions or of background as is the case on the Waskesiu course.*

*One fairway may be surrounded by pines, another by poplars, or by a blending of both. Others may start in pines and end in the shade of broadleaf trees. Some are lined with birch with a background of evergreens, or vice versa, and the player may well wonder if the designer had hoped to present each visitor with a reminder of a home course at some time on the tour of his creation.*

*(Star-Phoenix [Saskatoon, Saskatchewan], 25 June 1940, p. 17)*

The same article seems to have been rewritten in 1942, modified slightly, referring to anonymous “designers”: “The designers took particular care to utilize the natural beauties and features of the land on which the course was built” (*Star-Phoenix* [Saskatoon, Saskatchewan], 24 June 1942, p. 16).

When the original nine holes opened for play in June of 1935, however, one of the first reviews – provided by the person who made the first birdie, Henry (“Harry”) Holroyde – named a surprising designer.

After Holroyde played his first nine holes on the opening weekend, he seems to have agreed to postpone his second circuit of the course to talk by telephone to a reporter from the *Prince Albert Daily Herald* about his impressions of the course:



Figure 20 Harry Holroyde. *Prince Albert Daily Herald*, 4 May 1935, p. 1.

*The first birdie .... was obtained by Harry Holroyde, president of the Prince Albert Golf Club, when he made a two on hole number two, 130 yards, which is known as "Duffers Beware."*

*[Note that a contest had been held at Waskesiu to determine names for the holes: Hole 3 was "Bunker Hook," Hole 4 was "Bear's Paw," Hole 5 was "Rolling Acres," Hole 6 was "Lazy Lane," Hole 7 was "Happy Landing," Hole 9 was "The Birches." Names for holes 1 and 8 were omitted from the news item cited here from the Star-Phoenix (Saskatoon, Saskatchewan), 24 June 1935, p. 10.]*

*Mr. Holroyde, who is one of Prince Albert's most enthusiastic golfers, stated after playing one round that he found the new course more sporty and interesting than even the Banff or Jasper courses, and when one realizes the tremendous amounts that have been spent on these two outstanding courses, great credit is due to Mr. Wood in planning and creating the Waskesiu course. (Prince Albert Daily Herald, 3 June 1935, p. 1)*

Holroyde indirectly alludes to Stanley Thompson here, but only to use him as a contrast to superintendent Wood: the outstanding Thompson courses at Banff and Jasper cost a fortune; the "more sporting and interesting" course that Wood built at Waskesiu, not so much.

Was Holroyde implying that Wood had built a Stanley Thompson design for a fraction of what CNR and CPR had spent to build their Stanley Thompson designs?

Holroyde certainly did not tell the *Prince Albert Daily Herald* reporter that Stanley Thompson was the architect responsible for Waskesiu Golf Course, for the reporter asserted that "Major J.A. Wood ... designed the course and superintended construction throughout" (*Prince Albert Daily Herald*, 3 June 1935, p. 1).

What should we make of this idea?

Did the reporter have another source for this information, or had he or she simply interpreted Holroyde's talk of Wood as "planning and creating the Waskesiu course" as an indication that Wood was the course architect (*Prince Albert Daily Herald*, 3 June 1935, p. 1)?

If the latter is the case, had the reporter misunderstood Holroyde, or did Holroyde indeed intend to credit Wood with the design?

In his observation about the cost of Thompson's Banff and Jasper courses, Holroyde alluded to an issue with which we are familiar: a Provincial National Park Association delegation had raised with Prime Minister Mackenzie King in November of 1929 its concern "that Banff and Jasper were rapidly becoming playgrounds for the 'millionaire' class" and expressed the desire "that Prince Albert park should be developed in such a way as to make it accessible to the average citizen without the spending of a small 'fortune'" (*Leader-Post* [Regina, Saskatchewan], 4 November 1929, p. 8). And "the premier said he was particularly impressed with the reference to Banff and Jasper as 'millionaires' resorts' and expressed the hope that the Prince Albert park could be kept for the average man" (*Leader-Post* [Regina, Saskatchewan], 4 November 1929, p. 8).

In talking with the *Prince Albert Daily Herald* reporter about Waskesiu Golf Course, Holroyde emphasized that visitors would not have to pay a small fortune to play the Park's new nine-hole course:

"Saskatchewan golfers are extremely fortunate in having this marvellous course so close at hand and on which they can play at fees no higher than their local courses,' said Mr. Holroyde" (*Prince Albert Daily Herald*, 3 June 1935, p. 1).



Figure 21 Walter Riddell, circa 1951. from Harris, A Stanley Thompson Masterpiece, p. 77.

In 1946, Walt Riddell, a Saskatoon sports writer since the late 1920s, would take up this theme about the inexpensiveness of the Waskesiu course, but from the opposite point of view: he complained that "the course was installed more or less 'on the cheap'" (*Star-Phoenix* [Saskatoon, Saskatchewan], 14 May 1946, p. 13).

Riddell had reported the first slightly negative criticism of the course in June of 1935. After acknowledging that "local golfers who competed in the invitation tournament at Lake Waskesiu over the weekend had many compliments to pay the new course at the Northern lake resort," he then observed that "the local golf contingent claims that scientifically the Waskesiu course has few equals anywhere, but most of the players are of the opinion that the fairways are just a bit too narrow for a course at a holiday resort where the game should not be too difficult for the vacationists" (*Star-Phoenix* [Saskatoon], 25 June 1935, p. 11).

When Stanley Thompson was brought to Waskesiu in May of 1946 to assess the golf course, there were rumours that he had articulated an even harsher review: it was thought that

Thompson had determined that the course needed a “re-build” – something that Riddell thought was necessary because of the cheapskate way the National Parks branch had gone about building the course:

*In hiring Thompson to re-build Waskesiu, the park is merely spending the money it didn't outlay when the course was built.*

*At that time, the course was installed more or less 'on the cheap' with no qualified architect in charge....*

*Main objection to the present layout, in addition to the steep hill at the 16<sup>th</sup> hole, is that most of the course's best scenery is wasted. Instead of walking toward a good view, ... too many of the good views at Waskesiu are at the player's back.*

*One will not be surprised if Thompson uses a bulldozer to move away many of the hills at Waskesiu and replace them with gentle sloping cuts.*

*It's a safe bet that the hills on the first, 16<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> holes will come in for considerable attention from Mr. Thompson.*

*(Star-Phoenix [Saskatoon, Saskatchewan], 14 May 1946, p. 13).*

Riddell was a big Thompson fan: “the National Parks branch ... really went first class when it secured Stanley Thompson for the work”; it “could not have secured a more qualified architect” (*Star-Phoenix* [Saskatoon, Saskatchewan], 14 May 1946, p. 13). By his criticism of the “present layout” as one in which “most of the course’s best scenery is wasted,” Riddell implies that the original router of the golf course was not a “qualified architect”: “Instead of [players] walking toward a good view, ... too many of the good views at Waskesiu are at the player’s back.”

For what it is worth, Riddell clearly does not regard Thompson here as the original router; rather, he sees him as the best redeemer of the original architect’s botched job.

To assess Waskesiu Golf Course in 1946, Thompson visited the course twice: first in May, and then in August. He would submit a report with recommendations for changes in December. To judge by the rumours that emerged after his visit in May, the bite of his December recommendations was mild compared to the bark of his May criticisms.

Thompson was at Waskesiu on May 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup>, 1946, in the company of the Controller of Canada’s National Parks, James Smart, who a day later reported about his conversations with Thompson to a delegation from the Prince Albert Alberta Board of Trade (*Prince Albert Daily Herald*, 14 May 1946). Smart announced that “extensive improvements are to be undertaken on the Waskesiu Golf Club course” (*Star-Phoenix* [Saskatoon], 14 May 1946, p. 13). The need “to eliminate the steep climb” on the

16<sup>th</sup> hole was identified; this problem would occupy Thompson for three years. Not making it into the December recommendations, however, was a plan to reroute the course:

*There being too many short holes together and too many long ones together, the plan is to eventually rearrange the holes to remedy this weakness.*

*In the rearrangement, the ninth hole will be brought near the clubhouse.*

*(Star-Phoenix [Saskatoon], 14 May 1946, p. 13).*

Who was the architect responsible for the original routing that Thompson thought so problematic in May of 1946? Was Thompson proposing to redeem mistakes in routing that he had made? that Kam had made? that Atkinson had made? that Wood had made?

A routing by which a ninth hole would be brought nearer the clubhouse would have required a major rearrangement of the golf course.

Smart explained that “while at Waskesiu, Mr. Thompson surveyed the course in order to make recommendations for improvements to the National Parks Bureau” (*Prince Albert Daily Herald*, 13 May 1946, p. 1). Does he use the word “survey” in its engineering sense to indicate that Thompson recorded the features of the land to construct a map or plan, or does he use the word in its more general sense simply to indicate that Thompson inspected the golf course carefully and thoroughly to assess it.

Smart also reported that the architect “was particularly impressed with natural soil conditions of the course for construction of perfect greens and fairways” (*Prince Albert Daily Herald*, 13 May 1946, p. 1).

Thompson’s surveying of the course, his talk of good conditions for construction of perfect greens and fairways, and his talk of bringing the ninth hole closer to the clubhouse perhaps suggest that in May of 1946 he was considering big changes, perhaps even the design of new holes.

On the basis of the rumours that were circulating in Prince Albert and Saskatoon in May of 1946 about Thompson’s plans for changes, one can see why Riddell assumed that there would be a re-build at Waskesiu.

In 1950, Thompson spoke to Riddell at some length about the Waskesiu course design:

*Numerous changes, aimed at bringing the Waskesiu Golf Club course to championship calibre and at the same time make it less arduous for the average player, have been recommended by Stanley Thompson, golf architect and consulting landscape engineer for the federal Department of Mines and Resources.*

*Mr. Thompson, who has built courses in Canada, the United States, and South America, played over the Waskesiu layout following the recent Lobstick tournament.*

*His main complaint with Waskesiu was that it lacked balance.*

*He said there were not enough par 4 holes in the 350 to 390-yard class and too many from 245 to 340 yards, which were not good unless enhanced by some special feature in the terrain.*

*He, however, said the layout had great possibilities and a few deft touches here and there would turn it into one of the best courses in the national parks. (Star-Phoenix [Saskatoon, Saskatchewan], 20 August 1950, p. 13)*

As one who reported on events at Waskesiu over almost four decades, Riddell knew Waskesiu well. He “not only wrote the stories but helped in other ways”; at the Lobstick tournaments, “Walt was the draw master, passing out the scorecards” (*Star-Phoenix*, 7 June 1986, p. 81). And Riddell had come to know Thompson fairly well from the latter’s visits to Waskesiu in 1946 and 1950. Riddell had met Thompson by at least 1941, when he reported from Jasper on Thompson’s play in the Totem Pole tournament that year. If Riddell thought Thompson had been the original designer of Waskesiu Golf Course, it is odd that in his regular singing of Thompson’s praises, he never listed Waskesiu as among Thompson’s great achievements:

*The late Stanley Thompson [is] the man who laid out Capilano, Banff, Jasper, Niakwa, Marathon and courses in Minneapolis and South America. (Star-Phoenix [Saskatoon, Saskatchewan], 31 May 1960, p. 14)*

*As Mr. [Clinton E. (“Robbie”)] Robinson served his apprenticeship as a golf architect under the late Stanley Thompson, designer of such famous courses as Banff, Jasper, Capilano and Niakwa, to name a few, [Robinson’s] Holiday Park layout [in Saskatoon] has all the earmarks of a Thompson course. (Star-Phoenix [Saskatoon, Saskatchewan], 23 June 1962, p. 18)*

As Riddell was writing about Saskatchewan golf in the latter article, the absence of Waskesiu in his list of Thompson courses is especially curious.

In 1962, there was implicitly the harshest design review of all, for there were rumours of a plan to replace nine of Waskesiu’s existing holes to create a new eighteen-hole layout:

*While no official was willing to talk, it was pretty well general knowledge around the park that long range plans for the course called for a new nine holes to be built south from the tenth green and a new and larger clubhouse built somewhere between the tenth green and the ninth tee, not far from the water tower.*

*In the event of this construction being carried out, it was believed the old clubhouse might either be used as a refreshment booth or as a clubhouse for players using a nine-hole layout.*

*(Star-Phoenix [Saskatoon, Saskatchewan], 13 June 1962, p. 26.*

Implicitly, the “new nine holes” would have been combined with holes five to thirteen to make up a new championship course that would be served by the “new and larger clubhouse,” allowing the original nine holes to be reconstituted and served by “the old clubhouse.”

Displaying a remarkably cavalier attitude toward what many today regard as “a Stanley Thompson masterpiece,” Park authorities in the early 1960s apparently thought that the original course could be improved by subtraction and addition of holes.

Heresy!

Mind you, the original motivation for developing nine new holes at Waskesiu seems not to have been dissatisfaction with the layout, for as early as 1950, there had been plans to add a short nine-hole course at Waskesiu to relieve congestion on the very popular eighteen-hole layout. In fact, Stanley Thompson had begun to plan such a course, as he revealed in his conversation with Walt Riddell in 1950:

*Questioned regarding a new, easy, nine-hole course at Waskesiu, Mr. Thompson said he believed such a venture would be feasible as a result of the heavy play over the 18-hole course, and that a nine-hole layout, located within easy distance of the shack tents and lake front cottages, would be a great asset.*

*Such a course could be constructed at a reasonable cost.*

*Final decision, he said, on such a project would have to come from the parks controller at Ottawa.*

*(Star-Phoenix [Saskatoon, Saskatchewan], 20 August 1950, p. 13)*

This proposal was renewed in 1959: “a new nine-hole golf course is sought to relieve the demands on the existing 18-hole course” (*Star-Phoenix* [Saskatoon, Saskatchewan], 3 March 1959, p. 13).

By 1963, the idea was further elaborated: “at Waskesiu, there has been a constant demand for a nine-hole course with the result that long distance plans at the national park call for building another nine holes, building a new clubhouse at a central location, and having the three nine holes branch out from it” (*Star-Phoenix* [Saskatoon, Saskatchewan], 13 November 1963, p. 22).

This “long-distance plan” for three nines was never fulfilled.

And so, the original design endures, including the greens designed by Albert Kam, whose story is told in the next part of this essay.

## Albert Kamienski

Albert Kam's journey to Waskesiu was highly improbable.

Born in Enfield, Middlesex, England, early in 1881 as Albert Oscar Waldemar Kamienski, the second son of a Polish Count and his English wife, Albert would (like his older brother Walter, who was born in 1875 and died in British Columbia in 1948) eventually shorten his last name to Kam.

His father was Count Waldemar Alexander Oscar Kamienski, born in Warsaw, Poland, in 1835 (he died in Stroud, Gloucestershire, in 1898.). His mother was Jenny Louise Hengler (1849-1935), daughter of Charles Hengler of Kent's Green House, Taynton, Gloucestershire. Their marriage made the news:

*Miss Jenny Louise Hengler, the accomplished equestrian, has been married for more than a year. The ceremony took place on May 6<sup>th</sup>, 1874, at Marylebone church by licence, and the officiating clergyman was the Rev. C.H. Christie, curate of the parish.*

*The name of the Bridegroom was Count Waldemar Alexander Oscar Kamienski, whose father was also a Polish count. The husband, we understand, has fulfilled engagements as a professional equestrian under the name of "Oscar." (The Era [London], 6 June 1875, p. 9)*

In the late 1870s, the newspapers referred to the couple as the Count and Countess Kamienski. And they were greatly respected in Gloucestershire's genteel society. The marriages of Jenny's younger sisters in 1891 and 1892 received extensive newspaper coverage. And at the 1892 wedding, Albert's five-year-old sister Beatrice was a much remarked-upon flower girl.



Figure 22 Poster advertising Hengler's Grand Cirque, circa 1875.

The equestrian feats noted in the newspaper account of the marriage between "Oscar" and Jenny were related to the business run by her father: Hengler's Grand Cirque (the premier equestrian circus company in Victorian Britain).

Touring initially with a circus tent, Hengler transformed his circus into the most famous and most respected circus in the British Isles, with permanent sites in major cities such as London, Liverpool, Hull, Dublin, and Glasgow (Hengler's building in Glasgow seated 5,000 people).

After his death in 1887, his sons took it over:

*Hengler's Grand Cirque. – Messrs. Fred C. and Albert H. Hengler reopened this circus last night.*

*The Sisters Vaidis still give illustrations of their wonderful aerial performances. The clever Leotards gain well-merited applause for their athletic feats and comical hat throwing. Miss Alice Fontainebleau is exhibiting her dogs.*

*Chirgwin and Little Joey are as amusing as ever, and the same may be said of Willie Matthews, the Comical Cattle, and Whimsical Walker. The latter introduces his pugnacious bantam and trained donkey.*

*Of the ladies, Miss Nellie Boswell and Miss Nellie Bailley are as clever as ever in their feats on horseback, while Mr. W. Richards and Mr. Thomas Yelding are unparalleled in their horsemanship.*

*Mr. F. Cattle introduces the highly trained pony Robin, and the thoroughbred Zetland is introduced by Mons. Oscar Kamienski.*

*One of the prettiest items on the programme is the Lancers Quadrille on horseback by Mesdames Bailey, Eva, Lucille, Paster, and Boswell, and Messrs. Leotard, Cattle, Richards, and Yelding, and the entertainment concludes with an interesting pony race. (The Era [London], 8 October 1887, p. 17)*

Still performing in 1887, Albert's father had been billed as "Herr Oscar" in an 1874 programme. His special performance – "The Tandem Manage" – was listed as the fourth item. Albert's mother performed eighth: "Miss Jenny Louise Hengler will introduce the Bay Thoroughbred Horse 'Napoleon.'"

Her father had been circus manager, but never a performer, but Jenny was from an early age a star of the show, as in the circus's performances of Cinderella in Liverpool in 1869:

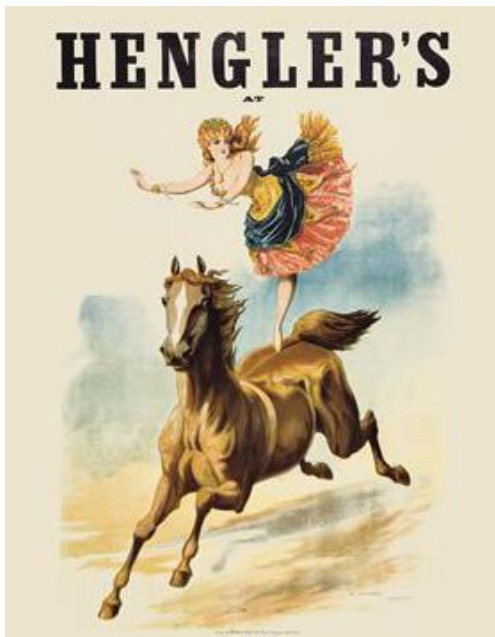


Figure 23 Jenny Hengler featured on Hengler's Grand Cirque poster, circa 1875.

*Of course, Miss Jenny Louise Hengler charmed the audience by her clever and graceful performances upon her highly trained steed, Gazelle.*

*A finished horsewoman, she seems to guide her noble beast purely by instinct, and a more perfect picture could not be presented than that of the accomplished equestrienne and her finely formed specimen of the equine race.*

*Each adds effect to the other's performances, and the audience never wearies of them, while it is unstinted in its praises of both.*

*Miss Hengler leaves the ring with a tremendous leap over a hurdle, and as a necessary consequence receives a prolonged encore, which she very readily complies with. (Liverpool Daily Post, 28 December 1869, cited in Hull Packet and East Riding Times, 28 October 1870, p. 5)*



Figure 24 Jenny Hengler Kamienski, 2 January 1875.

Jenny and her husband established their own circus in the late 1870s: Oscar's International Cirque. It toured the British Isles in 1881, just months after Albert was born. His mother, who was still performing (in fact, she was top of the bill), remained extremely popular:

*The last of the morning performances at Oscar's International Cirque during the present visit to Exeter ... took place yesterday....*

*Last night, Madame Jenny Louise Hengler-Oscar took her benefit under the immediate patronage of Col. Hamilton and the officers of the 11<sup>th</sup> Regional District, and a fashionable and crowded audience testified to the popularity of the fair equestrienne, who, during her visit to Exeter, has been a graceful and clever exponent of the "haute école" of horsemanship. (Devon and Exeter Gazette [England], 24 September 1931, p. 2)*

Her love of riding was such that when she was not performing, she was often to be found fox hunting – astonishing other men and women on the hunt by the height of the fences and hedges

over which she would take her horse.

Albert's sister Beatrice was born in 1887, the year his grandfather Hengler died. She was an American by birth, the family having moved to Astoria, Long Island, New York, in the mid-1880s. Presumably, Jenny's father's death led them to return home to help with her brother's re-launch of the circus.

The oldest sibling, Walter, received a good education in a residential public school, playing cricket for Cavendish (his cricket exploits noted in the Gloucestershire newspapers). Beatrice received a similar education, attending a residential school for girls in Great Malvern (Worcestershire) when she was a teenager, and she became accomplished at the pianoforte. But there are no items in the local newspapers about Albert's activities. In the 1901 census, just weeks before he left for Canada, twenty-year-old Albert indicated that he was an "iron fitter." He would later tell Canadian immigration authorities that he was an "engineer." He had probably trained as such at the Enfield Flue Company, of which his father was managing director up until the time of his death in 1898.

## Minchinhampton Golf

Regarding Albert Kamienski's introduction to golf, newspapers later recalled: "Kam laid the foundation of his game at Minchinhampton" (*South Bristol Free Press and Bedminster, Knowles & Brislington Record* [Bristol, England], 21 February 1914, p. 2).

The Minchinhampton Golf Club had been formed in 1889 on the Minchinhampton Common a couple of miles south of Stroud, a market town of several thousand people where the Kamienski family was living in the 1890s.



Figure 25 "Negotiating a Hazard on Minchinhampton Common," a painting by Lucien Davis. *Illustrated London News*, 1890.

When thirty-three-year-old Albert Kam returned to England in 1914 (after thirteen years in Canada) and played a famous match against the best amateur golfer from the Minchinhampton Golf Club, A.R. Smith, a newspaper noted: "The men are old opponents and have played many strenuous games together at Minchinhampton, where the professional learned most of his golf" (*Evening Post* [Bristol,

England], 16 February 1914, p. 9). I interpret this allusion to their past matches to suggest that they played against each other at Minchinhampton when they were teenagers in the late 1890s.

When Kam was interviewed in January of 1935 by the editor of the *Prince Albert Daily Herald* about his work at Waskesiu, he explained that he “took up the game when he was 13 years old” (1894) and regaled his listener with stories of the old days:

*His experience dates back to his youth in England ....*

*He'll tell you of golfing days in the late years of the Nineteenth Century – stories of clubs with long, narrow heads, spliced shafts, and grips an inch and a half through in order to absorb some of the shock of clouting one of the old “guttie” balls down the fairway.*

*(Prince Albert Daily Herald, 11 January 1935, p. 2)*



Figure 26 Alfred Henry Toogood, Sr (1872-1928). Circa 1907.

The golf professional in charge of the Minchinhampton links from 1894 (the year he finished fourth in the Open Championship) to 1900 was Alfred Toogood. Had Kamienski apprenticed under Toogood as a young golf professional at this time?

Perhaps.

But how Albert Kamienski could have acquired, by the time he was nineteen years old, both the skills of an iron fitter and the skills of a golf professional is unclear.

As his family was very well-off, Albert may well have played his early matches against Smith as a fellow amateur, deciding only later in Canada that he would earn a living as a golf professional.

His father having died in 1898, Kamienski made a momentous decision a few years later: he would immigrate to Canada and begin a new life working on his brother's farm near Winnipeg.

## Manitoba Farming

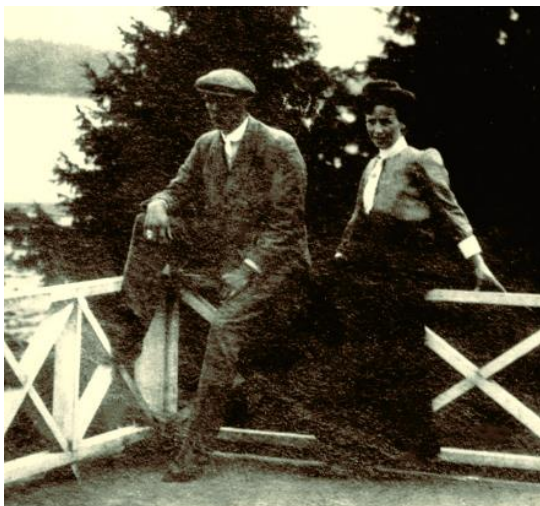
“A Kamienski” immigrated to Canada in 1901, indicating to immigration authorities upon his arrival at Quebec in April that he was an “engineer” on his way to Winnipeg, Manitoba.

He was presumably heading to his brother’s farm.

Walter Alexander Hengler Kamienski had immigrated to Winnipeg in the spring of 1896. He was granted a homestead in Rosewood, a farming area about 25 miles (40 km) southeast of Winnipeg in the municipality of Taché. On 13 November 1902, he married eighteen-year-old Violet Jane Carruthers in Winnipeg. Born 26 April 1884 in Alwyn Township, Gatineau, Quebec, she was living in Selkirk, Manitoba, when Walter met her. Alas, she died 3 January 1917 and was buried three days later in Millbrook Cemetery, near Anola, Manitoba (the couple was childless).

Perhaps to give the newlyweds some space, Albert returned to England during the 1902-03 winter. He came back to Canada, however, in February of 1903. Over the years, both Walter and Albert returned to England several times, always indicating that they were returning only “on a visit.” And they always visited Gloucestershire, where their widowed mother lived in the city of Gloucester.

Upon his return to Canada this time, Albert indicated to port officials that he was a “labourer” on his way back to Winnipeg. Two years later, he returned to England again, apparently during the 1904-5 winter. He came back in May of 1905, arriving in Quebec, where authorities recorded that he had been born in Middlesex, England, in 1881, and that he was a “farmer” on his way to Winnipeg.



*Figure 27 Albert and Jessie Kam, Vancouver, Canada, circa 1908.*

On this occasion, however, Kamienski was accompanied by a twenty-five-year-old woman whose name was recorded as “J. Gardiner.”

His travelling companion said she had been born in Gloucester and that she worked as a “domestic.” She, too, was on her way to Winnipeg.

A week before, however, these two seem to have provided different information at their port of departure in England: I presume that the “J. Gardiner” who arrives at Quebec is the “Mrs. A. Kaminski” (sic) recorded as

leaving Britain on 11 May 1905 with “Mr. A. Kaminski,” the ostensibly married couple indicating that they were on their way to the port of Montreal.

Jessica Trefaldwyn Gardner and Albert Kamienski officially became Mr. and Mrs. A. Kamienski in Winnipeg on 30 April 1906.

## Winnipeg Golf and Three Early Courses

Kamienski's life as an "engineer," "labourer," and "farmer" in Winnipeg from 1901 to 1904 is unrecorded: he was presumably working on his brother's farm. In 1905, however, he became the golf professional of the Winnipeg Golf Club and acquired "the distinction of being the second professional golfer to do business in Winnipeg" (*Free Press Evening Bulletin* [Winnipeg, Manitoba], 31 December 1923, p. 25).

For the Winnipeg Golf Club, he later said, he "laid out the Norwood Course and was its professional from 1905 to 1912" (*Free Press Evening Bulletin* [Winnipeg, Manitoba], 29 December 1923, p. 2).

After the Winnipeg Golf Club's first weeks of play on a nine-hole course at Norwood in 1894, it moved to "lots 64 to 69, St. James": "The property was thereupon fitted up as a course and for twelve years it was played upon by the members" (*The Winnipeg Golf Club, Limited, Year Book 1910* [Winnipeg, 1910], p. 3). In 1906, however, most members of the Winnipeg Golf Club left to form the St. Charles Country Club, and those still loyal to the Winnipeg Golf Club returned to Norwood and had a course laid out there.



Figure 28 A view of the northern part of the Norwood golf course laid out for the Winnipeg Golf Club in 1906. Manitoba Archives. J. Allan Hackett Collection, 128.

This was the course Kam built.

When he was later interviewed by the *Prince Albert Daily Herald* in 1935, Kam said that “in 1906, he laid out the new Norwood course, noted for years as one of the outstanding in the dominion” (*Prince Albert Daily Herald*, 11 January 1935, p. 2). The members, however, took awhile to warm to the course:

*The first year at the new course was discouraging.*

*The vast majority of the active players had gone to the Country Club.*

*The links were rough; interest was lukewarm.*

*In a short time, however, matters improved. Many new members joined. The course was put in better shape. Frequent competitions were held and ... the success of the Club [since] has been a matter of common knowledge.” (Year Book 1910, p. 4).*

Kam also spoke more ambiguously about his design work in Winnipeg.

When he sought a position as golf professional for an English club, he explained in his application that he had “been professional ... to the Winnipeg ... Club ..., the course ... of which he constructed” (*Western Daily Press* [Bristol, England], 16 February 1914, p. 9). When he said this, he may have been referring to the Norwood course mentioned above, but there were also two other golf courses built by the Winnipeg Golf Club that Kam may have had a hand in laying out between 1909 and 1912.

In 1909, the Winnipeg Golf Club was chartered as a company to purchase “120 acres on the Crescent Road, parts of lots 39, 40, 41, St. Charles,” for a new golf course (*Year Book 1910*, p. 5). A few improvements were made to the land late in 1909 and tenders were requested in the spring of 1910 “for breaking, discing, harrowing and rolling the grounds of the ... club,” but the club continued to play on its Norwood course for two more seasons (*Manitoba Morning Free Press* [Winnipeg], 16 April 1910, p. 7).

Was Kam in charge of this work on the new golf course?

The value of its St. Charles property had increased so much so fast that the club decided to flip it and invest in a new property. It named this St. Charles area Alcrest, subdivided it into housing lots, and sold the entire property, which had been made ready for golf: “The place is now practically a park. The golf club during the past two years has spent a lot of money upon it. Indeed, if the [club’s] new links at Bird’s Hill had not been acquired, it was the intention of the club to start playing here this year” (*Winnipeg Tribune*, 23 March 1912, p. 6).

In 1914, the interests that had bought Alcrest turned it into the temporary nine-hole golf course of the Elmhurst Golf Club while the latter club waited for its new eighteen-hole links to be completed (also in

the Bird's Hill area). The golf course afterwards became the home base of the Alcrest Golf Club, which (ten years later) called in Stanley Thompson to advise it on the process of modernizing its greens:

*During the weekend, Stanley Thompson, the well-known Toronto golf expert, visited and played over the [Alcrest] course.*

*He gave the Alcrest officials a few suggestions for improvement at some of the holes, though he was quite satisfied with the layout, and his advice will no doubt be acted upon. (Winnipeg Tribune, 9 June 1924, p. 12)*

Thompson's satisfaction with the layout may well have been a benediction of the design work of Albert Kam.



*Figure 29 Albert Kam. Spalding Official Golf Guide for 1913 (New York: American Sport Publishing Company, 1913), p. 70.*

This nine-hole golf course (as home of the Alcrest Golf Club and then the Charleswood Golf Club) lasted until 2001.

The Winnipeg Golf Club had sold this property because it had again bought new grounds.: "Nearly \$13,000 is invested in improvements on the new links which have been purchased near Bird's Hill" (*Winnipeg Tribune*, 6 December 1911, p. 6). Having received detailed plans from "the experts" who examined the site "during the fall" of 1911, the club's president was ecstatic, declaring "its new golf course ... was one of the finest in the country and among the six finest on the American continent" (*Winnipeg Tribune*, 27 November 1911, p. 9).

But some members worried that "the traps and bunkers on the new links" would make the course "too difficult for average players"

(*Winnipeg Tribune*, 6 December 1911, p. 6). Most members, however,

thought that "the experts' report took advantage of the golfing features of the links," and that since the experts had been told that "there should

be a variety of conditions" challenging golfers, "this requirement [was] fairly well met" by the plans submitted (*Winnipeg Tribune*, 6 December 1911, p. 6). The nervous Nellies were reminded that "the report of the grounds committee merely embraced the recommendations of the experts ... and did not give their arrangements regarding holes, traps and bunkers more than a tentative acceptance," but they were also warned that any "change would probably be of a minor character" (*Winnipeg Tribune*, 6 December 1911, p. 6).

Was Kam one of the experts who laid out the Winnipeg Golf Club's Bird's Hill course in the fall of 1911?

The upshot of the Winnipeg Golf Club's adventures in the property market was that the 1912 and 1913 seasons were also spent on its Norwood course as the Bird's Hill course was being built. The new course finally opened at the end of August in 1913: "The course is well laid out. Each hole has been placed with consideration of the contour of the land, which is slightly rolling, and all this makes the course more to the liking of the golfer. The putting greens are also well laid out" (*Winnipeg Tribune*, 25 August 1913, p. 8).

But some members preferred the Norwood course, so the Winnipeg Golf Club again split in two, with most going to the new course and the rest going back to the Norwood course and renaming themselves the Norwood Golf Club.

Kam's Norwood course laid out in 1906 endured into the 1940s, when it was finally swallowed by urban development (*Winnipeg Tribune*, 24 March 1914, p. 10).

## Laying Out a Vancouver Course

It was in Kam's own advertisement for his Winnipeg Golf School in the mid-1920s that he said he had been the Winnipeg Golf Club's "professional from 1905 to 1912," but he was not exclusively the Winnipeg Golf Club's pro during his early years in Winnipeg.

On the one hand, he later said that he had spent time at both "the St. Charles and Norwood clubs" (*Free Press Evening Bulletin* [Winnipeg, Manitoba], 31 December 1923, p. 25). At the St. Charles Golf and Country Club, however, he was the golf professional for just the 1913 season. The club apparently wanted him to return for a second season (and he later said the offer had been tempting), but, as we shall soon see, he had other plans.



Figure 30 Albert Kam, 4th tee, Jericho Golf Club, Vancouver, circa 1908. City of Vancouver Archives.

Kam also spent at least several months between 1907 and 1908 as the golf professional of the Jericho Golf Club in Vancouver. When Kam later sought a position as golf professional for an English club, he explained in his application that he had "been professional both to the Winnipeg [Norwood] and Vancouver [Jericho] Clubs, the courses for both of which he constructed" (*Western Daily Press* [Bristol, England], 16 February 1914, p. 9).

Kam later explained that "he laid out and built the Jericho Country Club course ... and one other before returning to Winnipeg" (*Prince Albert Daily Herald*, 11 January 1935, p. 2).

The Jericho course seems to have been staked out in the spring of 1907 and constructed shortly thereafter. Vancouver golf pioneer F.M. Chaldecott later recalled that at Jericho "during the months of August and September [1907] ... the golf greens were completed and all seeding finished" (F.M. Chaldecott, *Jericho and Golf in the Early days in*

*Vancouver* [Vancouver, 1935], p. 15). Kam must have done this work at Jericho before the golf season began and negotiated at that time his contract for the fall, for Chaldecott says, “The first golf professional, A. Kam, and his wife, arrived on 11<sup>th</sup> November, 1907, the former taking charge of the golf course and grounds and his wife in charge of the club as housekeeper” (p. 15).



*Figure 31 On the 1st green of the Jericho Golf Club, Albert Kam putts as Jessie Kam tends the flag. Circa 1908. City of Vancouver Archives.*

Given, on the one hand, that the golf season generally finishes in Winnipeg around the end of October or beginning of November, and, on the other hand, that golf could be played during the winter in Vancouver, it is possible that Kam accepted appointment at the Jericho Golf Club for just the winter months between 1907 and 1908 – just as other Canadian golf professionals would soon start to spend the winter months as golf professionals at clubs in the American South.

In November of 1907, a week before their contract with the Jericho Golf Club officially commenced, Albert and Jessie stayed in a Vancouver hotel called “The Woods” registered as “Mr. and Mrs. A. Kam” (*The Province* [Vancouver], 4 November 1907, p. 12). Now using the name “Kam,” they did not give up the name “Kamienski” absolutely: it would still be used on certain government forms and legal documents. And their daughter used the name Kamienski when she got married in the mid-1930s.

## Commuting Between Winnipeg and Minchinhampton

Albert and Jessie returned to England after the 1910 golf season and are again recorded arriving in Canada in March of 1911. Jessie was pregnant by the time of the sailing: the couple's only child, Hazel Grace Kamienski, was born 9 September 1911 in St. Boniface, Winnipeg, Manitoba. Residing in the parish of St. Boniface, Albert and Jessie lived relatively close to in-laws Walter and Violet, who now owned a farm in the adjoining municipality of Springfield.



Figure 32 Centre: Albert Kam (between A. Black, left, and Dan Kenny). 1911 Canadian Open, Ottawa Golf Club.

Also in 1911, Albert travelled to the Ottawa Golf Club to participate in just the eighth Canadian Open.

Paired with the host professional and the pre-tournament favourite (1909 Canadian Open Champion Karl Keffer), Kam was twelfth after two rounds.

His participation in this tournament was greatly appreciated because the Canadian Open had up till then been largely the preserve of Ontario and Quebec golfers:

### **WINNIPEG GOLFER BELOW HIS FORM ....**

*The day was ideal for golfing, and the work of Kam, who came the farthest distance to compete, was watched with interest. The Winnipegger made the first round in 86 and reduced the total for the eighteen holes in the afternoon by two, thus having for the two rounds 170 strokes. (Winnipeg Tribune, 8 July 1911, p. 15)*

Had he not blown up on four holes (scoring three 7s and a 9), Kam would have been in the thick of the battle after the first two rounds. As it was, he finished sixteenth. While in Ottawa, he may also have participated in the meeting amongst the golf professionals participating in this tournament at which the Canadian Professional Golfers Association was founded.

At the end of the 1911 golf season, Albert and Jessie again returned to England, staying in the home of a family named Gardner: perhaps Jessie's parents. She may have looked to them for help in the care of her new baby. In April of 1912, Albert returned to Winnipeg via New York. Albert was on his own: Jessie and Hazel stayed in Minchinhampton.

Clearly interested in testing himself against the continent's best golfers, Albert entered the 1912 U.S. Western Open (regarded as the equivalent of a "Major" at the time) and finished tied 24<sup>th</sup>.

Again, he returned to England at the end of the 1912 golf season – another "one of the 18 annual visits he made to his homeland" from Canada (*Prince Albert Daily Herald*, 11 January 1935, p. 2). He was a long-distance commuter before there was such a thing.

In March of 1913, he sailed from Liverpool on his way back to Winnipeg via New York (once more, Jessie and Hazel remained in England).

## Club Making

During the 1913 season, In addition to his work in Winnipeg as a golf professional at the St. Charles Country Club, Kam travelled to Montreal to compete in the Canadian Open, finishing tied 21<sup>st</sup>, and he worked for a local sports company as an onsite club maker and club repairer.

The taller-than-average and well-built Kam seems to have been sufficiently well-known in the golfing community for the company to have considered it worthwhile to commission a caricature of Kam to include in its advertisements: he was a recognized expert (pun intended). In its summer advertisements, P.J. Cantwell & Company (calling itself the “Sportsmen’s Headquarters”) invited “**Golf Men**” to “Come in and see **MR. KAM** about your New Golf Club or Repairs” (as shown below).



**Golf Men,  
Attention!**

Come in and see  
**MR. KAM**  
about your New Golf  
Club or Repairs

SPORTSMEN'S HEADQUARTERS  
**P. J. Cantwell & Co. Ltd.**  
346 Portage Avenue. Phone Main 921.

Figure 33 Winnipeg Tribune, 12 September 1913, p. 10.

And then, with Kam’s departure for England imminent once again, there was a fall sale, at which Kam would be in attendance: “Mr. Kam will be here and give everyone his personal attention.”



**Golf Men,  
Attention!**

We have a limited number of  
**K A M'S**  
Hand-made Golf Clubs on hand,  
and are clearing the entire lot,  
both Wood and Iron, at  
**\$1.75 EACH.**

Mr. Kam will be here and give  
everyone his personal attention.  
Don't forget—**Get One Now.**

**SPORTSMEN'S HEADQUARTERS**  
**P. J. Cantwell & Co. Ltd.**  
346 Portage Avenue. Phone Main 921.

*Figure 34 Winnipeg Tribune, 27 September 1913, p. 10.*

In November of 1913, he sailed home to England.

## The Minchinhampton Fletcher Brothers

When Albert Kam arrived in Canada in the spring of 1913, he was not travelling alone: he was taking with him to Winnipeg a twenty-two-year-old assistant golf professional from Burleigh in Gloucestershire: “Herbert Fletcher.”

Misspelled by immigration authorities, his first name was actually Hubert.



Figure 35 Hugh C. Fletcher, Free Press Evening Bulletin [Winnipeg, Manitoba], 20 August 1923, p. 8.

Hubert Charles Fletcher would serve as Kam’s assistant at Winnipeg’s St. Charles Country Club that year, and he would be elevated to the position of head golf professional within the next year or two.

Born in Burleigh Stroud in 1891, Fletcher lived on the northeast side of the Minchinhampton golf course.

When Kam returned to Minchinhampton from Winnipeg at the end of the 1912 season, he lived with his wife and daughter in Pinfarthings, a hamlet several hundred yards southwest of Burleigh Stroud on the other side of the golf course. I assume that at this time (if not before) Kam came to know the abilities of the young assistant pro fairly well.

Years later, when “Hugh C. Fletcher” had established himself as a widely respected golf professional in Manitoba and Saskatchewan, *Canadian Golfer* magazine paraphrased Fletcher’s own account of his golf upbringing at Minchinhampton in the early 1900s:

*Hugh Fletcher was brought up on golf, and he learned the game at an early age in the Old Country.*

*His home for many years was just off an Old Country course [Minchinhampton] and he had many opportunities to study the game.*

*He came to Canada 16 years ago and commenced his career as golf professional at the St. Charles Golf Club of Winnipeg. (Canadian Golfer, vol 14 no 12 [April 1929], p. 961)*

Fletcher eventually became a prominent competitive golfer in Western Canada.

The combination of the influence of Hugh Fletcher in Winnipeg and the influence of Albert Kam in Minchinhampton convinced Hugh’s younger brother, Freddie (another assistant professional from Minchinhampton) to immigrate to Winnipeg, too.



*Figure 36 Fred C. Fletcher.  
Canadian Golfer, vol 13 no 4  
(August 1927), p. 311.*

Seventeen-year-old Frederick Clarence Fletcher arrived in Winnipeg in 1919 and immediately began a career as an assistant professional that took him to several of Winnipeg's golf clubs over the next six years, including the St. Charles Country Club (where he probably worked under his brother, at first, and then continued there under his brother's successor, Eric Bannister).

Appointed golf professional to Saskatchewan's Moose Jaw club in 1925, he would win three big tournaments in 1927: the Western Canadian Open, the Western Canadian Professional Championship, and the Saskatchewan Open.

Over the 72 holes of the 1927 Western Canadian Professional Championship, he beat his old boss, Eric Bannister, by two strokes; his older brother, Hugh, by fourteen strokes; and just plain old and aging Albert Kam by thirty-two strokes.

Kam was forty-six years of age, and time was starting to tell on his game.

Mind you, he still occasionally caught lightning in a bottle: in a practice round the next year at the fifth annual Western Canada Golf Championship in Edmonton, "Kam, of Yorkton, had a fine 72," which would prove to be one of the lowest scores of the week, although his official tournament rounds were ten or more strokes higher (*Edmonton Journal*, 16 July 1928, p. 17).

Kam had set up Hugh Fletcher at the St. Charles Country Club in 1913. And he may also have steered Fred Fletcher toward this club 1919, but, if so, he did so from afar, for Kam himself would not return to Canada for ten years after his return to England in the fall of 1913.

## Home for a Good Time

When he left Canada at the end of the 1913 golf season in Winnipeg, Kam joined his family in Pinfarthings, a hamlet of cottages built in the late 1700s and early 1800s on the hillside on the west side of the Minchinhampton Common.

Kam later said that he had returned to England at this time simply for a “holiday” (Declaration of Passenger to Canada, British Passenger records, 14 September 1923). During the winter months in England, however, a local newspaper reported that he had faced a dilemma: “He received a tempting offer to return [to the St. Charles Country Club in Winnipeg] again this spring but is anxious to settle down in England” (*South Bristol Free Press and Bedminster, Knowles & Brislington Record* [Bristol, England], 21 February 1914, p. 2).

Trans-Atlantic commuting for more than a week per crossing must have been a chore. And Hazel was now a toddler whose development was not to be missed. Of course, Jessie and Albert might have wanted to be together more than three or four months a year. In short, there must have been many reasons to settle down in England.



Figure 37 Clubhouse, Long Ashton Golf Club, circa 1908.

A particularly strong reason to stay in England, from a career point of view, was the fact that Kam was successful in February of 1914 in his application for the position of golf professional at the Long Ashton Golf Club, just south of Bristol.

He was just thirty-five miles (60 km) from Minchinhampton, but a very long way from Winnipeg.

Working as a golf professional in England for the next ten years, Kam would later boast on his return to Winnipeg that during his time away, he had acquired “experience at leading courses of Great Britain” (*Free Press Evening Bulletin* [Winnipeg, Manitoba], 29 December 1923, p. 2).

Appointed golf professional at Long Ashton in February of 1914, Kam would serve at the club for exactly three years.

It was immediately noted in the local press that “He drives a very long ball” (*Western Daily Press* [Bristol, England], 23 February 1914, p. 9). Everyone loves a big hitter!

But Kam was also recognized as a consummate golf professional of the day:

*He is an expert in course-planning and upkeep and is a good coach and club-maker.*

*Of fine physique, he plays a powerful game and finished fifth [actually, tied 21<sup>st</sup>] in the open championship of Canada last year.*

*He comes to his new club with splendid testimonials, and it is hoped that the appointment will be mutually advantageous.*

*Kam takes up his new duties on Monday, and as he has a most engaging personality, he bids fair to soon have a big circle of friends in the local golfing world. (South Bristol Free Press and Bedminster, Knowles & Brislington Record [Bristol, England], 21 February 1914, p. 2).*

Kam’s position at a first-rate club such as Long Ashton automatically conferred upon him a certain standing in the local golf community.



Figure 38 Recent photograph of a Chemico Triumph golf ball manufactured circa 1914.

The Chemico manufacturing company, for instance, requested his permission to use his commendation of their “Chemico Triumph” golf ball in their newspaper advertisements:

*You will be glad to know that I broke the record of the course [at Long Ashton] .... I played throughout with the Chemico Triumph, and I think it a fine ball in every respect.*

*I am sending my [score]card marked by one our members.*

*Albert Kam, Professional Golf Club Maker, Long Ashton.*

*(Gentlewoman, 29 May 1915, p. 42).*

It is likely that one of the reasons that Kam’s application for the Long Ashton job had drawn the attention of the

club directors was the strong testimonials he presented from the Winnipeg and Vancouver clubs regarding his ability to lay out a golf course, for the Long Ashton golf course was in need of thorough renovation.

By mid-March, Kam had “already effected a great improvement .... to the second hole” (*South Bristol Free Press and Bedminster, Knowles & Brislington Record* [Bristol, England], 16 March 1914, p. 2). But then he was laid out for ten weeks out by a bad case of rheumatism:

### ***Kam's Recovery***

*Local golfers generally, and the members of his own club particularly, will be glad to know that Kam, the Long Ashton professional, has so far recovered from his illness as to be able to resume his duties.*

*His absence from the course extended over ten weeks, and though now much better, he is still very weak, and some little time must elapse before he will be quite fit. (Evening Post [Bristol], 20 July 1914, p. 5)*

Kam resumed his redesign work as soon as he regained his strength, and a year later, the club's annual report “mentioned the extensive improvements made in the course since Kam's appointment as professional and greenkeeper.... Much good work had been done on the course” (*Evening Post* [Bristol, England], 1 March 1915, p. 9).

Because of a shortage of golf course workers caused by World War I, Kam had to be resourceful in his renovation of Long Ashton:

*In 1914, Mr. Albert Kam was appointed as Professional and Greenkeeper, and he made considerable improvements despite the shortage of green staff.*

*Presumably he made use of the Argyle & Sutherland Highlanders who ... offered their services for pick and spade work .... This was in return for permission to dig trenches and carry out military operations on the course provided they avoided tees and greens. (A.J. Campbell, Long Ashton Golf Club Centenary Book, 1893-1993 (Bristol, England: Long Ashton Golf Club, 1993), p. 11)*

Talk about golf course hazards!

A newspaper detailing the work done by Kam during his first year at Long Ashton suggests that there was more to come:

*A few details of what has been accomplished at Long Ashton may be of interest.*

*Owing to the war, the committee were compelled to reduce the number of the staff, but, notwithstanding this, a good deal has been done in the way of improvements, though not on such an extensive scale as on some other local courses.*

*As a greenkeeper, Kam is proving his worth, his great experience in Canada, where he was responsible for the construction of more than one course, being invaluable.*

*The work done has consisted mainly of the construction of bunkers and enlargement of greens, but when things settle down again, alterations of a more ambitious character may be looked for.*

### ***Some of the Improvements***

*The committee has been fortunate in being able to take advantage of military operations in the neighbourhood, and in consequence the walls have been banked at the 8<sup>th</sup>, 9<sup>th</sup>, 10<sup>th</sup>, and 12<sup>th</sup> holes, this in itself being a great improvement.*

*New bunkers have been constructed on the 8<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> to catch sliced or pulled shots, the player thus being compelled to play straight if he is to avoid trouble.*

*Another improvement that has been effected is at the first hole, where the steep bank leading to the green has been altered to a gentle slope, and "humps" built at the back of the green. It must now be a very bad shot which runs over the green, and if this does occur, the player is heavily punished, as to get back is much harder than formerly.*

*One of the most difficult greens on the course to approach was the 17<sup>th</sup>, owing to its situation on the crown of the hill. This has now been altered, the green being enlarged and considerably altered in shape, with the result that a good shot will meet with its due reward, though the bad one will not escape punishment. (Evening Post [Bristol, England], 12 April 1915, p. 6)*

Kam seems to have been a sophisticated architect. A testimonial letter from the secretary of the Long Ashton Golf Club touting Kam's course planning and course construction abilities no doubt accompanied him when he later returned to Canada.

While at Long Ashton, Kam was more than the greenkeeper. Befitting the holder of the new scoring record at the club, he represented Long Ashton in a variety of competitions.

In April of 1914, just before he fell ill, he agreed to play in a much ballyhooed contest at Long Ashton: "practically all the leading amateurs of the district have consented to take part, and the same applies to the professionals" (*Evening Post* [Bristol], 6 April 1914, p. 5). Kam would captain the twenty professionals; his old rival from Minchinhampton, A.R. Smith, would captain the twenty amateurs.

It was anticipated that "some of the best golf ever seen at Long Ashton should be witnessed" (*Evening Post* [Bristol], 15 April 1914, p. 9).

Kam and Smith warmed up in the morning by each taking a partner and playing a foursomes four-ball match against each other, with Kam and his professional partner defeating Smith and his amateur partner "after a good struggle" (*Evening Post* [Bristol], 15 April 1914, p. 9).

And then they went at it for real:

## **THE SINGLES**

### **A.R. Smith (Minchinhampton) v. Kam (Long Ashton)**

*The match between the leaders of their two sides was interesting for more than one reason.*

*The men are old opponents and have played many strenuous games together at Minchinhampton, where the professional learned most of his golf.*

*It was also Kam's first match of any importance since becoming attached to Long Ashton Club as professional.*

*While the two players were well matched as far as the long game was concerned and also near the green, Kam had an off day on the greens, in addition to which he was quite out of luck with some very good putts.*

*Smith did not start any too well, his tee shot at the first being for him a poor one, but after that he settled down to a strong and confident game....*

*Of the fourteen holes over which the match extended, no fewer than nine were halved, the other five going to Smith. (Evening Post [Bristol, England], 16 February 1914, p. 9)*

The next year, just over a year after World War I had broken out, Kam played in a special charitable tournament organized to help out golf professionals who were struggling financially:

*Local golf professionals who for various reasons are ineligible for the Army have not been having a particularly rosy time since the war commenced, and it was an exceedingly kind action, and one much appreciated, of a member of the Shirehampton club to invite Adlam (Saltford), Kam (Long Ashton), Pixton (Shirehampton Park), and Branch (of Henbury) to join in a competition over the Sham Castle links at Bath.*

*Adlam and Pixton tied for the £10 prize generously provided by the anonymous donor. (Western Daily Press [Bristol, England], 18 October 1915, p. 7).*

At Henbury in January of 1916, Kam participated in a Red Cross tournament organized to support war charities, and he won it "because of his all round consistency" (*Western Daily Press* [Bristol, England], 20 January 1916, p. 7). He was in good form: "Kam, the winner, played good golf, being round in a stroke under bogey" (*Evening Post* [Bristol, England], 20 January 1916, p. 5). In an afternoon four-ball foursomes competition, Kam and his partner shot the lowest score (70), with Kam "putting very strongly" (*Western Daily Press* [Bristol, England], 20 January 1916, p. 7).

Later that year, the war led indirectly to Kam's name appearing in the newspapers again – but this time for an unfortunate reason. He ran afoul of war-time restrictions on pub opening hours:

*Mrs. Sherman [licensed publican of the Ashton Arms in Yanley Lane] was ... summoned for permitting intoxicating liquor to be taken from the Ashton Arms during prohibited hours, and Albert Kam was summoned for taking the liquor.*

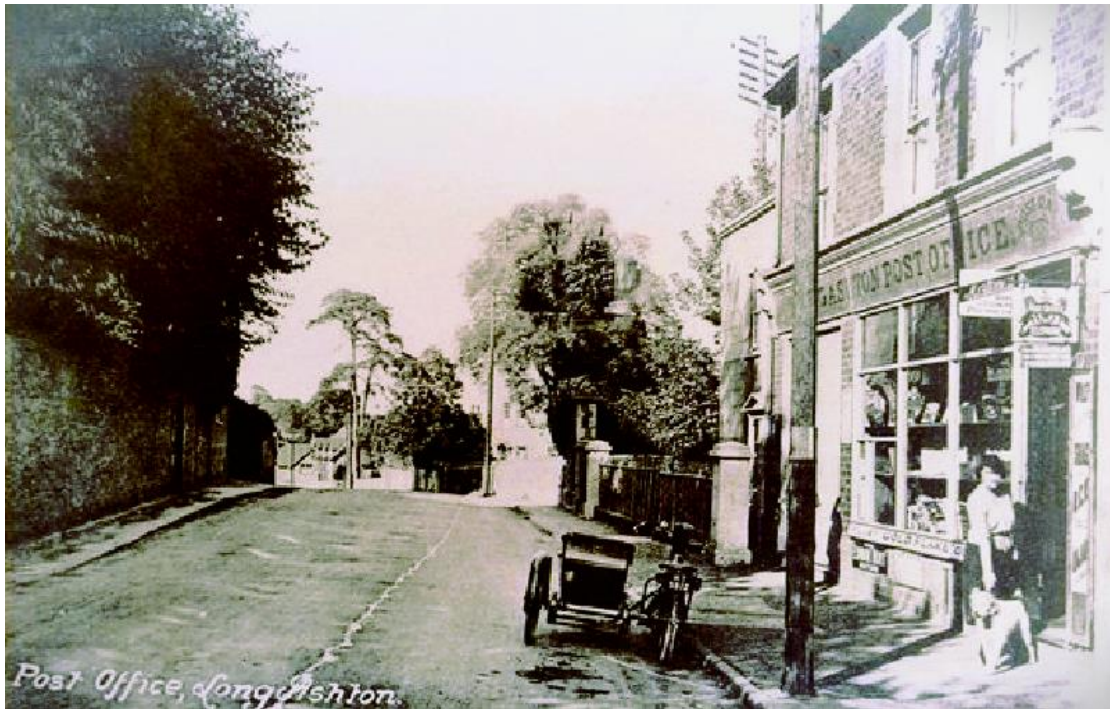


Figure 39 Yanley Lane, Long Ashton, where the Ashton Arms was located in the building to the right of the Post Office where the woman in this photograph stands.

*When stopped by Sergt. Skinner at 11 p.m., Kam said he had been to the Ashton Arms to learn the time, but witness called attention to the flagons of beer in his pocket.*

*Kam, in his evidence, said the beer was paid for between 12:30 and one o'clock mid-day [permitted hours], when he gave an order for the golf club.*

*Mr. Roberts [lawyer for Mrs. Sherman] mentioned that the flagons were handed to Kam by the licensee's husband.*

*The Bench fined Mrs. Sherman 50 s[hillings] and Kam 10 s[hillings]. (Evening Post [Bristol, England], 10 June 1916, p. 4)*

The question of Kam's status regarding possible army service during World War I is a curious one.

In 1915, we recall, he had played in a special tournament to make donated prize money available to "local golf professionals who for various reasons [were] ineligible for the Army" (*Western Daily Press* [Bristol, England], 18 October 1915, p. 7). Yet Long Ashton may have released him so that he could join the army. At the club's annual meeting in February of 1917, it was announced that "In order to reduce expenses and to release all able-bodied men, the services of the professional (Kam) had been dispensed with, and only two men kept on the course" (*Evening Post* [Bristol], 19 February 1917, p. 5). The syntax in this newspaper report is ambiguous. Was it that Kam's services had been "dispensed with" to reduce expenses and that other workers had been released for war service? Or were they all released to reduce expenses and to be made available for war service?

I can find no references at all to Albert Kam in 1918 and 1919, let alone references to any golf-related activities on his part. Was he simply without a position as a golf professional, perhaps scraping a living from club making and club repair, or did he join the Army?

Is Albert Kam the "Albert Kaminski" whose name is on the Medals Roll for service in the British Army during World War I?

## Back in the Game in the Early 1920s

By 1920, Albert Kam was back in the golf business.

From 1920 to the spring of 1922, he served as the golf professional at the Ladyhill Golf Club on Chepstow Road, Newport, Wales. If he had been away from golf for three years, there was no sign that he had lost the desire to play competitive golf. A “ding dong” exhibition contest between the team of Kam and his club’s top amateur, on the one hand, and the team of a neighbouring club’s pro and its top amateur, on the other hand, received newspaper coverage in Wales in 1920: “Kam holed a long putt” to turn the match, which ended in a draw (*Western News* [Cardiff, Wales], 20 July 1920, p. 9).

His 71 was the best score made on the Ladyhill course in 1921 (*Western Mail* [Cardiff, Wales], 3 January 1922, p. 8). In April of that year, he represented Ladyhill in his return to Long Ashton to play a 36-hole tournament staged by the West of England Professional Golfers’ Association to decide six qualifiers for Professional Golfers’ Association Championship in June. (He missed qualifying by four strokes.) In September of 1921, again playing out of Ladyhill, he was one of fifty-five competitors in the Welsh Open Championship played on the Southerndown Golf Course in Glamorgan, Wales. That year’s tournament was the first to be played over 72 holes.

The Ladyhill Golf Club disbanded in 1922 and members moved across Newport to Viscount Tredegar’s deer park at his Tredegar Park estate, where, bestowing the presidency on the Viscount, they formed the Tredegar Golf Club in May of 1923.

Kam returned to his home in Pinfarthings and began to play in competitions for “Ye Olde Lodge Golf Club,” which played on the Minchinhampton links. It was a decades old club associated with this golf course, but its members did not enjoy the privilege of access to the clubhouse, which was reserved for members of the Minchinhampton Golf Club. The latter club comprised members of the gentry, industrialists, professionals, and so on. Members of “Ye Olde Lodge Golf Club” were of a humbler social standing, but in their annual competition with the Minchinhampton Golf Club, they often prevailed.

Between twelve and twenty-two players made up the men’s team of “Ye Olde Lodge Golf Club.” Kam always played in the first or second match out, which suggests that he was one of the leading players for the club. In June of 1922, the club was engaging in weekly matches against other clubs. He must have enjoyed these times. One of his fellow club members was F. Gardiner, probably a brother or cousin of his

wife Jessie. And he also renewed a three-decade relationship with his old nemesis, now known as **Captain** A.R. Smith, still the leading amateur player of the Minchinhampton Golf Club.



*Figure 40 Circa 1920 postcard showing Ye Olde Lodge and clubhouse buildings of the Minchinhampton Golf Club, a complex surrounded on all sides by the Minchinhampton golf links.*

Kam seems to have joined “Ye Olde Lodge Golf Club” simply as a member. He was still regarded as a professional, but he was apparently not the club’s resident professional.

And then, on 14 September 1923, once more leaving Jessie and Hazel at “The Bungalow” in Pinfarthings, Kam sailed from England on the S.S. Regina bound for Montreal: he was going back to Winnipeg.

## S.O.S.

There were many who remembered Kam's influence on the early development of golf in Winnipeg:

### ***Albert Kam, Pro Golfer, Returns to the City***

*Albert Kam, who holds the distinction of being the second professional golfer to do business in Winnipeg, being at the St. Charles and Norwood clubs a number of years ago, has returned to the city after several years' visit to the old country.*

*He has opened a golf school in the balcony room at the Board of Trade building and expects to meet many of the men whom he started out on their golf careers in Winnipeg some years ago. (Free Press Evening Bulletin [Winnipeg, Manitoba] 31 December 1923, p. 25).*

An advertisement for his golf school that appeared on 1 January 1924 mentioned that he was "now professional at the Windsor Park Club" (*Free Press Evening Bulletin*, 1 January 1924, p. 1).

I presume that he had not left England in September of 1923 merely speculating that he might find a job in Winnipeg, but rather that he had a contract in hand regarding this Windsor Park appointment. Strangely, however, for the first time in his life, he was travelling to Winnipeg at the end of the golf season rather than at the beginning of it. I further presume that his appointment was to commence upon his arrival in Winnipeg: since contracts for golf professionals in those days were from spring to fall only (which left pros to their own devices, such as indoor golf schools, during the winter months), there would have been no point in Kam's coming to Winnipeg in September for an appointment commencing in May.

Why would Windsor Park have called him to come over at the end of the 1923 golf season?

The Windsor Park Golf Club had been organized in December of 1921 with more than sufficient enthusiasm, but less than sufficient funds. It planned to purchase about 280 acres of land and build "three courses, one 6,600 yards, one 6,250 yards, and the Lilliput course, 9 holes, 2,100 yards" (*Winnipeg Tribune*, 21 December 1921, p. 14). Clearing of the land began in April of 1922. Nine holes were to be ready for play on temporary greens by May, and eighteen holes were to be ready by June. In fact, just nine holes were opened for play by July. And they were said to be only "in fair playing condition"; "the greens," it was said, "are, of course, by no means perfect, but are quite playable" (*Free Press Evening Bulletin* [Winnipeg, Manitoba], 14 September 1922, p. 19; *Winnipeg Tribune*, 13 September 1922, p. 16).

At this point, the two eighteen-hole layouts of the Windsor Park Golf Club existed only in the imagination.

The directors called a special general meeting at the end of September in 1922 to announce: “more members must be immediately procured to enable them to complete the first 18 holes of the course” (*Winnipeg Tribune*, 30 September 1922, p. 14).

A general meeting in February of 1923 “decided to push right ahead with the construction of the next 18 holes over the Seine River. This land for the next 18 holes constitutes the best part of the golfing land” (*Free Press Evening Bulletin* [Winnipeg, Manitoba], 23 February 1923, p. 14). With no hope of completing the next eighteen holes that summer, the club announced a new plan devised in July “to link up 9 of the new 18 holes with the present 9 holes, thus making 18 holes available for play” (*Free Press Evening Bulletin* [Winnipeg, Manitoba], 23 June 1923, p. 17).

This plan was not fulfilled.

Still, at the end of the 1923 season, the club announced that the new eighteen-hole course was open – well, open for inspection:

*An event of considerable interest to golfers will take place over the next weekend when the new eighteen hole course of the Windsor Park Golf Club will be open for inspection.*

*The project is not by any means completed, but a great deal of work has been done and the fairways are all cut and the greens laid out, and in the course of construction; also, the water system is in operation with a 10 horsepower electrically driven pump.*

*Work will continue during the fall and early spring ....* (*Free Press Evening Bulletin* [Winnipeg, Manitoba], 24 October 1923, p. 9)

This must have been why Albert Kam for the first time ever came to Winnipeg at the time of year when he was usually getting ready to leave: he had been called over from England to continue the building of this golf course through the fall and early spring. His mission was to save the golf course – and perhaps to save the Windsor Park Golf Club, as well.

## What Had He Gotten Himself Into?

As the 1923 golf season closed, Kam was probably on site with the Windsor Park directors to greet those who accepted the club's invitation to inspect the new golf course between 2:00 and 3:00 pm on Saturday and Sunday, November 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup>. And if so, what an English newspaper had called his "most engaging personality" will have served a useful purpose at that event as the club tried to drum up more members.

By this weekend, Kam had probably been at work on the course for five or six weeks and so would have been able to speak knowledgeably to the public about what was being done. At the end of October, the *Winnipeg Tribune* reported: "the greens ... are now being enlarged and shaped for the final seeding.... The fairways will be shaped and widened during the winter" (*Winnipeg Tribune*, 29 October 1923, p. 10). Whatever work had been done on fairways and greens before Kam arrived, it is clear that Kam was still required to do design work on both greens and fairways.



Figure 41 Hugh C. Fletcher, *Winnipeg Tribune*, 28 July 1928, p. 1.

Who had done this early work?

And why was it that Kam's predecessor could not continue with the construction work he had started?

In May of 1923, the Winter Park Golf Club had announced: "Hugh Fletcher, the well-known local professional, has been engaged by the club" (*Free Press Evening Bulletin* [Winnipeg, Manitoba], 12 May 1923, p. 13).

Perhaps on the basis of his having laid out a golf course in Brandon, Manitoba, in 1920, Fletcher had been hired to lay out the new eighteen-hole golf course:

*The directors of the Windsor Park Golf Club are very busy arranging their programme for the coming season and the further building of 18 holes which is to be carried out on the undulating land lying to the east of the Seine River.*

*They have engaged the services of a first-class greenmaker and are only waiting for the snow to disappear before laying out the new greens. (Free Press Evening Bulletin, 14 April 1923, p. 34)*

As we know, before the end of the summer, "first-class greenmaker" Fletcher would be replaced by his mentor Albert Kam.

For Kam to have set out for Winnipeg in mid-September, the Windsor Park Golf Club must have been in contact with him well before the end of the summer in 1923. Why? Had Fletcher abandoned the project, or perhaps let it be known that he would not work on the new course through the fall and winter?

Perhaps Fletcher's "greenmaking" had not been "first-class." After all, in 1920, he had laid out the Brandon golf course not with grass greens, but with sand greens (an absolutely flat structure of sand mixed with oil and a hole fixed permanently at its centre). Had Fletcher been exposed as not up to the requirements of making proper modern elevated and undulating greens?

I suspect that Kam had responded to an S.O.S. sent by the club. Club directors probably remembered Kam's earlier work in the city, perhaps being among those "whom he started out on their golf careers in Winnipeg some years ago" (*Free Press Evening Bulletin* [Winnipeg, Manitoba], 31 December 1923, p. 25). Or Fletcher himself may have suggested to them that Kam could save the project.

Kam seems to have worked on the golf course as long into the winter as was possible and then opened a winter golf school. But this did not open until the first week of January.



Figure 42 *Free Press Evening Bulletin* [Winnipeg, Manitoba], 1 December 1923, p. 18.

For the previous three winters, the regular winter golf school run by local golf professional Ernest Penfold had opened in November, and it did so again in 1923. Kam presumably delayed opening his own golf school until January because he had been working on the course at Windsor Park until the end of December.

And even at that point he seems to have contrived to keep himself free to work on the course whenever the winter weather might allow him to do so, for

rather than maintaining regular hours at his golf school (as did Penfold and as did Fletcher, himself, at the golf school he was running that winter), Kam explained that at his school, it would be a case of "LESSONS BY APPOINTMENT" (*Free Press Evening Bulletin*, [Winnipeg, Manitoba], 2 January 1924, p. 15).

News that winter will have made Kam uncertain about his future in Winnipeg, for even before he offered his first lesson, he had probably heard rumours that the City of Winnipeg wanted to buy the Windsor

Park golf course and turn it into a municipal course – rumours confirmed in mid-January of 1924, when it was revealed that a Public Parks committee had been looking into the matter for weeks, had made an offer to purchase the 135 acres that were available, and had then received a counter-offer requiring the city to buy equipment, pay for improvements to the land, assume existing contracts, and so on. The Public Parks committee recommended “that proceeding on terms of the purchase be held up until the spring when the value of work on the golf course can be ascertained by inspection” (*Free Press Evening Bulletin* [Winnipeg, Manitoba], 17 January 1924, p. 1). The price to be offered the Windsor Park golf club would depend, in part, on the value that Kam’s work was adding to its property. And Kam’s future would depend on whether the City of Winnipeg assumed his contract.

## Stanley Thompson Has a Look at Windsor Park

The snow melted by the beginning of April in 1924, the City liked what it saw of the Windsor Park golf course, and the purchase was made during April and early May. The city also leased the nine-hole course that the Windsor Park Golf Club had laid out in 1922 and used for two seasons, and it installed Kam as its golf professional for the next three years.

City of Winnipeg officials, as well as officials from neighbouring municipalities, met to inspect the City's new eighteen-hole layout on 5 May 1924 – a member of this party being Stanley Thompson.



Figure 43 In this photograph of some of the approximately 50 people who inspected the Windsor Park golf course on 5 May 1924, Stanley Thompson stands 4th from the left (only his head is visible). The 6th person from the left, standing beside Thompson (wearing a round-topped hat), is Public Parks superintendent, George Champion, who would soon take charge of completing the course. Winnipeg Tribune, 6 May 1924, p. 6.

After the morning's two-hour inspection of the new municipal course, Thompson repaired with the various municipal officials to the City's other municipal golf course for a luncheon and an afternoon of golf:

*"There'll be golf aplenty here," was the word which came from veteran golfers' lips as officialdom ... viewed the Windsor Park golf course for the first time yesterday.*

*The inspection trip over the newly acquired municipal course ... sent enthusiasm to a high pitch and won additional supporters in council ranks for the latest venture of the Public Parks Board.*

*The new course, though its fairways are cleared of timber, yet it revealed a wealth of scenic beauty and a host of hazards which delighted both the golfers and the uninitiated at yesterday's inspection trip....*

*Fairways over the whole course were clear of brush, but the ground is full of roots and stubble. The winding Seine River, overflowing at present into the gullies and ravines which pattern the*

*course with natural hazards, gave the promise of a “sporting game” to the stalwart golfers of the party....*

*After a two hour trip over the course, the party ... motored direct to Kildonan municipal course where a luncheon was served.*

*A battle for golfing honors then began .... Mayor Farmer and Jack Cuthbert, amateur champion of Manitoba, paired to play a foursome with Dr. Robert Fletcher, chairman of the [Public Parks] board, and Stanley Thompson, noted Ontario golfer. (Freedom Press Evening Bulletin [Winnipeg, Manitoba], 6 May 1924, p. 17)*

Two days before this, the *Winnipeg Tribune* had reported: “Stanley Thompson ... has come to Winnipeg to lay out a practice course” (*Winnipeg Tribune*, 3 May 1924, p. 6). This news item probably refers to Thompson’s arrangement with the Alcrest Golf Club. In his regular newspaper column about golf, Jack Cuthbert reported that the Alcrest club had sought Thompson’s advice in its attempt to decide whether to redesign all nine of its greens:

*Stanley Thompson, the well known golf architect, has been consulted in the matter, and as a result members will have an opportunity of testing out on at least one hole the latest idea in the sowing of greens with creeping bent stolons.*

*The other greens will be improved as much as possible temporarily. (Free Press Evening Bulletin [Winnipeg, Manitoba], 19 March 1924, p. 6).*

Happening to be in Winnipeg on other business, did Thompson merely accept an impromptu invitation to participate in the inspection of the Windsor Park course? Or was he hired to advise the city on the suitability for municipal golf requirements of the Windsor Park layout that was under construction?

Whatever the case may be, the ground had been carefully prepared for inspection: it “had been staked out as a course and marked with cards” (*Free Press Evening Bulletin* [Winnipeg, Manitoba], 5 May 1924, p. 5). The holes had been numbered clearly from one to eighteen so that people could walk the holes in order to enable them to appreciate the sequence of challenges that golfers would meet and to assess the balance between the two nines. Kam was presumably the one who had staked out the course and identified the holes with cards numbering the tees and greens.

Apparently, some of the golf experts brought golf clubs with them and, where possible, there “was a trial game over the land” (*Free Press Evening Bulletin* [Winnipeg, Manitoba], 5 May 1924, p. 5). It is likely that tee shots could be played on most holes, but many greens were not yet seeded, so it is not clear how many holes could have been played all the way from tee to green.

On his way around the course, Thompson is likely to have discussed the layout with at least two members of the entourage: the Public Parks superintendent, George Champion, and the Manitoba

amateur golf champion, Jack Cuthbert, with whom Thompson had played golf at the other municipal course two days before (and with whom he would enjoy a lifelong friendship).



*Figure 44 George Champion, circa 1925.*

Champion was about to assume responsibility on behalf of the City for the remaining construction work. He had maintained the City's first municipal golf course, Kildonan, since 1921.

Kam is likely to have attended upon officials and experts, alike, to answer questions about the nature of the work accomplished so far and the nature of the work that remained. Thompson probably directed to him a few questions – if not observations – about the layout.

The photograph below shows a view of the tee for the 330-yard eighteenth hole as it was presented to the inspecting party on 5 May 1924.



*Figure 45 Canadian Golfer, vol 10 no 2 (June 1924), p. 139.*

In the foreground is the Seine River, across which several golf holes were routed. One can see that when the forest was cleared, several trees were kept in the fairway so as to complicate the tee shot. Of this

hole, the *Winnipeg Tribune* said (the day before the official opening) that “The Seine has to be carried from the tee; a good drive gets to the best piece of fairway on the course” (*Winnipeg Tribune*, 29 July 1925, p. 11).

The photograph below shows a view of the approach shot on the 320-yard twelfth hole. The *Winnipeg Tribune* described it as follows: “A dog-leg to the right, a long, well-placed drive leaves a pitch across a gully to a banked-up green” (*Winnipeg Tribune*, 29 July 1925, p. 11). The writer for the *Free Press Evening Bulletin* identified this hole as one of “two holes in particular [that] caught the fancy of those who played over the course yesterday”:

*The twelfth hole is one of the finest holes of the drive and pitch variety that can be found anywhere.*

*A wide fairway, as far as the left side is concerned, gives lots of room to play safe, but the safer one plays, the harder the second shot is.*

*A broad coulee, with lots of trouble in it, has to be negotiated with the second shot to the green, which is beautifully constructed to hold a well played approach shot. (Free Press Evening Bulletin [Winnipeg, Manitoba], 31 July 1925, p. 15)*



Figure 46 *Canadian Golfer*, vol 10 no 2 (June 1924), p. 137.

On the one hand, since the City was still completing the legal process necessary for formal acquisition of the property and so Parks Superintendent Champion had not yet assumed charge of the work on the course, and, on the other hand, since the original designer Hugh Fletcher was long gone from the scene,

what we see above of the construction of the celebrated banked green on the twelfth holes is presumably the result of Kam's work.



Figure 47 Pearl Driscoll, *Winnipeg Tribune*, 6 May 1924, p. 6.

And note that there were still many more decisions to be made about the layout when Thompson walked the course, as seems to have been common knowledge among those on the course tour.

Winnipeg writer Pearl Driscoll made precisely this point in her *Canadian Golfer* article about that day's layout inspection at Windsor Park.

She was a recent graduate of the University of Manitoba who had been hired a few years before as a reporter for the *Winnipeg Free Press*.

She was also a member of the executive committee of the ladies' section of Winnipeg's Alcrest Golf Club.

Whether in *Canadian Golfer* or the *Winnipeg Free Press*, Driscoll showed herself to be quite knowledgeable about golf in general and perceptive concerning the strategic implications of golf course design in particular.

As she reported:

*Long stretches of clearing ... stretch into the heavily treed land and here and there a planted green shows its smooth, emerald surface.*

*The whole course is mapped out, but some changes will be made before the final pattern of fairways and greens ... is imprinted on the land in playable turf and smooth carpeted greens. (Canadian Golfer, vol 10 no 2 [June 1924], p. 139).*

Did Thompson discuss – with Champion, or Cuthbert, or Driscoll, or Kam – the routing of the holes, the balance between the two nines, the strengths or weakness of this or that particular hole, the shape or undulations of a green here or there?

Observations on all of these matters would have leapt to the mind of such an architect as he toured the course. The only question was whether he would keep his thoughts to himself or chat about them. He was known to be generous with his advice. Note that when he was back in Winnipeg exactly a month later to serve as an usher at a friend's wedding, he played a social round of golf over Pearl Driscoll's Alcrest course and spontaneously offered suggestions:

*During the weekend, Stanley Thompson, the well-known Toronto golf expert, visited and played over the [Alcrest] course.*

*He gave the Alcrest officials a few suggestions for improvement at some of the holes, though he was quite satisfied with the layout, and his advice will no doubt be acted upon. (Winnipeg Tribune, 9 June 1924, p. 12)*

How could he have refrained from making a few suggestions for improvements at Windsor Park? It would be surprising if he had said nothing at all.

Is there any sign of his opinion of the Windsor Park course?



**93 JACK CUTHBERT**  
Winnipeg, Man.

Cut off here—Save picture  
93 Send us complete  
series of Coupons Nos.  
1 to 120 and receive a  
valuable prize. (over)

Figure 48 Jack Cuthbert.  
Dominion Chocolate  
Company trading card,  
circa 1925.

As we know, Thompson kept the company of Jack Cuthbert on Winnipeg's golf courses: they had played the Kildonan municipal course together on Saturday, and they had toured together over the Windsor Park grounds on Monday, probably being among those who brought golf clubs for "a trial game over the land" (*Free Press Evening Bulletin* [Winnipeg, Manitoba], 5 May 1924, p. 5). Recall that a reporter had observed that during the course inspection, there had been a good deal of discussion of the layout amongst "veteran golfers": "'There'll be golf aplenty here,' was the word which came from veteran golfers' lips as officialdom ... viewed the Windsor Park golf course for the first time yesterday" (*Freedom Press Evening Bulletin* [Winnipeg, Manitoba], 6 May 1924, p. 17). After their two-hour course inspection together, they had further opportunity to discuss the course when they played a four-ball foursomes match against each other at the Kildonan municipal course.

Four days later, Cuthbert shared his opinion of the Windsor Park layout with readers of his regular newspaper column about golf – an opinion no doubt shaped by conversations about the layout that he had conducted with Thompson.

According to Cuthbert:

*From a golf standpoint, the new property is undoubtedly all that could possibly be desired.*

*Of a generally rolling nature, the ground is well supplied with natural character, is beautifully treed, and is well equipped with natural hazards by the windings of the Seine River, which winds through the middle of the course.*

*A good deal of construction work has already been done, and the Parks Board will be able to complete the work without very much further expense, and when completed the course will be a first-class championship one in every respect, with many holes that will compare most favorably with the best that can be found anywhere....*

*It should be no idle boast that there will be few courses in the country to equal it, and certainly nothing approaching it elsewhere municipally owned. (Free Press Evening Bulletin [Winnipeg, Manitoba], 10 May 1924, p. 20)*

Cuthbert writes of this golf property just as the architects of the day did when they assessed any golf property. I doubt that he would have ventured such unequivocally positive opinions about the layout if Thompson had trashed it, or even if he had been lukewarm about it.

## A Signature Hole

Just before the Windsor Park Golf course officially opened, the *Winnipeg Tribune* described what seems to have been regarded by many as its signature hole: “No. 14, 120 yds. – The best short hole of the course, a pitch all the way to a good holding green” (*Winnipeg Tribune*, 29 July 1925, p. 11).

A year before, *Canadian Golfer* had published Pearl Driscoll’s extensive review of the layout, in which she raved about this hole:

*The 14<sup>th</sup> hole is 110 yards of impudence.*

*The fairway dribbles off from the tee for a few yards, then gathers itself for a leap into the deepest ravine on the course, with only one solace – that it is free of water.*

*The green, treacherously narrow for a lofted mashie or niblick, perches on the summit of the farther bank and saucily tips toward the declivity. (Canadian Golfer, vol 10 no 2 [June 1924], p. 140)*

After the first day of play fifteen months later, the same hole was once again celebrated:

*The fourteenth cannot better be described than as the finest short hole in Manitoba.*

*Allowing the regulation two putts on the green, it can either be an easy three or a thirteen.*

*Only 120 yards, the shot must carry the green, and stay there, or take the consequences – a forty-foot drop in front of it, a fifty-foot drop to the left of it, and an out-of-bounds fence to the right of it.*

*Behind it there are only some trees.*

*The depth of the drop to the left is verified by A.J. Stevenson, prominent member of the Winnipeg Club [he had been paired with Kam in the second round of the 1924 Manitoba Open], who claims he is now in shape to play a ball to the top of Mount Everest.*

*(Free Press Evening Bulletin [Winnipeg, Manitoba], 31 July 1925, p. 15)*

Did Kam read the unanimously effusive celebrations of the fourteenth hole?

One might wonder whether, a few years later, he recreated it in the woods at Waskesiu—the carry over a deep ravine to a small green, the unforgiving steep fall away in front, the woods beyond, the danger to the right of the green:

*Overshooting of the green on any of the holes will be fatal to low scores....*

*A shock awaits the player as he jauntily shoulders his clubs and steps off to the second test. Number two, 117 yards, par three, but what yards!*

*Perched on top of a miniature mountain is the tee.*



Figure 49 Waskesiu Golf Course, 2nd tee. Robert J.C. Stead, *Playgrounds of the Prairies* (1939?), n.p.

*Down 117 yards lies the green, the only flat piece of country on this hole. Not only does the fairway fall away at an acute angle to the green below, but it also slopes sharply sideways.*



Figure 50 Contemporary view from the tee of the 2<sup>nd</sup> hole at the Waskesiu Golf Course. Andrew Harvie, *Beyond the Contour*. <https://beyondthecontour.com/review-waskesiu-golf-course/>

*Beautiful it is beyond doubt, but number two will spell disaster to many a golfer.*

*A mashie shot dropped on the green will, of course, put the player within easy reach of par figures, but it has to be on the green. If the ball falls short, there is no hope of it rolling on, as the sharp side angle will cause it to run off into the heavy timber which lines the fairway.*

*As if the natural contour of this hole is not sufficient, man has taken a hand and to the right of the green is a neat trap necessitating an eight-foot pitch back onto the green.*

*Actually, a reasonably straight shot with the necessary weight to it will put the golfer on the green out of all danger, but the mental hazard to any but the seasoned veteran is likely to make number two one of the hardest of the course to negotiate. (Star-Phoenix [Saskatoon, Saskatchewan], 25 June 1935, p. 25)*

Because of “the mental hazard” it posed “to any but the seasoned veteran,” this hole immediately became “known as ‘Duffers Beware’” (*Prince Albert Daily Herald*, 3 June 1935, p. 1). Yet it was officially rated as the easiest hole on the nine-hole course (*Prince Albert Daily Herald*, 1 June 1935, p. 6).

## The Windsor Park 9

On the day of the Windsor Park course inspection at the beginning of May in 1924, Pearl Driscoll observed:

*now the genius of George Champion, parks superintendent, will be called into play to convert the newly cleared land to grassy fairways and velvety greens.*

*The task will not take long, however ....*

*With gangs of men already at work, the Superintendent is well on the way to having the course in shape for play, with a favorable season, in August or early September. (Canadian Golfer, vol 10 no 2 [June 1924], p. 138)*

Driscoll's optimistic prediction was off by eleven months.

The new eighteen-hole course remained closed for all of 1924. The photograph below shows fairway preparation underway that year.



*Figure 51 Catherine Macdonald, A City at Leisure: An Illustrated History of Parks and Recreation Services in Winnipeg (Winnipeg, Manitoba: City of Winnipeg Parks and Recreation Department, 1995), p. 47.*

In the photograph below, the moustached man wearing a tie and vest may be Public Parks superintendent George Champion, himself, engaged in seeding the fairways later in 1924.



Figure 52 Catherine Macdonald, *A City at Leisure*, p. 47.

The eighteen-hole Windsor Park layout would not be opened until the end of July in 1925.

In the mean time, the City continued to operate the original nine-hole course of the old Windsor Park Golf Club.

Kam not only managed it; he also redesigned it: "Windsor Park Public Golf Course, the nine hole course on the Windsor Park property off St. Anne's Road which was operated last year by Albert Kam, is again open for play and will be considerably improved this year" (*Winnipeg Free Press*, 21 April 1925, p. 17). As Jack Cuthbert reported:

*The layout is practically entirely re-arranged, considerable distance being added to the course by the change.*

*The first tee is now moved to the north end of the course, thereby making it more easily accessible to town.*

*The greens are all being remade and seeded, and numerous bunkers are being built, so that the course will generally be of a more interesting nature.*

*Kam himself will again be in attendance, and as he has had many years experience in professional ranks, he is looking forward to a busy season this year.*

*(Free Press Evening Bulletin [Winnipeg, Manitoba], 21 April 1925, p. 15)*

Since Kam had become an employee of the City of Winnipeg, I suspect that Parks superintendent Champion kept him as the head of the thirty-man crew building the eighteen-hole course. He remains invisible to history in any such role, however, for newspapers do not mention him in connection with work on the course because the person who spoke exclusively to the newspapers about how the course was coming along was superintendent Champion.

Kam represented Windsor Park when he played in the 1924 Manitoba Open and the 1924 Western Canadian Golf Association Open Championship. The latter was the first occasion on which this championship was held and required Kam to make his first trip to Saskatoon, where his young niece and nephew lived with his re-married brother and his new sister-in-law, Kathleen Lavinia Steele.

Kam again represented Windsor Park in the 1925 Manitoba Open.



*Figure 53 Left to right: Jack Cuthbert, Hugh C. Fletcher, Albert Kam. They sit on the front steps of the Winter Park Golf Course clubhouse in 1925 with other Winnipeg golf professionals and top amateurs in connection with a professionals versus amateurs competition. City of Winnipeg Archives i03090.*

Kam also played in the 1926 Western Canada Golf Association Championships. His club affiliation is not indicated in newspaper reports of the scores at this event, but he seems to have still been at the Windsor Park nine-hole course, for throughout 1926 he continued to reside at the Windsor Park clubhouse on St. Anne's Road.

## Yorkton, Saskatchewan



*Figure 54 Albert Kam just before he left Winnipeg. Winnipeg Tribune, 12 August 1926, p. 13. At Kam's feet sits local caddie Sam Cisuk.*

The City of Winnipeg did not lease the old Windsor Park nine-hole course after the 1926 season. It was taken over by a group from St. Vital and remained a public course, renamed the St. Vital Golf Course.

The City also decided as a matter of policy not to hire golf professionals to tend to patrons of the new eighteen-hole Windsor Park Municipal Golf Course.

And so, in April of 1927, although no longer a young man, Albert Kam headed west:

### ***Albert Kam Pro at Yorkton Golf Club ....***

*Albert Kam, of Winnipeg, has been secured as professional at the Yorkton Golf and Country Club for the coming season, it was announced at a meeting on Monday, when officers for the year were elected.*

*In addition to the engaging of Mr. Kam, the directors of the club decided to put on an extensive membership campaign. (Winnipeg Tribune, 31 March 1927, p. 15)*

A Regina newspaper was perhaps surprised that the little town of Yorkton (population 5,000) had landed such a big fish: it added to the club's press release above the observation that "Kam was formerly at the St. Charles Country Club, Winnipeg, and the Windsor Park course of the same city" (*Leader Post* [Regina, Saskatchewan]. 1 April 1927, p. 15).

Kam seems to have been chosen for the Yorkton job at least in part because of his greenkeeping skills: "It was announced that the service of Albert Kam, of Winnipeg, had been secured as pro for the season, and he is expected to arrive here about April 15, when the work of getting the greens in condition will start" (*Free Press Evening Bulletin* [Winnipeg, Manitoba], 31 March 1927, p. 16).



Figure 55 York Lake beach activity in the early 1900s.

The members of the Yorkton Country Club, Limited, played on a course laid out near York Lake, a popular resort area for many a Yorkton family of holidaymakers: “York Lake, a long, narrow body of water, fed by springs, is only three miles out, and nearly

all the Yorkton folk make it their headquarters during the summer months” (*Free Press Evening Bulletin* [Winnipeg, Manitoba], 28 June 1926, p. 6). The golf course had been laid out late in 1924 by the previous golf professional:

*The Country Club course, laid out on the shores of York Lake, has come into being with astonishing rapidity. Started only two years ago, it now has a charming little clubhouse, well laid out sporting fairways, and excellent grass greens.*

*A “pro,” John Scott, who planned the course and practically built it himself, lives in a cottage not far from the clubhouse, and looks after the course as well as the members.*

(*Free Press Evening Bulletin* [Winnipeg, Manitoba], 28 June 1926, p. 6)

Kam seems to have had big shoes to fill, but his work on the course soon showed results: “Albert Kam, new pro at the club, has the greens and fairways in good shape” (*Free Press Evening Bulletin* [Winnipeg, Manitoba], 30 April 1927, p. 20). He had no work crew to help him, it seems, but only the annual “volunteers” who had helped John Scott the previous year, being “on the links daily, giving them the finishing touches in preparations for the season’s play” (*Free Press Evening Bulletin* [Winnipeg, Manitoba], 27 April 1926, p. 20).

Kam was set up nicely in his new location. Family was nearby. His brother Walter (with his second wife and two young children) had moved to Regina in the early 1920s and was now living in Saskatoon. Albert could also use Yorkton as his base for competition in the Western Canada Golf Association Championships, in which he duly competed in 1927 and 1928.

Although it spells Kam's name incorrectly, *Canadian Golfer* magazine records him as working as the golf professional of the Yorkton Country Club as late as the 1929 season.

Was he called up to Waskesiu in 1928 or 1929 to provide an opinion as to whether Prospect Point was as ideal a site for golf as Wood thought it to be?

## Prince Albert's Minchinhampton Bro Pro

How might Wood and Atkinson have learned that the Yorkton pro Albert Kam was the man to design their golf course?

They probably discussed their Waskesiu golf plans with the golf professional at the Prince Albert Golf Club since 1925: Hubert Cooke. As club directors and members of the Club's green committee since 1928, they would have come to know him well by the fall of 1929.



*Figure 56 Hubert Edward Cooke (1901-1968), Star-Phoenix [Saskatoon, Saskatchewan], 24 August 1935, p. 13.*

Hubert Edward Cooke was born in Stroud, Gloucestershire, early in 1901 (just weeks before fellow Stroud resident Albert Kam would leave town for Winnipeg).

That's right! Cooke was another member of the Minchinhampton golf mafia.

The son of a labourer in the construction industry, Hubert was the youngest of nine children (his oldest sibling being nineteen years older than him). The family lived in the part of Stroud called Cainscross, which was about two miles (3.3 km) north of the Minchinhampton golf course. He came to Canada in 1920, but he returned to Stroud in the fall of 1922 to marry Alice E.M. Smith (of Dursley, Gloucestershire), and the couple travelled to Canada immediately after their wedding.

Kam probably directed Cooke to Winnipeg, just as he had directed the Fletcher brothers to that city.

Cooke overlapped with Kam in Winnipeg between 1924 and 1925. They both played in the 1924 Manitoba Open held in Winnipeg. In 1924, Cooke worked at the Winnipeg Golf Club as assistant to head pro Ernest Penfold, and he also worked

at the latter's golf school during the 1924-25 winter. Since Kam did not open his own golf school during the 1924-25 winter, he may have worked alongside Cooke in Penfold's school.

Besides, as there were fewer than a dozen golf professionals in Winnipeg at that time, along with a number of assistant professionals working under them, Cooke and Kam would have met each other frequently in the normal course of their affairs within that small professional golf community.

At the 1927 Western Canada Golf Championships held in Moose Jaw, Saskatchewan, at the end of July, three of the Minchinhampton golf professionals working in Saskatchewan renewed acquaintance at the Moose Jaw Golf Club, along with one who still worked in Winnipeg: Freddie Fletcher (the local club pro), his brother Hugh Fletcher (of Winnipeg), Hubert Cooke, and Albert Kam. About 25% of the golf professionals who participated in the Open and Professional championships were from Minchinhampton!



Figure 57 Hubert Cooke, circa 1965.

Cooke would serve as the golf professional at the Prince Albert golf course for forty years, one of the longest tenures at the same golf club of any Canadian head pro.

He had been hired by the Prince Albert Golf Club in 1925. When the city of Prince Albert took over the golf course in 1935, Cooke continued to work as the head pro until 1965. After Cooke died in 1968, the city renamed the golf course Cooke Municipal Golf Course, which flourishes under that name to this day.

Cooke seems not to have laid out any golf courses himself in the 1920s or early 1930s (although he was said to have supervised the building of nine new golf holes at the Prince Albert golf course in the spring of 1935). Wood and Atkinson may not have had confidence that he had the course planning experience required to lay out a golf course in a national park. And so, Cooke, who would have known of Kam's wide experience of planning and building golf courses in both Canada and England, may have told them that the Yorkton pro was the man for their job.

Mind you, if Wood and Atkinson were looking in November of 1928 for a golf professional to provide an opinion as to whether Prospect Point was as ideal a site for a golf course as they thought it to be, and Cooke was their choice, he would have had to explain that he was not available. The Cookes were taking their young son home to England for a visit. They left Prince Albert on 1 November 1928 and would not return before January of 1929 (*Star-Phoenix* [Saskatoon, Saskatchewan], 6 November 1928, p. 9). Kam might have filled in for Cooke.

## Work in Saskatoon

In 1932, Albert Kam found work in Saskatoon's growing golf industry – both as an instructor at a driving range and as a designer and builder of a local golf course.



Figure 58 Albert Kam's sister-in-law Kathleen Kam, walking in downtown Saskatoon. *Saskatoon Daily Star*, 3 November 1927, p. 3.

Kam presumably welcomed the opportunity to spend the 1932 golf season in Saskatoon, for the city was the home of his brother Walter, who had worked in the city since the late 1920s as a car cleaner and general labourer for Canadian National Railway. Living with Walter Kam at 1033 Main Street were his second wife Kathleen (seen in the photograph to the left) and the couple's children – Albert's fifteen-year-old niece Gladys as well his nephews ten-year-old Mervin and four-year-old Paul.

Albert boarded in the city for \$30 per month (*Saskatoon Star-Phoenix*, 15 August 1932, p. 3).

One of Kam's jobs was as instructor at "Swat 'Em Golf Course," which was not a golf course but rather a driving range, which had opened in 1930:

*An innovation in golf circles in western Canada will be found in this city in the course of a few days.*

*Tourist golfers [from Saskatoon] travelling through eastern Canada and the coast states have been bringing back reports of courses where they have been able to practice every shot of the game when they found it impossible to spare the time to play a complete round at one of the many clubs.*

*These new courses in the United States are known as driving ranges.*

*(Star-Phoenix [Saskatoon], 13 September 1930, p. 11)*

In 1932, what was also called the Swat 'Em "golf school" or "golf club" opened at the end of April.

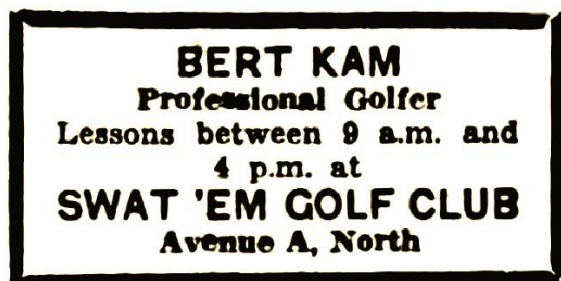


Figure 59 *Star-Phoenix [Saskatoon]*, 25 July 1932, p. 4.

At the beginning of May, a local newspaper indirectly mentioned Kam: "there is a competent golfer in charge to give advice to players having trouble with their drives or iron shots" (*Star-Phoenix [Saskatoon]*, 12 May 1932). But Kam soon explicitly advertised his connection to the driving range (as shown to the left).

Initially, Swat 'Em was "open Wednesdays and Saturdays 1:30 pm, other days 5 p.m." (*Star-Phoenix* [Saskatoon], 12 May 1932). In mid-June, the range began to open an hour earlier at 4 pm. Such hours allowed Kam to work a second job a local golf course.

Note, however, that by the time the advertisement above was published at the end of July, something had changed: Kam was now available for "Lessons between 9 am and 4 pm at Swat 'Em Golf Club"; he was no longer at the golf course.



Figure 60 Rob Lee in the Wildwood pro shop. *Star-Phoenix* [Saskatoon], 13 March 1990, p. 3.

Recently, Rob Lee, the manager for 34 years (the last 32 of which he also spent as head pro) at Saskatoon's Wildwood Golf Course (he is now a life member of the PGA of Canada), drew my attention to the fact that in 1932, Albert Kam was hired to lay out nine new holes at what would become Wildwood but which was known until 1952 as the Eighth Street Golf Course. Built in the spring of 1931, the Eighth Street Golf Course was reputed to have been at that time the only private golf course in the West.

Owner John ("Jack") Francis McCoy (1882-1971), who had arrived in Saskatoon from Ontario in 1904, presided until 1939 over a thriving Second-Hand Store in the city (furniture was his specialty). Ironically, in the very summer in which he was quoted in the local newspaper complaining that second-hand dealers were "decidedly" not "reaping a harvest out of [the] adversity" of the Great Depression – "Don't get the idea we're reaping a bumper crop this year. Business isn't any better because of hard times" – McCoy decided to splurge on a golf course (*Star-Phoenix* [Saskatoon], 11 August 1931, p. 3). Perhaps with tongue in cheek, McCoy explained to a newspaper reporter that "his primary object in building the course was to have a place where he could enjoy the game himself without overcrowded conditions" (*Star-Phoenix* [Saskatoon], 27 June 1931, p. 11). McCoy knew the value of a dollar and intended from the beginning that "an exceptionally low green fee" would lead to his course becoming crowded: "he feels that many golfers will avail themselves of the privileges" (*Star-Phoenix* [Saskatoon], 27 June 1931, p. 11).

According to the website of the Wildwood Golf Course, "In 1928, Jack McCoy bought the McKenzie farm and with help from Lew Orge laid out a golf course" in 1931 ("History of Wildwood Golf Course," <https://wildwoodmenssection.ca/history-of-wildwood-golf-course/>).

Louis Org (1871-1952), born in Norway in 1871, emigrating to the United States in 1887, homesteading as of 1906 in the Herschel District of Saskatchewan, and then moving into Saskatoon to work in the Sheriff's Office from 1911 until his retirement in 1936, joined the Saskatoon Golf Club in the 1920s and became a devoted golfer. Playing a match against his boss in 1928, Orge was all square with the sheriff on the 9<sup>th</sup> tee: "the sheriff placed one dead to the pin but his opponent [Orge] came along with a high mashie shot that landed on the green and trickled into the cup" (*Star-Phoenix* [Saskatoon], 15 November 1928). I suspect that McCoy, who seems seldom (if ever) to have played golf before building his own golf course, asked Orge to help him with the design of the layout.

The Eighth Street Golf Course was ready for play on 1 July 1931. "Thrown open to the public ... free of charge" on opening day, and thereafter charging "an exceptionally low green fee," McCoy's golf course immediately became popular, making the game available to a green fee paying public (*Star-Phoenix* [Saskatoon], 27 June 1931, p. 11). The golf course was relatively short and its facilities were relatively simple and practical:

*The new course is 2,600 yards in length and will have a par of slightly over 33 (possibly 36).*



Figure 61 Undated photograph of the 1st tee of the Eighth Street Golf Course. Photograph courtesy of the W.D.M. Barton Collection, no. 07050.

*Large sand greens have been installed. The smallest green on the layout is 30 feet wide and the largest, 40 feet.*

*Up-to-date mat driving tees and sand boxes [a handful of sand was moistened and placed on the ground to make a mound for teeing the ball] have been installed at every hole.*

*For the accommodation of the players, a refreshment counter handling a line of golfer's requisites will be ready for opening day.*

*If the course proves successful, the owner intends to use (after remodelling) the house which is on the property for a clubhouse.*

*(Star-Phoenix [Saskatoon], 27 June 1931, p. 11)*

The fact that it had not yet been determined whether the par for the nine holes would be 33 or 36 suggests that the length of some holes had not yet been finalized when the course opened for play in 1931.

The new course immediately proved to be very popular, attracting several hundred players each weekend, leading McCoy to add nine new holes in the spring of 1932. At that time, he hired Albert Kam, paying him \$25 per month (*Saskatoon Star-Phoenix*, 15 August 1932, p. 3). McCoy later implied that he was able to acquire Kam's services at a relatively low price because Kam had been unemployed at the beginning of the 1932 season (*Saskatoon Star-Phoenix*, 15 August 1932, p. 3).

It is not clear whether McCoy hired Kam to serve as greenkeeper of the original course and shortly afterwards decided to have him add nine new holes or whether he hired him to add nine new holes and subsequently decided also to place him in charge of improving the original nine holes.

What we know for sure is that Kam did both jobs.

At the end of May, just four weeks into the new golf season, a local newspaper observed improvement in the original nine holes: "Playing conditions have improved considerably since the arrival of Bert Kam, the new professional at the Eighth Street course" (*Star-Phoenix* [Saskatoon], 28 May 1932, p. 15).

Ten days later, at the beginning of June, the writer of the "On the Sport Spot!" column in the *Star-Phoenix* reported on new holes under development:

*Under the supervision of Art [Bert] Kamm [Kam], the club pro, work has already started on the Eighth Street club to extend the course into an 18-hole layout.*

*If weather conditions are favorable, the 18-hole course will be open to the public in about six weeks' time.*

*(Star-Phoenix [Saskatoon], 7 June 1932, p. 6)*

Kam and his crew progressed so quickly in this work that it was shortly afterwards announced that the new 18-hole layout would open not "in about six weeks' time" but in just three weeks' time!

The new layout opened on July 1<sup>st</sup> – one year to the day after the original nine-hole course had opened for play:

***18-Hole Course at Eighth Street Club to Open on July 1***

*With rapid progress being made on the construction of the new nine holes, the Eighth Street Golf Club will open its 18-hole course on Friday, July 1.*

*Practically all the work on the fairways of the new nine has been completed. By the end of the week, the majority of the greens will be laid.*

*With two exceptions, the greens on the present course will be used on the new layout but numbered differently.*

*All the work at the course has been carried out under the supervision of Bert Kamm [Kam], the club pro, who has laid out courses in all parts of Canada.*

*(Star-Phoenix [Saskatoon], 21 June 1932, p. 11)*

Just a few weeks after the opening of the new layout, however, owner McCoy and club pro Kam came to disagree vehemently about how the fairways should be treated.

In mid-July, the question arose as to whether the fairways should be dragged.

“Dragging the fairway” involves a tractor pulling along the ground behind it a wide chain mesh or a rectangular steel grid mesh. This process has long been used for various purposes: as a way of breaking up pellets of sod after aeration; as a way of removing dew to mitigate against fungal diseases; as a way of breaking down worm castings; as a way of preparing new fairways for seeding; as a way of working grass clippings into the ground, and so on.

McCoy “stated that he wanted it done” and he apparently told Kam he had heard “it was a good way of filling in holes and smoothing rough spots”; Kam told McCoy “that this was bad practice” and refused to do it (*Star-Phoenix* [Saskatoon], 15 August 1932, p. 3).

It is not clear whether Kam regarded dragging a fairway as a bad practice absolutely (that is, objected to dragging a fairway on any course at any time) or whether he merely regarded it as a bad practice for this new course at that time.

What happened next was a matter of dispute, eventuating in Kam’s “suing J.F. McCoy for wages for a month and a half at \$25 a month and board for the same period at \$30 a month, alleging wrongful dismissal” (*Star-Phoenix* [Saskatoon], 15 August 1932, p. 3).

On the one hand, “according to McCoy, Camm [Kam] ... interfered with his personal orders to have the dragging done and had finally said to him: ‘Drag, drag, that’s all you can think. You can drag them to ---- [hell] for all I care. I’m through’” (*Star-Phoenix* [Saskatoon], 15 August 1932, p. 3). McCoy understood Kam to have resigned: “He ... stated that he assumed that the alleged remark about the possibility of transferring the course to an even hotter clime [hell] indicated that Mr. Camm [Kam] considered his employment ended at his personal request” (*Star-Phoenix* [Saskatoon], 15 August 1932, p. 3).

On the other hand, according to Kam, “what he said was, ‘If you must drag, I’m through giving orders to the men’” (*Star-Phoenix* [Saskatoon], 15 August 1932, p. 3). Kam had not intended to quit his job at the golf course but only to refuse to supervise the dragging, which he regarded as malpractice. During the

trial, McCoy perhaps indirectly corroborated Kam's statement that he had not intended to resign: "McCoy told the court that following the first conversation, which took place in the middle of July, Camm [Kam] had asked him 'to talk the matter over,' but that he [McCoy] had refused on the principle that when a man said he was through, he was through" (*Star-Phoenix* [Saskatoon], 15 August 1932, p. 3).

Presumably as a way of explaining Kam's attitude toward the question of dragging the fairways, Kam's lawyer raised in court the question of his client's professional expertise. He had Kam testify to the fact that "he had laid out courses in Winnipeg, Vancouver and Yorkton" (*Star-Phoenix* [Saskatoon], 15 August 1932, p. 3). Under examination by Kam's lawyer, "McCoy admitted that Camm [Kam] knew a lot about golf courses" (*Star-Phoenix* [Saskatoon], 15 August 1932, p. 3). And so, Kam's lawyer next asked McCoy "whether he didn't think that he [had] engaged the services of a professional golfer pretty cheaply" (*Star-Phoenix* [Saskatoon], 15 August 1932, p. 3).

In his responses to interrogation by Kam's lawyer, McCoy employed two strategies.



Figure 62 William Kinnear. *Star-Phoenix* [Saskatoon], 15 November 1920, p. 6.

First, he tried to undermine Kam's standing as a golf professional by pointing out that Kam "had been unemployed at the time he engaged him" (*Star-Phoenix* [Saskatoon], 15 August 1932, p. 3). Similarly, although no other golf professional was called to testify about Kam's professional expertise, McCoy quoted an opinion about dragging fairways that he attributed to William Kinnear (1879-1958), the head pro at the Saskatoon Golf Club (often called the "City Club"): McCoy claimed that "William Kinnear, City Club professional, had told him that it was a good way of filling in holes and smoothing rough spots" (*Star-Phoenix* [Saskatoon], 15 August 1932, p. 3). Kinnear, born near Leven, Scotland, where he apprenticed under golf professional Alex Patrick, had been the golf professional of the Saskatoon Golf Club since 1909, laid out a nine-hole course for the Club in 1911, and

then in 1928 laid out an additional 18-hole course on adjoining land that he sold to the Club, so Kinnear's opinion would have been heard with respect, but there is no way of knowing whether Kinnear had endorsed McCoy's plan to drag the fairways on his new course or whether he had simply made a general observation about one of the benefits of dragging fairways.

Second, McCoy tried to suggest that Kam's acknowledged professional expertise was superfluous to requirements: McCoy said that "he did not look on his course as a professional one. Many people, he

said, called it a cow pasture, and he did not have the money to do some of the things that Mr. Camm [Kam] had suggested" (*Star-Phoenix* [Saskatoon], 15 August 1932, p. 3). We know that with "the arrival of Bert Kam," the golf course became less of a cow pasture: "playing conditions have improved considerably" (*Star-Phoenix* [Saskatoon], 28 May 1932, p. 15). McCoy, however, implied that to a certain extent, "cow pasture" conditions were part of his business model.

Kam's lawyer managed to demonstrate McCoy's confidence in Kam, his appreciation of Kam's professional's expertise, and his hope of milking him for everything he could get out of him at \$25 per month: McCoy "admitted that the laying out of an extra nine holes had been debated" (*Star-Phoenix* [Saskatoon], 15 August 1932, p. 3).

What does this mean?

McCoy's discussion with Kam of the possibility of laying out an "extra nine holes" seems to refer to McCoy's ambition to offer the public a 27-hole facility – a plan he would mention explicitly at the beginning of the next golf season:

*The only privately owned course in the city, the Eighth Street club, is well patronized on weekdays and is actually crowded on weekends and holidays. This course was lengthened from nine to 18 holes last summer....*

*J.F. McCoy, the owner of the club, plans to enlarge the course by the addition of another nine-hole layout next season. This, he believes, will prevent overcrowding on the 18 hole course.*

*(Star-Phoenix [Saskatoon], 29 May 1933, p. 10).*

It seems that McCoy's ambitions for his "cow pasture" – and his plan to use Kam's expertise to realize these ambitions – were greater than McCoy was willing to admit in court.

McCoy's defense may have been undermined by hints of this sort that McCoy's testimony was not as full, as open, or as reliable as a judge would have wished. It was certainly undermined by a witness called on McCoy's behalf.

As we know, Kam supervise a crew of men charged both with maintaining the original golf course and with constructing the new holes. Two members of the crew witnessed the argument between McCoy and Kam about dragging the fairways. Kam's lawyer called one of them to testify; McCoy's lawyer called the other:

*W. Burt corroborated Camm's [Kam's] version of what the latter had said apropos of the dragging, while George Jackson, a fellow employee of Burt's, agreed with McCoy.*

*Jackson, however, contradicted himself when he first stated that he had talked to no one about the case and then admitted to having spoken to ... McCoy's lawyer, and to McCoy.*

*(Star-Phoenix [Saskatoon], 15 August 1932, p. 3).*

The judge decided the matter the next day.

In advance of the trial, McCoy had put "an offer before the court of half a month's compensation" for Kam (*Star-Phoenix* [Saskatoon], 15 August 1932, p. 3). But the judge rejected any such half measure and instead ruled entirely in Kam's favour, giving him everything he asked for:

***GOLF COURSE PRO WINS WAGE CLAIM ....***

*Judgement in favor of albert Camm [Kam] for the sum of \$62.50, as two months' wages at \$25 a month and two weeks' board at \$12.50, was delivered this morning by Magistrate J.T. Leger against J.F. McCoy, proprietor of the Eighth Street Golf Course....*

*The magistrate, remarking that apparently McCoy had had a nine-hole course laid out "for the large sum of \$62.50," gave judgement for that amount, assessing costs at \$4.25.*

*(Star-Phoenix [Saskatoon, 16 August 1932, p. 3)*

The judge seems to have meant his statement that "McCoy had had a nine-hole course laid out for the **large** sum of \$62.50" (emphasis added) to be taken ironically. That is, I understand him to be implying that he agreed with Kam's lawyer that McCoy had "engaged the services of a professional golfer pretty cheaply" and had got a good deal out of him for \$25 a month: in other words, \$62.50 was decidedly **not** a "large" sum to pay for the design and construction of a nine-hole golf course.

Perhaps flush with cash, was Albert Kam flushed with triumph after his win in court?

Did he have occasion to relish it?

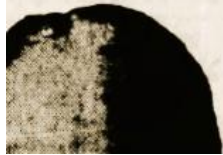
He stayed in Saskatoon after the trial, working as an instructor at Smart 'Em until the end of the 1932 golf season. I wonder how many of the golfers to whom he sold buckets of balls and how many of the people to whom he gave lessons congratulated him on his victory over McCoy. Most golfers – as well as many non-golfers – will have heard about it, for the local newspaper had given prominence to its coverage of the trial in mid-August.

The *Star-Phoenix* discussed Kam's lawsuit against McCoy in an article put at the top – and in the centre – of "The Third Page" – its special page that had after more than two decades become an "institution," according to the newspaper itself, where "readers [could] depend upon finding local news as accurately reported, as brightly written, and as well displayed as a staff of experienced newspaper men can do it" (*Saskatoon Daily Star* [forerunner of the *Star-Phoenix*], 31 December 1917, p. 13).

# The Third Page

SASKATOON, SASKATCHEWAN, MONDAY, AUGUST 15, 1932.

*Dies Here*



## Magistrate Leger Hears How Golf Courses Begin.

RIGHTS AND WRONGS OF MAKING FAIRWAY ARGUED  
IN MORNING COURT AS ALBERT CANN SUES  
EIGHTH STREET OWNER FOR PAY

*Passes Away*



Figure 63 "The Third Page," a regular heading in the Star-Phoenix and its precursors, along with the headline about Albert Kam's lawsuit. Star-Phoenix [Saskatoon], 15 August 1932, p. 3.

The editor encouraged the reporter to write the story not just brightly, but also in an ironic way – as though the judge's learning about how the new nine holes of the Eighth Street Golf Course began was also a lesson in how golf courses originally began, and as though the judge's presiding over the arguments in court was akin to refereeing a golf match:

### **Magistrate Leger Hears How Golf Courses Begin**

#### **Rights And Wrongs of Making Fairway Argued In Morning Court As Albert Cann [Kam] Sues Eighth Street Owner For Pay**

*If there had been no sheep in Scotland in days gone by, Magistrate J.T. Leger would not have learned this morning that Walter Caswell, local barrister [acting as counsel for J.F. McCoy], can do nine holes on the Eighth Street Golf Course in 33 – with "two in the bush."*

*The magistrate's [golf] studies can be traced back to the fact that the Scot shepherd's pastime of knocking stones about with the crooks otherwise used to yank sheep out of potholes ultimately became an obsession, addiction, and passion among people who are otherwise sane.*

*Tomorrow morning, Magistrate Leger, who admitted that his principal knowledge of golf was that sometimes they burn the grass off to improve the fairways or something, will give his decision in the case of Albert Cann [Kam] who is suing J.F. McCoy.*

*(Star-Phoenix [Saskatoon], 15 August 1932, p. 3)*

Well, at least the judge knew something about practices "to improve the fairways or something."

At the end of his otherwise factual account of the day's proceedings, the *Star-Phoenix* writer returned to his joking parallel between a golf match and Kam's lawsuit: "The nineteenth hole will be played

tomorrow, when handicaps will be assigned by Magistrate Leger” (*Star-Phoenix* [Saskatoon], 15 August 1932, p. 3).

The article about Kam’s lawsuit was meant to tickle the reader’s fancy and get people talking about it.

And so, for an entirely unforeseen reason, by the end of the 1932 golf season, golf instructor and course designer Albert Kam had probably become the most famous golfer in Saskatoon – a fact that may have led to work in nearby Wakaw Lake during the 1933 season.

## Wakaw Lake

In July of 1933, a man named Albert Kam, said to have been from Vancouver, was staying at the Poplar Beach resort on Wakaw Lake (*Star-Phoenix* [Saskatoon, Saskatchewan], 25 July 1933, p. 6).

Since, up to 1960, there is only one Albert Kam ever recorded in Canadian newspapers, Canadian census records, marriage records, immigration records, and so on, and since that Albert Kam is the man studied in this essay, I suspect that the Albert Kam at Wakaw Lake in 1933 is also our Albert Kam.

The Poplar Beach resort on Wakaw Lake (located less than 60 miles/100 km northeast of Saskatoon) was the same distance south of Prince Albert as the Waskesiu golf course was north of the city.

A 2,400-yard nine-hole par-34 course was laid out in 1926 on 160 acres of rolling land adjoining the Poplar Beach resort:

*Directly across the highway from Poplar Beach is the famous Wakaw Lake Golf Course, situated in a natural park with a surface varying from level lawn to hills and ravines and with sufficient forest to provide beauty and hazard.*



Figure 64 *The rolling shores of Wakaw Lake.* *Star-Phoenix* [Saskatoon, Saskatchewan], 30 June 1932, p. 33.

*This course never fails to give pleasant surprise to golf enthusiasts who are forever wondering how such a fine course can be kept up in a small country place.*

*The answer to their question is that the course seems to have been made by nature especially for golf and did not require heavy expenditure to put it in shape, and that the course is being well supported by the summer residents and golfers at the neighbouring towns ....*

*Great credit for the success of the course is due to the work of ... the grounds committee under whose direction the fairways are being constantly improved and the sand greens being brought to a high state of perfection. (Star-Phoenix [Saskatoon, Saskatchewan], 21 July 1928, p. 22)*

A golf club was also formed in 1926 and incorporated in 1927 as Wakaw Lake Golf Club. It conducted an Open tournament in 1927 in which Prince Albert pro Hubert Cooke played, along with the Prince Albert Golf Club champion and several other Prince Albert Golf Club members. The next year, Hubert Cooke won the Wakaw Lake Open, while Aimée Holroyde won the ladies championship (*Star-Phoenix* [Saskatoon, Saskatchewan], 5 July 1928, p. 9). In the days before the golf course at Waskesiu was opened, Prince Albert golfers often travelled down to Wakaw Lake to play golf on its interesting and challenging course.

In 1933, the Wakaw Lake Golf Club received a windfall: “\$1,000 derived from settlement for damages from the CNR in connection with the railway running through the course” (*Star-Phoenix* [Saskatoon, Saskatchewan], 2 May 1933, p. 13). A special meeting was called in the spring to discuss what to do with the money: “Some suggested that the money be used to improve the golf course and to erect a more suitable clubhouse” (*Star-Phoenix* [Saskatoon, Saskatchewan], 2 May 1933, p. 13). The suggestion to improve the course did not receive majority support; instead, a decision was reached to deposit the money in a saving account and think the matter through.

If the Albert Kam staying at the Poplar Beach resort in the summer of 1933 was indeed our Albert Kam (who worked at Yorkton until 1929 and then worked in Saskatoon in 1932), perhaps he had been asked to visit Poplar Beach to advise the golf club about possible improvements to the course. If so, he would have been in place for consulting with Wood (and perhaps Atkinson, too) at Waskesiu in the summer of 1933 when adding a second nine holes to the nine-hole layout was being promoted by the Prince Albert Board of Trade.

## Waskesiu 1934 to 1935

The winter of 1934-35 was one of the few times when Albert Kam did not travel back to Minchinhampton at the end of the golf season. He seems to have spent the winter at Waskesiu.

At the beginning of 1935, he visited the office of the *Prince Albert Daily Herald* for an interview by the editor. The latter introduced Kam to his readers on 11 January 1935:

*Albert Kam, well-known in the West and in the Old Country as a professional golfer and landscape engineer, said today that Waskesiu's new links, when completed, should rank as one of the sportiest he has ever seen.*

*The work presented a proposition of some magnitude, involving clearing many acres of heavily wooded forestland and draining of low places, but the result will be well worthwhile.*

*Kam, engaged last year as sub-foreman in the Park and given a free hand in designing the greens, along with some other architectural work in connection with the course, is well qualified to express that opinion.*

*His experience dates back to his youth in England and, to quote from a Winnipeg paper during his sojourn as a professional there, "few players either on the continent of America or in the old land, could hold their own with him .... He knows the game from A to Z."*

*(Prince Albert Daily Herald, 11 January 1935, pp. 1-2)*

Kam had a long conversation with the editor, not only telling him about his life in golf (the courses he built, the competitions he had entered in Canada, the United States, and England, and the course records he still held in Winnipeg and at Minchinhampton), but also describing what he was doing at Waskesiu.

Building greens with a "free hand" will have entailed decisions about the size of the putting surface, its elevation relative to the surrounding fairway, its slope from front to back, its undulations, its orientation toward approach shots from the centre of the fairway, and its proximity to the surrounding woods. He was probably also responsible for designing the area immediately surrounding the green: making decisions about whether there would be banking behind the green or mounds around it, as well as making decisions about the location, size, and depth of bunkers around the greens.

In his 1946 report on the course, Stanley Thompson would criticize many of Kam's decisions regarding the original design of these greens. Of the first green, he wrote: "As this green is blind, it should be built up at the back so as to prevent balls from running over, causing unfair hazard and holding up play" (Thompson, cited by Harris, *A Stanley Thompson Masterpiece*, p. 78). He advised building a new green in

a new location for the third hole. The location of the eighth green was good, but changes were needed: “The green is in a fine natural location but is too small and should be enlarged and banked at rear, say three to four feet, so that the putting surface would be visible from the 435 yard mark. The green could easily be extended 2000 to 3000 square feet at left and rear” (Thompson, cited by Harris, *A Stanley Thompson Masterpiece*, p. 112). He said the ninth green “needs banking in the rear” (Thompson, cited by Harris, *A Stanley Thompson Masterpiece*, p. 118). Bunkering on the thirteenth green caught his attention: “a fine location for the green. This is a good hole. The two blind bunkers at the rear of the green are not considered good golf and should be removed” (Thompson, cited by Harris, *A Stanley Thompson Masterpiece*, p. 138). “Slope the back” of the fourteenth green, he suggested, “and run the surface up on this slope to improve visibility of the surface” (Thompson, cited by Harris, *A Stanley Thompson Masterpiece*, p. 142).

Kam probably described in some specificity for the editor various aspects of the other design work he had undertaken in 1934 (and was planning to undertake going forward in 1935), but the editor presumably reduced this technical part of their conversation to a general summary suitable for general readers: and so, we are told only that Kam was “given a free hand in designing ... some other architectural work in connection with the course.”

The newspaper reported that Kam “built the rolling greens of the new golf course,” and it also reported that work on fairways was among the “other architectural work” undertaken by him: Kam “assisted in widening fairways” (*Prince Albert Daily Herald*, 11 January 1935, pp. 1-2).

As we know, the width of the fairways would later be criticized. When the course opened in 1935, Riddell cited observations made by Saskatoon golfers: “the local golf contingent claims that scientifically the Waskesiu course has few equals anywhere, but most of the players are of the opinion that the fairways are just a bit too narrow for a course at a holiday resort where the game should not be too difficult for the vacationists” (*Star-Phoenix* [Saskatoon], 25 June 1935, p. 11).

Given that Kam had “assisted in widening the fairways,” one wonders how narrow the fairways might have been before he widened them!

I take the statement about Kam’s widening of fairways to indicate not that Kam was cutting down trees with his own saw, but rather that he was in charge of deciding where fairways would be wide and where they would be narrow – and perhaps, as well, how a dogleg would be shaped. Given that the majority of

fairway work in 1934 concerned the new nine holes, Kam's fairway work may have focused mainly on today's holes five to thirteen.

Beyond this work in widening fairways, it is not clear what his mandate for "other architectural work" comprised. Was he allowed to choose the location of tee boxes? Was he allowed to lengthen or shorten a fairway already cleared?

Since "Jimmy Wood" boasted in June of 1934 to the author of the "Seen N' Heard Among the Golfers" column in the *Prince Albert Daily Herald* that "the long hole is 590 yards," we know that changes were made to whatever plans had been committed to paper at this time, for the longest hole on the nine-hole course that opened in 1935 was the 419-yard fourth, and the longest hole on the eighteen-hole course that opened in 1936 was the 530-yard sixth (*Prince Albert Daily Herald*, 26 June 1934, p. 6). Two days later, an item in the same newspaper reported:

*When the 18 holes are completed, there will be exactly 6,154 yards of driving and putting for Mr. Golfer.*

*The longest hole is No. 6 of 550 yards and the shortest No. 2 of 116 yards.*

*Several require sporting drives at the angle of 45 degrees up hill with plenty of water hazards and sandpits to add to the zest.*

(*Prince Albert Daily Herald*, 28 June 1934, p. 7)

We cannot be sure where a hole once planned to be 590 yards was reduced in length, but the change on this hole (as well as the apparent shortening of the sixth hole by twenty yards) may well be evidence of decisions made by Kam on the basis of his "free hand" over "some other architectural work in connection with the course" in addition to his control over the design of the greens. (The course length on the plans described by Wood in January of 1934 was 6,150 yards; the course length on the 1936 scorecard was 6,025 yards.)

In 1946, Stanley Thompson would criticize the location of several tee boxes and the length of several holes on the original design. Of the second hole, he complained: "This hole is altogether too short and the tee is at the wrong angle to the green" (Thompson, cited by Harris, *A Stanley Thompson Masterpiece*, p. 84). The fourth hole was no good: "The length of this hole, 251 yards par 4, makes it a poor hole. We suggest advancing No. four tee, building it up a little so the surface of the green is visible, and elevating the back of the green slightly. This would then be a fine par 3 hole" (Thompson, cited by Harris, *A Stanley Thompson Masterpiece*, p. 92). Similarly, the fifth hole, he said, "is too short a par" four and "a way should be found to lengthen this hole" (Thompson, cited by Harris, *A Stanley Thompson Masterpiece*, p.

97). Of the forward tee on the eighth hole, he said it “sticks up too prominently and is in the line of play. Flatten this tee” (Thompson, cited by Harris, *A Stanley Thompson Masterpiece*, p. 112). The “fine” fifteenth hole and the seventeenth hole were “abortive in length”: that is, too short for a par of four (Thompson, cited by Harris, *A Stanley Thompson Masterpiece*, pp. 146, 146, 158). The eighteenth hole was “too short for a finishing hole” (Thompson, cited by Harris, *A Stanley Thompson Masterpiece*, p. 162).

Kam seems to have left certain trees in certain fairways. An article about the course written at the end of June in 1934 observed: “White birch left standing in the middle of the fairway both enhance the scene and make the golfer wonder what would be the best route around” (*Prince Albert Daily Herald*, 26 June 1934, p. 7). In 1946, Stanley Thompson recommended the removal of a number trees of this sort. Of the tenth hole, he said: “Remove isolated trees (on the fairway)” (Thompson, cited by Harris, *A Stanley Thompson Masterpiece*, p. 122). “Remove isolated trees” on eleven, he said (Thompson, cited by Harris, *A Stanley Thompson Masterpiece*, p. 128). And of course there was the Lobstick tree in the middle of the first fairway. Thompson began his hole-by-hole suggestions in 1946 with a recommendation about this tree: “Hole No. One: Remove spruce tree in centre of fairway” (Thompson, cited by Harris, *A Stanley Thompson Masterpiece*, p. 168).

Recall that Wood summarized the state of the construction of the two nine-hole designs at Waskesiu in January of 1934:

*The nine-hole course was started in 1932 and now was ready for seeding, while another nine holes were being laid out.*

*The course, Mr. Wood assured, was 6,150 feet long and of championship calibre.*

*Placed between Prospect Point and the townsite, it was a sporting course with each green well bunkered.*

*(Star-Phoenix [Saskatoon, Saskatchewan], 9 January 1934, p. 7)*

What do we make of Wood’s reference on 9 January of 1934 – the beginning of the year in which Kam was appointed sub-foreman – to the “well bunkered” greens on the nine-hole course? Kam was engaged as sub-foreman in 1934: he could not have constructed “each green well bunkered” during the first nine days of January that year: these greens would have been built in 1933.

Recall also that on 24 May 1934, people were playing golf on certain putting greens: “Golfers yesterday played on seven of the greens at the Waskesiu Lake golf course in Prince Albert National Park” (*Prince*

*Albert Daily Herald*, 25 May 1934, p. 3). That these greens were ready for play by May of 1934 suggests that they had been seeded in 1933.

Since the *Prince Albert Daily Herald* reports unequivocally that Kam “built the rolling greens of the new golf course,” it may well be that Kam had been working on green construction at Waskesiu in 1933 before he was “engaged ... as sub-foreman” by the National Parks branch in 1934 (*Prince Albert Daily Herald*, 11 January 1935, pp. 1).

If this is the case, then the editor’s mentioning that Kam had been “engaged last year [1934] as sub-foreman in the Park and given a free hand in designing the greens” may be interpreted as reporting a change in Kam’s employment status. The word “sub-foreman” can mean several things: “a supervisory employee subordinate to a foreman,” “a working foreman,” or “a member of a work crew functioning, especially temporarily, as a foreman” (Merriam-Webster dictionary). Kam may have worked with Atkinson building greens in 1933 (perhaps as an individual contractor), his work being so impressive that when Atkinson left for Elk Island that year, Kam was officially hired as a Park employee as of 1934 to take over a role that would have been beyond the abilities of the new engineer John Mould who had built nothing other than roads by this point in his career.

Whatever the case may be, Kam’s role as sub-foreman, green designer, and architect responsible for certain other matters placed him in a position to have a considerable influence on the new nine holes “being laid out” in 1934 (*Star-Phoenix* [Saskatoon, Saskatchewan], 9 January 1934, p. 7).

Engaged by the National Parks branch in 1934, Kam speaks during his interview with the *Prince Albert Daily Herald* in January of 1935 as though his “free hand in designing the greens, along with some other architectural work in connection with the course,” continues: he certainly does not say, “I had a free hand initially but now Stanley Thompson is in charge.” Whether or not Stanley Thompson actually visited Waskesiu in the fall of 1934 to “assist with the layout for the golf course at Prince Albert National Park,” that is, all indications are that Kam would continue in 1935 to design his own greens and decide on other architectural work to be done on the new nine holes.

Albert Kam certainly deserves credit as one of the original designers of Waskesiu Golf Course.

## Greenkeeper John Strathdee

The first greenkeeper at Waskesiu Golf Course was John Strathdee (1871-1944). When he died in the summer of 1944, the *Winnipeg Tribune* said that he had been “land supervisor” at Waskesiu “for the last five years,” which implies that he started there in 1939, or perhaps 1938. But the Regina *Leader-Post* was celebrating the achievements at Waskesiu of “John Strathdee, greens keeper,” in 1937 (*Leader-Post* [Regina, Saskatchewan], 4 September 1937, p. 6). And Harris, although he provides no source for his information, says that “Strathdee began as Waskesiu Golf Course’s first greenkeeper” “in 1935,” when he was “was described as a ‘tough old Scotsman’” (Harris, *A Stanley Thompson Masterpiece*, p. 65).

Strathdee may well have been recommended to Wood by Kam, who would have been familiar with Strathdee’s greenkeeping career in Winnipeg.

Born in Ayrshire, Scotland, in 1871, Strathdee was said to have been “brought up on golf courses in Scotland” (*Leader-Post* [Saskatoon, Saskatchewan], 4 September 1937, p. 6).

He had immigrated to Canada in 1910, arriving at Halifax on the S.S. Numidian in April of 1910, indicating that he had worked for twenty years previously in the United Kingdom as a gardener. He declared his destination to be Cobourg, Ontario, but within a year he had established himself as a gardener in North Toronto, where he told the 1911 census taker that he did “odd jobs.”

On 4 November 1910, he married Agnes Burns (born 1883), who had immigrated to Toronto from Scotland two years before and worked as a domestic servant. Their only child, Eric John Strathdee, was born in 1911 in Winnipeg, where John Strathdee immediately established himself as one of the city’s preeminent horticulturalists while working for Crescentwood Gardens nursery.

He was elected first vice-president of the Winnipeg Horticultural Society in 1914. He thereafter served as a judge at many exhibitions of flowers and plants in Winnipeg and toured city residences as a judge in various garden competitions – in 1918, for instance, he evaluated eighty-seven residential gardens for the Weston Home Garden Association (*Winnipeg Tribune*, 9 August 1918, p. 12). He also travelled across Manitoba doing the same. For example, in 1914, he travelled north of Winnipeg to the town of Stonewall, Manitoba, to officiate as a judge at the Stonewall Horticultural Exhibition, where he and a fellow judge “gave as good satisfaction as any judges ever could or do give” (*Manitoba Horticulturalist*, vol 1 no 5 [September 1914, p. 32).

In 1917, Strathdee was asked to lecture to children in Winnipeg public schools to encourage them to grow home gardens to increase the food supply during World War I.

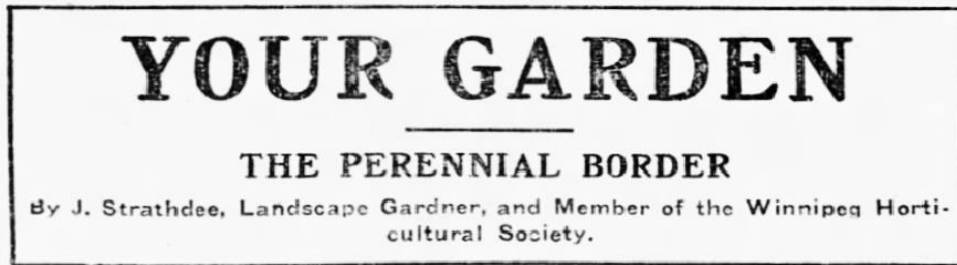


Figure 65 Free Press Prairie Farmer, 29 April 1914, p. 19.

Strathdee also had an academic inclination. In 1915, he published a substantial article called “The Perennial Garden

Border” in the *Free Press Prairie Farmer* (29 April 1914, p. 19). The following year, he addressed a meeting of the Winnipeg Horticultural Society on the topic, “Growing Annuals and Perennials,” which he later published as an essay in *Manitoba Horticulturalist* (vol 3 no 4 (May 1916, pp. 27-29).

In 1919, however, Strathdee developed a new career when the St. Charles Country Club brought in Donald J. Ross to re-design its Tom Bendelow course (originally laid out in 1905). The club decided that Strathdee was the person to bring the new course into play: “[J.] Strathdee, a well-known horticulturalist, formerly of Scotland, has been engaged to keep the greens and fairways in shape, and this is expected to prove of great benefit, as he has a great reputation in handling soil” (*Canadian Golfer* vol 5 no 1 [May 1919], p. 38).



Figure 66 Free Press Evening Bulletin, 20 December 1927, p. 11.

Strathdee worked as the greenkeeping superintendent of the St. Charles Country Club from 1919 to 1927, when he returned to the nursery business, managing Antenbrings, Limited, introducing himself to potential customers in advertisements as “Previously with the St. Charles Country Club” (see the image to the left).

What brought the mid-sixties Strathdee out of greenkeeping retirement in the mid-1930s to undertake a new start in this horticultural art at Waskesiu?

As the St. Charles Country Club had done, superintendent Wood may have identified Strathdee as a special man for a special job.

At Waskesiu in 1934, we recall, “the soil was worked up and heavily fertilized” (*Leader-Post* [Regina, Saskatchewan], 23 August 1938, p. 13). Wood was determined that there would be no repeat of the grass-growing problems that had plagued the Donald Ross course at Banff in the early 1920s.

Fertilization procedures would subsequently be emphasized in Stanley Thompson’s management advice throughout the 1940s. In 1941, for example, the Thompson Company provided Strathdee with “a program for fertilizing the fairways at Waskesiu” (Harris, *A Stanley Thompson Masterpiece*, pp. 49-50).

Having presided over the initial working up of the soil and the subsequent heavy fertilization regime, Kam was probably aware of the vigilant turf care that would be needed going forward, and, since he was also aware of Strathdee’s “great reputation in handling soil” from the years 1923 to 1927 when they were both working in the Winnipeg golf industry, Kam may have suggested to Wood that it would be worth his while to convince Strathdee to come to Waskesiu and resume his greenkeeping career.

Whenever it was between 1935 and 1937 that Strathdee was hired at Waskesiu, his greenkeeping work was soon celebrated:

*Waskesiu golf links win the hearts of visitors.*

*All 18 fairways have been cut out of solid forest and now 83 acres of the course are covered with plush-like grass, pipeline and hose over the entire course partly accounting for the fine state of the grass.*

*John Strathdee, greens keeper, was brought up on golf courses in Scotland, coming to Canada 25 years ago.*

*Colonial bent grass seed brought from Quebec and much top dressing, not to mention hard work and expert knowledge, are [also] part of the formula.*

*(Leader-Post [Regina, Saskatchewan], 4 September 1937, p. 6)*

When Strathdee died mid-season in 1944, it was said that he had left big shoes:

*Local golfers will be sorry to hear that [John] Strathdee, who was for many years the greenskeeper at the Waskesiu Golf Club, passed away last week in a local hospital.*

*A conscientious, quiet Scot, Strathdee was responsible for the fine condition of Waskesiu’s fairways and greens.*

*He will be greatly missed by the golfers, and P.A. National Park may find it very difficult to find anyone capable of filling his shoes.*

*(Star-Phoenix [Saskatoon, Saskatchewan], 19 July 1944, p. 13)*



Figure 67 Jimmy Cripps. 1 October 1937.

Within weeks, “Jimmy Cripps ... succeeded the late John Strathdee as greenkeeper” (*Prince Albert Daily Herald*, 7 August 1944, p. 6).

Cripps may well have worked under Strathdee and been trained by him.

As Stanley Thompson’s 1946 recommendations for changes at Waskesiu were slowly introduced over many years, Cripps was the person responsible for achieving them: “Jimmy Cripps, greenkeeper, is in charge of all construction work on the course” (*Star-Phoenix* [Saskatoon, Saskatchewan], 27 May 1948, p. 19).

Born in Steep Creek, Saskatchewan, in 1909, James Edward Cripps would work at Waskesiu until 1975, when he was suddenly admitted to a Prince Albert hospital. He had worked as greenkeeper until 1968, when he was succeeded by a man who had worked under him for fifteen years: Harry Patterson. Cripps had been promoted:

“appointed superintendent of park services, which includes the golf course” (*Star-Phoenix* [Saskatoon, Saskatchewan], 16 May 1969, p. 5).

Cripps died in that Prince Albert hospital in 1975. He left big shoes, too.

## From Club Maker to Carpenter

When Albert Kam returned to England sometime after 1935, he went home to the same house that he and Jessie had owned for decades: “The Bungalow,” at Pinfarthings. After they died, their granddaughter, Hazel D. Davis, lived in the house when (in the early 1960s) she incorporated her company, Hampton Mouldings, Limited (“dealers in plastics, modelling and moulding materials, etc.”), which she would sell decades later for several million pounds (*The Citizen* [Gloucester, England], 8 April 1963, p. 9).

Albert and Jessie appear in the England and Wales Register of voters throughout the late 1930s, 1940s, and 1950s. In the 1939 register, Albert was recorded as working as “Carpenter at Aerodrome” and Jessie was recorded as performing “Unpaid Domestic Duties.” Jessie had arrived in Canada in 1905 as a domestic. As late as Henderson’s 1909 Winnipeg Directory, Albert was listed as a carpenter.

The Aerodrome in question was probably the one established near Minchinhampton by the Royal Air Force during World War I. Originally called RAF Minchinhampton, but later renamed RAF Aston Down, it was six miles (10 km) southeast of Stroud and 2.5 miles (4 km) east of Minchinhampton. Having closed shortly after World War I ended in 1919, it was re-opened in 1938 as Britain prepared for anticipated war in Europe.



Figure 68 2007 photograph of the remains of a hangar and a pill box at the site of the former RAF Aston Down.

The ruins of an old hangar at RAF Aston Down, and a “pill box” built to defend it, appear in the photograph to the left.

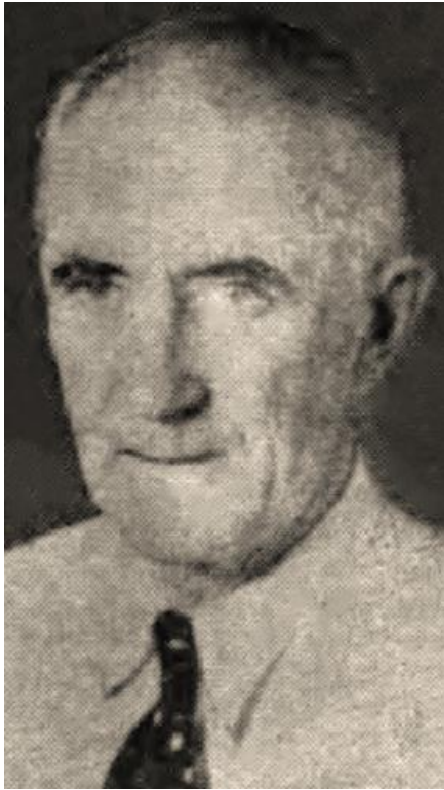
In the late 1930s and at the beginning of World War II (1939-45), Britain’s political and military leaders expected a future

invasion by Germany and ordered the building of pill boxes along Britain’s coast and at important inland

locations (such as RAF Aston Down) to serve as fortifications that troops could occupy in defence of the homeland.

Perhaps carpenter Kam was involved in the construction of the buildings seen above.

## Canadian Golf Legacy



*Figure 69 Albert Kam. Prince Albert Daily Herald, 11 January 1935, p. 1.*

Albert Oscar Waldemar Kam (alias Kamienski) died 2 February 1955 in Gloucester at the age of seventy-four.

Jessica Trefaldwyn Kam (alias Gardner) died in Gloucester in 1960 in her eightieth year.

Although long gone, and almost entirely forgotten, the golfing son of the Count and Countess Kamienski has not been without enduring impact in Canada.

As performers in Hengler's Grand Cirque, Albert Kam's parents entertained hundreds of thousands of people over the many years of their careers, but after they retired, they entertained only memories. Their son, however, although he retired as a golf professional in the 1930s and died in 1955, continues to entertain thousands of people each year at both Windsor Park Golf Course and Waskesiu Golf Course.

Quite a legacy: long may it continue.

## Agnostic Conclusion

Regarding the vexing question of who originally designed Waskesiu Golf Course, I am agnostic.

I know, however, that the 1934 prediction of the *Prince Albert Daily Herald* reporter was correct: “The course will be a credit to all those who had a hand in its making” (*Prince Albert Daily Herald*, 25 June 1934, p. 2).

The following are “those who had a [designing] hand in its making”:

- (i) In the 1980s, Stanley Thompson begins to be mentioned in Saskatchewan newspapers as the Waskesiu designer, but no evidence for this assertion is ever offered. More significant is the fact that, in 2004, Pinder recalls Thompson’s description in 1950 of difficulties he had while routing nine holes at Waskesiu at some point. Were these holes built? At the very least, Thompson oversaw changes to the course from 1938 to 1950.
- (ii) Albert Kam is mentioned in 1952 (along with J.H. Atkinson) as a designer of the original Waskesiu course. At the very least, we know that in 1934, he was “given a free hand in designing the greens along with some other architectural work in connection with the course,” and we know that in 1935, it was reported that Kam “built the rolling greens of the new golf course” and “assisted in widening fairways” (*Prince Albert Daily Herald*, 11 January 1935, pp. 1-2).
- (iii) In addition to being mentioned as a designer in 1952, Atkinson is also credited with being a “planner” of Waskesiu at the time the course opened for play in 1935.

Unless and until further information emerges about the original layout, we cannot be sure who did what, when – apart from the fact that in the mid-1930s Kam designed and built the greens and widened fairways.

At this point, perhaps the only other thing we know for sure is who most people would prefer to be named the designer.

Yet despite the Stanley Thompson preference, evidence indicates that at least two other people contributed substantially to the original design of Waskesiu Golf Course, and so, at present, it would be prudent to call today’s course an Atkinson-Kam-Thompson design.